

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

meeting date: TUESDAY, 24 AUGUST 2021
title: CLITHEROE FOOD FESTIVAL
submitted by: JOHN HEAP – DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES
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1 PURPOSE

1.1 To provide an update on the event and seek approval in principle for the 2022 event.

1.2 Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities:

- Community Objectives – To sustain a strong and prosperous Ribble Valley, encompassing our objective to encourage economic development throughout the borough, with a specific emphasis on tourism.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 The Council was unable to stage the Food Festival for either 2020 or 2021 due to the impact of covid, which has a significant impact on events across the Country.

2.2 Planning for what is the largest one-day event in the Borough takes many months and is undertaken by the Council's officers.

2.3 The event was originally introduced to help promote the many food and drink businesses in the Borough. It has in time grown to be one of the largest one-day food events in the Country.

2.4 It has always been a one-day event for 3 principal reasons:

- a. The Park and ride, run by the Council from the Auction Mart site, so essential to avoid complete traffic gridlock in the town, has only been available to the Council on a Saturday.
- b. Security of the site, based as it is in the town centre and not within a fenced enclosure, as many other 2 days events are, would be prohibitively expensive and even then, impossible to guarantee security for the stock left overnight. Requiring a complete breakdown, load out and then set up and load in on the Sunday Morning, for any on street stalls.
- c. The mainly council staff resources used to run the event are not sufficient to cover a two-day event. Sourcing external staff is not achievable within the remit of the existing budget.

3 THE 2022 FOOD FESTIVAL

3.1 2022 would if it goes ahead, mark the 10th year the event has been staged.

3.2 The event is planned and organised by Council officers, Council staff also work on the day, undertaking various roles, such as litter collection and stewarding. Volunteers help with providing visitors with maps or directions and we use external specialist assistance, e.g., first aid, security and traffic management.

3.3 The Clitheroe Food Festival contributes to our promotion of the area as a tourist destination and our economic development role. However, there is only anecdotal

evidence to support the economic and tourism impact of the event on the town, as there has never been an economic impact assessment of the event. Of the roughly 110 stalls booked in 2019, around 30 were from Ribble Valley, the rest came from Lancashire and elsewhere in the Northwest.

- 3.4 As a result of problems experienced because of previous demand for non-food stalls, committee decided to limit these to no more than 3. Included in that number are the charity stalls.

4 ISSUES

- 4.1 The amount of sponsorship attracted by the festival has steadily fallen over the past 4 years. In 2019 the sum was £4k. The return for sponsors has always been tenuous at best, with links by association through advertising and the web site, plus tickets to tastings or demonstrations. Managing sponsorship has been made difficult in recent years with some sponsors also being producers. This meant that they had space at the event to sell their products, (there is of course an opportunity cost to this space, which otherwise could be sold to other stall holders). This diminishes the value of the sponsorship received by the Council.
- 4.2 The festival is free to attend, with income principally obtained from stall holder fees and a small amount from tastings/demonstrations, whilst the park and ride seeks to break even. Being free to visitors, it cannot generate sufficient income to cover the cost of staging it. That has always been the case and the only way to change it would be if it was possible to relocate to a site where entry could be controlled, and an entry fee applied. The Castle field could be an alternative location, but it is not viable due to the variability of the weather and the impact it has on the surface. In 2019 for example, the funfair associated with the event, was cancelled due to heavy rain three days before the event, the second time in three years this has happened.
- 4.3 The event has relied to date on a substantial number of Council officers working to plan it and, on the day, to serve in various roles. Although working on the day is paid (subject to tax and N.I.), it is a long and exhausting day for everyone involved. There has been a clear downward trend in the number of staff willing to work on the event and it may be necessary to look at alternative models of delivery for the future, to ensure the many people required to run it are available. A more reliable option would be to use a professional event company to manage the event, but that would be at considerable cost.
- 4.4 Because it is free to attend, that brings with it the risks of large crowds with no easily discernible way of controlling numbers. There is an inherent safety risk in managing the crowd and further work will need to be considered to ensure that public safety is maintained. Unlike a ticketed event, where numbers can be controlled, there is no realistic way of doing so for a free to attend event. However, this does not absolve the Council from its' responsibility to plan and run an event which is safe for all attendees. The Council as an organiser has a legal obligation under various pieces of legislation to ensure the risk to the people attending is minimised. At the height of the event, the main streets are full with attendees. This is a situation which must be managed safely and currently there is no practical way of doing so. However, the Council or any event organiser, cannot plan for an event knowing that such things have not been addressed satisfactorily. To be able to consider a controllable site, options to make the surface of the Castle Field suitable have been explored briefly. The permanent solution involving reinforcing the grass with a grid system would be around £210k, whilst temporary surfacing to allow vehicles and pedestrians to use the field after heavy rain is around £81k each year. Clearly both are beyond the scope of the current budget provision and

would if Committee wanted to explore this route in detail require further work and ultimately a capital bid or significant uplift in the revenue costs of running the event. However, this option would allow the area to be fenced and providing the control of crowd numbers required, as well as a modest ticket income if desired. A permanent solution also opens the field to more extensive event use annually, something which is currently limited because of ground conditions.

- 4.5 In previous years, the option of food demonstrations and tastings have been tried, the participation of local chefs for the former dwindled as did demand from attendees. The same was true of the tasting events, where demand fell away. The demonstrations were stopped in 2017 and the tastings had dropped to just two sessions by 2019.
- 4.6 Although popular according to social media and other sources, the event is not universally welcomed in the town. Some business owners are hostile to it, because of the negative impact it has on their normal business and others embrace it, because of the opportunity it brings.

5. RISK ASSESSMENT

5.1 The approval of this report may have the following implications:

- Resources – To date the Council has underwritten the cost of staging the Food festival. With limited sponsorship and being free to attend, the event cost has risen sharply is likely to rise further as the demands of staging it safely increase. The budget from the event staged in 2019 is attached (appendix 1).
- Technical, Environmental and Legal - The success of the event in attracting people to Clitheroe makes safety a constant challenge given the limited street space available within the town. The Council as the event organiser is legally obliged to run a safe event and would be held accountable by the Health and Safety Executive if an incident occurred leading to injuries or worse.
- Political – none in the context of the report
- Reputation - The Council has a high reputation for delivering an excellent event according to the feedback from stall holders and many attendees. That is based on the professional approach taken to the planning and delivery of previous food festivals, The Tour of Britain Cycle Race and The Freedom of the Borough March.
- Equality and Diversity – The festival is located on the streets of the town and all areas are accessible. Demonstrations if staged, are in accessible buildings.

6. RECOMMENDED THAT COMMITTEE

6.1 Note the report and decide if approval should be granted in principle for the 2022 edition of the event.

MARK BEVERIDGE
HEAD OF CULTURAL & LEISURE SERVICES

JOHN HEAP
DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES

BACKGROUND PAPERS – CFF File
Appendix 1

Clitheroe Food Festival	Actual 2018 £	Original Estimate 2019 £	Actual 2019 (as at 15/10/19) £
EXPENDITURE			
EMPLOYEE RELATED			
Staffing Costs Before, During and After the Event	6,821	6,710	5,115
<i>total employee related</i>	6,821	6,710	5,115
PREMISES RELATED			
Marquees, Stalls and Staging for Town Centre Entertainment	8,583	8,730	8,790
Demonstration Venues	900	920	880
Portable Toilets	475	500	630
Park and Ride Facilities	670	830	1,070
<i>total premises related</i>	10,628	10,980	11,370
TRANSPORT RELATED			
Park and Ride Coach Hire	1,820	1,950	1,890
<i>total transport related</i>	1,820	1,950	1,890
SUPPLIES AND SERVICES			
Advertising and Promotions Online and in Print	4,034	4,500	4,966
Printed Leaflets and Posters	2,043	2,080	2,073
Postage	167	170	122
Volunteer T-Shirts	232	200	149
On Street Entertainment	2,165	3,760	3,865
Two Way Radios for on the Festival Day	480	500	480
First Aid Provision	1,568	1,700	1,610
Festival Site Security	1,628	1,800	1,701
The Mad Science Funstations	550	650	940
Refreshments	405	410	220
AA Signs within Clitheroe and Perimeter	1,284	1,400	1,310
Traffic Management Signage and Coning	1,606	1,900	1,727
Other Miscellaneous Items	265	270	642
<i>total supplies and services</i>	16,425	19,340	19,804
<i>Total Gross Expenditure</i>	35,695	38,980	38,178

Clitheroe Food Festival	Actual 2018 £	Original Estimate 2019 £	Actual 2019 (as at 15/10/19) £
INCOME			
CUSTOMER AND CLIENT RECEIPTS			
Park and Ride Income	-4,140	-4,490	-2,113
Chargeable Events - Demos/Tastings	-485	-500	-324
Charges to Exhibitors	-14,305	-14,590	-18,265
<i>total customer and client receipts</i>	-18,930	-19,580	-20,702
GRANTS REIMBURSEMENTS AND CONTRIBUTIONS			
Grant from Ribble Valley Borough Council	-5,000	-5,000	-5,000
Overs/Unders	75	0	0
Fair	-250	-280	0
Total Sponsorship	-8,500	0	-4,000
<i>total grants reimbursements and contributions</i>	-13,675	-5,280	-9,000
<i>Total Gross Income</i>	-32,605	-24,860	-29,702
Actual (Potential for 2019) – (SURPLUS)/DEFICIT (added to)/taken from earmarked reserve	3,089	14,120	8,477
Opening Balance on Earmarked Reserve	-17,736	-14,647	-14,647
Closing Balance on Earmarked Reserve	-14,647	-527	-6,170