

Report of	Meeting	Date
Director of Change and Delivery (Introduced by Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member (Policy, Reform and Communications))	Council	Wednesday, 20 September 2023

Is this report confidential?	No
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### **Music in the Park 2024-2027**

Is this decision key?	Yes
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<b>Savings or expenditure amounting to greater than £100,000</b>	Significant impact on 2 or more council wards
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#### **Purpose of the Report**

1. To outline plans for the Music in the Park event over the next few years and request a budget to allow us to allow us to grow the event and maximise the benefit for the local economy.

#### **Recommendations to Council**

2. To allocate £150,000 from the Covid Recovery reserve to cover the costs of Music in the Park 2024.
3. To agree the waiver of contract procedure rules for the event partner UK Media & Events Ltd. for 2024.
4. To delegate the decision to award the contract award for 2025-2027 to the Leader of the Council following a procurement exercise.

#### **Reasons for recommendations**

5. To inform council of the plans to allow the necessary expenditure to be made to run the event in 2024 and the plans for the following 3 years.

#### **Other options considered and rejected**

6. The alternative would be to not host the event, which we have rejected based on the feedback we received from the first two years of hosting the event, and the desire to look to establish

an event that attracts people to South Ribble from across the North West to support the local economy.

7. The urgency to create a budget to allow us to secure the acts means we couldn't, for example, wait until the next budget setting cycle to arrange the necessary funding.

### **Corporate priorities**

8. The report relates to the following corporate priorities:

<b>An exemplary council</b>	<b>Thriving communities</b>
A fair local economy that works for everyone	Good homes, green spaces, healthy places

### **Background to the report**

9. We held the second Music in the Park event over the Spring Bank Holiday weekend this year.
10. The event was one of the key projects in the corporate strategy with a view to establishing this as a signature event for South Ribble.
11. We hadn't put any plans in place for further events until we had hosted the second event and so this report is to outline the plans going forward and decisions we need to take to make it happen in 2024 and beyond.

### **Feedback on this year's event**

12. The feedback we received from attendees was overwhelmingly positive and it provided a feelgood factor for South Ribble over the Spring Bank Holiday weekend.
13. More than 3,200 people attended the event on Sunday 28 May with visitors largely from the South Ribble, Chorley and Preston areas but a noticeable increase in those who visited from further afield compared to year one.
14. We carried out a survey of people who attended and some of the notable feedback was:
  - 45% rated it 10/10 for experience (83% rated it 8/10 or higher)
  - 96% said they would recommend it to a friend if we were to host the event again
  - The overwhelming sense of opinion was that people wanted the event to continue and develop moving forwards.
15. While the feedback was really positive and we have built on the success of the first year there were improvements we know we can make going forward and the main areas highlighted by visitors were:
  - The cost of items from the bar
  - The differential between the VIP offer and general admission offer (although this was improved on year one)
  - A standing area in front of the stage
  - Bigger TV screens adjacent to the stage

16. We set aside a reserve to cover the costs of the event in 2023 as we knew having made the event bigger and better the expenditure would be higher. The breakdown of the spend for the 2023 event was:

- Total expenditure - £271,630
- Income - £102,428
- Overall cost - £169,202

17. The other benefit to hosting the event, aside from the visitors enjoying the event, is the economic impact upon the borough.

18. Using the data we have from the event and the feedback survey it is estimated the event boosted the local economy by £196,200. This data was created by using a government-backed economic impact calculator and feedback from the survey that asked how much visitors spent in the borough outside of the event.

19. In addition to this, the Leyland Town Team was very positive with many hospitality businesses benefitting from much-increased trade associated with this event and the wider events hosted over that weekend with Music in the Town taking place for the first time, on Hough Lane, the day before.

20. The Town Team has stated that the event has a huge benefit to the local economy and whereas visitors would normally travel out of town on a Bank Holiday people are coming into the borough spending money before and after the event.

21. The impact on the local economy is a key driver for the event and we will look to expand this as well as maximising other sources of income through ticket sales and sponsorship.

#### **Plans for Music in the Park 2024-2027**

22. This event is a key priority for the council and has been an integral part of our corporate plans to do the best for the residents of South Ribble.

23. Having hosted the event for two years we have learnt a lot about what works and where improvements can be made.

24. The feedback from visitors is that this is a really positive event for South Ribble and to make sure we can develop the event to have a lasting legacy and impact for the borough we need to look at planning for the event over a longer period of time.

25. This will help us to provide certainty for visitors and potential sponsors and will allow us to reduce costs by procuring items over a longer period of time.

26. It will also aid us to attract the best artists as we risk missing out on people we would like to attend as they get booked up a number of years in advance.

27. The types of acts we are looking at will include a mix from the 80s and 90s in line with feedback we received after the event and is in line with the initial aims of the event.

28. We are looking at keeping the event at a similar time of year (May/June) but we will be led to some extent by the availability of the acts. For 2024 we have already agreed a provisional date of the Spring Bank Holiday again (Sunday 26 May 2024).

29. While this report focusses on the proposed contract award and budget for 2024 as we need this in place now to secure acts for next year's event, work will start immediately on procuring a partner for the event and associated budget for a further 3-year period.

### **Budget requirement**

30. Given we had not taken a decision to make this an annual event until we had seen how the event performed there is no current budget provision in place going forward.

31. Using intelligence from the first two years we are better able to estimate costs and income levels for future years.

32. As this report is focussed on the 2024 event we are proposing to cover the costs through the Covid Recovery reserve.

33. We will then look to set a budget going forward to cover the subsequent three years with the view to make the event cost neutral at the end of that period.

34. The projected figures for the 2024 event are below:

- Expenditure - £315,000
- Ticket sales - £184,000 (based on 4,200 sales – 1,000 premium and 3,200 general)
- Other income (bar contribution, traders, sponsorship) - £15,000
- Deficit - £116,000

### **Proposed contract award**

35. To deliver the Music in the Park event we need to work with a trusted provider and following the success of the first two events the desire is to work with the same provider (UK Media & Events Ltd).

36. It is important we get this in place now as our event partner will be part of the process to secure the acts and determine what production would be needed for the event.

37. Until the acts are secured and format of the event is determined we will not know exactly what the contract value would be but it will be similar to this year's event (albeit higher taking into account inflationary costs) and over the threshold that would trigger a procurement exercise.

38. The request is to waive Contract Procedure Rule 11, which requires that tenders are openly advertised both on the council's e-procurement portal The Chest and Contracts Finder.

39. For us to build on the success of the inaugural Music in the Park event and to be safe, well managed and successful, it is believed that the nature of the market for event management services has been investigated and it is in our interest to work with a trusted partner that has a track record and history of involvement with the event.

40. The specialist services UK Media & Events provide are:

- a. An in-depth knowledge of the music industry
- b. Relationships with agents and acts, which means they can attract them to South Ribble

- c. An understanding of the production requirements for artists and what kit (stage, lighting and sound) is required for the event
- d. The ability to run the stage side of the event on the day (production and technical) and relationships with acts to manage their appearances

41. Given they have partnered with us on the event for the first two years this relationship is also vitally important in delivering a successful event.
42. To ensure best value going forward beyond 2024 a procurement exercise will take place straight away to get a partner in place for the subsequent three years.
43. Where they procure items such as staging, lighting, production etc. on our behalf we will require UK Media and Events to demonstrate best value.
44. Therefore it is demonstrated to be such that granting a waiver is justifiable.

### **Climate change and air quality**

45. The work noted in this report does not impact the climate change and sustainability targets of the Council's Green Agenda and all environmental considerations are in place.

### **Equality and diversity**

46. A full impact assessment will be done as we agree the format of the event and we will build on feedback from this year's event.
47. The range of marketing techniques will be used to attract a diverse audience with consideration for how accessibility can be maintained for all parts of our community.

### **Risk**

48. The main risk in what we are requesting in this report is the financial risks associated with hosting events that are reliant on generating significant ticket sales to recoup income.
49. We will mitigate this by utilising our experience from the first two years and growing the event in a manageable way so as we are not over ambitious in our income generation targets.

### **Comments of the Statutory Finance Officer**

50. The estimated net cost of the event proposed for 2024/25 is £116,000 however a budget is requested of £150,000, to include an element of contingency; it is proposed to fund this from the Covid Recovery reserve which currently stands at £280,000.
51. If the event is to continue in 2025/26 and beyond, it will need to be considered as a cost pressure, alongside other cost pressures within the Council, as part of the development of the 2024/25 Budget and MTFS over the period to 2026/27..

### **Comments of the Monitoring Officer**

52. The proposal is to waive Contract Procedure Rules for 2024 but carry out compliant procurement exercises for the year 2025 – 2027. Waivers may only be granted in exceptional circumstances. That part of the report entitled “Proposed contract award” sets out the detailed circumstances here. Essentially there is a need for a suitable specialist form to start contacting the artists now with a view to booking them for next year – hence the need for a waiver.

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