

STRATFORD-UPON-AVON TOWN COUNCIL
CIVIC, HERITAGE AND EVENTS COMMITTEE

Town Clerk's Open Report

3 November, 2020

1) Remembrance Sunday

- **To receive information regarding finite arrangements for Remembrance Sunday – Civic Officer, Charles Wilson**

Covid infection levels have been steadily increasing across both Warwickshire and Stratford District during recent times. This has led to Warwickshire County Council reviewing what activities they feel appropriate for marking Remembrance Sunday. Members will be aware that a robust plan had already been put in place, in consultation with our Health and Safety consultant, but this has had to be fully revised to respond to additional restrictions.

Following the original plan, based on twenty seven 2 meter squared socially distanced pods, accommodating a maximum of four people per pod, Stratford District Council sent through a WCC directive on the 9 October, advising that Remembrance Day Commemorations should be much more strictly limited than originally thought due to the increasing 'R Rate'. Ultimately there could only be a maximum of 10 in attendance in the entire Garden, including staff.

The UK Government then published further guidance on the 15 October to assist local authorities planning Remembrance Sunday events. The main points are précised below, but it became clear that the two sets of guidance were not aligned and caused further confusion. Members will recall that the detailed plan, discussed and adopted at the July meeting, which the Officers had originally put in place was fully in accordance with official guidance at that time. It incorporated all the following measures.

- short and focused on wreath laying, with a reduced march past or parade only if social distancing can be maintained
- take advantage of opportunities for wreath layers to represent wider groups

- take precautionary measures as set out in the performing arts guidance for any small, military bands
- not involve communal singing
- keep numbers to a minimum, focusing attendance on those wishing to lay wreaths (more information on who can attend below)
- take reasonable steps to reduce wider public viewing, encouraging the public to observe the rule of 6 when spectating
- observe social distancing at all times

Subsequently we learnt that the Royal British Legion were advocating that there should be no parade or a March Past, primarily for the safety of its members.

Following further discussions with SDC, WCC has recently confirmed that we can move ahead with our plans, based on reduced numbers, but with a maximum of 50 in attendance.

Stratford District Council has also advised that no road closures will be issued for Remembrance Sunday, in order to discourage the public gathering outside. Every effort has been made to get this message across and encourage residents to 'Remember from Home'. The event will be live streamed from 10:30am via the link: <https://ssv.uk.com/stratford>

The Council has made every effort to ensure that 'Remember at Home' is the preferred option, but some people may still choose to gather as usual outside the Remembrance Garden to witness the commemoration. Although Council is confident that the measures put in place for the Garden are robust, any public gathering on the highway is outside our control. As a precaution however, barriers and appropriate signage is available if it becomes evident that public safety may be compromised.

In an effort to reduce numbers to the maximum permitted, every organisation invited to attend will be allocated a maximum of 2 places. Therefore, organisations that cannot be accommodated due to Covid restrictions, have been invited to come later in the day to place wreaths once the ceremony has finished. The Civic Officer, acting as compere, will read out the names of the organisations who would normally have been in attendance.

2) Christmas Lights Switch-On

- **To receive details of the arrangements for the Christmas**

Lights Switch-On 2020 – Civic Officer

The Christmas Lights Company has confirmed that the light's display will be installed in time for Thursday 19 November, the revised date for the Switch-On. This coincides with the first of several Christmas Markets along Waterside, which are taking place on the 19, 26 of November, and the 3, 10, 17 of December.

The display will be switched-on remotely during the morning, and the brief ceremony will be filmed. This will be made available later in the day via YouTube, and will incorporate a message from the Mayor thanking the main sponsors and all the businesses and individuals who contribute towards the much anticipated Christmas Lights display.

Local primary school choirs, currently on half term holiday, have been approached and invited to record favourite carols, which will be broadcast as part of a programme of seasonal music at the Christmas Market.

3) Town Hall Tariffs

- **To note the report on Town Hall Tariffs – Town Hall Booking Co-ordinator, Emma Evans**

Town Hall tariffs were included in error as part of the budget review of the Community Services Committee Meeting (CS). Since the committee structure review they now come under the Civic, Heritage and Events Committee's (CHE) remit.

Members of the CS Committee deferred the issue to a meeting of the CHE Committee and this will be undertaken at the meeting on 5 January, 2021.

In the past, tariffs have usually been uplifted in line with inflation and a thorough review is now overdue.

4) Nominated Designated Reserve Requirement

- **To agree the nominated designated reserve – Deputy Town Clerk, Phil Mills**

Following Council's decision in September 2020 to approve the new Committee structure and new Terms of Reference, the Civic, Heritage and Events Committee is responsible for agreeing its recommended designated reserve requirement for the next financial year and to advise the Finance and Audit Committee accordingly, in addition to agreeing its recommended budget.

This "pot" of additional funds will enable the committee to make decisions on additional expenditure during the next financial year, on matters within its budget responsibility, without having to request approval of budget virement from the Finance and Audit Committee.

Note that any funds allocated to new designated reserves for each committee will need to be taken initially from Council's General Reserve, so these decisions will potentially have an impact on the Reserves Policy. Also note that the Reserves Policy will continue to be reviewed as part of the overall budget process.

If no specific requirement for further funds is identified, it is suggested that Members should consider whether any budget surpluses from 2020/21 may be carried forward and included as part of the designated reserve.

5) CIL Projects

- **To determine and recommend any potential CIL projects – Deputy Town Clerk**

The latest payment from SDC has been received and the balance of CIL funds now stands at £13,350.92.

Under the new committee structure, the Terms of Reference for the various standing committees say they have advisory powers to recommend to Council any CIL spending projects.

Members are requested to make recommendations for consideration by Council.

6) Civic Event Budget Review

- **To note the report – Civic Officer and Town Clerk**

The budget proposal for 2021- 2022 is attached as Appendix 'A' for information. The Civic Officer and the Town Clerk are reviewing the budget in depth as it is currently very difficult to forecast which events will remain viable if the pandemic continues for a considerable length of time.

The CHE Committee will be requested to view the proposed budget at the January meeting of the Committee.

7) Monitoring Feedback Relating to Council Events

- **To note the report and recommendation – Civic Officer and Town Clerk**

Feedback is generally very positive, a reflection of the standards on which the Council rightly prides itself. However, the one annual event which has drawn adverse comments from time to time is the Mayor's Charity Ball.

The title 'Ball' conjures up an image of a black tie event, with dancing to a traditional dance band, preceded by a formal dinner. Generally, such dances are less popular and a more informal approach has been observed by some Mayors in the recent past. However, the phraseology of 'Ball' seems to remain constant and it is this that has given rise to some adverse feedback.

It is therefore RECOMMENDED that consideration is given to amending the title 'Mayor's Charity Ball', and that going forward it is renamed, possibly the 'Mayor's Charity Evening' or the 'Mayor's Annual Gala Evening, which brands it as the major Mayoral fund raising occasion in the civic year and leaves the 'door wide open' for the incumbent Mayor to determine the genre of the event.

8) Market Operation

- **To note the report – Market Forum Chairman, Cllr Kevin Taylor and Admin Officer, Lisa Cowley**

Following the lifting of restrictions regarding outdoor markets, the Stratford-upon-Avon Rother Street Charter Market reopened on Friday 19 June. Following the Governments social distancing guidelines, the number of permitted stalls within the market were reduced, and continue to be so, to allow for the public to move around safely. Sanitising stations have also been made available for public use.

The Saturday Urban Mix Market on Rother Street and the Sunday Upmarket on Waterside were also reintroduced during the same weekend, again with a reduced number of stalls.

The Friday and Saturday markets have now seen an improvement and have also seen a larger number of traders returning.

The Sunday Upmarket has been very busy particularly around the food court. The rest of the market has increased footfall, which accords with the fact that car park users are returning to levels associated with pre-COVID activity. The market traders are generally happy with the way the market is trading. However, stall holders who want to trade on the Upmarket currently exceeds the capacity, as was the case when things were 'normal'.

In order to comply with social distancing measures, it is not possible to increase the number of traders. The safety of all who work or visit the markets continues to be a priority.

On Saturday 28 and 29 August, the incredibly successful Young Traders Market National Final took place on Waterside. Young entrepreneurs aged 16 - 30 competed to be crowned the 'Young Trader of the Year 2020'. This year's winner was Emma Russ of the Topsy Bakery - a well-deserved winner especially considering the standard of the competition.

Due to the current Coronavirus pandemic, the organisers of the Stratford-upon-Avon Victorian Christmas Market made the decision to cancel this year's event. The event has become very popular and brings high levels of footfall into the town centre and is welcomed and seen as a great benefit for Stratford-upon-Avon retailers and hospitality.

Due to this popularity, and in a response to the large numbers of similar events that have been cancelled, it was felt that excessive

crowds may flock to Stratford-upon-Avon at a time when we are trying to promote social distancing to keep people safe.

There is no doubt that the safe and sensible option was to cancel the event this year but it is to return from Thursday 9 until Sunday 12 December, 2021.

Despite the cancellation of the Victorian Christmas Market, the Late-Night Festive Shopping Waterside Christmas Market and Street Food Court returns on the 19 November to coincide with the first day of Christmas Light displays, and will take place each Thursday until the 17 December. These markets will comprise of over 50 socially distanced stalls selling speciality gifts, crafts, vintage, handmade bespoke toys, home-produced decorations, jewellery, candles, clothing and more. Some street food will be available, whilst festive tunes are provided by a live compere. It is hoped that the local primary schools will provide part of the medley of festive tunes, as outlined in item 2) of the Town Clerk's Open Report.

Outdoor markets and social distancing – we have had numerous questions recently concerning the social distancing measures on Waterside. Outdoor markets were allowed to re-open well before non-essential retail or hospitality as the transmission rate outside was a lower risk. However, there were still guidelines to follow:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/shops-and-branches>

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/restaurants-offering-takeaway-or-delivery>

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/close-contact-services>

<https://www.nmtf.co.uk/coronavirus/>

<https://lsdpromotions.com/covid19>

It is worth noting that that we are now reaching a telling time for markets as we proceed through autumn into the winter. We are already experiencing inclement weather and with the added difficulty of the pandemic, challenging times may be ahead for

traders. A further update on this will be available following the Market Forum meeting due to take place on 27 November.

9) Additional Income Streams for the Town Hall

• **To note the report and recommendation – Town Hall Booking Co-ordinator**

Due to Covid restrictions the type of bookings we are able to safely accommodate at the Town Hall are very limited.

Most of the bookings for the remainder of the year have either been cancelled or postponed.

Although we are able to accommodate craft fairs the limit on the amount of stalls we can fit in the rooms following Government guidance on 2 meter spacing mean that it is not financially viable for hirers to continue with these bookings.

We are currently safely accommodating wedding ceremonies for up to a maximum of 15 people and concerts for a maximum of 40 people.

We are also able to accommodate AGMs for a maximum of 40 people. However, the kitchen is out of use and hirers are unable to serve refreshments to attendees. Attendees must primarily remain static and wear a face covering, particularly when moving within the venue.

It is RECOMMENDED That due to current uncertainties, bookings are taken only for wedding ceremonies, concerts, AGMs and similar but will be reviewed and amended in line with Government guidance and/or restrictive measures are lifted or tightened.

Town Clerk
03.11.20