

Classification: Public

Key Decision: No

Gravesham Borough Council

Report to: Community & Leisure Cabinet Committee

Date: 4 June 2019

Reporting officer: Assistant Director (Communities)

Subject: Town Centre Events Programming

Purpose and summary of report:

To seek the Committee's views on the programming of events in the Town Centre.

Recommendations:

1. The Committee is asked to comment on the event proposals outlined in the report and to recommend additional ideas.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Town Centres across the country are facing considerable change arising from the major structural and technological changes that are taking place within the retail sector. In response, they are looking to a variety of means to create compelling reasons for people to come into Town Centres.
- 1.2 Gravesend Town Centre has traditionally hosted a wide range of events activity, the majority of which have been organised and paid for by the council with the aim of:
 - 1.2.1 Increasing footfall;
 - 1.2.2 Diversifying the customer base, e.g. bringing in more families, younger people, higher spend;
 - 1.2.3 Attracting visitors and shoppers from further afield, i.e. beyond the current catchment area of the Town;
 - 1.2.4 Encouraging people to share positive experiences of the Town by word of mouth and social media; and,
 - 1.2.5 Creating a more cohesive community.

- 1.3 This report sets out the planned programme of events activity in and around the Town and current thinking concerning the development of events to help underpin the vitality of the Town Centre.

2. Current Programme

- 2.1 The current calendar of events is attached as Appendix 2. This includes events directly run by the council, those run in partnership, primarily with Cohesion Plus, and those which are run by other groups and, which by virtue of event size, have a positive impact on the Town Centre.
- 2.2 Recent years have seen an increasing diversity of events aimed at bringing Gravesham's communities together to celebrate or mark specific milestones in the year, e.g. Vaisakhi, Eid and Chinese New Year.
- 2.3 There have also been encouraging moves towards other groups taking a lead in the development of regular events which bring people into the Town. These include the Fusion Festival, Waterfront Weekend, Hope & Glory and South East Strong-Man.
- 2.4 Gravesend Borough Market has also become a focus for events in support of market trading and the Town as a whole. Its programme is attached as Appendix 3. Many of these events and activities are made possible with Go Trade Funding from the EU Interreg partnership.

3. Programme Development

- 3.1 Officers are giving additional thought as to how best to support the Town Centre through additional events which are distinctive enough to draw significant footfall into the Town and meet the objectives set out in paragraph 1.2. These are include:
 - 3.1.1 *A focus on food* – creation of a series of regular food festivals, market activity and entertainment which reflects the wide variety of cultural food offerings and music in the borough and bringing people together to share the experience. External funding has already been secured to deliver the initial stages of this work.
 - 3.1.2 *Raising the profile of independent businesses* - the Town has a sizeable independent business sector that differentiates the Town from other competing centres. A number of national events seek to promote independent businesses, such as Small Business Saturday (7 December 2019) and the proposal is to develop an event around that date in conjunction with independent businesses in the Town.
 - 3.1.3 *Promoting the evening economy* – more needs to be done to support the Town's evening economy, to overcome unhelpful perceptions of the Town at nights and to bring more people into the Town's diverse range for bars, restaurants and entertainment venues. The scope for hosting a 'Light Night' style event or season in the Town where buildings are creatively illuminated and light installations positioned. These have proved successful in other towns and cities and have attracted visitors and positive attention. This could take the form of an illuminated trail through the heart of the Town from Community Square to the Riverside, potentially in February to coincide with the Spring Half Term/Valentine's Day.

- 3.1.4 *Family Friendly Activities* – invariably families and young people are looking for more reasons to come into Town, especially during school holidays. The Market and Woodville are reflecting this in their programming, but the opportunity to create a temporary beach in the Town over the Summer period.
- 3.1.5 *Festivals/Parades* – these work well in the Town and consideration is being given as to how to add to these with e.g. a street fiesta in the High Street, classic car parades, etc.
- 3.2 Consideration is also being given to encouraging greater participation in national Heritage Open Days (13 to 22 September), and additional opportunities to dress the Town, especially within the Summer months as these create opportunities for people to talk positive about the Town.
- 3.3 These proposals are being worked up and costed to see what is achievable. Financial resources will be a constraint, yet if designed well it is possible for significant impacts to be achieved without considerable expenditure.
- 3.4 The Committee is asked to comment on the proposals as outlined above, to consider those which specifically can become regular and distinctive events that work well for the Town, and to suggest other ideas. Members may wish to note that there are gaps in the event calendar at certain times of the year, e.g. in the Winter months.

4. Christmas 2019

- 4.1 Gravesend Town Centre has achieved a programme of Christmas events over many years which are the envy of many other Towns and the refurbished Market has enabled many of these to take place in the heart of the Town Centre.

- 4.2 An outline of a programme for 2019 is as follows:

Friday 22 November	Christmas Lights Switch-on Parade and entertainment in the Market
Saturday 23 November	Young Traders Christmas Market
Sunday 24 November	Vintage Christmas Market
Friday 29 November	Christmas World Record attempt – Community Square
Saturday 30 November	Christmas Market & Grotto
Sunday 1 December	Crafts for Christmas Market
Saturday 7 December	Focus on independent businesses in the Town Centre with Small Business Saturday
	Christmas Market & Grotto
Sunday 8 December	Christmas Market & Grotto
Saturday 14 December	Live Nativity (tbc)

Christmas Market & Grotto

Sunday 15 December

Christmas Market & Grotto

- 4.3 These events are in the early stages of preparation and discussion with partners and will be developed further in the coming months.

5. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 5.1 There are no background papers pertaining to this report.

Anyone wishing to inspect background papers should, in the first place, be directed to Committee & Electoral Services who will make the necessary arrangements.

IMPLICATIONS	APPENDIX 1
Legal	No direct implications.
Finance and Value for Money	The cost of carrying out Town Centre events will be met from existing budgets. If additional funding is required then a separate report will be presented to Management Team.
Risk Assessment	Risk assessments, event and traffic management plans are prepared for events and where appropriate reviewed by the Gravesham Safety Advisory Group.
Data Protection Impact Assessment	<p><i>A data protection impact assessment (DPIA) should be carried out at the start of any major project involving the use of personal data or if you are making a significant change to an existing process.</i></p> <p>a. Does the project/change being recommended through this paper involve the processing of personal data or special category data or criminal offence data? A definition of each type of data can be found on the Information Commissioner’s Office website via the above links.</p> <p>b. If yes to question a, have you completed and attached a DPIA including Data Protection Officer advice?</p> <p>c. If no to question b, please seek advice from your nominated DPIA assessor or the Information Governance Team at gdpr@medway.gov.uk.</p>
Equality Impact Assessment	<p>a. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have potential to cause adverse impact or discriminate against different groups in the community? If yes, please explain answer. No</p> <p>b. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper make a positive contribution to promoting equality? If yes, please explain answer. No</p> <p><i>In submitting this report, the Chief Officer doing so is confirming that they have given due regard to the equality impacts of the decision being considered, as noted in the table above</i></p>
Corporate Plan	Strategic Objective 3 - Sustainable Gravesham
Crime and Disorder	More positive events activity has a beneficial impact on community safety in the Town Centre.
Digital and website implications	Events will be promoted via the council's website, www.visitgravesend.co.uk and social media.
Safeguarding children and vulnerable adults	Safeguarding considerations will be applied in the planning and delivery of events activity.