



Report to: Place and Economic Development Committee, 23rd January 2023

Report of: Deputy Director – Economic Development

Subject: REVIEW OF MAJOR EVENTS

1. Recommendation

1.1 That the committee notes the content of the report.

2. Background

2.1 The city has a calendar of event activity throughout the year. This report looks at the projects and activities that are planned for future years, including the direct revenue costs of these events and the wider economic impact that they have in attracting visitors and subsequent spend to the city to support future resilience. The events programme is split between those that are funded through the base budget and those that receive council support through alternative pathways including the Managing Director's funds or the Community Grants programme.

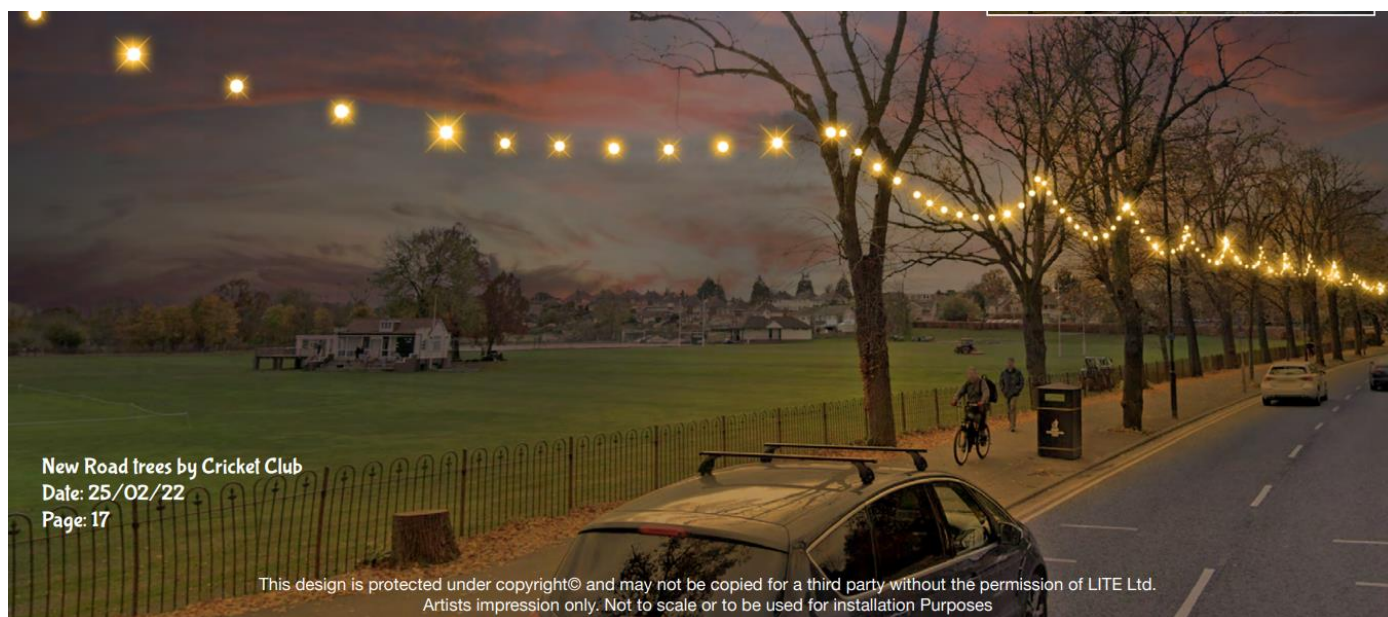
3. Events

3.1 The **Victorian Fayre (core funded)** is the largest of the city centre events having started in 1992 by local businesses looking to provide an attraction to encourage visitors to the city. The Fayre has increased in size and now sees almost 200 stalls fill the streets of Worcester for four days, welcoming over 100,000 visitors from across the country. The event is organized by the Council's economic development team, alongside Cotswold markets, the current market management partner.

The Fayre runs for four days and contains a packed programme of entertainment with Victorian characters, stilt walkers, school choirs and local musicians, alongside stalls and chalets selling arts and crafts, street food and gifts. 195 units were trading at this year's fayre, at just over £400 per unit. £7000 up from 2021. The forecast city Council revenue spend for this year's event is estimated at £162,000, with an expected income of £109,000. Costing the council in total £53,000. The 2021/22 Fayre saw spend of £131,286 and an income of £95,895 with a total cost to the Council of **£35,391**. Costs have increased this year due mainly to increased security, medical and generator fuel costs.

The **Christmas Lights and Switch On (core funded)** are a main programme of activity in the period leading up to Christmas. Contractor, LITE Ltd, were procured to deliver the 2021-2024 festive illuminations contract, which sees light installations in Broad Street, High Street, The Cross, Mealcheapen Street, Pump Street, St Swithuns, The Shambles and Cathedral Square. We continue to work in partnership with the BID who also install infrastructure and light crossings in New Street and Friar Street.

We have looked to increase the lighting programme to further areas in the city, including New Road and column lighting in St Johns. To install new lighting there is a requirement to attach 2/3 small fixings on the front of each building to support the securing of lighting. Unfortunately, we were unable to secure enough support from the local businesses in Lowesmoor, and were forced to go for an alternative option in St Johns which saw lighting column attachments installed



St John's column lights

All of the lights in Worcester are LED and consume very little energy compared to the old filament lights which were traditionally used at Christmas. Running costs of these LED lights compared to filament lights provide a saving of around 85% - 90%.

The estimated cost of the lights and Switch On event for this year is **£57,792**, with a core budget of **£39,000** and new lighting offset against the UKSPF events budget, totalling **£27,490**.

- 3.2 **Worcester Theatres (core funded)** a registered charity that operates Huntingdon Hall and the Swan Theatre. The organisation's production arm, the Worcester Rep Company, produces the annual Swan Theatre pantomime and outdoor theatre at the Commandery, alongside national touring shows. The charity relies on charitable donations and receives arts grants, donations from trust and foundations and circa **£110k** contribution per year from the City Council. Audience figures of 70,854 were recorded in 2022.
- 3.3 **Three Choirs Festival (core funded)** is a week-long programme of world-class music making, featuring choral and orchestral concerts, solo and chamber music recitals, talks, cathedral services, theatre, exhibitions, and walks, rotating each summer between the English cathedral cities of Gloucester, Hereford, and Worcester. One of the elements which makes the festival so special is the Festival Chorus, which is made up of auditioned singers from the local area trained by professional directors, meaning that the Chorus both sings to a high standard and is a real part of the community. Three Choirs is thought to be the longest-standing classical music festival in the world and celebrated its 300th anniversary in 2015. The festival costs the Council **£8k** per year as a contribution to the £1million budget of the organisers, a payment of **£24k** is made every 3 years (the year that the City is host), with Worcester due to host the event in 2024.
- 3.4 **The Worcester Show (core funded)** held at Pitchcroft since 2021, is an annual, one-day event celebration of local produce, horticulture, crafts and community, bringing in visitors from across the region. Attracting over 20,000 people to the City, the show includes over 100 market stalls, food and drink outlets and a festival atmosphere highlighted by the entertainment stage hosting an eclectic range of bands and performers. The show is supported by a group of proactive volunteers, The Friends of Worcester Show, who work hard to help plan and shape the event each year. The 2021 show cost £30,373 and produced an income of £10,126, costing the City **£20,246**. The 2022 show cost £49,734, producing an income of £24,376 at an estimated net revenue cost of **£25,358**. Arrangements also see an indirect cost to the council, with over 700 hours of staff time used to support the event
- 3.5 **Worcester City Run (core funded)** is entering its ninth year. The event, managed and delivered by Events in the North, will this year see a full weekend programme of activities, including a 10k and a half marathon event, alongside a Junior run and Paula Radcliffe's Families on Track family fitness run at Worcester Racecourse. The event in 2021 saw over 3,000 participants taking part, accompanied by nearly 5000 spectators and a further 300 family members taking part in Families on Track. The event received over 7000 social media hits last year. The City contributes **£25,000** towards the costs of the events, with a total budget in excess of £75k.



- 3.6 **Light Festival** for the last three years, Severn Arts and The Arches Worcester have delivered Light Night Festivals, a presentation of interactive experiences across the City. The events are free of charge and provide a two-day programme of light-based events alongside street performances. The first event saw 5000 visitors to the city, this has since increased to over 15,000 last year and is expected to continue to increase. The Festival Social media campaign received over 300,000 hits, with over 45,000 people watching Light Night films on YouTube. Previous years have received funding from DCMS and Arts Council England and have also received contributions from the Council via Welcome Back and UKSPF grant programmes. Last year (2021/22) saw a contribution from the Council of **£4,893**. The festival programme is due to complete in February 2023, but the organisers are looking to build on the success of the project to establish the festival as an annual event for the future.
- 3.7 **Paint Festival** a street-art festival that began in September 2021, the event features street artists from across the country creating murals at various sites across the city. The festival is supported by a range of funders, including Arts Council, Worcester BID and the Elmley Foundation, costing the Council **£3,450** in its first year and with a revenue contribution of **£3,000** in 22/23.
- 3.8 **Worcester Mela** A voluntary sector team looking to create a 'Mela' in Worcester to celebrate south Asian culture and tradition. Covid restricted activity but provided a 'Voices' project to mark the stories of the original settlers to Worcester, and an Art Installation to mark the South Asian community affected by covid. The Mela also appeared at Worcester Show, with a marquee full of dance, crafts and food. The organisation has received **£12,500** from the City Council alongside further contributions from the Arts Council and the National Lottery.
- 3.9 **The Elgar Festival** held annually since 2018 in the weekend closest to the composers' birthday (2 June), the festival provides a range of concerts by the English Symphony Orchestra and across a range of venues, including the Cathedral, Huntingdon Hall, The Royal Porcelain Works and the Elgar School of Music amongst others. The festival offers a wide range of educational activities and community projects alongside internationally renowned musical performances to celebrate Worcester's famous musical son. The festival receives an annual community grant of **£5,000** from the City Council, and received an additional **£10,000** contribution in 2022.

4. **Funding**

- 4.1 All of these projects will be planning ongoing activity for the future and will be looking for contributions towards costs from the City Council. Sponsorship opportunities are currently being developed, particularly in relation to the Christmas

lights. Wider funding options are also under review with the opportunity to apply for external funding to support elements of other projects.

- 4.2 The £2.9m **UKSPF** funding also has a limited budget for the next two years to support events and activities, particularly in relation to bringing visitors into the city.

Breakdown of funding

Event	Core Funding	Other Council Funding	Indirect costs
Victorian Fayre	£53,000		1 full time member of staff covering all event activity, funded to March 2023 £50000. 50% of Town Centre Manager's time covering all event activity Circa £25,000
Christmas Lights/Switch-on	£35,000	£27,490 (UKSPF)	
Worcester Theatres	£110,196	-	-
Three Choirs Festival	£8000		
Worcester Show	£35000		700 hours of staff time (estimated at midpoint grade 5)- contribution circa £10108
Worcester City Run	£25000		
Light Festival		£20000	
Paint Festival		£3000	
Mela		£12500 (MD's budget)	
Elgar Festival		£15000 (Community grant and MD's budget)	
Total	£178,196	£71414	

5. Conclusion

- 5.1 Worcester's programme of event activity brings an audience of over 70,000 theatre goers to the city, with over 250,000 additional visitors attending events throughout a year-long calendar and securing over £1million in match funding. With an average spend of £52-£96 per day per visitor (Statista Research), these events are adding over £13,000,000 to the local economy for a cost of £250,000.
- 5.2 Whilst there is no doubt that these events make a significant contribution to the economic and community wellbeing of the city, for the City Council, these are non-statutory activities that if Members wish to continue to support and deliver in the future, will require the development of alternative and commercial revenue income streams that will both supplant current City Council revenue contributions and recover the significant staff costs that are required to support development and delivery of many of these events.
- 5.3 Officers are continuing to work proactively to secure new funding streams, including public sector grant income, private sector sponsorship and commercial revenue income and will bring recommendations to Members during 2023-24.

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Background Papers: None