

19 November, 2020

Bonfire and Fireworks events 2019 response to questions

Ward(s): St Mathews, Willenhall South, Bloxwich West, Brownhills

Portfolios: Clean and Green

1. Aim

- 1.1 To respond to questions raised at 20th February Overview and Scrutiny Committee prior to lockdown.

2. Recommendations

Committee to note the contents of the report

3. Report detail – know

- 3.1 At the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 20th February 2020 a number of questions were asked of officers below are the responses to these questions
- 3.2 Clarification on the numbers of staff in 2018 compared to 2019

Staffing numbers were similar in 2019 to 2018, (around 44 WMBC staff plus 64 external security staff for the Arboretum and 21-26 WMBC staff and 33-51 external security at other sites). Although there was the potential to reduce numbers due to the improved online ticketing system, staff numbers remained the same due to the need to maintain security. Advice was provided, that there may be problems on gates due to the use of cashless payments, Brexit (original date was 31/10/2019) and possible terrorist threats.

Staffing costs increased in 2019 as more staff claimed overtime than previous years, and fewer staff claimed TOIL. Staffing changes in 2019 meant fewer staff met the threshold for claiming TOIL. Only Senior Managers claimed TOIL in 2019, whereas in previous years more staff were employed in Parks and Open spaces to deliver these kind of events, and would claim TOIL.

- 3.3 A breakdown of staff costs

	2017	2018	2019
Staff Costs	9,376	7,289	13,241

3.4 Clarification on why costs had increased so dramatically for the reported years 2017, 2018 and 2019

	2017	2018	2019
Expenditure	-80,331	-114,986	-119,576
Income	69,235	105,022	75,987
Net position	-11,096	-9,954	-43,706

Cost between 2017 and 2018 increased by £34,655. This was due to considerable improvements in providing entertainment at the Arboretum and infrastructure such as trackway on soft ground, also there has been an increase in the cost of providing fireworks. Costs between 2018 and 2019 increased by £4,500. The majority of this was on staffing for reasons described in the first clarification above.

3.5 Clarification on the number of customers who were turned away due to a policy on cashless entry.

To ensure access to those who did not purchase tickets in advance, a box office was available on the entrances to enable card payments on the night of the events. Besides a group of teenagers who were refused entry after jumping the fencing, no other members of the public were turned away. Two teenagers at Holland Park were only able to pay by cash but were given an option of paying at the leisure centre or arranging for an adult to purchase on-line.

3.6 Information was also requested on the percentage of the total ticket cost that was taken by the provider as a booking fee for online transactions.

Following benchmarking against three suppliers, the decision was taken to go with the supplier offering the lowest fees on sales which was Seaty (6%). The other two suppliers' fees were 6.5% and 7%. For the public a 6% booking fee was 60p on a £10 sale and 45p on a £7.50 sale. Seaty also offered a payment platform, Stripe, that was in line with what the Council's own finance system uses.

3.7 Members expressed concerns about the lack of project documentation for events that were accessible to the Healthy Spaces team when they took over responsibility for the delivery of events.

Many of the Healthy Spaces Team were new in post when planning the Bonfire and Fireworks events, some information was available to them but the documentation from previous events was limited. New systems were also being developed such as cashless payments which proved very successful in reducing the amount of cash processing on the evening of the event.

3.8 Members requested a further breakdown of costs per site

Location	Holland Park	Willenhall Memorial Park	Walsall Arboretum	KGV	TOTAL
Date	Sat 26/10	Fri 01/11	Sat 02/11*	Tue 05/11*	
WEATHER	V poor	V poor	V poor	Good	
Expenditure	-18,796.78	-18,990.88	-61,291.28	-20,498.03	-119,576.97
Income tickets	2,429.00	7,888.00	29,882.50	24,550.00	
Other income	755.00	1,005.00	7,976.00	1,385.00	
Total Income	3,184.00	8,893.00	37,858.50	25,935.00	75,987.50
Net position	-15,612.78	-10,097.88	-23,432.78	5,436.97	-43,706.47

Location	Holland pk	Willenhall pk	Walsall Arboretum	KGV	Total
Site capacity	4,000	4,000	10,000	8,000	
% achieved	12%	37%	41%	57%	
Est. income if capacity achieved	£19,095	£18,816	£68,713	£37,100	
Total profit/ loss if capacity achieved	£298	-£175	£7,422	£16,602	

* Key dates closest to Bonfire night, more likely to have a higher turnout, and therefore higher income

Within the budget there is an income target of £10,000, therefore overall position is a £53,706.47 loss. It should be noted that in the previous two year the Arboretum made a small profit of £1,694 and £2,577.

4. **Financial information**

The cost of providing a safe and well run event is increasing annually, and there are high expectations from customers to provide other entertainment as well as the Fireworks. Ticket sales were particularly bad for the 2 events held before Bonfire weekend, and the poor weather before the Arboretum event did not help with Ticket sales for this event.

5. **Reducing Inequalities**

The events provide an opportunity for residents from all walks of life to attend a safe and well organised activity as part of the Council year.

6. Decide

As this report is in response to questions raised in the previous report an options proposal has not been provided.

7. Respond

Feedback from this report will be used to inform development and delivery of future council events.

8. Review

The Healthy Spaces events programme is monitored and reviewed, ensuring compliance with corporate priorities and the satisfaction of residents and stakeholders, future provision will be developed accordingly.

Background papers

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