

Cheshire East Council

Cabinet

Date of Meeting:	7 th November 2017
Report of:	Executive Director Place
Subject/Title:	Strategic Events
Portfolio Holder:	Cllr Don Stockton, Environment

1. Report Summary

- 1.1** The purpose of this paper is to present the Strategic Events Framework for consideration as being an important pillar in delivering the Council's strategic priority of 'Quality of Place'. Strategic events can have an important role in contributing to or achieving 'distinctiveness', creating and communicating the 'identity' of a place as part of place marketing, nurturing community engagement, supporting skills development and delivering wellbeing. The paper presents the Strategic Events Framework, the Council's priorities for strategic events and explains how the framework will be delivered.
- 1.2** The term 'strategic events' refers to events which have the potential to generate visitors, economic value, inward investment and place marketing benefits, will help to achieve council outcomes and will support or celebrate our local communities. Strategic events can operate on a number of different levels depending on the impact and reach they have, whether local, regional, national or international.
- 1.3** The Framework (appendix 1) sets out the council's priorities with regard to strategic events. It also sets out criteria and definitions required in order to distinguish the nature and relevant approach to each of three defined categories of strategic event. An approach to decision making is outlined in the Framework that will inform which events are supported and which are not. Cheshire East Council's goal for strategic events is to establish Cheshire East as a renowned event destination that attracts new visitors to the region and supports its Quality of Place, enabling the economy, communities and places of Cheshire East to benefit from the Council's approach to strategic events.
- 1.4** The Framework is designed to help achieve this through its adoption by Cheshire East Council. It will also help to guide the strategic approach of the Council's partners and stakeholders, national agencies, the voluntary sector, commissioners of public services and event organisations.

2 Recommendation

It is recommended that Cabinet:

1. Endorse the Strategic Events Framework for delivery from April 2018.
2. Agree to delegate decisions made within the Framework, to the Head of Rural and Cultural Economy in consultation with the Portfolio holder responsible for Culture and Visitor Economy at the time, in line with financial regulations.

3 Other options considered

- 3.1** Continue with the current ad-hoc approach to supporting strategic events.

4 Reasons for Recommendation

- 4.1** It has become clear over the last few years that the number of events and indeed the appetite for major events in Cheshire East has grown. Visitor numbers at many events have increased year on year, driving economic benefit, community and visitor engagement and profile for the area. A few Cheshire East events generate significant TV coverage and attract overnight stays. For example, the RHS Flower Show at Tatton Park has extensive BBC coverage and is estimated to be worth up to £4.78m. Stage 3 of the Tour of Britain 2016, which saw record crowds of 300,000 spectators in Cheshire East, had a net economic benefit direct to Cheshire East of £3.5m. 63% of spectators were from outside the area and 59% of spectators were inspired to cycle more often. 1.23 million viewers watched Cheshire East live on ITV4 during the Tour of Britain helping to promote a positive image of the Borough.
- 4.2** Events are identified within the Council's Visitor Economy Strategy (2016-2020) as an important driver. Marketing Cheshire has also identified major events as a key economic driver for Cheshire overall. Their 2011 study of 6 major events in Cheshire concluded that they attract 500,000 visitors to Cheshire each year, generating c£48m of visitor expenditure. It is estimated that this expenditure supports c730 jobs, not including employment associated with the operation of the events not directly dependent on visitor expenditure. (Marketing Cheshire/Amion Consulting 2011).
- 4.3** Events are also closely linked to the Council's Quality of Place agenda as they are recognised as being significant contributors to developing quality places. In February 2017 the Council adopted a Cultural Framework which sets out cultural priorities and mechanisms for support in the context of delivering on Quality of Place. There are clear links between Culture and strategic events with many events meeting the Council's Cultural priorities too.
- 4.4** Events and festivals can be positive economic and social drivers encouraging financial and social investment by a wide range of organisations and communities attracting sponsorship from private and public investors. Events

and festivals generate an array of social and economic impacts for Cheshire East including:

- Attracting visitors
- Enhancing a positive image
- Showcasing the cultural destination
- Developing community engagement, civic pride and aspiration
- Showing Cheshire East as a great place to live, work and visit
- Promoting increased business such as tourism and hospitality
- Providing learning and skills development opportunities

4.5 For these reasons a clear strategy for Strategic Events would improve the co-ordination of the Council's investment in and support of events.

4.6 The Framework for Strategic Events will enable appropriate arrangements to be in place that are 'fit for purpose', fair and targeted towards the outcomes sought. It will identify clear priorities for Strategic Events and would identify the Council's role in achieving these. The purpose of the framework would be to:

- Inform a cohesive approach across the Council to engage with the events sector to ensure the delivery of our outcomes.
- Develop a comprehensive understanding of the benefits of engaging with the events sector across all Council services.
- Facilitate closer links with the events sector to maximise opportunities for investment activity in Cheshire East.

4.7 The Council's priorities for Strategic Events will inform all instances where the Council will commission, contribute to, or directly deliver an event activity in order to deliver Quality of Place. The associated Framework will also help to identify opportunities for collaboration or leadership, which can be as important as direct support or delivery.

5 Background/Chronology

5.1 With a few notable exceptions, the current role of the Council in strategic events is to provide guidance and support to event organisers as well as promotion through visitor information channels. In addition, Cheshire East has an Event Safety Advisory Group (ESAG) and also provides a 'Safer Events Guidance for Event Organisers' document on its website. This group provides free of charge advice to ensure a co-ordinated approach to public safety.

5.2 Occasionally events will be organised and delivered directly by the Council when they fall within a specific programme of work, e.g. Cheshire East Reflects, or when the Council is a required partner, e.g. the Tour of Britain and the Olympic Torch Relay. This work has tended to be addressed on the basis of individual decisions, there currently being no managed programme for co-ordination or development of strategic events or budget specifically allocated for this purpose.

- 5.3** At times the Council may also commission events in order to address a specific, identified need or to address gaps in provision, for example ‘The Lost Carnival’ in 2016 or ‘Chalk it Up’, the International Pavement Art Competition in Crewe in 2017. Furthermore, the Council may provide a financial contribution to events which are deemed to have a strategic importance. However, other than the Cultural framework, which deals with the Council’s cultural priorities, there has not previously been a framework through which decisions to support activity may be taken.
- 5.4** Additionally, venues in Cheshire East, including Tatton Park, host many large public events. This aspect is often important in generating income to fund the sustainable management of an historic asset and such venues are often strategically of value to the rural and wider economy. The RHS Show is an example where it is of significant value to the local economy, has high profile and TV coverage, and is an important contributor to Tatton Park itself.
- 5.5** Realisation of the potential of strategic events will require capacity for research, support, bid development, sponsorship and project management. There is also a current demand for small scale intervention to support, sustain and nurture some existing events and to realise their potential for growth. Often such events already make a valuable contribution locally and may be important to the visitor economy, image/profile and community outcomes as signature events. It is important to be able to differentiate those events with a ‘strategic’ value or potential and those that are and will remain at a community level in order to determine the appropriate response.
- 5.6** Events are classed as ‘strategic events’ where they make a significant contribution to the profile, image and brand awareness of the Borough; make a significant economic contribution, are major events in scale or make a significant contribution to a strategic objective of the Council. This could still include some events that are delivered by the community and/or generated locally and will include some events that start at a modest level but have the potential for growth and development. **The framework identifies approaches to three categories of strategic event:**
- **Major events:** these are events defined by their scale & appeal to attract & influence large scale regional, national & international audiences, extensive media coverage and an ability to deliver economic impact & significant visitor numbers. They can have a positive impact in influencing specific market segments & in changing attitudes & behaviours. These events are not “owned” by the Council and may have to choose Cheshire East in the face of national and international competition. Major events capture the imagination of people around the world, while research has shown that they can provide significant economic benefits and improve the international reputation and profile of the host. There is also growing recognition that major events have the power to inspire and engage diverse individuals and communities and to thereby enhance social, environmental and cultural wellbeing, including an enhanced sense of place.

- **Signature events:** these events can also have a strong regional, national or international dimension but unlike the category of major events they are recurring. They are also either unique to Cheshire East or are distinctively Cheshire, and reflect our culture, traditions and values. They enhance the image and cultural identity of Cheshire East and provide a high quality experience for visitors. Successful Signature Events continuously re-invigorate and replenish their audiences.
- **Growth events:** these are smaller events, often new or with an untapped growth potential that is regional, local or sector led and which demonstrate the ambition and potential to evolve and grow to become Major or Signature Events. These will be considered for support. An important dimension of this 'added value investment' is in creating and nurturing home grown events.

- 5.7** The Framework sets out the council's priorities with regard to strategic events. It also sets out criteria and definitions required in order to distinguish the nature and relevant approach to each category and the events that might be supported. These are included in appendix 'A' of the Framework document (appendix 1). The decision framework takes account of these priorities and appendix 'B' of the Framework document (appendix 1) will inform which events are supported and which are not.
- 5.8** The Council's priorities for Strategic Events will inform all instances where the Council will commission, contribute to, or directly deliver an event activity in order to deliver Quality of Place. It will also help to identify opportunities for collaboration or leadership, which can be as important as direct support or delivery.
- 5.9** There may however be circumstances where the Council would wish to invest in strategic events and the Framework will help to identify under what circumstances this would take place and give guidance as to what level of subvention may be appropriate. Investment may be financial or it may also include such things as waiving of venue hire costs or support with marketing.
- 5.10** The Framework also recognises the importance of partnership arrangements in delivery of strategic events, such as host venues, town and parish councils, community and business partners or the emergency services. It will also provide guidance on the Council's priorities to its partners should events be commissioned or supported through them.
- 5.11** It is inherent in this approach that resources would be set at a level commensurate with achieving the strategic priorities adopted. Therefore the Framework will help to inform which events are supported and which are not as well as ensuring that resources are most effectively used. The approach to evaluation criteria is set out in appendix 'B' of the Framework document (appendix 1).

6. Wards Affected and Local Ward Members

All Wards

7. Implications of Recommendation

7.1 Policy Implications

The Framework is in line with the Visitor Economy Strategy, Quality of Place agenda and contributes to all Corporate Plan outcomes, but particularly contributes to outcomes 1,2 and 5. The Strategic Events Framework can be read as complementary to the council's Cultural framework.

7.2 Legal Implications

Contracts and partnership arrangements resulting from implementation of the Framework will be in line with the Council's regulations. Dependant upon the approach adopted for any supported event, there will be a need for input from Legal services in drafting or validating contracts, partnership agreements or sponsorship agreements.

7.3 Financial Implications

Adoption of the framework does not in itself have direct financial implications. The Framework could be implemented within current budgets, which include Place Directorate budgets for individual events funded through reserves such as the Tour of Britain and RHS Flower show, Communications budgets for the Cheshire and Nantwich Shows, or potentially some Community grants. However, this approach may necessitate some budgets to be realigned to facilitate more strategic decision making. Should the Council's ambition for strategic events fall beyond existing budgets, necessary provision for growth would have to be made through the medium term financial strategy. Application of the framework may present some opportunities to lever in external funding and sponsorship or may facilitate collaborative pooling of budget contributions from a number of commissioners or partners. Contracts and partnership arrangements resulting from implementation will be in line with the Council's financial and procurement regulations.

7.4 Equality Implications

The Framework could provide opportunities to address inequalities and the type of events to be supported would consider the needs of our communities. The framework would therefore include a requirement to undertake an Equality Impact Assessment as part of the criteria for direct support.

7.5 Rural Community Implications

The Framework provides opportunities to benefit the rural economy, helping to deliver aspects of the Council's Visitor Economy strategy to support events and develop a distinctive Rural tourism offer. The value of events in engaging communities, as seen during the Tour of Britain in 2016, can have benefits to community development in rural areas.

7.6 Human Resources Implications

Should the Council endorse this approach and adopt a framework for Strategic Events, there may be the need at some point to consider the staffing capacity to deliver the council's ambition for strategic events. This could be considered initially as part of a review of how events are managed across the Council, but should additional resource be required to meet the council's ambitions a business case would be developed at the time.

7.7 Public Health Implications

The Framework gives opportunities to reduce health inequalities & improve wellbeing if events are identified that support health outcomes.

7.8 Implications for Children and Young People

Events can provide opportunities for children and young people to access skills development. The Framework would provide an opportunity to assess support for the types of events that could provide additional opportunities for young people to volunteer, to take part in workshops, to perform or otherwise develop and showcase their skills.

8. Risk Management

Without strategic consideration of events the Council risks not being able to realise the opportunities to influence the direct economic benefits and other contributions of strategic events, to lose the true potential of home grown events or to fail to attract significant regional or national events. While having the potential to generate significant benefits to Cheshire East and its residents, any interventions inevitably carry their own financial and reputational risks, including financial dependency. Risks can be mitigated by development of a good business case, consideration of sustainability and provision of sufficient capacity and expertise to support sponsorship development and funding bids.

9. Access to Information/Bibliography

Background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting the report writer.

10. Contact Information

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