

Report title	Town Centre Events
Report author	Azra Mukadam -Town Centre & Events Manager
Department	Economic Development and Planning Policy
Exempt?	No
Exemption type	Not applicable
Reasons for exemption	There are no specific legal implications associated with this report. Actions which flow from the measures referred to in the body of the report may require legal advice which will be provided when they are progressed.

Purpose of report:

To resolve :
The release of the provision set aside in the 2023/24 Economic Development Budget to support Town centre events.

Synopsis of report:
This report provides further detail on the delivery method and costs associated with events for the three town centres in the borough supported by the release of the £15,000 provision set aside in the 2023/24 Budget.

Recommendation(s):

- i) Committee approves the business case (see Appendix 1) for the release of the growth budget to support town centre events in 2023/24 financial period.
- ii) Committee approves the release of £15,000 provision set aside in the General Fund Revenue Budget and Business Plan for this purpose.

1. Context and background

- 1.1. One of the six priorities in the Runnymede Economic Development Strategy for 2022 to 2026 is “Developing the vitality and vibrancy of our town centres and growing the tourism and leisure economy”.
- 1.2. Drawing from previous reports and feasibility studies carried out over the last two years, there is key evidence that suggests that businesses in the town centres are being significantly impacted by a lack of footfall to the town centres.
- 1.3. The reports demonstrate evidence that an increase in footfall and dwell time through improvements to the vitality and vibrancy of the town centres benefits businesses within the immediate vicinity.

- 1.4. Evidence from the following feasibility studies and resident and business surveys suggests that a calendar of regular events and markets throughout the year will benefit the businesses and the wider community: (documents provided on request)
- Retail and Main Town Centre Uses Study (2022)
 - Business Survey on Markets & Events (2021)
 - Chertsey Masterplan Review (2022)
 - Visitor Economy Report (2022)
- 1.5. To date, ad hoc external funding sources (such as Welcome Back Funding) and a one-off budget to support the Jubilee have been used to put on events in the Borough's centres including several very successful events which have attracted large numbers of people to our towns.
- 1.6. However, these sources of funding cannot be guaranteed year on year, and there is currently no baseline budget within the economic development team to assist with planning and organising a regular calendar of events for our town centres.
- 1.7. Money has been allocated in RBC's Shared Prosperity Fund investment plan to support events, but due to the funding profile for SPF, this is for 2024/25 only. The Town Centre Manager (TCM) is working hard to develop town teams in the three town centres and is engaging with our larger retailers/town centre businesses regarding organising and sponsoring events.
- 1.8. Until a secure sponsorship revenue stream is established to enable a planned calendar of activities to be provided, an upfront budget is required. Delivery of a regular calendar of successful events over the next few years should help demonstrate to local businesses the benefits for the town centres and their own businesses and encourage future sponsorship.
- 1.9. Although the TCM's immediate priority for 2023/24 is to focus on developing an events calendar in the Borough's three town centres, a small additional amount of funding is requested for 2024/25 to help support local communities to put on events in their local centres.
- 1.10. The current Economic Development team budget includes funding to support the delivery of other priorities within the EDS. This additional growth request has been made as various consultation exercises undertaken over the last year (as detailed above) have identified a real need for additional support for our town centres, and over the next year there is no identified source of grant funding available to support this activity.

2. Town Centre Events

- 2.1 Evidence from the following feasibility studies and resident and business surveys suggests that a calendar of regular events and markets throughout the year will benefit the businesses and the wider community (refer to point 1.4).
- 2.2 Consideration for regular events for the three towns could potentially be presented as per the table below:

Towns	Current activities	Potential additional events
Addlestone	Christmas (Addlestone ONE)	Summer event & Christmas Crafts market
Chertsey	Goose Fayre, Black Cherry Fayre	May Day event
Egham	Markets, Christmas, Magna Carta	Street Food, Freshers event

2.3 Currently, the council only financially supports the Addlestone ONE event, which is funded by service charge fees. All other towns centres have localised events that are run by volunteers and charity groups from the town communities.

3. Policy framework implications

3.1 Support for Town Centre Events aligns with priority three of the Economic Development Strategy 2022-2026 which is “developing the vitality and vibrancy of our town centres and growing the tourism and leisure economy by providing a wider range of shopping experiences to the community”. Specifically, the aim of the town centre events is aimed at encouraging visitors to the town centres to increase dwell time and spending locally.

3.2 Aligned with the Health & Wellbeing Strategy, this item considers one of the Healthy Communities objectives: “for all residents to be able to engage and participate in their community, and access services, facilities, amenities, leisure, and recreational opportunities locally, which in turn reduces loneliness and isolation”.

4 Resource implications

4.1 The 2023/24 budget, approved by Full Council in February 2023, included a provision of £30,000 for town centre events, subject to a future committee report, including the submission of a full business case for member approval. Due to the passing of time, only £15,000 is now required in the current year which matches the future annual commitment being requested. This business case is set out in Appendix 1.

4.2 If Members are content with the detail presented in the report and business case, and the costs presented are within the amount provided for in the growth provision, the Committee can provide their approval to proceed and for the budget provision to be released.

5. Legal implications

5.1 There are no specific legal implications associated with this report. Actions which flow from the measures referred to in the body of the report may require legal advice which will be provided when they are progressed.

6. Equality implications

6.1 An equalities impact assessment was completed for the Economic Development Strategy in April 2022. This included an assessment of the work covered by the Town Centre activities that encourage the vibrancy and vitality of the town.

7. Environmental/Sustainability/Biodiversity implications

7.1 In line with some of the key corporate objectives, town events will promote and support a greener environment and encourage a circular economy (a concept advocated by the Council's Climate Change Strategy).

7.2 The town centre events budget will facilitate changes to town centres which would encourage localised events that people can cycle or walk to. This is in line with the 20-minute neighbourhood concept which is supported by the Council's Climate Change Strategy, by bringing essential services within easy reach of local communities by walking, cycling and public transport.

8. Background papers (provided on request)

Retail and Main Town Centre Uses Study (2022)

Business Survey on Markets & Events (2021)

Chertsey Masterplan Review (2022)

Visitor Economy Report (2022)

9. Appendices

Business Case (2023)