

**ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO COMMISSIONERS**

<b>1.</b>	<b>Meeting:</b>	<b>Commissioner Kenny's Meeting</b>
<b>2.</b>	<b>Date:</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> May 2015</b>
<b>3.</b>	<b>Title:</b>	<b>Proposed Changes to Town Centre Events Programme – Summer 2015</b>
<b>4.</b>	<b>Directorate:</b>	<b>Resources and Transformation</b>

**5. Summary**

**Proposal to change the format of the town centre summer events programme.**

**6. Recommendations**

**That approval to replace Rotherham by the Sea with a five week programme of summer holiday activities across the town centre is granted.**

## **7. Proposals and Details**

### **7.1 Rotherham by the Sea**

Traditionally there has been one Council organised event in the town centre during the school summer holidays – Rotherham by the Sea. The event has been running for the last 12 years and consists of transforming All Saints' Square into a beach for the week during the school summer holidays. Daily entertainment is provided by professional entertainers working to various theme days.

It started out as a two-week event but has been a one-week event since 2005, with an exception of 2014 when Members agreed to extend to two weeks for one year only following a 406 signature petition. The additional costs were covered from the Leader's special projects fund.

The event attracts around 2,000 attendees over the week, attracting a core group of visitors each day. The nature of the event puts increasing pressure on both Council staff and the Police to supervise the area.

Businesses in the immediate vicinity of the Square report additional trading during the week. However, businesses in other parts of the town have said that it has zero effect on their trading.

### **7.2 Vintage Hop**

Following the wish expressed by members of Rotherham Voice to hold a vintage-style event as part of the 2014 Christmas events programme, the Events Team worked with volunteers from local businesses to develop the concept. Over 2,000 people attended the event on Saturday, 29<sup>th</sup> November, 2014. Feedback from both town centre businesses and members of the public was that the Vintage Hop was "amazing". Many customers commented on the positive atmosphere in the town, and people from out of the area expressed a wish for something similar in their own locality. Feedback from businesses was positive, with many reporting a rise in footfall and sales.

This event was deemed as the most successful event of the year in terms of attracting new customers and spending in the town. It has been agreed through Rotherham Voice to repeat the event in 2015 on an even larger scale, but to bring it forward into the summer (proposed 11<sup>th</sup> July, 2015) to reduce the risk of adverse weather and to enable further attractions, e.g. tea dance, jive lessons, etc., to be part of the event.

### **7.3 Proposal**

The Rotherham by the Sea event has run successfully for many years but, given the success of other styles of events which have been tried in the town, it is an opportune time to review the summer events schedule. It is proposed to replace this event with a different activity for one day each week during the school summer holidays. This would be over a period of five weeks, avoiding the August Bank Holiday week when many potential visitors are on holiday. A wide variety of activities could include (subject to availability) such as circus skills workshops; street theatre shows; laser quest; space hopper Grand National and opportunities to view/hold birds of prey, culminating in an interactive "school disco" party during the last week, including action dance songs and music that have proved popular during Rotherham by the Sea. In addition Young People's Services and various community associations could be involved to provide additionality to the events.

## 8. Finance

The current budget for town centre events is £32,024. Rent and rates for a storage unit for event equipment and relevant PRS/PPL licences (£5,000) reduces the available spend on events to £27,024. This budget has traditionally been split between the following core events:

Easter Event	£1,500
Armed Forces Day	£1,000
Rotherham by the Sea	£7,400
2 Minute Silence	£100
Christmas Marketing Campaign	£3,000
Christmas Lights Switch On Event	£4,000
3 x December Christmas Events	£10,000

Moving the Vintage Hop event and its funding to the summer will effectively reduce the available Christmas events budget. Town centre businesses place a great deal of importance on the December trading period and events help to increase footfall across the town. Any reduction in the Christmas events programme could have a detrimental effect on potential trading figures.

There is relatively little support from the businesses for Rotherham by the Sea, the staging cost of which for one week is £7,400.

It is, therefore, recommended that Rotherham by the Sea is removed from this year's events programme and the funding is re-allocated as follows:

£4,000 for a Christmas event
£3,400 for a summer holiday programme of activities as outlined in 7.3.

## 9. Risks and Uncertainties

A decision to end Rotherham by the Sea in its current form will impact on past visitors. However, the proposed remodelling of this kind of event and extension of other successful events in the town centre will ensure a vibrant and varied events schedule.

## 10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

The events programme contributes to Priority 1 of the Corporate Plan. The events and entertainment programme is a key driver of regenerating a town and helps to showcase the town and its wider offer to visitors.

## 11. Background Papers and Consultation

Consultation has been undertaken with Members with 16 responses being received, in the main supporting the proposal.

The views of the original petition organiser for Rotherham by the Sea have also been sought and she did say that if the proposal goes ahead some people will be disappointed. However, she did acknowledge that there would be no harm in trying something different which would appeal to many different age groups rather than just younger children.

Town centre businesses were consulted regarding the benefits or otherwise of Rotherham by the Sea at the Rotherham Voice meeting on 4<sup>th</sup> February, 2015, and it was agreed that a survey would be circulated to the retailers to ascertain any benefits and to inform a decision

about the potential relocation of the budget to other events. The closing date for the survey was 3<sup>rd</sup> April, 2015. Only 11 responses out of 450 were received. All respondees said that the event did not increase footfall and only one respondee said the event increased their sales. 5 businesses said that Rotherham by the Sea had the least benefit to their business.

Should the revised summer holiday events programme be approved, it is proposed that we evaluate the success or otherwise of this at the end of the summer and, if deemed unsuccessful, we could consider the reinstatement of Rotherham by the Sea for 2016 subject to available funding.

**Contact Name:** *Marie Hayes, Events Manager, Ext. 55501 or e-mail marie.hayes@rotherham.gov.uk*