

# Overview and Scrutiny Committee



*St Edmundsbury*  
BOROUGH COUNCIL

<b>Title of Report:</b>	<b>Christmas Fayre Review</b>	
<b>Report No:</b>	<b>OAS/SE/15/016</b>	
<b>Report to and dates:</b>	<b>Overview and Scrutiny Committee</b>	10 June 2015
		11 November 2015
	<b>Cabinet</b>	8 December 2015
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<b>Purpose of report:</b>	<p>This report summarises the review of the Bury St Edmunds Christmas Fayre and presents a draft operational plan for taking forward the recommendations from the Christmas Fayre Task and Finish Group.</p>	
<b>Recommendation:</b>	<p><b>The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is invited to <u>recommend</u> the Christmas Fayre review report and the supporting operational plan to Cabinet.</b></p>	

<p><b>Key Decision:</b></p> <p><i>(Check the appropriate box and delete all those that <b>do not</b> apply.)</i></p>	<p><i>Is this a Key Decision and, if so, under which definition?</i></p> <p>Yes, it is a Key Decision - <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>No, it is not a Key Decision - <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>(a) A key decision means an executive decision which, pending any further guidance from the Secretary of State, is likely to:</p> <p>(i) be significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area in the Borough/District.</p>
<p><b>Consultation:</b></p>	<p>As part of the review, the Task and Finish Group completed the following consultation and engagement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Online public survey</li> <li>- Workshop for Town Centre businesses</li> <li>- Meetings and telephone conversations with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Emergency services</li> <li>o OurBuryStEdmunds and arc management</li> <li>o Bury St Edmunds Tourism Group</li> <li>o Christmas Fayre venues</li> <li>o Council operational services</li> <li>o Council support services</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>Alternative option(s) for the Christmas Fayre:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue with the Christmas Fayre in the current format.</li> <li>• Complete an annual review of the Christmas Fayre as part of budget setting.</li> <li>• Run the Christmas Fayre as a commercial event</li> <li>• Establish an arms-length vehicle to run the Fayre and other events across West Suffolk.</li> <li>• End the Council's involvement with the Fayre and explore future options for running the Fayre with OurBuryStEdmunds or the emerging Destination Management Organisation.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Implications:</b></p>	
<p><i>Are there any <b>financial</b> implications? If yes, please give details</i></p>	<p>Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commitment to provide the Christmas Fayre for the remainder of the current political administration.</li> <li>• The Christmas Fayre should be managed as a cost-neutral event by the Council.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Are there any <b>staffing</b> implications? If yes, please give details</i></p>	<p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>

Are there any <b>ICT</b> implications? If yes, please give details		Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Are there any <b>legal and/or policy</b> implications? If yes, please give details		Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Are there any <b>equality</b> implications? If yes, please give details		Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Risk/opportunity assessment:</b>		<i>(potential hazards or opportunities affecting corporate, service or project objectives)</i>	
<b>Risk area</b>	<b>Inherent level of risk</b> (before controls)	<b>Controls</b>	<b>Residual risk</b> (after controls)
No business continuity procedures in place for the event planning and management.	Medium	Christmas Fayre project group to be set up. Key staff to take on clearly defined responsibilities for the Christmas Fayre.	Low
Event is not run as cost neutral by the Council	Medium	Commercial Manager to explore additional income generation.	Low
<b>Wards affected:</b>		All Bury St Edmunds wards	
<b>Background papers:</b> <i>(all background papers are to be published on the website and a link included)</i>		10 June 2015 Overview and Scrutiny Committee - <a href="#">OAS/SE/15/007</a>	
<b>Documents attached:</b>		<b>Appendix A</b> - Analysis of Christmas Fayre stalls <b>Appendix B</b> - Christmas Fayre stakeholders and review reporting structure <b>Appendix C</b> - Christmas Fayre impact survey <b>Appendix D</b> - Five year operational plan	

## **1. Background to the review of the Christmas Fayre**

1.1 On 10 June 2015, the St Edmundsbury Overview and Scrutiny Committee resolved to establish a Task and Finish Group to complete a review of the Bury St Edmunds Christmas Fayre and to adopt a five-year operational plan for the event. The prompt for the review came from the Council's acknowledgment that the Christmas Fayre had grown to be a nationally recognised event and that a review of the current principles and arrangements was therefore opportune.

1.2 The Task and Finish Group included six Members from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee along with three officers in support; the Markets Development Officer, Health and Safety Manager and a Policy Business Partner. The following Members were appointed to contribute to the Christmas Fayre Task and Finish Group:

- Cllr Terry Buckle, Moreton Hall Ward
- Cllr Patrick Chung, Southgate Ward
- Cllr Jeremy Farthing, Hundon Ward
- Cllr Richard Rout, Westgate Ward
- Cllr Clive Springett, Minden Ward
- Cllr Frank Warby, Moreton Hall Ward

1.3 The Task and Finish Group met to discuss the planned approach to the review and to consider the specific areas to be explored. It was agreed that the review would explore the following areas of the Christmas Fayre:

- Finance
- Governance
- Event consultation/focus group
- Operational issues

1.4 It is proposed that the findings from this report and the attached operational plan should be used to influence the planning and delivery of the 2016 Christmas Fayre. The Markets Development Officer should use this report and an assessment of Christmas markets from National Association of British Markets Authorities (NABMA) when advising on Christmas events in Brandon, Haverhill, Mildenhall, Newmarket and other West Suffolk towns and villages.

## **2. Bury St Edmunds Christmas Fayre – current position**

This section covers:

- Background to the Fayre
- An event for the community
- Statistics
- Venues and stalls
- Timings
- Health and safety
- Marketing
- Entertainment
- Finance
- Christmas Fayre Working Group
- Traffic Management and car parks

## ***Background to the Fayre***

- 2.1 The first Bury St Edmunds Christmas Fayre (the Fayre) took place in 2004 and was organised by St Edmundsbury Borough Council using a £10,000 grant from Bury St Edmunds Town Council. The Fayre has grown significantly over the eleven years that it has been running and is almost certainly the largest event that St Edmundsbury Borough Council (the Council) delivers.
- 2.2 The Fayre has developed from a small event with a small amount of resource to one that attracts approximately 120,000 visitors to Bury St Edmunds over its four days. The Fayre is normally held over the last weekend in November, beginning on the Thursday evening (promoted for 'locals' to attend) and ending on the Sunday afternoon. In 2014 the Fayre offered the following to visitors:
- Food and drinks stalls
  - Craft market
  - Weekly provisions market
  - Entertainment from a stage on Angel Hill and a stage in Charter Square
  - Funfair
  - Santa's Grotto
  - Fireworks display on the Thursday evening
- 2.3 The Fayre is organised and funded by the Council and is managed as an event for the local community and visitors to Bury St Edmunds, with some stakeholders giving their support on a voluntary or not-for-profit basis. The Markets Development Officer co-ordinates the event with varying levels of support from several Council departments.
- 2.4 The Fayre attracts visitors from across the country and was recently assessed by the NABMA<sup>1</sup>. The NABMA report, released in October 2015, stated that the Bury St Edmunds Christmas Fayre is in the top dozen (it is estimated that there are over 100 markets nationally) of UK Christmas markets in terms of its size and economic contribution. The Fayre has been awarded several regional and national awards, which have included East of England Tourism Best Large Event, and National Association of British Market Authorities Best Speciality Market.
- 2.5 The Markets Development Officer has also been invited to attend national conferences to talk about the Fayre, how it has developed, how it incorporates the local community and how it contributes to the local economy.

## ***An event for the community***

- 2.6 As part of the community focus for the Fayre, local artists, schools and choirs are invited to perform on two stages that are hired by the Council. Many of the schools, choirs and bands that perform receive a donation for their time and expenses (see para 2.25 below).

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.nabma.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Christmas-Markets-ROI-Team-Report.pdf>

2.7 The opening evening of the Fayre is promoted for 'locals' to attend. A fireworks display, children's parade and discounted funfair rides are provided as an incentive for local communities to attend the opening evening. Local churches also take part in the Fayre by opening for teas, coffees and their self-managed stalls.

2.8 In 2012, the St Edmundsbury Overview & Scrutiny (O&S) Committee completed a review<sup>2</sup> of the Fayre and recommended that it remain as an event for the community. The following vision statement was adopted for the future of the Fayre:

*"The Christmas Fayre is a fun, festive and inclusive event for all ages designed to attract visitors, promote the area and have a positive effect on local people, and has a huge economic impact on businesses and the local area; spread throughout the town, the local community should continue to be a great part of its success"*

### **Statistics**

2.9 The Fayre attracts approximately 120,000 visitors from all over the country. In 2014, it was estimated that 45% of visitors to the Fayre travelled from over 25 miles away. The 2014 Fayre had the highest footfall figures yet:

- The arc shopping centre (Saturday) was up 15% on the 2013 Fayre
- Abbeygate Street (Sunday) up 20% on the 2013 Fayre
- Athenaeum up 8% on 2013 Fayre (30,000 to 42,000 over last 7 years)

### **Venues and stalls**

2.10 There are approximately 300 Fayre stalls across ten different Bury St Edmunds venues:

- |                           |                       |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|
| - Angel Hill <sup>3</sup> | - Cathedral           |
| - Abbey Gardens           | - Buttermarket        |
| - The apex                | - Charter Square      |
| - Athenaeum               | - Moyse's Hall Museum |
| - Hatter Street           | - Cathedral Courtyard |

2.11 The list of market stalls for the 2015 Fayre has been analysed based on the description of the products that they sell. For example a stall that sells hot food would be assigned the *Café/Takeaway* category under the high-level 'foods' group. The categories and groups are listed in the table below.

2.12 Out of the four high-level 'stall type' categories the majority of traders have been categorised as selling *Household Goods* (110 stalls), followed closely by *Foods*

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<sup>2</sup> [Overview & Scrutiny review report](#)

<sup>3</sup> An external market provider (Market Square Group for the last seven years) manages half of Angel Hill at the Fayre. The external provider organises the stall bookings, management, and security for this area of the Fayre. The Markets Development Officer liaises with the external market provider to ensure the plan for this area of the Fayre is in keeping with the rest of the Fayre.

(100 stalls). *Information* stalls are the least common type of stalls, with only nine present at the event.

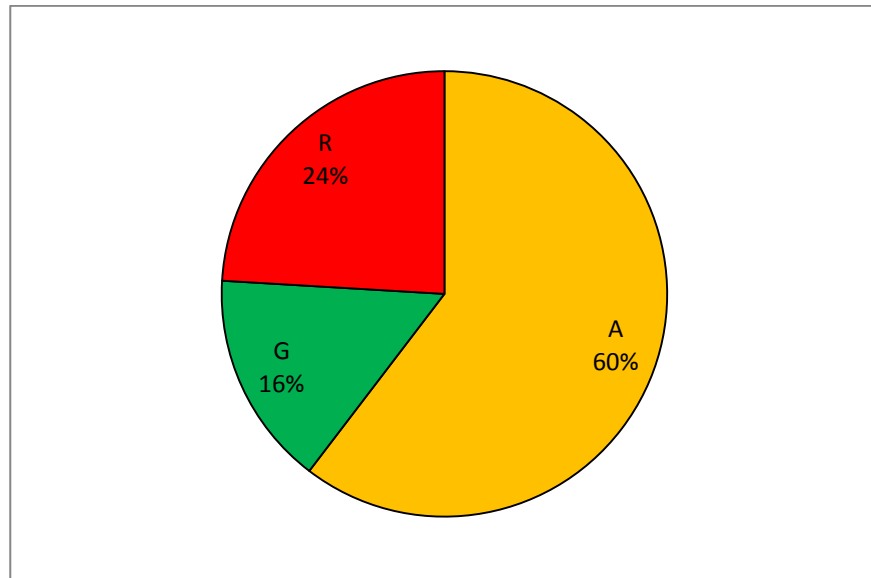
2.13 The Council wants to ensure that the Fayre has an appropriate mix of stalls that meet the needs of the customer and offers a diverse retail offer. The Markets Development Officer has the responsibility of balancing the different types of market stall to suit the demographic and shopping behaviour of visitors to the Fayre. This allows the Markets Development Officer the flexibility to change the market offer due to changing customer preferences or new products on the marketplace. However, the feedback from a Fayre Visitor Survey could be used to gauge perceptions on the stalls with the aim of assisting any changes to the 'tenant mix' for the next Fayre.

<b>Stall Type</b>	<b>Number of Stalls</b>	<b>% of Total</b>
<b>Household Goods</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>36.91%</b>
Arts, Crafts & Gifts	77	25.84%
Household Goods and Textiles	15	5.03%
Christmas Goods	12	4.03%
Plants	4	1.34%
Second Hand/Bric a Brac/Vintage	2	0.67%
<b>Foods</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>33.56%</b>
Groceries	30	10.07%
Confectionery	24	8.05%
Café/Takeaway	21	7.05%
Alcoholic	17	5.70%
Bakery	5	1.68%
Butcher	3	1.01%
<b>Personal Goods</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>26.51%</b>
Fashionwear	28	9.40%
Jewellery, watches and accessories	22	7.38%
Children's Goods and Products	21	7.05%
Health & Beauty	5	1.68%
Books, Magazines & Stationery	2	0.67%
Entertainment/Communications	1	0.34%
<b>Information</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>3.02%</b>
Charity	5	1.68%
Promotional	4	1.34%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>298</b>	<b>100%</b>

2.14 The list of stalls have also been analysed based on their location in the UK. A Red, Amber, Green classification has been allocated to the stalls based on the postcode<sup>4</sup> of the registered trader.

<sup>4</sup> It should be noted that the Red, Amber, Green classification does not include the 40 stalls on Angel Hill that are booked and provided by the external market provider (Market Square Group for the last seven years). The Council does not hold location data for these 40 stalls and it is assumed that the majority come to the Fayre from outside of the East of England.

- **Green** classification was given to stalls with registered addresses located within the boundaries of the West Suffolk councils.
- **Amber** classification was given to stalls with addresses in the east of England,
- **Red** classification was given to stalls registered elsewhere in the UK, or outside the UK.



2.15 It is encouraging, in terms of regional economic benefit, that 76% of the Fayre stalls that are managed by the Council are based in the east of England. Further analysis of the Fayre stalls is attached at **Appendix A**.

2.16 During 2015, the Council implemented an online booking and payment system for the booking of stalls and visitor coaches. The new online system was well received, with the majority of bookings being completed online, and has made the administration of the event more efficient.

2.17 The weekly provisions market is on the Bury St Edmunds Cornhill/Buttermarket site for the Friday, Saturday and Sunday of the Fayre. Issues were raised at the 2014 Fayre regarding the market being packed away before the Fayre had finished each day. The Health and Safety Manager advised that this was a safety issue and that the weekly provisions market stalls would not be allowed to pack up until the Fayre had closed or footfall had significantly reduced.

### **Timings**

2.18 The timings for the Fayre have been regularly reviewed and as a result, the opening hours on the Friday and Saturday have been extended to 8pm to support the higher volume of visitors to the Fayre and to maximise the income potential for traders and retailers. The current opening times for the Fayre are:

- Thursday 4pm – 8pm
- Friday and Saturday - 10am – 8pm
- Sunday- 10am – 5pm



2.19 Various weekends have previously been used for the Fayre and this created confusion and clashes with local events and with Christmas markets in other areas of the country. To avoid further confusion it has been previously agreed by the Christmas Fayre Working Group (see para 2.35) to set the date for the Fayre as the last weekend in November.

### ***Health and Safety***

2.20 As the Fayre has developed over the years, the health and safety aspect has become increasingly important. The Council's Health and Safety Manager is involved with the event planning from an early stage and liaises regularly with the emergency services. The event safety plan is taken to the Suffolk Event Advisory Group for discussion and approval.

2.21 In recent years, additional CCTV has been installed at the Fayre, crowd management systems put in place and both the Health and Safety Manager and the Markets Development Officer have attended courses in event and crowd management.

2.22 Crowd flow through specified control zones at the Fayre is monitored at all times by CCTV and zone leaders. At the 2014 Fayre, none of the zones exceeded 50% of their capacity profile. However, both Abbeygate Street and the Abbey Gate have been identified as potentially high risk areas due to restricted crowd control (additional crowd control measures have been implemented). Taking into account crowd safety implications, the footprint of the event and the potential for additional visitors at peak times, the current attendance figures are considered appropriate.

### ***Marketing***

2.23 The Fayre has a dedicated website for marketing the event. During 2014, the website had 43,000 hits. The Council also manages a Christmas Fayre Facebook page with over 5,000 followers. In addition to this, the Council prints 25,000 programmes that are sent out to other tourist offices and given out throughout the Fayre from Tourist Information Points across Bury St Edmunds.

2.24 The Fayre is advertised locally in the Bury Free Press and East Anglian Daily Times. OurBuryStEdmunds also advertises the town nationally for the Christmas period and the Fayre buys into these specific campaigns. The Markets Development Officer also promotes the Fayre at events such as 'Excursions' which is the largest coach operator show in the country.

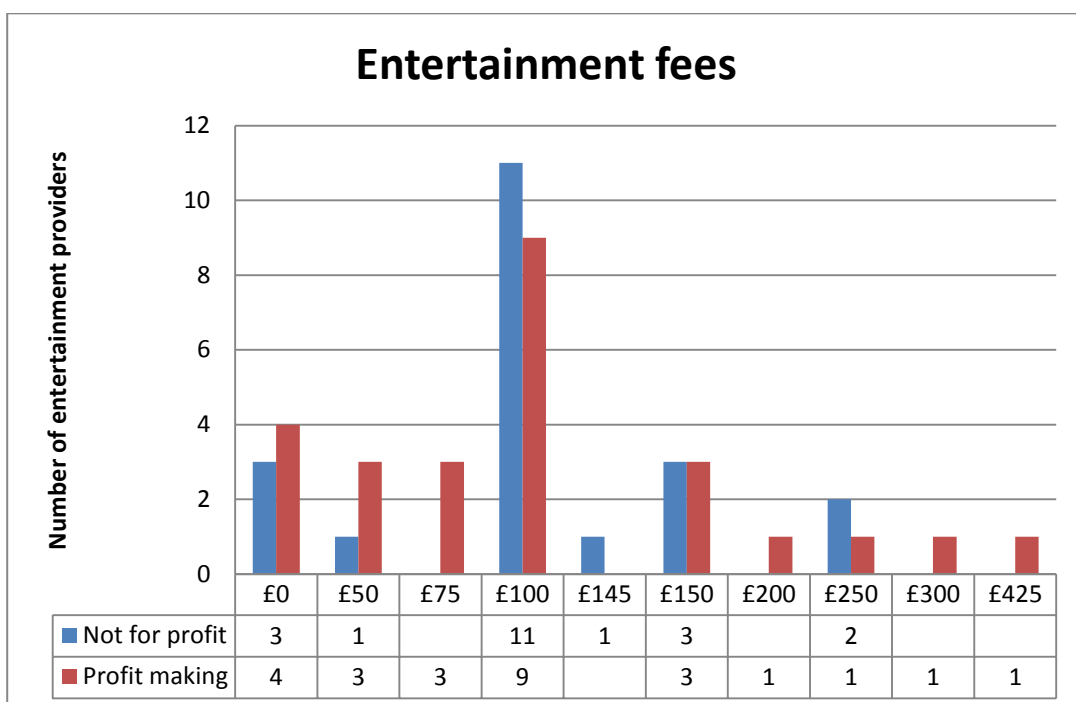
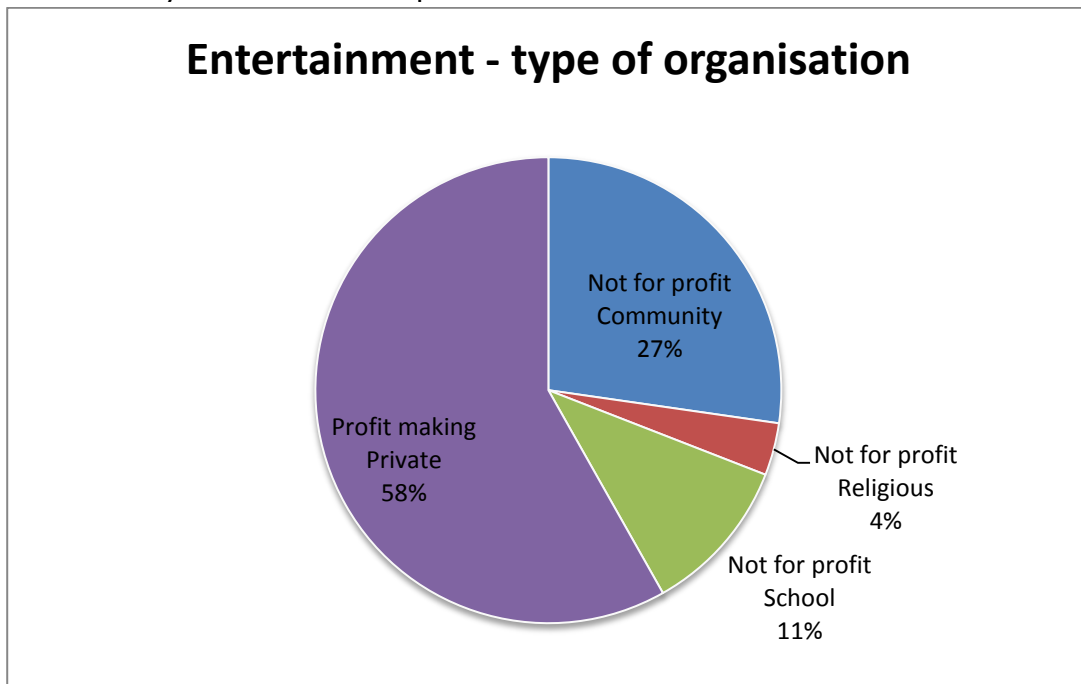
### ***Entertainment***

2.25 There are three entertainment stages with a full programme of artists performing<sup>5</sup>. All entertainment artists are from the local area and the majority are from West Suffolk. The Council makes a donation to the artists to cover their costs.

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<sup>5</sup> It should be noted that some of the entertainers perform more than once at the Fayre

2.26 Below is an analysis of the types of organisation that provide entertainment at the 2014 Fayre and the fees paid to the entertainers.



### **Employment**

2.27 The Fayre employs over 60 casual staff to help with the set-up, take-down and stewarding of the event. The stewards are employed by the Council and work anywhere between one and four days.

2.28 West Suffolk College, Community Action Suffolk and the Round Table supply up to 50 unpaid volunteer stewards for the Fayre. Any staff and stewards that are required in addition to the volunteers are recruited and paid directly out of the Fayre budget.

2.29 The Council has received both negative and positive comments about the stewards at the Fayre and is working to ensure that stewards are competent and aware of their duties.

2.30 Council services such as waste, landscapes and the apex staff also carry out additional work associated with the Fayre and these costs are recharged to the Fayre budget.

### **Finance**

2.31 The actual income and expenditure from the 2014 Fayre is listed below:

<b>Expenditure</b>	
Salaries for casual staff for the event	£13,129
Apex and Athenaeum costs	£9,491
Entertainment/donations to entertainers	£10,765
Advertising/ programme costs	£12,869
Waste – Street cleansing	£2,693
Signage/road closure and remedial works	£10,636
Additional CCTV	£9,000
Security	£10,048
First Aid cover	£4,590
Marquee hire	£3,215
Power supply and staging	£30,100
Miscellaneous*	£17,875
Support costs (see breakdown below)	£14,750
<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>£149,161</b>
<b>Income</b>	
Coach booking fee	- £3,365
Sponsorship	- £1,500
Greene King Car Park	- £4,577
Stallholder fees	- £138,455
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>- £147,897</b>
<b>Net Expenditure</b>	<b>£1,264</b>

\*Examples of miscellaneous expenditure; fireworks, children workshops, website design, additional room hire for Fayre Operations staff.

2.32 The 2014 shortfall of £1,264 was due to a one-off cost of £1783.76 to Suffolk County Council to test the lamp columns on Angel Hill.

2.33 The support costs reflect recharges for internal services. A breakdown of the costs is listed below:

- Grounds maintenance - £600
- Health and safety - £500
- Legal - £700
- Finance - £1700

- Property - £300
- Central recharge - £3,600
- Admin support - £7,350

2.34 Please note, the costs for the Markets Development Officer and Health and Safety Manager were not included in the Fayre budget for 2014 (see para 3.34 below).

### ***Christmas Fayre Working Group***

2.35 A Christmas Fayre Working Group currently supports the planning and development of the Fayre. The group is attended by elected members, Bury St Edmunds Town Council, local charities, tourism providers, the emergency services, Chamber of Commerce, OurBuryStEdmunds and other support services for the Fayre.

2.36 The Working Group is not a decision-making body and is used as a way of keeping stakeholders informed of the event planning and also to look at new ideas for future Fayres. It should be noted that several of the Working Group stakeholders attend in their own time.

### ***Traffic management and car parks***

2.37 Congestion and car parking are regularly complained about in relation to the Fayre weekend. The Council recognises the impact that the Fayre has on congestion and car parking in the town and is working very closely with Highways, Car Parks Services and an external Traffic Management Company to manage the impact on the town.

2.38 The Council works every year to manage the availability of car parking outside the town centre as this reduces the levels of congestion in the town. A 1,000 space Park and Ride service is operated from Claas UK. Greene King, Bury St Edmunds Rugby Club and West Suffolk College make their car parks available for visitors. The Council also makes their staff and visitor car parks at Olding Road and Western Way available for visitors to park and walk. Council staff that work at West Suffolk House and in the town centre are advised to consider alternative transport methods to avoid disruption.

2.39 The Health and Safety Manager has advised that an additional park and ride site should not be pursued because this could lead to crowd management issues within the footprint of the Fayre.

2.40 A team of stewards, both volunteer and paid, are recruited to signpost visitors to the best area for car parking. The electronic signs for car parking in Bury St Edmunds have been intermittent over recent years and this has affected the direction of traffic across the town. It is expected that these signs will be switched on and working at the 2015 Fayre.

2.41 The Council organises a coach drop-off point for the Fayre and many operators have said that this is one of the best that they have attended. A £25 administration fee (plus VAT) was introduced for coaches with over 16 seats at the 2014 Fayre. Coaches with under 16 seats are currently offered this service free of charge.

2.42 Local visitors to the 2015 fayre are also being encouraged to leave their car at home and cycle or walk into the Bury St Edmunds town centre. Thanks to Maglia Rosso cycle shop in Hawstead, the Council is offering free cycle storage at the Cornhill Walk shopping centre as well as a free bicycle MOT.

### **3. Christmas Fayre review – findings and recommendations**

3.1 The Christmas Fayre review covered a wide range of areas of the planning and management of the Fayre. The recommendations in this report are based on findings from discussions with Fayre stakeholders, desk research and an online survey. A list of stakeholders is included at **Appendix B**. All the recommendations that the Task and Finish Group agreed on in response to the findings of the review are brought together into a 5-year operational plan, which is attached at **Appendix D**.

3.2 This section of the report covers:

- Survey findings
- Findings from meetings with external partners and stakeholders
- Fayre planning and management risks identified
- Vision for the Fayre
- Commitment to the Fayre
- Economic impact
- Finance
- Governance and support
- Operational

#### ***Survey findings***

3.3 The online survey was sent to Fayre stakeholders and published using social media and the Bury Free Press. 214 responses were received during the three weeks that the survey was available online. A report of the survey responses is included at **Appendix C**.

3.4 The findings from the survey showed a perception that the Fayre enhances Bury St Edmunds' image as a visitor destination (80%), boosts the local economy (74%) and is a great event for the communities in and around Bury St Edmunds (66%). However, it was also widely recognised that the Fayre creates significant car parking problems (67%) traffic congestion (69%) and pedestrian congestion (59%).

3.5 The negative issues raised were largely concerned with the operational aspects of the Fayre and as such are addressed in the Operational section below.

### ***Findings from meetings with external partners and stakeholders***

3.6 As part of the review, the Task and Finish Group engaged with several Fayre stakeholder groups. These groups included; town centre businesses, businesses that provide services to the Fayre, Bury St Edmunds Tourism Group, OurBuryStEdmunds, arc management and the emergency services.

#### *- Business workshop*

3.7 The Markets Development Officer and Policy Business Partner facilitated a workshop at the apex for town centre businesses and also for businesses that provide services to the Fayre. Attendees at the workshop reacted to recent press coverage regarding the Fayre review and were concerned that the Council was considering 'privatising' the Fayre to shift the financial burden or responsibility.

3.8 It was noted that many businesses at the workshop thought that the Markets Development Officer was solely responsible for the running of the Fayre and that there was no plan in place to ensure business continuity. The businesses saw this as a risk to the future management of the Fayre.

3.9 The date of the Fayre had changed over recent years and it was suggested by businesses at the workshop that the date could be changed to avoid a clash with Black Friday<sup>6</sup>.

3.10 Some businesses had expressed concern about access to the town centre for the emergency services. The Markets Development Officer reassured businesses that the layout was specifically designed to allow access to emergency vehicles and that the event safety plan was taken to the Suffolk Event Advisory Group for discussion and approval. It was agreed that the arrangements for emergency services would be communicated to town centre services.

3.11 It was suggested at the business workshop that the layout of the weekly provisions market could be reconfigured so that St John's Street and the Traverse were more accessible over the Fayre weekend. The Markets Development Officer advised that it would be more practical to complete a wider review of the weekly market layout as this layout was the same for the market throughout the year. A review of the market layout could cause significant knock-on effects to the weekly market and would only be completed if there was common support for this from the businesses on St John's Street and in the Traverse. It is expected that the Traverse will be more accessible after the scaffolding on the Cupola House is removed.

#### *- Bury St Edmunds Tourism Group*

3.12 The Markets Development Officer and Policy Business Partner Officers also attended a meeting of the Bury St Edmunds Tourism Group. The tourism group

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<sup>6</sup> Black Friday is the first Friday after Thanksgiving. Black Friday is an American shopping event, but over the past few years it has started to gain traction in the UK.

recognised the longer-term impact of the Fayre on the town and the potential opportunities from a review of the Fayre.

3.13 The Tourism Group suggested that the Council could explore incentives for visitors to return to Bury St Edmunds after the Fayre. This would support the wider, longer-term economic impact of the Fayre.

3.14 It was agreed by the Tourism Group that local communication and marketing for the Fayre could be improved. This was following a discussion regarding promoting the Thursday evening for 'locals' to attend, the availability of information regarding entertainment and the accessibility of the Fayre website and event information on a mobile device.

- *OurBuryStEdmunds and arc management*

3.15 OurBuryStEdmunds and arc management met with the Markets Development Officer and Policy Business Partner to discuss 2014 Fayre feedback from town centre retailers and to discuss the potential opportunities from a review of the Fayre. OurBuryStEdmunds stated the importance of event ownership and commented that it was not always apparent that the Council provided the Fayre.

3.16 Communication over the Fayre weekend was discussed at the meeting and there was agreement that the Council could make greater use of social media and other communications channels to keep visitors up-to-date on the programme for the Fayre and to inform visitors of car parking availability and any emergency situations that occur. It was suggested that the Council could explore a mobile application that provided real-time notifications to visitors at the Fayre.

3.17 OurBuryStEdmunds expressed concern regarding the weekly provisions market being allowed to pack away before the Fayre had finished each day. The Markets Development Officer advised that this had been reviewed and that the weekly provisions market stalls would not be allowed to pack up until the Fayre had closed or footfall had significantly reduced.

3.18 The Council and partners were considering the development of a Development Management Organisation (DMO), or similar model, for tourism in Bury St Edmunds. This was discussed at the meeting and it was agreed that A DMO model could include a consistent approach to planning and marketing for all major events in Bury St Edmunds, including the Fayre. However, as there were a number of events provided by different organisations it was agreed that this should be explored as the DMO, or similar model, is developed.

- *Emergency Services*

3.19 The Policy Business Partner spoke to the Police, Fire Service and St Johns Ambulance regarding the impact of the Fayre on emergency services. All three services engaged with the planning for the Fayre and were satisfied with management of the event. All three services also had access to the event safety plan through the Suffolk Event Advisory Group.

- 3.20 The Fire Service checked emergency access routes in advance of the event and were happy with the access arrangements in place. It was confirmed that the Fayre did not have an impact on the rota for the Fire Service.
- 3.21 The Police also confirmed that the Fayre did not create a need for additional staff as there had not been any reported increase in anti social behaviour or other crime over the weekend of the Fayre. A Police Community Support Officer regularly attended the Christmas Fayre Working Group and had previously provided advice and suggestions for improvements to the Fayre.
- 3.22 The Fayre budget pays for first aid to be present on site for the Fayre weekend. St Johns Ambulance had been previously been involved in the Fayre but were unable to contribute to the planning for the 2015 Fayre as they had not yet been confirmed as the first-aid provider for the event. However, a St Johns Ambulance manager confirmed that St Johns Ambulance had been happy with management of the event and would continue to offer their services in the future.

### ***Fayre planning and management risks identified***

- 3.23 It was recognised by the Task and Finish Group and event stakeholders that the successful planning and management of the Fayre is reliant on the Markets Development Officer and that business continuity has not been considered to ensure the long-term successful management and reputation of the event.
- 3.24 The planning and management is also reliant on internal support from Health and Safety and Highways. Other internal services are also impacted on in the run up to the Fayre; for example, Car Parks, Waste and Business Regulation and Licensing. The roles and responsibilities for these services regarding the planning and management of the Fayre are not currently defined.
- 3.25 Fayre update reports are not currently sent to the Council's Leadership Team or to the Cabinet portfolio holder. This affects awareness and ownership of the event at a senior level of the Council.

### ***Vision for the Fayre***

- 3.26 The Task and Finish Group agreed that it was appropriate to make a minor change to the Fayre vision statement which was adopted by Cabinet in 2012. It was felt that the following shorter vision statement clearly stated the purpose and ownership of the event:

*"The Bury St Edmunds Christmas Fayre is a fun, festive and inclusive event for all ages. The event is designed to attract visitors and have a positive effect on local people and businesses. The Fayre is provided by St Edmundsbury Borough Council."*



### ***Commitment to the Christmas Fayre***

3.27 The Task and Finish Group considered various options for the long-term management of the Fayre; for example, making the event more commercial, establishing an arms-length vehicle to manage the Fayre and other events across West Suffolk or exploring new options for running the Fayre within the emerging Destination Management Organisation.

3.28 The Task and Finish Group recognised the potential for a future Destination Management Organisation (DMO) or similar model for tourism and events in Bury St Edmunds. It was therefore agreed that where possible the Markets Development Officer should engage with the DMO project and continue to work with other partners, for example OurBuryStEdmunds, to ensure consistent management and marketing of all major events in the Bury St Edmunds town centre.

3.29 The project to consider a DMO, or similar model, for Bury St Edmunds is still being explored and developed. The Task and Finish Group acknowledged this and agreed that the Council should make a commitment to provide the Fayre for the remainder of the current political administration. This would deliver the following benefits:

- Commitment to improving the Fayre by delivering the operational plan
- Opportunity to procure services that support the Fayre, for example power supply and staging, marquee hire, security etc. The commitment of a three year contract would reduce the annual charge and reduce the time spent organising the relevant contracts every year.
- Commitment to exploring new areas of income generation to ensure full recovery of all costs related to the Fayre.

3.30 The Task and Finish Group agreed that the date of the Fayre should remain fixed as the final weekend in November for the remainder of the current political administration. Selecting this weekend avoids a clash with the Christmas lights switch-on and avoids a clash with the fixed date for the Lincoln Christmas Market. However, it was agreed that this should be revisited if Black Friday becomes a more important shopping tradition in the local area and there is common support from businesses to change the date to avoid the impact on a busy weekend of trading.

### ***Economic impact***

3.31 A survey of visitors to the 2014 Fayre showed that visitors were spending money on the Christmas market stalls and also spending money in town centre shops, the weekly provisions market and on hotels/B&Bs in the local area. It was agreed by the Task and Finish Group that the survey could be further developed and also be targeted to cover all groups (visitor coaches, park and ride, park and walk etc.). This would produce data that could be used for economic impact modelling.

- 3.32 Anecdotal evidence was received throughout the review regarding Fayre visitors returning to Bury St Edmunds during the year because they were impressed with the town features and facilities. The Task and Finish Group agreed that this should be further explored by offering incentives to visitors to return to Bury St Edmunds. A mechanism for recording the success of the incentive scheme would also be required and should be reported on. The Council will work in partnership with the Bury St Edmunds Tourism Group to develop and promote the scheme of incentives.
- 3.33 To support the economic impact modelling for the Fayre the Council will need to review the existing formula used to record visitor numbers. It is currently based on a formula for the footfall figures from the Athenaeum and the apex. It was agreed that additional data is available to support the estimation of footfall numbers, for example from car parking and visitor coaches.
- 3.34 The economic impact model should be developed with local businesses, as feedback has been received that in some cases the Fayre can lead to lower takings for some shops compared to an equivalent weekend in November without the Fayre taking place.

### **Finance**

- 3.35 The Council has always aimed to manage the Fayre with recovery of all associated costs. Analysis of the budget for the Fayre shows that it does not currently reflect the true cost to the Council as it does not accurately account for internal staff recharges, for example the Markets Development Officer, Highways Officer and the full cost of the Health and Safety Manager. It was agreed by the Task and Finish Group that the Council should review and realign the budget recharges.
- 3.36 Pending a review of the internal recharges, the Task and Finish Group agreed that the Council should look at new areas of potential income generation to support the full cost recovery of the Fayre. It was also agreed that additional income could support investment in the event that is associated with the delivery of the Fayre Operational Plan. The Task and Finish Group proposed that the following areas of income generation should be explored:
- Event sponsorship and business advertising
  - Procurement of longer term contracts for the Fayre
  - Full cost recovery of process to manage bookings for coach drop-offs (including coaches with under 16 seats)
  - Review of entertainment fees/donations that is consistent. For example, donations only to entertainment of a higher calibre.
  - Moyses Hall to be used as a café at future Fayres
- 3.37 An overview of the 2014 budget expenditure for the Fayre identified a large number of transactions under the 'miscellaneous' code. The expenditure and income budget codes for the Fayre should be reviewed to ensure they are

transparent and structured appropriately to support the financial management of the Fayre.

### ***Governance and support***

- 3.38 The event has a large impact on both the Families and Communities and the Planning and Growth portfolios and it is therefore proposed that the Markets Development Manager provides updates to both Portfolio Holders.
- 3.39 It was agreed by the Task and Finish Group that a biannual report regarding the Fayre should be sent to Leadership Team for information, discussion and a steer where appropriate. The reports should be sent at Q1 and Q3 of the financial year to report on the previous Fayre (Q1) and to update on the planning and any major changes to the following Fayre (Q3).
- 3.40 Business continuity for the Fayre was identified as a risk by both the 2012 and the 2015 review of the Fayre. It is essential that a Christmas Fayre Project Group is formed with clearly defined roles and responsibilities for areas of the Fayre planning and management. This will ensure the effective management and sustainability of the event.
- 3.41 The Markets Development Officer co-ordinates a Christmas Fayre Working Group that meets at least three times a year. This group has developed into an information sharing forum and it was agreed that this group should continue and be developed and promoted as an open information sharing and discussion forum for all Fayre stakeholders to attend. The group will discuss learning from the previous Fayre and provide an opportunity for the Christmas Fayre Project Group to update on progress and changes for the next Fayre.

### ***Operational***

- 3.42 A large part of the review was spent evaluating the long list of suggestions that would affect the future operation of the Fayre. The Task and Finish Group discussed the various suggestions and agreed more work should be progressed on the following areas:
- Communications and marketing
  - Staffing
  - Travel
  - Management of food safety.
- 3.43 The use of the internet, mobile technology and social media has developed at a fast pace and the Fayre could make more use of these tools to market the event and inform visitors and residents in advance of and during the event. The communications and marketing plan for the event should be enhanced to ensure the potential of email, the new website, social media and mobile applications is utilised.

- 3.44 The Council recognises that the Markets Development Officer has done a fantastic job to develop the Fayre over the past eleven years and it is therefore a positive that the Fayre promotes the profile of the Markets Development Officer. However, the Task and Finish Group agreed it was important that the Council brands the event so that communities, businesses and visitors are aware that the Council provides the event. The marketing plan for the Fayre should reflect Council ownership.
- 3.45 It is essential that the 120,000 people that visit the Fayre are offered professional guidance and direction to ensure pedestrian flow throughout the event. Therefore, it was agreed that the Markets Development Officer should continue with the current practice of recruiting stewards with suitable qualifications or experience. It is considered appropriate that they are allocated to manage/supervise the less experienced or volunteer stewards.
- 3.46 The Task and Finish Group discussed accessibility to the Fayre for visitors with limited mobility. The Health and Safety Manager and Markets Development Officer advised the group that all venues offer disabled access and that alternative routes are also available for visitors that want to avoid the busier areas of the town centre.
- 3.47 The online survey showed that car parking and congestion were the most negative aspects of the Fayre. It was agreed by the Task and Finish Group that the work to provide additional parking and, more importantly, to encourage the use of public transport should continue to be explored with the Service Manager for Car Parks and the Marketing Officer. Where available and appropriate, privately owned car parks (for example businesses) should be encouraged to offer parking facilities to the public over the weekend of the Fayre.
- 3.48 The Fayre has a large number of stalls that offer food and drink to Fayre customers. The process of investigating the food stalls to ensure they have relevant food safety accreditation can be labour intensive. A free-to-use website<sup>7</sup> that offers tools for the management of food stall bookings is available and offers stall bookings, a portal for relevant food safety and risk assessment documents and an area for 'feedback' from Environmental Health Officers across the country. It was agreed that the use of this tool should be further explored.
- 3.49 The management of litter and bins at the Fayre is well-managed and only 17% of people that completed the online survey thought that litter had a negative effect on the local area. However, the Task and Finish Group discussed litter and the potential provision of an outside 'break-out area' for the consumption of food; it was agreed that this should be explored further for the 2016 Fayre. This could mitigate the potential for litter and relieve some pedestrian congestion, as people would not need to eat food on the move.

**Ben Smith (Policy Business Partner)**

**October 2015**

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<sup>7</sup> <http://www.ncass.org.uk/>