



Abingdon Town Council
Event Review
HM Queen's Platinum Jubilee Event
Rye Farm Meadow
2nd-4th June 2022

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1. Request for Review of the Platinum Jubilee Event 2nd-4th June 2023

The Abingdon Town Council Community Committee confirmed at its meeting held on 6th December 2022 that a Review should be undertaken of HM Queen's Platinum Jubilee Event held in Abingdon between 2nd and 4th June 2022. (Minute C82/22 Refers).

The Committee stated that the Review should cover the following areas:

- Comparison of what was delivered during the Event against the original aims and objectives of the Community Services Committee outlined at their meeting held on 9 March 2021.
- Breakdown of income and expenditure.
- Staffing costs, including preparation time.
- Timeline of decisions made and an explanation for them.
- External guidance and advice on what an appropriate timeline should be for such events.
- Democratic oversight of the event planning.

Originally a Review of the Event was to be conducted by an external consultant from Local Government resource Centre (LGRC). Following discussions with the Locum Town Clerk, it was subsequently agreed that the Locum Clerk should conduct the Review as he has extensive recent experience in organising public events in Oxfordshire. The Review was carried out without additional cost to Abingdon Town Council.

2. Objectives of the Event

The Community Services Committee meeting held on 9th March 2021 identified the following objectives for the Event:

- Bring together the community.
- Reach out to disenfranchised groups.
- Cultural engagement.
- Promote Heritage.
- Market Abingdon
- Bring in sponsorship.
- Facilitate business community links.

Important factors for consideration:

- Inclusivity.
- Sustainability.
- Cost to council tax payer.
- National Guidance issued from government.

Subsequently, a Working Party of councillors was established to deliver the Event. The Working Party met regularly in the run up to the Event. Copies of the Minutes of the Working Party are available via Sharepoint.

The Event Plan and Risk Assessment for the Event were prepared in accordance with national guidelines.

3. Roles of Officers

Staff were and are still not qualified in delivering large scale Events over a number of days such as the Platinum Jubilee Event. The need for this skill set was not identified by the Town Clerk who had ultimate responsibility for managing the Council staff or the Councillors involved in the project.

Staff lacked key skills such as Risk Management, Project Planning and Event management.

Although an external Event manager was recruited on a consultancy basis he viewed his role as supplying entertainment, not overall Event management. He ceased working with the Council of his own volition several weeks before the Event.

The Council recruited from LGRC an officer with Event experience who worked with the Council for one month prior to the date of the Event.

Event role	Timeline
Town Clerk	Overall responsibility for event.
Responsible Financial Officer and Dep Town Clerk	Left June 2022
Community Services and Events Officer	Left December 2021
Community Services and Events Officer	Event planning from January 2022
Properties Officer	Project worker from beginning of May 2022
External event manager	Left June 2022
External event adviser	One month prior to event

4. Management of Budget and Event Preparation

Budget and costs

Date Working Group	Budget
4 th August 21	£22,000
20 th October 21	£70,000
17 th December 21	£52,410
10 th March 22	£83,076
June 22	£118,874 final cost

There was an over optimistic expectation by the Working Group at their meeting held on 20th October 21 that £50,000 sponsorship could be obtained from the Event. There was no real evidence to support this expectation.

The initial budget for 2021-22 of £22,000 was agreed at the meeting of the Working Group on 4th August 2021.

At the meeting of the Working Group on 20th October 2021 the budget was amended to £70,000 - £5,000 Platinum Jubilee funding, £14,651 'Fun and Music in the Park' funding, and the expectation that up to £50,000 could be obtained through sponsorship.

The final budget was significantly more than the original proposed budget. The variance arose as the original budget was based on a one-day event and assumed significant sponsorship, profit from merchandise and income from ticket sales. No sponsorship was forthcoming, so the full cost of the event had to be met by the town council.

The final budget was considerable but a comparison with previous one day events provides a useful measure. These costs are outlined in the table below. The costs of the latter events have been multiplied by three and four to offer a sensible comparison. The Platinum Jubilee Meadow Festival ran over three days, but costs were incurred for four days as this was the original schedule.

The cost of hosting the Event by Abingdon Town Council was £118,874.

It is important to note that no expenditure for the Event was incurred which was not approved by Abingdon Town Council.

When considering whether the cost of the Event provided value for money it is useful to compare the cost with the Fun and Music in the Park Event.

The Platinum Jubilee Event took place over 3 days. Below is a comparison of the cost of the Fun and Music in the Park events which took place between 2017 and 2019 delivered extrapolated from a 1-day Event to a 3 day Event.

	Fun and Music in the Park			Platinum Jubilee
	2017	2018	2019	
Cost for event (one day)	£33,496	£31,872	£33,017	
Cost for event x 3	£100,488	£95,616	£99,051	
Cost for event x 4	£133,984	£127,488	£132,068	
Total cost (Platinum Jubilee)				£118,874
Cost of event x 3 minus total cost of Platinum Jubilee	-£4,244	-£9,116	-£5,681	
Cost of event x 4 minus total cost of Platinum Jubilee	£29,252	£22,756	£27,336	

Although the comparison of the costs of the Fun and Music in the Park Event and the Platinum Jubilee Event can be viewed as simplistic as the Events are different in nature it is important to note that a projected cost of the 2019 Fun and Music in the Park Event increased to a 3 day EVENT would be £99,051. The total cost of the Platinum Jubilee Event was £118.874.

With the benefit of hindsight there are several areas where the final costs of the Platinum Jubilee Event could have been reduced during the preparation stage of the Event.

5. Event Preparation

Between March 2021 and 4th June 2022 there was a lack of a clear project plan for the Event. The Working Party and the Council continually changed their views as to what the Event would deliver for local residents. This caused challenges for the Officers trying to deliver the project.

For example, it was initially agreed that there would be an entrance fee for visitors to the Event. Expenditure was incurred to facilitate this. Subsequently a decision was made to make the Event free.

As the date of the Event drew closer it became more difficult to book resources. This resulted in many contractors increasing their fees.

6. Measurement of success

Over 15,000 people were recorded as visiting the Platinum Jubilee celebration.

It should be noted that on the 4th June there was a large public Platinum Jubilee Event taking place at Abingdon Airfield.

Research on social media reveals that the posts recorded by the visitors to the Council organised Event were very complimentary.

7. Key Learning Points

Project Management - There was a lack of a Project Plan which would have set out tasks, costs, and timelines for the project. This should have been identified by the Chief Officer or the Responsible Financial Officer of the Council.

Role of Councillors Working Party - The Working Party of Councillors established to deliver the Event are volunteers. Their role was to provide Officers with clear direction as to what should be delivered, and the Officers role is to deliver it. The number of changes from project inception to the date of the Event made the Officers role extremely challenging.

Budget Control - There are two areas identified where potential savings could have been made to the final invoices paid.

i. Security

The owner of the security company selected to provide security for the Event attended many of the Working Party meetings. The need for security support could have been assessed more closely. An examination of similar events taking place in the County shows a more realistic security assessment. There were no public order or security issues reported during the Event. The cost for security was nearly 25% of the total cost of the Event and apart from counting people into and out of the Event they had no security duties to perform. There were no incidents of public disorder.

Cost of Security contract £28,611.

ii. Bins and refuse

Due to the contract for litter being placed with the provider shortly before the Event date the prices offered reflected a market shortage of refuse equipment due to so many events taking place on the same dates. Once the decision to hold the Event over three days had been made the refuse contract should have been negotiated more quickly.

Refuse contract - £10,000.

iii Role of Officers

None of the staff employed by Abingdon Town Council who worked on the project were experienced in project managing an event of this size. No

members of staff were qualified as Event Mangers or Risk Managers. These skills are an essential part of Event planning and delivery.

The Event Manager who was recruited had an undefined role and eventually left the Council.

iv Potential Income and Budgeting

A greater level of financial control and budget management by the Town Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer would have reduced the challenges faced by the Working Party and Officers.

8. Summary

1. Although the planning and delivery of the Event was challenging for all concerned the outcome was in line with the expectations of the Community and the Council.
2. The cost of the Platinum Jubilee Event when compared to the Fun and Music in the Park Events were compatible.
3. Before an Event of a similar size and duration is planned by Abingdon Town Council it is essential that sufficient resources who are properly trained are in place.
4. The project planning for a future similar sized event requires professional management.
5. All expenditure for the Event was approved by Abingdon Town Council.