



**Report To:** Environmental Services Portfolio Holder  
**Lead Officer:** Director, Health and Environmental Services

29 September 2016

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## **PARKLIFE: REVIEW OF 2016 AND OPTIONS FOR FUTURE EVENTS**

### **Purpose**

1. To review the Parklife 2016 event and consider options with regard to the Council hosting similar events in future years.
2. This is not a key decision.

### **Recommendations**

3. It is recommended that the Portfolio Holder:
  - (a) notes the feedback from Parklife 2016;
  - (b) agrees to continue to host a free Parklife event with Cambridge Sport Lakes Trust each year for the next three-years, relying on income from sponsorship, grant funding and pre-bookings to reduce the Council's expenditure to approximately £2,500 per event for each year of a three year programme; and
  - (c) agrees to continue to underwrite the events with £10,000 per annum.
  - (d) To further promote the contribution of Cambridge Sports Lakes Trust to the event through branding and advertising.

### **Reasons for Recommendation**

4. Parklife has been running since 2009 and is the main corporate event put on by the Council. The aim of Parklife is to offer local people the opportunity to try out a range of sports, for example, paddle boarding and canoeing, with a view to them taking up the activity and remain in good health.
5. A guaranteed baseline budget of £10,000 would allow for early bookings of key attractions (activity providers can be lost through inability to commit due to financial uncertainty) allowing the creation of an event which can then be promoted to sponsors – it is easier to sell a product than a concept.

### **Background**

6. The Council has been hosting a Parklife event (or similar) since 2009. Originally held as a countdown to London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, the event has grown from a modest open day, attracting 2,000 people, to become the biggest family fun day held in the district and a distinctive flagship event for the Council, with over 5,000 visitors regularly attracted.
7. Historically, and including the last three year period, the event has been organised in partnership with the Cambridge Sports Lake Trust, with other partners also involved year to year.

8. The event has historically aimed to offer local people the opportunity to try out a range of sports, for example, paddle boarding and canoeing, with a view to them becoming more active and healthy.
9. The event is widely advertised via South Cambs Magazine, sports centres, schools, local press and through social media channels.
10. As part of the Olympic Legacy it was proposed that the Parklife event should continue on an annual basis. In September 2013 the Portfolio Holder for Planning Policy and Localism considered the future of Parklife for the following three year period and, with a sponsorship target of £2,500, £5,000 and £7,500 in successive years, against a baseline budget of £10,000 per event, agreed a further three year programme.
12. Parklife delivery has been supported by SCDC staff providing stewarding services, with staff able to reclaim hours through flexi-time with the agreement of line management, Cambridge Sport Lakes Trust staff and volunteers, young volunteers, elected members and a small number of local people.

### Considerations

11. With the benefit of learning from the 2014 event, levels of sponsorship for successive events has increased, with £2,150 (in cash and in kind) obtained in 2015 and, £7,200 (in cash and in kind plus a grant secured by our partner, the Cambridge Sports Lakes Trust, from the John Stewart Memorial Fund (Cambridge Community Foundation)) obtained in 2016, thereby broadly meeting the target set for this year. It should however be noted that obtaining sponsorship is demanding in terms of officer time and requires adequate investment in branding to reflect sponsor input, so is not cost free.
12. In response to calls from visitors for an alternative booking mechanism for water sport sessions, to queuing on the morning of the event, a pre-booking system was piloted in 2015. This allowed half of all the available sessions to be booked in advance thereby reducing queuing time and increasing choice for visitors. In 2015 administration charges were set at £3 for an individual activity (paddle boarding, kayaking), and £5 for a group activity (canoeing), generating £246. Following the good level of take up in 2015, this was again offered in 2016, with charges set at £5 and £7 for individual and group activity bookings respectively, generating £431 of income, see Table 1 for income/expenditure figures.

A further £326 of income could have been generated if all available sessions had been pre-booked. Improved information (i.e. clear criteria for participation) on booking pages and effective promotion should increase the uptake of this offer.

Table 1: SCDC Income and Expenditure for Parklife 2014-2016

	2014	2015	2016
<b>Income (£)</b>			
Sponsorship	500	2150	5350
Grants	250		1850
Trader receipts	495*	305*	180
Pre-booking		246	431
Re-charging			750
<b>Expenditure (£)</b>	10,686	10,828	11,685
<b>Balance</b>	<b>9,441</b>	<b>8,127</b>	<b>3,369</b>

\* In 2014 and 2015 a marquee was provided for traders, at a cost of £600

13. The income/expenditure summarised in Table 1 relates only to the Council's own costs and does not take into account those incurred by our partners in supporting Parklife. Cambridge Sport Lakes Trust also invests a large amount of time and resources in the run up to the event and on the day.
14. Income from stall holders (trader receipts) has brought in on average £325 income per event, however, marquee hire costs of £600 offset this in 2014 and 2015 resulting in a loss, with a small profit in 2016 generated only because no marquee was provided. The administrative and logistical demands trader stalls entail is relatively high; traders themselves have noted that Parklife does not offer ideal trading conditions, perhaps because visitors are not attending with a view to spending, since Parklife is promoted as a free event. Surveys returned by traders showed they were not enthusiastic about returning in future years.
15. The 2016 Visitor Survey asked whether an entrance fee would be acceptable, if required, to bring Parklife back in future years. Based on the amount of money people indicated that they would be willing to pay (up to £2 per person), against a fall in revenue for Cambridge Sport Lakes Trust on car parking and the additional arrangements that would need to be put in place to manage an entrance fee, it would not be beneficial to the Council or Cambridge Sport Lakes Trust to change entry for the event at the present time. The impact of charging an entry fee on levels of sponsorship is unknown.
16. A number of elected members have been generous in their time, providing stewarding support to the event. Parklife has also enjoyed strong support from the Chairman (who, for the past two years, has officially opened the event) and Deputy Chairman, thereby contributing to raising the Council's profile through the event.
17. A significant contribution was made in 2014, 2015 and 2016 by young volunteers, with the Young Sport Leaders programme providing an important source of young volunteers over this period – a contribution recognised by the press coverage in 2016.
18. The activities provided at Parklife which have proved consistently popular are the water sports of paddle boarding, kayaking and canoeing, with angling, climbing walls, bouncy castles and archery also featuring highly as top rated activities. In 2015 the Cycling Zone was particularly well received, reflecting the investment in Parklife made by Cambridgeshire County Council, as part of its Cycling Festival program (which brought £5,000 worth of additional cycling activities and does not appear in our expenditure).
19. In response to the 2015 visitor survey, the water sports offer was expanded for Parklife 2016, providing 95 sessions for kayaking, 72 sessions for canoeing and 104 sessions for Paddleboarding, a doubling of the provision for this activity on the previous year, meaning over 400 individuals were able to try a water sport in 2016. There remains further capacity on Todd's Pit to expand the water sport offer - the 2016 visitor survey again returned an interest in greater availability, with all the available sessions offered in 2016 taken up.
20. The popularity of Parklife with visitors remains high; visitor survey returns indicate an improvement in the satisfaction ratings year on year (85% of visitors rated the event as excellent or very good in 2015, rising to 93% of visitors in 2016).
21. The need to capitalise on the opportunity to promote the South Cambridgeshire District Council brand was identified in the 2013 Parklife Report. Improvements have been made to ensure greater brand prominence both in pre-event publicity and on the

day, through signage and event publications. The promotional materials need to also recognise the contribution of Cambridge Sport Lakes Trust in delivering the event.

22. The visitor survey of Parklife 2016 indicates that Milton Country Park is rated highly as a venue, with 93% of visitors rating the venue as very good or excellent.
23. In 2016 greater emphasis was placed on promoting opportunities for the activities on offer to be taken up following the event, with a visitor guide published to advertise these opportunities.
24. The visitor survey found that all of those respondents (10% of the total) who had not visited Milton Country Park before, intended to return, however, this does not indicate whether this will stimulate more uptake of healthy activities, only that Milton Country Park may become a destination of choice.
25. In response to more specific questioning, the 2016 visitor survey found visitors agreed that Parklife had provided them with an opportunity to try out a new activity and that on average there was agreement that it had also provided an opportunity to find out more about how these activities could be taken forward post Parklife.
26. The visitor survey revealed the origin of visitors to be 53% South Cambridgeshire District, 32 % Cambridge City, 6% East Cambridgeshire District, 1.5% from Huntingdonshire District and 7% from outside the county.
27. Given the known costs of safely mounting an event of this scale, with a strong core offer of key visitor attractions (climbing walls, archery, water sports, cycling and inflatables) and necessary logistical support (First Aid, additional toileting facilities) the baseline budget of £10,000 is a realistic figure – less than this figure the quality of the event in its current form could not be guaranteed.

### **Options**

28. The Portfolio Holder could decide:
  - a. to continue to host a free Parklife event with Cambridge Sport Lakes Trust each year for the next three-years, relying on income from sponsorship, grant funding and pre-bookings to reduce the Council's expenditure to approximately £2,500 per event for each year of a three year programme.
  - b. to suspend the event for a year, indefinitely or for the duration of the next three year cycle.
  - c. to change from a free event, supported by sponsorship, Council funding, some alternative income generation and Cambridge Sport Lakes Trust resources, to a wholly commercial operation, funded by entry fees and other income sources, to include pre-booking and sponsorship income.
29. If the Portfolio Holder agrees to continue to host future Parklife events, he could decide to:
  - a. continue to underwrite the events with £10,000 per annum;
  - b. underwrite the events with an alternative amount per annum; or
  - c. not underwrite the events.

## **Implications**

30. In the writing of this report, taking into account financial, legal, staffing, risk management, equality and diversity, climate change, community safety and any other key issues, the following implications have been considered: -

### ***Financial***

31. Based on current projections, which assume continued success in attracting sponsorship, Parklife expenditure is likely to be approximately £2,500 per annum to SCDC, plus staff time, should the existing financial model continue. The risk of not receiving sponsorship to similar levels can be reduced through underwriting the event to the value of £10,000.

### ***Legal***

32. There is no ownership by the Council of the Parklife brand, with many festivals throughout the country promoted under this moniker. The Council has no control over alternative "Parklives" emerging in this district, which has attendant risks of reputational damage.

### ***Staffing***

33. Parklife is our main corporate event. The management of the event is led by the Sustainable Communities and Partnerships Team, with significant support from the Communications Team in executing the Communications Plan and the in house production of promotional materials. However, the delivery of the event, if it is to continue in its current format, requires input across all directorates, with staff being asked to support the event as stewards.

### ***Risk Management***

34. The Parklife event is risk managed via a robust Management Control Document, co-developed with the Cambridge Sports Lake Trust and brought before the Safety Advisory Group. In 2015 and 2016, health and safety was coordinated by the Council's Joint Health, Safety and Emergency Planning Manager. If agreed, future Parklife events would be similarly managed.

### ***Equality and Diversity***

35. In developing Parklife events, care is taken to ensure that all facilities and as many elements of the offer as can be practicably achieved are open to visitors of all abilities. Should a further three year program be agreed, this would continue to be embedded in Parklife event development.

## **Consultation responses**

36. Participant views are included in the main body of the report.

## **Effect on Strategic Aims**

### **Aim 1 – LIVING WELL**

37. Parklife has potential to support our communities to remain in good health, and for the district to become a healthy place to live for all.

## **Background Papers**

Planning Policy and Localism Portfolio Holder Meeting, September 2013 -  
<http://moderngov.ie/ListDocuments.aspx?CId=1024&MId=6157&Ver=4>

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