

## For Council: 20 September 2021 APPENDIX 2

### Lichfield City Council

#### Minutes of the Meeting of the Sheriff's Ride Working Party (SRWP) held via 'Zoom' on Thursday 16 September 2021 at 1.00pm.

#### PRESENT:

**Representing Lichfield City Council:** Councillor A Smith (Chairman) and Councillors Mrs G Boyle, C Ball, Miss J Marks, and M Warfield.

**In Attendance:** Lucy Clarke (Civic Officer)  
Tony Briggs (Town Clerk)  
Sarah Thomas (Deputy Town Clerk)  
Nick Sedgwick (Clerk of the Course)

**Apologies:** Cllr J Smith

#### 7. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATION

None.

#### 8. MINUTES

**RESOLVED:** *The minutes of the meeting held on 19 May 2021 be confirmed as a correct record. [Minutes adopted by Council on 14 June 2021]*

#### 9. MATTERS ARISING

None

#### 10. SHERIFF'S RIDE - 2021

The Chairman introduced Nick Sedgwick, Clerk of the Course to the Working Group; it was agreed that Nick's involvement in the Group would be highly beneficial.

Members briefly discussed the appropriateness of the 2021 provision. Cllr Warfield stated that the day worked well and the banquet was a success, Cllr Miss J Marks expressed disappointment as to the lack of a 'cry' on the Square and around the City to make all aware of the Ride taking place, and that the speeches were made inside rather than on the dais as is usually the case. Cllr C Ball stated he was surprised at the small number of attendees and stated there were few if any under approximately 50 years old in attendance. With much of the discussion slipping to 2022 and future years, the Chairman suggested moving on to the next item to discuss more fully. This was agreed by the Working Party.

#### 11. SHERIFF'S RIDE 2022 AND FUTURE YEARS

The Chairman expressed the view that there were certain key issues to consider – a lack of resident interest, maintaining tradition and overall value for money. The Chairman stated that if the Ride's scale were to be reduced it would become notional, preferring instead to explore possibilities of adding to the Ride 'offer' to make it more popular, attract sponsorship and therefore improve value for money.

Various aspects of the Ride were discussed, including the previous tradition of horses gathering on the Square on the day of the Ride; the loss of that spectacle being widely seen as a significant factor in the decline of crowds at the event since. Ideas were suggested such as gathering at Stowe Fields and/or an associated funfair/cycle Ride/family event to be organised to boost the Ride's overall appeal.

The view was repeatedly expressed that expert advice was needed to assist in making the Ride more viable, generating new ideas and assessing the appropriateness of ideas emerging from

the Working Party, but concern was expressed as to the cost of such expert advice and the likely success in achieving any meaningful sponsorship in the short term.

Cllr C Ball stated costs should be capped, and that any consultants must be able to quickly demonstrate they have experience of such events, have proposals that will lead to quantifiable benefits (e.g. greater footfall, local spend etc), and an ability to deliver the required sponsorship.

The Working Party discussed various proposals, such as the merits of a 'normal' Ride for 2022 to allow consultants to appreciate the spectacle and assist in their work. It was also proposed that the lunch at Freeford be abandoned and replaced with a banquet at the Guildhall, though the implications of such a decision would need to be carefully considered; issues such as bad weather and rest period for the horses/riders being raised by the Clerk of the Course, and also the potential for timings to preclude the traditional entrance into the Close just before evensong. It was decided to leave this matter in abeyance.

Cllr Miss J Marks stated that should the Ride go ahead in 2022 in traditional format the Registration fee should be reviewed, along with asking landowners to make a contribution rather than accept complimentary lunch tickets. It was also suggested that sponsorship for the marquee could go some way to covering costs. The Clerk of the Course highlighted that the major cost was security provision, and that this was an essential element of the Ride.

Following further discussion, it was agreed that a recommendation be made to Council that suitable PR companies be approached to assist with the issues facing the Ride currently; the Town Clerk to prepare an initial Project Brief and pre-submission questionnaire that will be circulated to the SRWP for comment. Cllr C Ball stated that he would support such a proposal provided that evidence was quickly available as to how such companies would tackle the core issues of tangible local benefit, sponsorship, and experience. The possibility of a pre-tender questionnaire to draw out some of this information is to be explored.

It was further agreed that if those companies who are approached cannot provide positive ideas and direction [*Members are asked to note that the discussion was specific as to ideas, rather than any actions or results from the implementation of such ideas*] that are acceptable to the SRWP by the time preparations begin for the 2022 Ride [*estimate March 2022*], that the Council reverts to 2021 arrangements for the 2022 Ride, pending further discussion with the chosen agency and/or others in anticipation of the 2023 event.

Finally, it was agreed that the status of complimentary tickets be reviewed; the Town Clerk confirmed such reviews had recently taken place, but that this would be looked at again.

***RESOLVED: That a further review take place into the allocation of complimentary tickets for the Sheriff's Ride lunch.***

***RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL:***

***a) That the Town Clerk prepare a brief scoping document to be issued to selected agencies in order to ascertain whether or not they could potentially bring benefits to the Ride in terms of their relevant experience, obtaining sponsorship, and tangible local benefits. The draft document to be circulated to the SRWP and finalised prior to wider circulation, with delegated authority to the SRWP to agree the finalised version and those to whom the scoping document will be distributed.***

***b) In the event that developments at (a) above do not generate positive ideas and direction to the satisfaction of the Working Party prior to the commencement of planning for the 2022 Ride, the Council to revert to the arrangements which took place in 2021 for the 2022 Ride only, pending further discussion and decision for 2023 in due course.***

**12. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

It was agreed to leave the date in abeyance pending developments with the proposed Project Brief, discussions with external companies etc. The next meeting to be held in person unless restrictions prevent it.

**THERE BEING NO FURTHER BUSINESS  
THE CHAIRMAN DECLARED THE MEETING CLOSED AT 2.03pm.**