



Report of the Director of Neighbourhoods & Housing

Outer South Area Committee

Date: Monday 6th November 2006

Subject: Morley Literature Festival – Evaluation Report

Electoral Wards Affected:

Morley North

Morley South

Specific Implications For:

Equality and Diversity

Community Cohesion

Narrowing the Gap

Council
Function

Delegated Executive
Function available
for Call In

Delegated Executive
Function not available for
Call In Details set out in the
report

Executive Summary

This report celebrates the first Morley Literature Festival while providing a critical evaluation of the whole event. The report takes account of opinions and feedback from members of the organising committee, participants through comments from an evaluation card and the South Leeds Area Manager. There exists a general view that such an event should become an annual feature of Morley life. For this to happen, it is important that lessons are learnt from this years event and that recommendations are put in place in order to build on this experience. The report endeavours to address all aspects of the festival and discuss the strengths and weaknesses and make clear recommendations.

1.0 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to evaluate the inaugural Morley Literature Festival and provide a framework to consider for the future organisation of this event.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The Morley Literature Festival came about from a notion that an event should be held to mark the centenary year of Morley Library. Initial discussions began in early 2006 and soon developed into full planning meetings for what became a weekend literature festival which included a poetry competition. It is reasonable to say that the festival initially developed in an adhoc manner which was later to become a detailed vision and plan. The organisation of the festival was led by the South Leeds Area Management Team, in conjunction with

Elected Members, Education Leeds, the Library Service, Learning & Leisure, Joseph Priestley College, The Morley Observer and Bertram Library Services.

- 2.2 While the Poetry Competition ran for several months, the main event took place over two days, Friday 29th Saturday 30th of September at Morley Town Hall and Morley Library. The festival combined celebrated speakers as well as workshops, readings and competitions. Although no detailed objectives and outcomes were agreed at the outset, it is generally felt that the event was a success and enjoyed by all and attracting approximately 1000 participants.

3.0 General Organisation

- 3.1 The organisation of the event is worth particular scrutiny as this is an area of greatest potential weakness from an Area Management perspective and will have the greatest impact on the delivery of future events.
- 3.2 The Morley Literature Festivals success was largely down to the creative inputs of a wide range of partner agencies, Ward Members and individuals. The diversity of partners involved and the numbers of people attending should be celebrated. The harnessing of this energy and creative dynamic will be important to any future event. By involving so many partners, the festival was able to get a degree of buy in and ownership which was significant in providing the range of activities promoted and numbers experiencing the event.

Lessons learnt:

- 3.3 The Area Committee has a responsibility to enable services to be more appropriate and responsive to local needs and priorities. To guide its work the Area Committee has drawn up several key priorities and actions and framed them in the Area delivery Plan (ADP). The ADP has a priority objective to regenerate town centres and while the festival broadly fits this objective, it was unclear how the festival would specifically contribute. At a time of low staffing levels this had impact on the Area Committees ability to address other priorities. Future work should be in line with ADP priorities and be clear as to what the social, economic and cultural benefits are to the regeneration of Morley. This should be inline with the plans currently being formulated by the Town Centre Manger and which will be driven by the Town Centre Management Board.
- 3.4 Because there was not a vision or strategy opportunities will have been missed for match funding, shared objectives, working with key groups, such as schools and local businesses, community involvement, marketing and sponsorship etc. A future vision should identify other linkages and help address corporate objectives, such as raising education standards.
- 3.5 Throughout the festival coordination there was a lack of accountability and direction which may have caused some waste of resources and duplication of effort by partners and put a great deal of pressure on the Area Management Team who had to pull the festival together and chase agencies. This can be improved with a constituted organising committee with clear terms of references. The status of the organising committee should also be confirmed, should it be a voluntary group or a charitable trust? Consideration should also be given to the establishment of clear leadership with the appointment of a Festival Director which would enhance the future organisation of the event.

Recommendations

Future events should:

- I. Provide a clear project proposal including budget
- II. Identify outcomes linking into the Area Committee's, partner agencies and corporate priorities
- III. Constitute an Organising Committee with terms of reference
- IV. Establish strong leadership and consider the appointment of a festival director
- V. Create stronger links with schools and other key groups.

4.0 Publicity, Marketing and Sponsorship

- 4.1 The promotion of the festival benefited from working with the Morley Observer, part of the Yorkshire Newspaper Group, which acted as the festival's media partner. The Morley Observer created a strong brand for the festival and carried many excellent features highlighting all aspects of the event. A broad range of publicity was developed by the Area Management Team including web based news, posters, festival programme and flyers. All partners took the initiative to seek publicity and promote the event, generating newspaper articles, radio interviews and web based advertising through their related media networks. The marketing done was consistent with a solid brand used throughout all marketing material. Sponsorship of the Poetry Competition was received from Bertram Library Services. As well as the prize presentation Bertram Library Services have also invited the recipients to visit their offices for lunch and select prizes. Sponsorship was also received from Manning Stainton Estate Agents and Morley Town Council.

Lessons learnt

- 4.2 There was no marketing strategy put in place rather, individuals and partners took their own initiative and did what they felt was necessary to promote the event. Although a clear brand was developed it was not linked to any particular theme for the festival or target audience. As the committee did not agree a target audience or outcomes it is difficult to know if the brand was successful in meeting anything other than a general objective. Any marketing strategy should take account of and focus on the specific social, economic and cultural benefits expected to benefit the regeneration of Morley.
- 4.3 Although several marketing vehicles were used, activity was only in short bursts rather than a sustained promotional campaign. Because of this opportunities may have been missed. There is no doubt that there was a high level of awareness about the festival in Morley and while there existed an aspiration to draw people from the greater Morley area, including the neighbouring towns of Dewsbury and Batley, we are unable to say where people travelled from to attend so it is impossible measure that detail of attendance. However, a general view from the evaluation cards was that more marketing would have helped. Although on a whole take up was good this was largely down to the efforts of partners in pushing the event. There was no budget allocated to publicity which will also have affected the marketing approach.
- 4.4 The staging of any festival in September which seeks to engage schools and colleges requires early engagement to enable partners to anticipate and plan their own involvement to the optimum. The timing of the festival as well as the theme is crucial to any future success. One of the longest established festivals at nearby Ilkley is held at the end of September early October. The staging of a future Morley event might take account of this. It may be that we should consider following Ilkley and possibly benefit from their profile.
- 4.5 While we are unable to quantify the value of sponsorship for this type of event, it is felt that this element has a greater capacity to generate income than that achieved this year. Gaining income from sponsorship should feature strongly in any marketing strategy.

Recommendations

Future events should:

- I. Agree a marketing strategy and budget early the planning process
- II. Agree accountability and ownership for the marketing strategy.
- III. Agree a festival brand with clear links to proposed outcomes.
- IV. Consider the date of the festival and how this affects marketing.
- V. Agree a strategy for maximising sponsorship opportunities

5.0 Content of the Festival

- 5.1 The content of the festival was agreed by the Organising Committee from suggestions made at the planning meetings. As stated earlier the festival content was not linked to any specific theme or marketing approach and consisted of performances by Ian McMillan and Gervase Phinn and several workshops throughout the day. The main speaking events benefited from having schools music groups performing beforehand and the services of Steve Smith (Education Leeds) as MC. Steve provided a thoughtful and light hearted link to performers. The variety of features meant that there was something for everyone. All artistes arrived promptly and were well received. Workshops designed for children were well attended, with the puppet theatre fully booked. Some other features such as the history of Morley was well received, but the content of future programmes should be considered in terms of the proposed festival theme.

Lessons learnt:

- 5.2 It is widely agreed that even without a specific theme and while also lacking essential components already identified in this report that the festival did provide a successful formula. This was mainly due to the knowledge and expertise provided by all partners and the high profile enjoyed by Ian McMillan and Gervase Phinn.
- 5.3 There are a number of issues that require detailed consideration and agreement before launching any future festival. Primarily, should the festival have a theme? Many towns have developed successful festivals based on a specific niche or theme, such as the Harrogate Crime Writers event which is linked to the great Agatha Christie mystery. It may be that keeping the format general gives the festival the flexibility to try different contents, while adapting over time before settling with a specific theme. It is also thought that the appointment of a festival director would provide the necessary expertise and leadership which would help shape the content of any future festivals.

Recommendations

Future events should:

- I. Have a clear vision or theme

6.0 Participation

- 6.1 Attendance over the weekend was estimated at about 1000. Which represented a significant achievement as this was the first festival of its kind and it has given a good bench mark for future years. Gervase Phinn drew in the majority of participants with over 600 while Ian McMillan had an audience of 200, with the workshops attracting about 200 participants. As Gervase Phinn was nearly sold out and many of the workshops proved very popular, it is reasonable to say that the festival was a success in terms of participation.

Lessons learnt:

- 6.2 As no outcomes were projected it is difficult to evaluate against any thing other than the general objective. It was not possible to monitor the age range and ethnic breakdown of participants so it is difficult to give a detailed picture of who attended and which part of the programme appealed to which group.

Recommendations

Future events should:

- I. Agree a target audience at the planning stages of the event.
- II. Agree outputs in terms of number of participants
- III. Have agreed monitoring frameworks

7.0 The Festival Weekend

7.1 The actual organisation on the day was well thought out with a clear timetable of activity this was due to strong organisations skills of individuals and several preparation meetings running up to the event. There were no real hitches and certainly nothing that could have been prevented with extra preparation. On the day the smooth running of the event benefited from having volunteers from the Area Management Team, local students and individuals to direct members of the public. The drinks reception hosted by the Mayor and Mayoress of Morley Councillor Bob and Lesley Gettings was very well received and contributed to the sense of occasion over the weekend. Morley Town Hall attracted praise as a venue for the festival with many of those attending remarking that it was one of the highlights of the weekend as they got the chance to explore the town hall and its architectural elegance. Volunteer stewards also worked hard out on the streets of Morley directing people to the library events as well as the town hall.

Lessons learnt:

7.2 Several participants commented upon the physical appearance of the library as it was currently being refurbished and had scaffolding up. In future it may be wise to only use buildings that are fully operational as the appearance may deter participants in the future from returning. It may also be worth considering using several venues in the town rather than just the town hall in order to make it feel like a whole town event rather than a Morley Town Hall event. The use of other venues should be considered in the light of the proposed festival programme.

7.3 Some issues did arise with regard to the staffing of the town hall, as on both evenings temporary stewards appointed arrived without having had any briefing as to the event and permanent members of the town hall staff went absent at short notice due to sickness and family commitments. These staff had been built into the operational requirements and so we were left short staffed. It is not possible to say what the consequences might have been had there had been an emergency, but suitable cover arrangements should be put in place in future. The organising committee relied upon the health and safety procedures currently used for the building. Again it is not known how suitable this was. It was suggested that refreshments should be made available at future events. This could be used as further income generation.

Recommendations

Future events should:

- I. Consider the use of other venues across the town
- II. Engage more fully with LCC Civic Buildings
- III. Consider more fully any health & safety requirements
- IV. Consider the provision of refreshments

8.0 Evaluation of Event and Participants Views

8.1 An evaluation card was distributed, but again because outcomes and objectives had not been drawn together at the planning stage it was difficult to decide what exactly to evaluate. However it was agreed to get a general overview from those attending. The questions asked included:

- How did you hear about the festival?
- Which event/ workshop did you attend?
- What did you particularly enjoy about the workshop/ event?
- Did you dislike any part of the workshop/ event?
- Any ideas suggestions for future events?

8.2 Over 100 evaluation cards were returned which gave a 10% consultation which is enough to give a representative view.

- 8.3 33% of those who attended heard about the festival through newspaper coverage while 19 % got to hear about the festival by word of mouth. This confirms the positive link between the coverage provide by the Morley Observer and other regional publications.
- 8.4 There was no trend in people dislikes although a few comments highlighted uncomfortable chairs in the Alexander Hall. In terms of suggestion for future events there were a few general themes. Firstly, participants would like to see more publicity and advertising material and encouragingly 27% simply felt that “More of the same “should be provided next year. Several participants suggested speakers for next year, to include: Tony Blair, Ian Clayton, John Godber, Alan Titchmarsh, Luke Grey and John Hegley. Comments about individual workshops and future suggestions should be looked at in more detail when planning the next event.

Recommendations

Future events should:

- I. Have agreed monitoring frameworks
- II. Be fully evaluated against agreed objectives.

9.0 Budget

9.1

Expenditure Item	Cost
Guest Speakers	£1,325
Education Leeds	£2,745
Room Hire	£2,053.50
Photocopying	£412.00
PA equipment Hire	£825.00
Morley Knowledge Ad	£180.00
Banner	£95.00
Stewards	£200.00
Refreshments	£20
Poetry Prizes	£225
Sub Total	£8,080.50
Income	
Ticket Sales	£1044
Sponsorship	£500
Morley Town Council	£1000
Bertrams ‘In Kind’	£225
Sub Total	£2,759.00
Balance	£5,311.50

Lessons learnt:

- 9.2 A budget was not agreed in advance of the festival and therefore it is difficult to consider if best value was achieved. This has great impact on several things including ticket price, sponsorship and match funding.

Recommendations

Future events should:

- I. Have a budget approved at stage one
- II. Allow for contingency and management costs
- III. Investigate possible match funders

10.0 Summary of key points and recommendations

10.1 General Organisation

Future events should:

1. Provide a clear project proposal including budget
2. Identify outcomes linking into the Area Committee's, partner agencies and corporate priorities
3. Constitute an Organising Committee with terms of reference
4. Establish strong leadership and consider the appointment of a festival director
5. Create stronger links with schools and other key groups.

10.2 Publicity, Marketing and Sponsorship

Future events should:

1. Agree a marketing strategy and budget early the planning process
2. Agree accountability and ownership for the marketing strategy.
3. Agree a festival brand with clear links to proposed outcomes.
4. Consider the date of the festival and how this affects marketing.
5. Agree a strategy for maximising sponsorship opportunities

10.3 Content of Festival

Future events should:

1. Have a clear vision or theme

10.4 Participation

Future events should:

1. Agree a target audience at the planning stages of the event.
2. Agree outputs in terms of number of participants
3. Have agreed monitoring frameworks

10.5 The Festival Weekend

Future events should:

1. Consider the use of other venues across the town
2. Engage more fully with LCC Civic Buildings
3. Consider more fully any health & safety requirements
4. Consider the provision of refreshments

10.6 Budget

Future events should:

1. Have a budget approved at stage one
2. Allow for contingency and management costs
3. Investigate possible match funders

10.7 Case Studies Appendix One

1. All three festivals have a director employed full or part time to organise the festival
2. All three festivals have a several funders and sponsors to contribute towards the cost of the event.

10.8 Recommendations:

Members of the Outer South Area Committee are requested to:

- (a). Note the contents of this report and consider any actions
- (b). Congratulates the Morley Literature Festival Organising Committee on the success the event
- (c). Support in principle the continuation of the Morley Literature Festival
- (d). Give approval for monies to be released from the Area Committee budget to cover costs associated with the festival
- (e). Agree to receive a report at the next meeting which will take account of section 10.0 above and provide detailed options for the future organisation of the Morley Literature Festival