

**REPORT TO THE MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE****PORTFOLIO: ENTERPRISE****REPORT FROM ACTING MANAGING DIRECTOR****SUBJECT: DISCOVER 2020 – 200 YEARS OF HMS BEAGLE****1 DECISION BEING RECOMMENDED**

To note the plans for the recreation of the Council-led “Beagle Event” Project and to agree that the Portfolio Holder with responsibility for Tourism works with the Acting Managing Director to achieve a suitable commemoration for 2021.

**2 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION**

- 2.1 The report of the Council’s Projects/Programme Management Office to the Executive on 8 July 2020 noted that the planned May 2020 event at the Freight House in Rochford which would be free to enter for members of the public – the “Discover 2020 – 200 years of HMS Beagle” (the “Beagle Event”) had been postponed due to COVID 19 restrictions. It was hoped that the Beagle Event could be recreated in summer/early autumn 2021 but this would be dependent upon the volunteers and contributors being able to participate. It was agreed that the matter should come back to the Executive in December 2020 for a decision to be taken regarding the future of the Beagle Event.

**3 SALIENT INFORMATION**

- 3.1 A review of the deliverability of the Beagle Event has taken place in order to confirm whether the Beagle Event can be delivered in 2021.

**Venue**

- 3.2 The Beagle Event was due to take place at the Freight House in Rochford: comprising an exhibition inside the building with outside displays and stalls in the grounds and car parking area. An enclosed building is necessary to house the artefacts, displays and audio-visual events planned. The Freight House is now closed as a financial consequence of COVID 19 and whilst the exhibition could be moved to the Mill Arts & Events Centre in Rayleigh, this venue too is in jeopardy of closure because of the pandemic. It is not possible for logistic and health and safety reasons to simply re-open these venues for the Beagle Event, so an alternative venue would need to be found.
- 3.3 If an alternative venue can be found locally, planning to use that venue, even for summer/autumn 2021 will have to take into account the implications of COVID 19. We hope that restrictions will be relaxed significantly by that time but we cannot say what restrictions will remain. It is a fact that COVID 19 will continue to present logistical challenges for event organisation, especially for indoor venues, even when a vaccine is available. It is a new risk that we will

have to factor into planning. What is clear is that we will have to plan for fewer visitors indoors.

### **Volunteers**

- 3.4 Everyone involved in the Beagle Event is a volunteer - the contributors, the exhibitors, and those working on the ground to ensure smooth operation. These are mostly people from third sector charitable and voluntary organisations and academic institutions as part of community outreach programmes of those organisations. These are areas which have been significantly financially impacted by COVID 19 and we have been informed by key collaborators that they will not be able to support a reprised event. So although there are some exhibitors who will be able to contribute, the new event will be much smaller and will be for a single day, rather than the whole weekend originally planned.
- 3.5 We will need to rely on members of the public to volunteer to support a new event. Evidence from the pandemic is that community spirit is high and we are reasonably optimistic that we could tap into that community spirit to recruit additional support to assist with logistics.

### **Public Interest**

- 3.6 The ethos behind the Beagle Event was to use the bicentenary commemoration to raise the profile of the district through its association with the ship; and to promote all the district's heritage assets to the visitor economy. Historic England listed the mud-dock at Paglesham as a scheduled monument and in addition, the Council funded heritage interpretation at RSPB Wallasea Island.
- 3.7 We have also promoted the HMS Beagle connection through the radio, local press and the launch of the National Lottery funded CGI project. The evidence is that HMS Beagle has sparked interest with the public. Initial data from our social media shows 77.2k total reach, 26.2k impressions and 317 link clicks. To date we have issued 40 posts to promote the web tour. We have had engagement from across the globe including the US, Australia, Singapore, Denmark, Russia, Ukraine, Italy, Germany.
- 3.8 Most commemorations nationally have been postponed but public interest would appear to be strong in terms of having something to look forward to; especially something local which is accessible and supports local businesses. Had Discover 2020 taken place, there would have been a plethora of local events and commemorations which would have all promoted the district's rich heritage. There is merit, therefore, in considering combining the HMS Beagle commemoration with another event or events to reach a wider, more diverse audience.

**Cost**

- 3.9 A total of £3503.10 has been spent out of the £15,000 budget allocated to the project as set out in the table below.

Hire of Freight House	£2,083.33
The Ostrich and the Dolphin Play	£400
Discover 2020 Lapel Pins	£423
Design Programme	£238.42
Scanning of posters	£31.50
Advertising Banner	£35
Prizes (Darwin Book)	£123.85
Printing of Posters	£168
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>£3,503.10</b>

- 3.10 £441.42 is identified as irrecoverable sunk costs. This relates to costs of design and printing promotional material which is no longer required and cannot be reused.

Design Programme	£238.42
Advertising Banner	£35
Printing of Posters	£168
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>£441.42</b>

- 3.11 Darwin Books and badges were sent to the winners of the poster competition, Class 7BS of King Edmund School, Rochford.
- 3.12 If the Beagle Event is reinstated to a different date in 2021, then the balance of the committed spend (£2937.83) can be mitigated by re-use in a reconvened event and a refund of the hiring fee. The unspent balance of the budget (£11,496.90) remains available for use.

**Conclusion**

- 3.13 There is a strong argument to proceed with a much smaller commemoration of the district's association with HMS Beagle as a large event is probably not achievable at the current time. If this commemoration can be combined with another event to share economies of scale and achieve a wider audience, then that would be the preferred option. It is recommended that the Portfolio Holder with responsibility for Tourism works with the Acting Managing Director to achieve this.

**4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 4.1 The alternative is to cancel the Beagle Event and return the balance of the unspent budget to general reserves.

**5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 These are set out in paragraphs 3.9 to 3.12 of the report.

**6 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

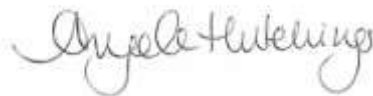
- 6.1 None arising out of this report.

**7 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 An Equality Impact Assessment will be completed as part of the reconvened plans.

I confirm that the above recommendation does not depart from Council policy and that appropriate consideration has been given to any budgetary and legal implications.

LT Lead Officer Signature: \_\_\_\_\_



**Acting Managing Director**

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**Background Papers:-**

None.

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