

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE JUST FESTIVAL REPORT TO ST MATTHEW'S PCC

Festival objectives

- The objective of the Just Festival Westminster, as agreed with the PCC's Standing Committee, was to 'discuss humanitarian/social justice issues and provide cultural events and entertainment'.
- The Just Festival Westminster 2015 was the first full-scale festival across two venues and should be viewed as a pilot for the future. It should be acknowledged by the PCC that a lot was achieved in a comparatively short time. 23 separate individual events plus a few repeated performances (e.g. Simply Soweto – 3 performances) were held across eleven days and across two venues, St Matthew's, Westminster and St Mary-le-Strand, which covered all the elements agreed with the Standing Committee. Given the variety of the events, it can be concluded that the festival programme did meet its objectives.

Benefits

- Total income, inclusive of sponsorship, £7282. Total cost of festival was £9695, of which the largest proportion was the Director's fee. Net contribution of £2413 by PCC. Had planning for the festival started much earlier in 2014, there would have been more time to plan and organise sponsorship.
- Non-financial benefits – a total of 645 people attended the events. In terms of attendance figures, the 'Bach to Baby' was by far the most popular event.
- Charitable giving - Over £400 was raised in aid of 'Iraqi Christians in Need' through subsequent retiring collections. One of the volunteers was offered a job as a result of sketching at events.

Organisation

- The festival committee held regular meetings with the Festival Director, Katherine Newbigging from January 2015 – June 2015. The festival director attended PCC meetings to present progress reports. The Committee members acted in an advisory capacity while the Director undertook the vast proportion of the required tasks. A detailed project plan, risks and issues' register and programme were presented to the Festival committee. No contingency time was included in the festival plan. The Director was also working for the Bloomsbury Festival at a critical time in the organisation of the Just Festival Westminster and then was working full-time for this festival in June.
- Marketing: Event pricing - apart from the cooking events, all the events were priced <£20. Most of the publicity was done via the internet using social media and websites. Promotion of the festival needed to be started earlier with the St Matthew's congregation. Sign-off of the programme by the PCC was later than scheduled which had a negative impact on the organisation of the marketing. This was due to the fact that the original programme drafted by the Director needed to be amended considerably to meet the objectives of the festival. Attendance at events varied from 3 to about 100.
- Volunteers – recruited from local agencies in central London by the Director, the volunteers worked well. The festival had very little impact luckily on the day to day work of parish administrator and the Director worked very conscientiously to ensure that events ran as smoothly as possible.

Risks and issues A very comprehensive risks and issues register was presented to the Festival Committee prior to the festival, based on lessons learned from the Just Festival in Edinburgh. Security was an issue during the discussions about programming. Security issues of a more practical nature were raised during several events at St Matthew's when a homeless person repeatedly entered the church during events and was disruptive. The police had to be called on one occasion in order for him to be removed.

Lessons learned – a full list of lessons learned is appended to this report.

Lessons Learned from the Just Festival Westminster 2015

The most critical learning point was that much more time is required to stage a festival on this scale. This was a common theme running through a number of key tasks which needed to be completed.

- Allow sufficient time for work on setting up, communicating and agreeing the programme.
- Receive feedback on programme from PCC via email to speed up process
- Concurrent events should be planned carefully; don't plan too many events as support will be limited . (Tickets sales corroborate this finding) 23 events over 10 days was very concentrated given the amount of work involved in organising just one event which attracts a large audience.
- Timing – weekday events should start between 6 – 6.30pm Later events deter commuters – core target market around St Matthew's and St Mary's in particular.
- Obtain adequate levels of sponsorship much earlier
- More time to identify potential income streams e.g. Foodstore outside the churches
- Marketing to be planned more strategically to ensure all media are ready well in advance of the start of the festival to raise awareness e.g. printed material
- Marketing leaflet for events targeting children/young people/families
- Present programme to congregation verbally and visually well in advance e.g. display in narthex/hall on Sundays – essential to win the hearts and minds of the congregation .Open up festival to wider community but acknowledge feedback so as not to 'lose' the congregation.
- All previous sponsors, however small the donation should always be contacted the following year.
- Security needs to be considered very carefully comprising different scenarios in the next risk register, and police contacted in advance of the festival
- Be aware of other major events taking place and impact of them e.g. Trooping the Colour – transport implications
- Key to determine prior to any future festival – what does the PCC **want**? What does the church **need**? This is important in relation to programme planning so that there is a clear consensus , agreed by the PCC at the outset. Full and frank discussion is needed before embarking on another festival with input from everyone. A festival should tie in with the church's Mission Action Plan for ongoing outreach of the churches and school
- A festival should allow for varied levels of engagement within the congregation
- Buy-in is essential from the PCC and followed up by physical support by PCC members of a wide range of events.
- A festival on this scale needs a longer lead time ideally.

**Jane Kennedy on behalf of the Just Festival Committee ,
St Matthew's, Westminster.
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