

MRWF 2019 AGM - Chair's report

Kate Collins

The Mill Road Winter Fair is a very big event, which many people don't realise is entirely managed by a small group of volunteers. A very BIG thank you to everyone who helped to make the 2019 Fair such a success. It was a relatively smooth process, not least because of some fantastic team work along the way. In particular we all benefited from Freya's involvement - as volunteer coordinator; she brought new ideas and motivation.

As in previous years, we have benefitted enormously from professional advice on safety issues from Eddie Barcan at Splendid Events and I'd like to record our sincere thanks for all his work and hands-on support.

Some things we did differently, that worked:

- **Communications** - we changed the big book-style brochure to a new fold-out leaflet. Having talked to all our sponsors, we realised that nobody was wedded to the book and it was expensive. We lost a small amount of advertising revenue, but the new style brochure was very well received. A massive thank you to Georgia King at Georgia King Design for her pro bono work on the graphic design and to Susie Biller and Donna Powell for their expert help.
- **Website** - we made the shift to a mobile website. Thank you to Tom for a huge amount of behind the scenes work to ensure we went 'live' in time for the Fair
- **Mill Road Fringe** - we produced (again with Georgia's help) a simple leaflet early on to advertise our key email addresses and set the scene for our first Fringe event, which, thanks to Jake, was a big success. We have plans to expand our Fringe activities in the run up to the 2020 fair.
- **Mill Road Winter Fair stall and street collection buckets** - both successful initiatives
- **Parties** - we had more, better organised fun, with a launch party for the team - Committee, working groups and sponsors and a follow up party the day after the Fair, for volunteers

Things that we know we need to work on, so that we get them right for the 2020 Fair:

- **Waste strategy** - The ONLY negative feedback received from the public following the 2019 Fair was about waste. This is similar to previous years. In 2019 we massively improved our waste management by partnering with *Greater Cambridge Shared Waste* (GCSW), a strategic partnership between Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council, which provided more bins and more people to clear them, but there were two problems that we'd like to address for next year:
 - *Bins were not always used effectively* - many with lids were not opened and people put waste on top rather than in the bins; the

big bins weren't in places where the main rubbish accumulated so small bins were overflowing

- *Food contamination* - it's not possible to recycle any of the food/drink containers thrown away at the fair because they are too contaminated - so there is no point in attempting to separate recycling from general waste

We will explore ways to improve and are considering how we might encourage people to bring their own re-usable containers to the Fair and whether/how we can promote the use of containers and utensils which are made of compostable materials. Ideally we would also separate general and compostable waste, but this will depend on what is feasible for GCSW.

- **Coordination with the Council's Safety Advisory Group** - there was some confusion over specific advice on set-back distances for stalls on pavements and we need to be clearer in our advice to shopkeepers - about what is needed and why.
- **Anglia Ruskin University** - ARU is one of our valued sponsors and also provides our biggest indoor venue, but last year footfall was lower at ARU than we'd like and we're considering options and ideas - maybe an ARU student stage and possibly an ARU marquee on Petersfield.
- **Website** - we'd like to do a lot more - to celebrate the Fair, promote our fringe events and also promote partners and sponsors, as well as providing the info and forms to make it function - depends on whether we have sufficient volunteer manpower.

Finally, to follow up on one of the actions from the minutes of last year's AGM, we are still planning to look carefully at our governance and specifically the option to convert from an unincorporated community organisation to a community interest company. The advantages are that this would reduce the liability of the committee and enable us to apply for grants, but it would also impose some restrictions on membership.

A parallel project is of relevance in this context - we are setting up a new registered charity, which will take on and expand the work of the Suzy Oakes Trust. It will be called Love Mill Road and will be a focus for donations and volunteering, with the aim of supporting local community projects and opportunities for community engagement. We anticipate that some components of the fair might be funded via Love Mill Road.