

APPENDIX 4 CIVIC AND COMMUNITIES EVENTS FRAMEWORK

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 Civic and Communities events celebrate, commemorate, and recognise the diverse communities of Waltham Forest. They have been delivered by the Council for many years and are an important part of the Council's role in fostering community cohesion.
- 1.2 There was no formal process for determining which events took place, and how they were resourced. A new approach was needed in a context of diminishing financial resources.
- 1.3 A revised approach and framework were successfully piloted in 2024, following internal and external engagement. The refreshed programme focused on 6 strategic, council-led Civic and Communities events for 2024, alongside a Fellowship Fund to enable community-led events and celebrations.
- 1.4 This paper sets out an overview of the 2024 programme and establishes a clear approach and framework for subsequent years.

2 COMMUNITIES AND CIVIC EVENTS FRAMEWORK

- 2.1 This framework has been developed from an analysis of current issues, extensive research and engagement. More details can be found in Appendix at the end of this paper.
- 2.2 The framework's objectives are to outline a formal process for Civic and Communities events, to:
 - 2.2.1 Celebrate, commemorate, and recognise our diverse communities.
 - 2.2.2 Increase social cohesion through events that bring community groups together.
 - 2.2.3 Respond to a reduction in resources available for council-led events.
- 2.3 The framework parameters
 - 2.3.1 **Number of strategic, council-led events:** there will be 4-6 Civic and Communities events delivered by the Council every year.
 - 2.3.2 **Purpose of strategic, council-led events:**
 - 2.3.2.1 These events will focus on fostering social cohesion, bringing different community groups together. For example, Faith Fest celebrated all faiths in the borough, as an alternative to individual faith events.
 - 2.3.2.2 These events include observations of past events.

- 2.3.2.3 These events will always be free to attend. Tickets may apply to manage numbers.
- 2.3.2.4 If events include market operators and food and drink providers, at least 70% of them should be local.
- 2.3.2 **Community-led events:** a Fellowship Fund will offer grants to the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS), so that community-led events can be delivered across the borough.
- 2.3.3 **Lead:** the Communities team will organise and deliver the Civic and Communities events and the Fellowship Fund.
- 2.3.4 **Location(s):** the majority of the Civic and Communities events for 2024 took place at Fellowship Square (see 4.1). Different locations across the borough will be considered for future events. Events at Fellowship Square will need to follow the Fellowship Square events parameters (Appendix 3).
- 2.3.5 **Approval process:** the detail of the Civic and Communities events programme will be approved by January every year, by the Cabinet member for Culture, Libraries and Sports and Leisure.

3 COMMUNITIES AND CIVIC EVENTS 2024

- 3.1 The 6 Civic and Communities events for 2024 were:
 - (1) Windrush Festival – June 2024, Fellowship Square (it was agreed this is to be moved to a community-led event(s) funded through the Fellowship Fund in community settings after 2024)
 - (2) Pride Festival – July 2024, Fellowship Square
 - (3) Faith Fest – August 2024, Fellowship Square
 - (4) Community Day – September 2024, Fellowship Square
 - (5) Remembrance Sunday – November 2024, 4 parades and ceremonies, in Walthamstow (Fellowship Square), Chingford, Leyton and Leytonstone
 - (6) Holocaust Memorial Day Ceremony – January 2025, Fellowship Square
- 3.2 Events 1-4 welcomed 8250 attendees & participants with 80 community partners including voluntary, community and faith organisations taking part. 350 young people took an active role in the events, such as performing; and 22 benefitted from paid employment.
- 3.3 The Fellowship Fund awarded grant funding to 31 VCS groups to deliver events, resulting in over 50 free events and workshops which celebrate equalities, including heritage and culture, religious festivals, disabilities and LGBTQ+ communities.

4 CONCLUSION

- 4.1 A revised framework and process is proposed for Civic and Communities events in Waltham Forest, limiting the number of events delivered, removing inequalities, and improving social cohesion. This was successfully piloted in 2024, following internal and external engagement. The refreshed programme focused on 6 multi-cultural events and civic services for 2024, alongside a Fellowship Fund to enable community-led events and celebrations.

APPENDIX

1: ISSUES

A new approach to Civic and Communities events was needed due to ongoing issues and resource pressures (budget and officer time).

- There was no formal process for determining which civic, communities and equalities events are celebrated, or how these are resourced with staff and financial investment.
- There was a perception of inequality and unfairness around which events are supported and to what degree.
- Over 130 civic, communities and equalities events were supported in 2023-24.
- Events have differing levels of support from members, community groups and residents. Due to changes to members and the borough's demographics over the years, events that were once well supported are no longer championed.
- Requests for events are often last minute, moving officer resource from council priorities and incurring higher budget requirements due to the last-minute requests.
- There is no defined budget for staffing or the grants programme, leading to operational challenges whilst seeking funding. Budget pressures mean funding availability is likely to decline.
- Waltham Forest has limited budget to dedicate towards civic, communities and equalities events already, and it is therefore imperative that this is focused where it will have most impact

2: RESEARCH AND ENGAGEMENT

RESEARCH

- The Council's programme of civic, communities and equalities events should reflect the representation of different community groups in the borough.

- To ensure this is the case, data from the recent 2021 census has been reviewed across the categories of National Identity, Ethnic Group, Country of Birth, Religion and Sexual Orientation.
- This data has been cross referenced with previously held civic, communities & equalities events.
- This exercise has found that certain faith groups and nationalities which are in the top demographics of the borough have not been fairly represented with civic, communities & equalities events, for example:
- of our 4 largest faith populations are Christians (108630), Hindus (5155) and Buddhists (1834), but we do not fund or celebrate any of these religious festivals.
- Whilst independence days for Antigua-Barbuda and Dominica are included, other Caribbean nationalities are not. This includes Jamaica, which is the biggest Caribbean majority in the borough.

ENGAGEMENT

- The communities team undertook an engagement exercise with community stakeholders through a series of meetings, workshops and surveys, to identify what events are important to them and how to reach the diverse communities of our borough.
- Groups engaged with include: The Community Resilience Alliance, Voluntary and Community sector partners, Faith Communities, Young People (Youth Advisors & YIAG's), Staff Equalities Network.
- The engagement recommendations were:
 - Move to cultural and faith exchange events instead of hosting individual celebrations.
 - Aside from key strategic events, hold a separate pot of funding available for faith/ culture community events across the borough.
 - Develop a strategy for involving young people in event development and attendance.
 - Work with comms on a stronger, clearer comms plan that reaches more widely.
 - Work on accessibility to events, considering intersectionality.
 - Communicate changes and final events calendar to Community Groups
 - Cancel national flag raising events & ceremonies due to costs, lack of fairness and to improve community cohesion.
- The following teams have been engaged with the proposal and agree with what is proposed: Culture, Communications, Communities, Customer Strategy & Digital, Strategy & Change, Deputy Chief Exec and the council's senior leadership team.

3: FELLOWSHIP SQUARE (FSQ) EVENTS PARAMETERS

- The whole of Fellowship Square may be closed to facilitate the agreed community & civic events.
- Entry to FSQ will always be free for Civic and Communities Events. Tickets (registration) may apply to manage numbers to large Council funded events.
- Market operators and F&B providers will be invited to trade alongside scheduled events. At least 70% of traders must be from the borough.
- Protests or demonstrations will not be prevented but managed in accordance with Council practices, including through liaison with the Community Safety Team and presenting events to the Safety Advisory Group. The Event Manager will be responsible for any decisions to manage this during the event.
- Events celebrating religious festival or holidays are not permitted but multi faith events will be planned as part of the schedule of civic events.
- Council Teams are not permitted to run standalone events and should be part of the annual schedule of civic & community events
- Events outside these parameters can be agreed by The Leader of the Council and CEO.