

## **Artisan Market**

With the creation of the Mindfulness Garden, we are obviously losing the majority of our available space for Artisan Market Stalls, and having tried various configurations over the past months we have come to the conclusion that keeping the majority in Upper Brook Street works best. There will be space for 6 stalls in Brook Square, so from this point onwards, Upper Brook Street will become the focal point of Artisan Saturdays.

It has also been commented on that the stall holders find the inclusion of entertainment in the form of Buskers, Face-painters or balloon modelers really improves footfall on the day, and although some entertainment has been weather dependent, we would like to include something at each market to help encourage people to spend more time, and utilizing our Gazebo space in wet weather.

### *Recommendation*

Cllrs are asked to consider looking at a budget to provide regular 'entertainment' at each market. We currently have provision for a fee of £60 for a busker, but this will not cover the costs of other forms of entertainment. Face-painters and Balloon Modelers range from £150-£200 per 3 hours.

## **External Power**

Just an update on the installation of the external power sockets outside businesses in the town – as previously discussed we are coming up against issues trying to get hold of building owners to progress this. The only one we have been successful in fitting so far is on Cllr Cooney's building, which is controlled inside. This will be beneficial for our Christmas Lights event and will allow us to utilize our new generator in another part of town.

## **Ukrainian Welcome Event**

Last Wednesday we held a Welcome event in the Theatre for our Ukrainian Guests. This consisted of representatives from the Community Church who advised on community groups and facilities available for them in Rugeley – waiving any costs to the visitors for anything they wish to become involved with. The Citizens Advice Bureau also brought many representatives, covering a vast array of subject areas from benefits advice to mental health support. The Lions were also in attendance offering advice, and support.

Many of our Ukrainian guests are now beginning to struggle with their mental health, and after a long conversation with one particular guest, she updated me on their current state of mind as a collective. It seems that many Ukrainians came to the UK believing that this would be a short-term solution to a problem that would be resolved within a few months, however it is becoming more and more obvious to them that this move could have much longer term implications. The news coming out of Ukraine is obviously devastating, and they very much look at the war as Genocide. They are witnessing the bombing of hospitals and schools and coming to terms with the likelihood that when they are able to return home, whenever that may be, they will have no homes to go back to.

Mental Health support is vital at this stage, and we are encouraging them to seek GP appointments as soon as possible. Lack of employment is also adding to this burden, as having 'too much time' on your hands, obviously feeds poor mental health, so any knowledge of local employment opportunities which would be suitable, would be very welcome.

Many thanks to Cllr Stanley for his support with communications with the host families for our Ukrainian guests.

### **Theatre Upgrade**

Quite a lot of time has been taken this month with the ongoing restorative work in the Rose Theatre. If you haven't had an opportunity to have a look, please do.

### **Wedding Fair**

We have identified Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> October as a date to hold a Wedding Fair in the Rose Theatre, from 11am – 3pm.

There are multiple aims to holding this event, the first being as an opportunity to showcase the Theatre as a wedding venue in its own right. The cosmetic renovations are well underway and have made a significant improvement to the look and feel of the theatre environment. These updates will obviously be completed before the wedding fair takes place.

We will dress parts of the theatre in wedding themes and layouts, allowing guests to envisage the space as a plausible venue. This event will also give local businesses and artisans an additional sales and growth opportunity. We will be selling space at the fair to vendors to promote the wedding-centric sides of their businesses and making sure that we have representation from all aspects of the growing wedding event business.

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We will offer space to our local Rugeley businesses at a reduced rate. We will also be giving each attendee a goody bag, which will be made up of donations from exhibitors, but we will also be engaging with our town centre non-wedding businesses for special offers and vouchers to be used in our town centre shops to promote visits into the town centre by people who are visiting Rugeley for the event, or to encourage repeat visits to our town.

