

Item 102
Chase Pride

Background

Earlier this year, Full Council heard from the organisers of Chase Pride which was due to take place in Hednesford in 2022 and Rugeley in 2023. The Town Council have received the following email from the Chase Pride Organisers:

Since I was last with you, we've been busy evaluating sites in Rugeley to hold Chase Pride 2023. Turnout for Chase Pride was higher than we expected, with 5500 people joining the event, alongside a parade attendance of 400 and with 1000 member of the public lining the streets to watch. Given the huge amount of post event publicity we received, we're expecting that to grow again next year.

Unfortunately, we haven't managed to find a location in Rugeley which meets the needs of such a large audience and an event of our nature. We've evaluated Ravenhill Park, however this presents accessibility challenges for our inclusive event, with insufficient space on flat terrain for two stages and a funfair due to the rolling hills. We're also concerned about the lack of parking facilities, the proximity of nearby residential properties, and public transport connectivity. We've also evaluated Hagley Fields and the Leisure Centre - a great sized space, but given it's incorporated into the towns flood defences and designed to retain/slowly release storm water, we feel this presents a significant risk to the event should we have an overly wet year. The proximity of residential properties is again a problem, along with emergency access/egress challenges for a large audience. Having talked through options with the District Council, we have concluded that at the present time Hednesford Park remains the best place to hold the event for 2023.

I can appreciate that this will come as a disappointment to your Members, who like me would have been looking forwards to the benefits of Pride spreading through the district. On a positive note, we were supported this year by Gregory Bryant of Rugeley, and a large number of Rugeley residents. The feedback from all regarding 2022 has been overwhelmingly positive, and many have told us that they think Hednesford Park was the perfect setting for the event and they're looking forwards to 2023 – so hopefully for the Rugeley LGBTQ+ community, there will be nothing but excitement. We will naturally put out a press release regarding the chosen location for 2023 in due course.

In our discussion with the leaders of the District Council, we also talked about the afterparties and fringe events which publicans in Cannock and Hednesford ran which saw them benefit from Chase Pride – it would be great to see more businesses in Rugeley getting involved too. This may be something which Cllr Lyons and the District Councils new LGBTQ+ Ambassador, Cllr Josh Bancroft, can assist with promoting along with other initiatives for the local LGBTQ+ community.

Hope that provides a useful update for your members.