

Community Services Committee

Title:	Thame Town Awards 2024
Date:	10 September 2024
Contact Officer:	Belinda Lee, Communications & Events Officer (Maternity Cover)

Purpose of the Report

To receive feedback on the 2024 Town Awards and to consider changes for next year.

Background

- The Town Awards were introduced in 2009 to recognise those who have made outstanding contributions to the town. The awards were also established to promote community spirit.
- In 2024, the Awards Panel consisted of six members, representing businesses, churches, schools, community support groups, sports clubs, and emergency services, and included the Community Services Chairman, with support from Officers as required. The Town Mayor also advised the panel of his Special Award.

Nominations

- This year's nomination period ran from 15 April 2024 to 17 June 2024.
- The panel met on 27 June to agree the winners:
 - Sporting Contribution – Ashley Roff
 - Service with a Smile – Monkey Puzzle
 - Volunteer of the Year – Martin Davis
 - Creative Arts Achievement – James McCann
 - Company of the Year – Morrisons Daily
 - Mayor's Special Award – John Hulett
- Overall, total nomination numbers significantly increased on previous years (Nb. 111 of these were for one individual/35 for another).

	2021	2022	2023	2024
No. of total nominations	75	70	40	368
No. of valid nominations	70	58	31	326
No. of invalid nominations	5	12	9	42
No. of people / organisations nominated	40	50	25	92
Online nominations	69	67	39	365
Hard-copy nominations	6	3	1	3

- The panel were pleased with this year's numbers and nominations, although it was thought some categories could be better defined in future. Some community groups were nominated in the Company of... and Volunteer of the Year categories. It was felt they needed their own category (Community Group of the Year). Recognition for those selected as 'back-up' was also recommended.

Publicity

7. A range of publicity tools were used including:
- Social media – including the Town Council’s Facebook / Instagram, the Town Awards Facebook page, and the ‘Love Thame’ Facebook group.
 - Town Council’s website and weekly newsletter.
 - Posters / leaflets in the Information Centre, noticeboards, and various locations around the town including shops, café’s, dentists, sports venues, and pubs.
 - Radio slots bi-weekly on Red Kite Radio talking about how to vote, and the categories.
 - **Post-Event Publicity:** In addition to the Council’s website, newsletter & social platforms, the awards night also received media coverage on Red Kite Radio and in the Oxford Mail - <https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/24462595.community-members-recognised-thame-town-awards-event/>

Awards Ceremony & Timelines

8. The winners and their guests were invited to a presentation evening at the Thame Barns Centre on 18 July 2024, where the Town Mayor presented the Awards with the help of his cadet Luke Smits. Members of the Town Awards panel, sponsor representatives, and Town Council Officers & Councillors were also invited to attend. A complimentary drink and light buffet was served. The event was well attended.

Feedback / Recommendations for 2024

9. The panel and Officers were asked for their feedback. Feedback is also welcome from this committee, so it can be fed into the first panel meeting in January/February 2025.
- **Nomination form:** To be reviewed. The panel thought some of the categories could be better defined so the public were clear about whether they were voting for an individual, business, or community group. Panel members also requested that the organisations they personally represent, and not only their names, be included in future years. With so few paper nomination forms received it was thought that the nomination process be driven 100% online in future.
 - **Number of nominations:** The panel were impressed with the number of nominations received this year. The question was asked, if numbers were to increase, if there could be a pre-judging process, whereby the panel receive the cream of the crop for judging. It was felt that the judging process itself was difficult this year, due to the volume of nominations.
 - **Publicity:** The panel felt some of those nominated, besides the winner, should receive recognition. The (relief) Communications & Events Officer proposed a short list of three or four nominees be listed in each category as ‘finalists’, with the award winners not being revealed (even to the winners) until the awards presentation evening. It would enable additional promotional opportunities, whereby each ‘finalist’ could be showcased on social media etc., increasing overall excitement and public engagement in the event.
 - **Panel:** New panel members may need to be recruited, depending on how many remain on the panel in 2025.
 - **Terms of Reference:** Award categories, panel selection, budget, sponsorship of overall awards and individual awards to be reviewed and any changes to be reported to the Community Services Committee.
 - **Aesthetics:** The overall aesthetic of this year’s awards was well received and could be applied to next year’s event.

- **Awards Ceremony:** A number of those who had attended previously, commented that the theatre style seating and overall set-up of the venue with the full-wall backdrop was a 'step-up' on previous years. It was noted that in future years we might consider hiring the Thame Barns Centre event back-drop (£50) which features in-built lighting.
- **Overall Feedback:** The feedback from all who attended was very positive. Sponsors who attended thought it was a wonderful event and indicated that they would want to partake again in future years. Social media feedback was also very positive, with most agreeing that this year's winners were well chosen.
- **Future Recommendations:** A number of people mentioned after the event, including directly to the Mayor, that in future, a number of nominees (i.e. top 3) could be invited to the awards ceremony, so that the announcement of the winner would be a surprise – and those shortlisted would also be recognised as finalists. It was also noted that the QR codes in shop windows gave the impression that only businesses could be nominated. Something we might need to address next year to ensure people know that individuals can also be nominated.

Resource Appraisal

10. Income – The awards were partially funded thanks to sponsorship from The HR Agency, Care UK, BP Collins, The Line Manager & Pentangle @ £200 each – totalling £1000.
11. Expenditure (excluding staff costs and VAT) is estimated to fall between £1200 - £1300.

Legal Powers:

- Local Government Act 1972, Section 145

Recommendation:

- To note the report.*
- To feedback any suggestions for ways to improve / change the Town Awards.*