

Community, Leisure & Recreation Committee

Date: 24 October 2017
Title: Christmas Event Update
Contact Officer: Cassie Pinnells, Community Services Manager

Purpose of the Report

1. To provide an update on the plans for the annual Christmas Lights Switch-On.

Action

2. To note the report.

Background

3. This year's Christmas event will be held on Friday 1 December 2017. As previously agreed, the event will take on no specific theme and instead will be a general celebration of Christmas. Following last year's success, it is proposed that the format remains similar.
4. The use of both the Upper Chamber and Masonic Hall as indoor performance venues worked well in terms of crowd management and dispersal at last year's event. These two venues will be used again, with the Masonic Hall opening earlier to cater for more performances. Signage will be positioned around the event and the venues will be included in the event programmes to encourage visitors to venture into the performance venues.
5. There will be numerous informal outside performance areas within the road closure where acts can perform throughout the evening. This is to reduce crowd build-ups and the need for a stage, which has raised operational issues in the past. The podium will again be used for compering the event, a Christmas blessing, and for the Mayor and Town Trail winner to turn on the lights. Discussions are being held with local church groups & Thame Music Academy for other entertainment options for the podium during the event.
6. The Lions Club have again been invited to sell hot and cold drinks (including mulled wine) at their stall outside the Town Hall. They will be able to use the Town Hall kitchen to prepare and store their drinks, but will not be serving from the kitchen as this will not be operationally possible with the Upper Chamber entertainment schedule.
7. Once again the Town Council will be organising a lantern parade in collaboration with the three primary schools in Thame and a local artist. Discussions have been had with Lord Williams's School who have agreed to invite their students to help with the primary schools' workshops once the dates have been confirmed. This will be the first time in recent years that Lord Williams's School students have been involved with the lantern workshops. Due to a surplus of lantern materials from 2016, it is hoped there will be a reduction in the expenditure on lantern materials this year. Where lantern materials are required, the Town Council will provide the materials and donations will be sought from local businesses.
8. Attractions this year will include a Santa's Grotto, Go-Karts, and a human-sized inflatable snow globe. It is expected that some expenditure will be recouped through ticket sales for these attractions. Operating hours for all three attractions will be between 3:30pm and 6.45pm to coincide with children finishing school, and the lights being switched on at 7pm. The providers of both the Go-Karts and Snow Globe are Oxfordshire-based companies.

9. Currently 29 stalls have booked to attend the event. Applications are expected from a further 8 stalls who have registered an interest and have been sent the relevant paperwork. Trading hours for the food and craft stalls will be between 3.30pm and 7pm. As in previous years, Town Centre businesses have been given the opportunity to have a free stall within the main event area. This year we have placed greater emphasis on inviting local stallholders, traders and businesses. Our Market Town Co-Ordinator has also invited all traders at Thame's weekly Charter Market and monthly Farmers' Market, of which six have confirmed attendance.
10. Town centre shops will be invited to take part in another town trail in the same format as last year and donations for prizes will be sought from local retailers. The winner of the competition will have the opportunity to switch on the lights, alongside Father Christmas and the Town Mayor. The Town Trail will run throughout the month of November.
11. Staffing at the event is an ongoing issue; Council Officers are required to handle ticket sales at the various attractions and the maintenance team are responsible for numerous operational tasks throughout the evening. Additional help is sought via the cadets, however their assistance is limited due to their age and availability. To alleviate the demand on staff and to allow both officers and members to enjoy the event, Councillors are invited to assist in staffing the attractions and providing support with various event operations, including the lantern parade and community carol singing.
12. The event will be publicised via the Town Council's usual media and publicity channels, as well as on Town Entrance boards nearer the event. Event programmes will also be produced and printed, although less will be printed this year due to a large surplus after the event in previous years.
13. The hire of professional road closure and barrier control last year, at a cost of £600, reduced the workload for Council officers and volunteers. It is proposed that professional security are hired again this year between noon and 9pm on the day of the event. This year security measures have been required following advice from the police and in light of the current heightened security terrorist threats. Costings will be sought.

Risk Assessment

A full risk assessment (Appendix 1) and Safety Event Management Plan (Appendix 2) is attached to this report.

Resource Appraisal

Expenditure	Estimate
Tree	£810.00
Lantern Parade Materials	£450.00
Artist Support	£450.00
Snow Globe	£955.00
Grotto	£500.00
Printing/Publicity	£270.00
Go-Karts	£370.00
Road Closure Security	£600.00
Children's Characters	£100.00
TOTAL	£4,505.00

Income	Estimate
Event Budget	£2,500.00

Tree Budget	£1,000.00
Sponsorship (as of 12.10.17)	£2,110.00
Stalls (as of 18.10.17)	£785.00
Attraction Income	£400.00
TOTAL	£6,795.00

Legal Powers: The Local Government Act 1972 s145 and s144

Recommendation:

The Committee is asked:

- i) To note the report.***