

Community, Leisure & Recreation Committee

Date: 23 October 2018

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 30 November 2018 between 3:30pm to 7pm, as agreed by this committee on 6 February 2018. No theme will be adopted, however consistent branding on all publicity via printed and digital channels gives the event an identity.
4. The Town Hall Upper Chamber and Masonic Hall will be used as indoor performance venues, whilst the small 'switch-on' podium and other designated outdoor performance zones will provide additional space for pop-up entertainment throughout the evening. Appropriate signage and advertising will be used to promote this entertainment. Ten local performance groups have expressed an interest in performing at the event and a draft entertainment schedule has been distributed to these groups. The podium will also be used for compering the event, a Christmas blessing, and for the Mayor of Thame and Town Trail winner to turn on the lights.
5. The Lions Club will be selling their mulled wine for charity and will use the Town Hall kitchen to prepare and store their drinks. Thame & District Twinning Association will be preparing and selling French crepes too.
6. The Town Council is currently co-ordinating the Thame Primary Schools lantern parade, with workshops booked in at all of the schools. Lord Williams's School have been approached to be involved and it is hoped that more students than last year will volunteer to help at the Primary School workshops. Where lantern materials are required, the Town Council will provide the materials and donations will be sought from local businesses. Unfortunately no funding was available for this project from the Arts Development team at SODC. The timing of the lantern parade will be brought forward this year by 30 minutes following feedback that the end of the parade bottlenecks. It is hoped that the earlier finish time of the parade will alleviate some operational pressures associated with the parade culminating at the switch-on crowd. Windles have kindly agreed to design and print card lantern templates for the schools and community groups to decorate, which integrates more of the community with the event.
7. The popular Santa's Grotto will return, with operational support from Thame Round Table. It is expected that some expenditure will be recouped through ticket sales. Following a poll on the 'Christmas in Thame' Facebook page, and after assessing feasibility, it was decided that Reindeer and a Snow Globe should be booked. An Oxfordshire based company will provide 2 reindeers, along with feed and an authentic sleigh for photo opportunities. The Snow Globe has been booked with a different company to last year and lighting will be included this time. The attractions will open at 3:30pm to coincide with children finishing school, and close just prior to the lights being switched-on at 7pm.
8. To date, 23 stalls have booked to attend the event. A further 4 have expressed an interest in attending and we are awaiting their paperwork / payment. Local businesses, charities and traders, as well as previous stallholders, have been invited to attend the event via the Facebook page, press release and the Town Council's website. Traders at the weekly and monthly markets in Thame have also been invited.

9. Local businesses have been invited to sponsor the event, with 8 generously agreeing to sponsorship collectively totalling just over £2,000.
10. This year's Town Trail will take on a Reindeer theme and 24 town centre shops will be invited to take part by displaying a numbered reindeer image in their window during November. The winner will be invited to help turn on the town's Christmas lights, with two runners-up receiving a prize donated by local retailers.
11. 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. The 'Christmas in Thame' Facebook page will be a key promotional tool; 1,800 people have already joined the Facebook event. Event programmes will also be produced and printed, and available online.
12. Professional security will be hired again from 12 noon to 9pm on the day of the event to control the road closure and barrier. Following a minor medical incident last year, options for professional first aiders will be investigated.
13. It is hoped that pressures on Council staff will be reduced this year as the Maintenance Team is double the size of last year, and the Reindeer will be manned by the company and not be ticketed and therefore require no Council staff to manage. The cadets will be approached to assist with the lantern parade and clear-up. However, 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 clear away at the end.

Risk Assessment

A full risk assessment (Appendix 1) is attached to this report. The Safety Event Management Plan has been reviewed and is available on request for relevant organisations.

Resource Appraisal

Expenditure	Estimate
Tree	£810
Lantern Parade Materials	£400
Artist Support	£450
Reindeer	£1,095
Snow Globe	£1,000
Grotto	£500
Printing/Publicity	£150
Road Closure Security	£780
Children's Characters	£100
First Aid	£500
Miscellaneous	£400
TOTAL	£6,185

Income	Estimate
Event Budget	£2,500
Tree Budget	£1,000
Sponsorship (as of 11.10.18)	£2,060
Stalls (as of 11.10.18)	£595
Attraction Income	£300
TOTAL	£6,455

Legal Powers: The Local Government Act 1972 s145 and s144

Recommendation:

The Committee is asked:

- i) **To note the report.**