

Community, Leisure & Recreation Committee

Date:	29 October 2019
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 6 December 2019 between 4pm to 7:30pm, as agreed by this committee on 5 February 2019. The switch-on has been brought forward to 6:30pm following feedback. 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. Thirteen local performance groups have expressed an interest in performing at the event and a draft entertainment schedule has been distributed to these groups. The Masonic Hall will be used as a space for nativity crafts and face painting run by Grace Church, and there is a possibility that a 'meet and greet' with two children's characters will run for the first hour of the event in this venue too. The podium will 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. Thame Lions Club, who closed in June, provided this event with much support and annually served mulled wine. In light of their closure, the mulled wine provision has been reviewed and it is hoped that the two community groups (OX9ERS and LWS Day Nurse) who have expressed an interest in serving it will take up the offer. Thame & District Twinning Association will continue to prepare and sell French crepes at the event.
6. The Town Council is currently co-ordinating the Thame Primary Schools lantern parade, with workshops booked in at two of the three schools so far. Once dates are confirmed, Lord Williams's School will be approached to be involved and it is hoped that students will continue to 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. The lantern parade is expected to start 45 minutes prior to the switch-on as this worked well last year. 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 Santa's Grotto and Reindeer have been booked to attend again. This year we will welcome back the Steam Train which was hired in 2013 & 2014. Thame Round Table will provide operational support for the Grotto, and it is hoped that some expenditure will be recouped through ticket sales for the train and grotto. Two children's characters from Frozen (the sequel is released in November) will roam the event. The attractions will open at 4pm to coincide with children finishing school, and will remain open post-switch-on until 7:30pm.
8. 41 stalls have booked to attend the event generating an expected income of £1,045. Stallholders were invited to attend the event via the Facebook page, press release and the Town Council's website. There has been a very positive response to stall applications this year. Stalls will be selling crafts and gifts and globally-inspired food & drink.

Agenda Item: 11

9. Local businesses have been invited to sponsor the event, with 9 generously agreeing to sponsorship collectively totalling £3,000. This includes, for the first time, a sponsor for the lantern parade as well as 3 other new business sponsorships and our annual tree sponsor, ASM Auto Recycling.
10. This year's Town Trail will see some changes. The trail will only run for 3 weeks, rather than a full month, and will take on a festive Steam Train theme. The images will be located in a logical order around the town and will include more clues to encourage higher participation. The Market Town Co-Ordinator will take the lead on organising this. The winner will be invited to help turn on the town's Christmas lights, with runners-up receiving prizes 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 continues to be a key promotional tool. This year, working with the MTCO, a 16-page 'Christmas in Thame' booklet is being produced which will feature the Christmas Event, Town Trail and lots of other events and activities taking place over the festive period. This will be distributed in mid-November to schools, businesses and town centre locations. A centre-page spread in the Look Local Magazine, with a reach of 7,000 homes, will further assist publicity.
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. Medical cover has also been arranged.
13. 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 (Grotto and Steam Train) and providing support with various event operations between 4pm and 7:30pm, including the lantern parade (5:50pm) and clear away at the end.

Risk Assessment

A full risk assessment (Appendix 1 & 2) 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	£250
Artist Support	£450
Reindeer	£1,100
Steam Train Railway	£700
Grotto	£500
Printing/Publicity	£650
Road Closure Security	£580
Children's Characters	£110
First Aid	£425
Miscellaneous	£350
TOTAL	£5,925

Income	Estimate
Event Budget	£2,500
Tree Budget	£1,000
Sponsorship (as of 17.10.19)	£3,010
Stalls (as of 17.10.19)	£1,045
Attraction Income	£350
TOTAL	£7,905

Legal Powers: The Local Government Act 1972 s145 and s144

Recommendation:

The Committee is asked:

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