

Community, Leisure & Recreation Committee

Date:	9 February 2021
Title:	Christmas Activities Feedback 2020
Contact Officer:	Becky Reid, Market Town Coordinator

Purpose of the Report

1. To provide feedback on the Christmas activities for 2020
2. To agree the date of the 2021 Christmas event.

Background

3. Our normal Christmas event was unable to go ahead due to Covid-19 restrictions. Instead, the budget was put towards creating an 'Advent Calendar' booklet that was printed and distributed to each home in Thame, a webpage on the Town Council's website and Social Media promotion. This highlighted a different activity or event each day of Advent for people to take part in. It included a range of opportunities such as gift markets, selfie stations, trails, live music, Santa's visits to town, a 'Window Wanderland', online events, competitions and more. The event was run in partnership with several local organisations and supported by Sponsorship from local businesses. Feedback was obtained via an online survey promoted on Christmas in Thame Facebook page, distributed to event participants via email, and to the public in general through social media, website and newsletter. There were only 40 official responses. The feedback received was very positive, with lots of requests to see elements of the activities repeated again in future years. This report summarises the main points of feedback.

Feedback and Review

4. **Overall response to Calendar:** Everyone who fed back was positive about the production of the Calendar. Many expressed that the idea was great, that it was really good to have something positive to engage with at the end of such a tough year, and despite the ongoing Covid-19 restrictions at Christmas. Pride at the community of Thame coming together to create the Calendar was also expressed. Respondents were thankful for the effort put in– and for finding Covid-safe activities that people could enjoy on their doorstep. The only negative feedback was from people who had not received the booklet. This was fed back at the time of delivery through the FB page and investigations were carried out into the streets stated. Delivery tracking showed that the delivery staff had gone along these streets. Therefore, it is likely that the booklets were thrown out with junk mail before people realised what they were. Central pick-up points allowed people to collect additional copies of the booklet if they wished. Sponsors were proud to be part of it.
5. **Choice of Events:** A different event/activity was offered on each day of advent to try to provide a full calendar. There were positive responses about the choice of events on offer. Those with teenagers felt there was less for them, and this was definitely true. There was also some concern expressed about the calendar having too much choice on some days (some events ran on several days) which made it slightly confusing at times. However others did like this variety 'so each family can choose what works for them'.

6. **Booklet:** The Booklet received positive feedback with respondents finding it helpful to see all that was happening in one place that could be referenced again. One person expressed that the hard copy meant they could get a better feel for it than everything only being online. Another appreciated being able to look through it with their son. Some found it clear, some found it confusing - so more thought needs to be put into design work next year.
7. **Publicity in general:** Press releases about different elements of the Calendar were sent out, resulting in Thame being featured on BBC Oxford twice throughout December. Our own publicity through Newsletter, Facebook (both TTC and 'Christmas in Thame'), Booklet and website had the greatest impact on residents. Some businesses seemed unaware of the event and the opportunities to engage in until afterwards. However, this was distributed by hand-delivered letter to businesses in the Town Centre, and through our monthly Business Newsletter, as well as our weekly Town Council Newsletter. Many businesses were proactive and engaged quickly, showing that the message had got through to those who had the time to read the information. Many businesses were possibly unlikely to have had the time due to the pressures they were facing because of Covid-19 and Christmas relaxations in restrictions. The Players Theatre were particularly pleased with the impact on their Social Media as part of the event, describing it as 'an amazing success'.
8. **Partnership:** The Calendar relied heavily on partner organisations, charities and businesses being willing to get involved to deliver activities and events. Thame did not disappoint, and many got involved – contributing to a great programme. Not everyone had the opportunity presented to them due to time restrictions and lack of capacity within Thame Town Council to approach everyone. Feedback shows that those involved (who fed back) are keen to be involved in Christmas events again. Specific mention was given to The Tree of Hope at the Library. The delivery of Window Wanderland with the schools led to some confusion in December (due to a competing event at John Hampden), but this was resolved, and they are keen to be involved with anything this year as well.
9. **Town Trail:** The alternative 'Christmas Spirits Safari' was not that well used and not something that was worth the money. In future years this should not be needed anyway as the normal Christmas Trail to win the opportunity to Turn on the Lights will be re-established.
10. **Competitions:** Additional competitions throughout December (both through Website and Facebook entries) had differing engagement. Some were much better engaged with than usual competitions, others were not. However, they did generate a buzz and are worth repeating in some way if another booklet is created.

Future Impact

11. If we are facing a similar, scaled back Christmas, this approach would be one to consider again, with plans starting earlier, using the learning from 2020 to make improvements.
12. If we can go ahead with a Christmas event as normal, then consideration should be given to:
 - a. Additional events on other weekends – especially those working with other charities to raise funds for local causes.
 - b. A repeat of the Window Wanderland event if schools are willing to take it on in full. A debrief of this will take place soon and any learning captured.
 - c. An installation such as the Nutcracker (possibly exploring purchasing one that Thame Town Council owns as this cost similar to hiring one. However, storage issues would need to be considered).

- d. The repeat of a booklet that is delivered to homes with a calendar of Christmas events taking place all in one location. Better Online advent calendars are also available and can be explored.

Event Date

13. It is proposed that the event is held on Friday 3 December 2021

Income and Expenditure

14. Below are the figures (excluding VAT) for the Income and Expenditure for the Christmas Event 2020.

Expenditure	
Publicity & Printing (including booklet delivery)	1425
Window Wanderland	400
Christmas Spirits Safari	300
Nutcracker	1580
TOTAL	£3705

Income	
Christmas Budget	3000
Sponsorship	1000*
Advertising in Booklet	1400
TOTAL	£6,210

*Excluding Sponsorship for the Christmas Tree

Recommendation:

The Committee is asked:

- i) To note the report and event feedback.*
- ii) To decide the date of the 2021 Christmas Event.*