

CONGLETON TOWN COUNCIL
COMMITTEE REPORTS AND UPDATES

COMMITTEE:	Community Committee		
MEETING DATE AND TIME	3 August 2023 7.00 pm	LOCATION	Congleton Town Hall
REPORT FROM	Rachel McCarthy, Town Centre and Events Officer		
AGENDA ITEM REPORT TITLE	13. Congleton Christmas Proposed Activities		
Background	<p>This paper has been written to give members an insight into the plans being developed for Christmas 2023 in Congleton.</p> <p>Congleton has enjoyed a Christmas Light Switch-on event for more than 20 years. Until 2008 this event was organised through Congleton Community Projects. As the town council expanded and the event and number of lights grew, it became a joint venture between Congleton Community Projects and the town council.</p> <p>Since 2013 the town council has taken responsibility for the Christmas lights and decorations, the health and safety of the event, most of the entertainment and infrastructure bookings and the publicity. We are also the main sponsor of the switch-on and take the lead on pulling together publicity about all the various Christmas-related activities occurring in Congleton.</p> <p>We still work closely with Congleton Community Projects on the event planning and CCP organises the lantern procession, running lantern-making workshops in the lead-up to the switch-on.</p>		
The Plan	<p>SCOPE OF THE PROJECT</p> <p>There are a number of elements to the Christmas in Congleton activities that the town council is involved with. The town council puts £6k into the events budget for Christmas. There is a separate budget of £16k for Christmas lights and £4k for the Christmas and Remembrance projections.</p> <p>1. Decorating the Town with Christmas Lights</p> <p>The town council owns Christmas lights to decorate the town. Some lights are no longer fit for purpose having served 10 years. This was discussed at Community and Environment Committee on 16th February where CE/52/2223 asked officers to produce a detailed plan for the council to consider.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A replacement for the Merry Christmas Congleton sign at the bottom of Moody Street • Replacement for the two cross street banners used on Swan Bank • Replacements for the two lamp post banners on Mill Street • Replacements for the six lamp post banners on West Street 		

- Replacement for the Cross Street banner in Lawton Street
- Consider some festive lighting for the Market Area.

This was left for the new administration to discuss and a detailed paper has been prepared for Council on August 10.

We are in year three of a three-year contract to use PME to store, check, repair, install and remove the lights and will go back out to tender for a lights partner early next year.

The Christmas lights will be installed as soon as possible after Remembrance Sunday.

2. **Main Tree:** The main tree is purchased, installed and decorated by our lights contractor as part of the lights project. Congleton Town Council usually seeks sponsorship to cover these costs.
3. **Projections on the Town Hall:** - this has been very popular for the past three years and a separate budget of £4k has been created for Town Hall projections (Remembrance and Christmas).
4. **Small Christmas Trees** - local shops are encouraged to purchase 5-6 foot trees which are installed above the shop. This is managed in a similar way to the hanging baskets. The shops cover the cost of the tree, provide the lights and the electricity and they pay £12.50 for CTC to install and remove the trees. There are usually around 100 small trees above shops and the installation money goes towards the cost of the switch-on.
5. **Switch-on Event:** - In 2023 the plan is for the switch-on to take place on Friday 24th November from 4pm – 8pm with the lights being turned on at 6pm. This will give 5 shopping weekends with the Christmas lights on. The Road Closures and Event Safety Advisory Group forms have already been submitted due to time scales.

There have also been discussions with the new Congleton Market Quarter to see how they may wish to be included or incorporated into the event and the plan is to extend the road closures to Mill Street and Swan Bank to allow activities on the closed road and to benefit the evening economy in this area.

We are in the process of pricing up stages and PA systems and speaking to a range of entertainers and stallholders. The Town Hall has been booked and we will have stalls in the Town Hall as well as out on the street. The location of Santa's Grotto is still being arranged. The Cairngorm reindeers have been secured as these were really popular last year.

Community Projects will organise the Lantern Parade. The intention is to include as many town centre businesses as possible in the event. The switch-on usually attracts several thousand people. The town council has a

	<p>budget of £6k that it puts towards Christmas activities. The remainder is raised through the small trees project, sponsorship and stall fees.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Window Dressing Competition - We are hoping to attract at least 24 shops into a window competition where we can highlight a window a day and create an advent trail. 7. Tree of Light - we will once again support Congleton Rotary with the Tree of Light Appeal – where they sell stars to go on a real tree planted in the Community Garden. The switch on for this tree will be Saturday 25 November. 8. Toy Appeal – Congleton Town Council will work with Plus Dane, Congleton Chronicle, NSPCC and Boots Barn Road on a toy appeal for local families – this will run through until the week before Christmas. 9. Christmas Town Centre Saturday - there will be a Markers Market on the 25th November and 16th December. We are looking for other activities to give a Christmas buzz in the town centre on the 2nd, 9th and 23rd December. 10. Christmas Guide - we are looking to produce a Guide to Christmas in Congleton to include activities that are open to the public, but also covering how to make your Christmas Greener and a Congleton Cares where to get support over Christmas. 11. East Cheshire Hospice Christmas Tree Recycling – we will be working with the hospice to help promote their Christmas Tree recycling system which raises funds for the hospice. 12. Town Hall Events – The Town Hall will be hosting a number of Christmas parties booked via Mark’s Events. <p>The Christmas activities are being led by the Town Council’s Communities and Marketing Team with support from Congleton Community, Congleton Rotary, Cheshire Marshals and other volunteers. The town council is the major sponsor and will be seeking more volunteers to help with the events.</p>
Recommendations	For councillors to note the report and for the officer team to take on board suggestions and recommendations from councillors.
Financial Implications	The town council has set a budget of £6k for Christmas activities. Boosted by sponsorship, stall fees, donations and tree installation the total spend, excluding decorations, will be closer to £10k.
Environmental Implications	There is a meeting on the 17 th August to explore avenues to ensure that the carbon footprint of events is as low as possible.
Inclusivity impact	Congleton organises events to help those living in Congleton feel part of their community and efforts are made to ensure that the events are accessible to all.

PROPOSALS	That councillors note this report.
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