

COMMITTEE REPORTS AND UPDATES

COMMITTEE:	Community Committee		
MEETING DATE AND TIME	4 January 2024	LOCATION	Congleton Town Hall
REPORT FROM	Rachel McCarthy, Town Centre and Events Officer and Jackie MacArthur, Communities and Marketing Manager/Deputy Chief Officer		
AGENDA ITEM REPORT TITLE	Item 11. Christmas Lights Switch-on and Christmas Lights		
Background	<p>This paper is to update Councillors on the Christmas Activities for 2023 and highlight some issues that the group will work on for 2024. It is also an opportunity for Committee members to make any suggestions</p> <p>We are seeking a couple of Councillors to join the 2024 Christmas working group.</p>		
Scope of Project:	<p>1. Christmas Lights: The Town Council owns all the Christmas lights. They are all LED. Lights are only in warranty for 12 months, and with proper care and attention we expect them to last at least 5-7 years – although do start to lose their lustre. New lights are purchased from capital expenditure. It is hoped that in 2024 the lights that were not used in 2023 can be repaired via the Repair café and be re-used.</p> <p>1.2 The light near the craft shop on West Street is from the old stock and needs to be replaced, but generally the stock is in good shape so any capital expenditure in 2024 would be for an expansion rather than replacement.</p> <p>1.3 Christmas 2023 was the final year of a three-year contract with PME Lighting with a contract to store, check, repair, install and remove the lights as well as supply the main Christmas Tree. Work on the documents to seek a partner for the next three years will need to be organised early in 2024.</p> <p>2. Christmas Lights Switch on.</p> <p>This took place on Friday 24 November from 4 pm – 8 pm. Road closures were from 12 noon to 10 pm.</p> <p>2.1 Cost: The total budget was £12,767. Total spend was £12,667 – with £100 surplus.</p> <p>£6,000 from the Town Council, £3,000 from sponsors, £1776 income from stalls and £1991 income from small trees (£552 profit which is the costs from Streetscape installing the trees). This does not include the funds for the lantern parade and workshops which are run and organised by Congleton Community Projects.</p> <p>2.3 Number of acts: 19</p>		

2.4 Number of stalls: 28 craft stalls, 12 charity stalls, 5 food trailers and 2 food stalls.

2.5 Support on the night: 27 volunteers and 11 members of staff

2.6 Number of attendees: 5000 - 7000 (best estimate)

2.7 Included: Free Santa's Grotto, Real Cairngorm Reindeer, Main Stage entertainment, Community Stage entertainment, street disco, lantern parade with 200+ children, craft and charity stalls in the Town Hall, the pedestrian area and Swan Bank.

2.8 The Town Hall team coordinated the putting up of the main Christmas lights and the selling and installation of 95 small trees which were purchased by shops and businesses.

2.9 Positive:

a. Increased the footprint of the area by closing Swan Bank and Mill Street – also lots of people at the stalls and entertainment in the Congleton Market Quarter.

b. Police Safety Bus and 6 uniformed police and one plain clothes at the event helped with community policing. No reports of any issues.

c. Medical Team: - only dealt with a few minor injuries – nothing to report.

d. Weather was perfect – so lots of people stayed for longer

e. Moving Santa's grotto to the Cygnet Club enabled space around the town hall for people to visit stalls.

f. Large stage and a popular act after the switch on encouraged more people to stay longer.

g. The Community supported the event in their thousands!

h. All the acts that responded to the survey monkey wanted to return next year.

i. 83% of the stall holders said the organisation on the day was excellent, one commenting it was the 'best run and helpful market they have ever attended', 92% would like to return next year. 96% thought the pre-event communications were excellent or good. The declared income from the charity stalls ranged from £892 to £100.

2.10 To Work on

a. The Congleton Market Quarter made Victoria Street much busier (past Spec Savers), making the area by the Elizabeth Statue not suitable for large choirs and dance acts. The new route of the parade also went past this area. The community stage needs a new location, although important to still have music in this area.

	<p>b. The large stage, whilst great for visibility, did cause a pinch point and so may be better to relocate to nearer the Town Hall to create a large space for the crowds.</p> <p>c. The stalls in the pedestrian area facing the shops did not do as well as the stalls facing into the pedestrian area – possibly need to look at just one row of traders with the back of the stalls kept as a walkway for those needing to get to the shops or just walking fast? This has cost implications.</p> <p>d. How to cater for prams, pushchairs, wheelchairs and mobility scooters at a packed event.</p> <p>e. How to attract more volunteers –to be in a position to offer shorter stints and a variety of roles.</p> <p>f. More public toilets are needed, depending on what is happening with the market quarter may need to hire event toilets in 2024</p> <p>f. The preferred date coming through for next year is Friday 29th November.</p> <p>3. Window Dressing Competition</p> <p>20 shops entered the competition and a further 9 were recognised as having a great window and encouraged to enter next time. The winners were: 1st place – Bare Health, 2nd place Hair Project in Lawton Street and 3rd place Vinny Brennan in the pedestrian area.</p> <p>4. Christmas Card from the Mayor and all at the Town Council</p> <p>The Town Council produced an electronic Christmas Card that was sent out to approximately 400 email contacts. A limited number of printed cards were also delivered by the Mayor, Mayoress and town hall team.</p> <p>5. NSPCC Toy Appeal</p> <p>The Town Council supported the Toy Appeal by collecting toys from the Town Hall, Boots Barn Road, Chronicle Office and Hammond McNulty and liaising with Plus Dane. A report will come out early in the new year, but local people were once again beyond generous with hundreds of toys donated and issued to parents who were not in a position to purchase toys for their children.</p>
Financial implications	The Christmas project was delivered to budget for 2023-24.
Environmental Implications	There is a carbon footprint to hosting events, although the team is trying to reduce the footprint through measures around waste reduction and energy consumption.
Equality and Diversity	The Christmas lights is a busy and noisy event and more work will take place for 2024 to see how best to tailor the event to make it more attractive for those with mobility or sensory or other needs. This is a free event open to all.
Decision Requested	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A request for 2-3 Councillors to join the Christmas working group – suggest that each year the Deputy Mayor joins in January so that they are fully aware of the event for their Mayoral year (assuming normal traditions)

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="454 100 1469 248">2. Are Councillors happy for Friday 29th November to be put forward as the preferred date? This is the date recommended by most of the staff and volunteers that are needed to work the event – plus preferred by the stall holders.<li data-bbox="454 257 1182 293">3. To note this report and any actions coming out of it.
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