

Agenda item number: 10

Date of meeting: 9th September 2019

THATCHAM TOWN COUNCIL

Events Committee

Report by: John Sackett

Job Title: Events Manager

Subject: Christmas Lights Switch-On

1 Purpose of Report

- a** To receive an update on events plans for the Christmas Lights' Switch-On to be held on Friday 6th December 2019 in Thatcham Broadway.
 - b** To consider costs for the purchase of new/additional lights for The Broadway and High Street area
 - c** To receive and consider proposals for activities on Saturday 7th December 2019 in Thatcham Broadway, to link the Christmas Lights' Switch-on on Friday 6th and The Rotary Club's Santa Fun Run on Sunday 8th December
 - d** To consider a review of pitch fees for Christmas Lights as requested by Councillor Cole at the last meeting of this Committee.
 - e** To confirm any recommendations to the Finance and General Purposes Committee
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1a Planning update

At the previous meeting (EV/2019/22) Members were advised that Officers were investigating a weekend of activity linking Christmas Lights' Switch-On event on Friday 6th December with the Rotary Santa Fun Run on Sunday 8th December.

Feedback from the community and businesses attending previous lights' switch-on events indicated that there are some safety concerns regarding the growing attendances and that toddler age families are subsequently and increasingly deterred from attending, along with comments that the programme needs refreshing and that some families are unable to attend on Friday evenings.

There is therefore an opportunity of creating a new event during Saturday daytime on The Broadway creating some economies of scale, in particular, regarding marketing activity.

The proposed programme for Friday's Christmas Lights' Switch-On remains similar to previous years but with the following changes being planned:

- A planning meeting has taken place with West Berkshire Council Highways Officers with a request for a complete road closure on both sides of The Broadway. Buses and Taxis would be re-routed to access and egress via the High Street. Broadway businesses would be informed of closure and marshalled exit through the afternoon of Friday 6th December.
- The Friday evening event stage consisted of two flatbed lorries acting as temporary stages which are unwieldy, unattractive and not fit for purpose with additional steps, lights and sound being supplied by separate suppliers. This year a more modern mobile designed stage has been sourced with its own built-in sound and lights and a sound engineer. It is solar powered and will run from its internal batteries for up to 8 hours (even when there's no sun), it can be positioned unrestricted by cables and will provide us with an improved artist and visitor experience.
- We are also in discussions with both the Kingsland Shopping Centre and Waitrose to support our Christmas offer over the 3 days (see 1c)

1b Purchase of New Lights for The Broadway and High Street

Members will note that improvements have been made with a new chamber allowing for the safe installation of a 9m Christmas Tree (EV/2019/12). To ensure that improvements continue, we now believe that additional lights are needed to enhance the overall festive scene of The Broadway leading up to the High Street.

Currently 9 Snowflake feature lights are displayed on the lighting columns at key locations where there is a power supply. The lights are owned by the Town Council, purchased in 2013. They are both tired looking as well as losing their effectiveness. We propose that new replacement lights are purchased and installed. There are a variety of options available with no direct like-for-like cost comparisons.

In addition, to extend the effectiveness of the icicle lights on The Broadway we wish to extend the icicle lights all the way up the Broadway Green by an additional 70m. The below table shows supplier costs for the various light options. Install and derig costs are shown separately under each content item.

Items	Supplier A	Supplier B	Supplier C Existing Supplier	Supplier D
New feature column lights x 9	From £2,800 to £3,976	From £2,200 to £3,000		From £2,340 to £4.302
Install and Derig columns	£754	£1,800	£700.etsimated*1	
New Icicle Lights- Broadway 14 x 5m LED pure white	£1,072	£686		£603.75
Install and derig Broadway *2	£2,808		£800 estimated	

*1 Already provided for in existing budget

*2 New Install and Derig Costs

We recommended that we purchase the following:

Supplier B Column Lights at £3,000 and Supplier D Icicle Lights for The Broadway at £603.75:

Total cost **£ 3,603.75** one-off Capital expenditure from Rolling Capital Fund.

In addition, we will require an additional **£1,500** revenue for install and derig costs this year – funding available from General Reserves.

1c Proposals for Saturday 7th December

Saturday event - we are working with West Berkshire Council seeking to put in place free public car-parking as an incentive to visitors and shoppers.

An activity, popular with a younger age group, would be moved to the Saturday event. Traditionally one primary school performs on Friday and we have asked all Thatcham primary schools if they wish to perform on Saturday and to date 3 of them have accepted the invitation. Santa would still be present at the Switch-On although we now propose a more organised and family-friendly presence on Saturday and Sunday with the purchase of a Grotto (4m by 3m Marquee with external and internal vinyl Christmas features).

The Rock Choir would launch the Saturday event whilst a popular local children's farm with a festive theme have been provisionally booked for the occasion and a fun fair operator providing children's rides at the top of The Broadway with parking suspended here.

The popular Friday evening treasure hunt that businesses take part in would be extended to Saturday whilst we propose that on Saturday and Sunday there is a public vote for the best dressed window competition which is supported by local media.

The additional activity we propose would cost as per table below:

*1 The Grotto and additional props costs would be a one-off Capital expenses from the Rolling Capital Fund.

Discussions have taken place with Newbury and District Lions who would be willing to staff the Grotto gratis in exchange for a charity donation. The Grotto activity could take place on the Sunday 8th December.

Note that presentations by Thatcham Rock Choir and Thatcham Primary Schools would not incur a charge.

Item	£ Costs	£ Income
Children Farm	525	
Frozen Characters	480	
Compere / Stage Management	100	
Stage and P/A costs	728	
Additional marketing	150	
Income Fun Rides		300
Sponsorship		200
Total Costs	1983	
Total (after income)	1483	
Grotto *1	2,391	
Grotto theming props *1	500	

To consider recommending to the Finance and General Purposes Committee that an additional **£1,500** of revenue (from General Reserves) be allocated to support the development of a new Saturday event as part of a Christmas weekend of activity.

In addition, consider recommending to the Finance and General Purposes Committee that **£3,000** be allocated from the Rolling Capital Fund to enable the purchase of a Grotto marquee structure.

1d To consider a review of pitch fees for Christmas Lights as requested by Councillor Cole at the last meeting of this Committee.

1e Recommendations to the Finance and General Purposes Committee:

- Consider £3,603.57 for additional Christmas Lights – one-off Capital expense from the Rolling Capital Fund
 - Consider £1,500 for install and derig of these lights – revenue cost from General Reserves
 - Consider £3,000 for the purchase of a Christmas style Grotto - one-off Capital expense from the Rolling Capital Fund
 - Consider £1,500 to support a new Saturday Christmas event - revenue cost from General Reserves
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2 Publicity

We propose that the new weekend event be called 'Warm up for Christmas', which comprises:

Friday 6th December: Christmas Lights' Switch-On

Saturday 7th December: Festive Fun Day

Sunday 8th December: Santa Fun Run (Thatcham and District Rotary)

The event would be promoted with a programme brochure designed to promote the overall weekend. Posters would also be displayed on the Town's noticeboards and businesses encouraged to display in their retail and business windows.

Facebook advertisements as well as posts would take place.

Local schools will be emailed about the event. Banners placed in advance on The Broadway. Press releases issued and a planned advertisement campaign consistent with plans in previous years

3 Finances 2019

A detailed budget report is included under item 11.
