

Report to: Events and Town Centre
Management Committee



Report Ref: E1906
Meeting Date: 30th September 2019
Agenda Item: 9
Prepared By: Administration Assistant

Subject: Santa Parade

1.0 BACKGROUND

The Reindeer Parade has taken place annually as part of the wider Christmas Weekend celebrations, alongside the Christmas Markets and Christmas Lights Switch On. The parade has traditionally been led by a brass band followed by Santa in a sleigh pulled by live reindeer. The parade would depart from Moorside around 5pm and proceed up King Street, onto Minshull Street and finally arrive in Canute Place at approximately 5.20pm, where the reindeer would be moved to a pen adjacent to the instant consumable stalls and Santa would join the Mayor by the stage ready for the switch on at 6pm.

At its February meeting, the committee resolved that reindeer should not be booked for this year's parade following discussion of a report detailing welfare concerns raised by members of the public and the cost of the reindeer hire. The committee requested officers investigate alternative options to be presented at a future meeting.

2.0 PROPOSAL

Following the decision of the committee, the Administration Assistant has explored various options for elements of a new parade. The proposed new parade set-up is set out in 2.1 – 2.4.

2.1 LED LIGHT PERFORMERS

The inclusion of three LED light performers to lead the parade, who will perform with LED light-up props and costumes as the parade proceeds to add a 'wow factor' to the parade. Included in the cost of hire, the performance troop would then perform a 10-minute routine on stage in Canute Place after the parade at approximately 5.45pm. The troop are locally based in South Manchester and have worked previously on many similar events.

2.2 CHRISTMAS CHARACTERS

Christmas characters to walk in the procession and wave to the children for added excitement, with the possibility of these characters handing out chocolates provided by local businesses as has been done in some previous parades. These would be recognisable Christmas characters such as a snowman, penguin, Christmas cracker, Christmas pudding and reindeer to walk ahead of Santa's sleigh. It is estimated that 6 characters would be appropriate.

Discussions are on-going with Knutsford Little Theatre regarding a supply of actors from the theatre to act as the characters in the parade. This would most likely be free of charge or a small donation

payable to the theatre. The characters would potentially stay around the stage area for the switch on, and the Administration Assistant is currently in talks with Savills Estate Agents who may allow use of their photo frame so characters can take photographs with children once the parade has commenced. Costumes would be purchased for the characters which can then be re-used in future Council parades and events, and potentially hired out to members of the community where applicable to generate future income.

2.3 SCHOOL CHILDREN

To evolve the parade into more of a community feature, inclusion of children from a Knutsford primary school to walk in the parade procession. These children would be accompanied by staff from the primary school as well as volunteers walking with the procession. The children would be supplied with Christmas character balloons to hold while walking in the parade, which they could take home and keep. It would be requested that the children wear Christmas jumpers or other festive attire.

Balloons would be sourced from Dave's Balloons and Greeting Cards in Knutsford Market Hall at a discounted cost. The children would then proceed onto the stage in Canute Place for a short performance once the parade has arrived by the stage.

2.4 SANTA

To account for the loss of the sleigh supplied by the reindeer provider, the Administration Assistant has explored options both for sleigh hire and purchase for the parade and has sourced a viable option for each. The sleigh hire option would involve a one day hire of a prop sleigh from a prop hire company who would deliver the sleigh and collect it once the parade has commenced. The sleigh purchase option would involve having a custom built to order sleigh produced for the Council and re-used in future Christmas events, with the additional potential for the sleigh to be hired out to generate income. Should the committee opt for a sleigh purchase, it would be stored in the garage at Knutsford Cemetery.

Total Vehicle Leasing has offered to sponsor the parade by providing a prestigious vehicle, such as a Rolls Royce, to tow the sleigh through town. The sleigh would sit on a low trailer secured to the back of the vehicle. The sleigh will be a full-sized prop with adequate room to comfortably seat Santa as well as a child so that we can continue to run the 'Win a Ride with Santa' competition in conjunction with the Knutsford Guardian which has ran for several years. The vehicle and sleigh will be at the rear of the parade as per previous years.

Santa will be the Santa from the grotto on Silk Mill Street provided by Children's Adventure Farm Trust. The Elves from the grotto can walk nearby the sleigh to accompany it through the procession as they have done previously. Santa will exit his sleigh once the parade has commenced stage-side in Canute Place and proceed to wait by the stage for the switch on.

2.5 MUSIC AND ASSEMBLY

It was felt that a brass band would be out of keeping with the new parade format and it is therefore proposed that Christmas songs such as 'Santa Claus is Coming to Town' will be played from the council's portable PA. This also creates a slight cost saving.

As there will no longer be reindeer on the Moor, it is proposed that the parade no longer assemble by Moorside, but that instead in the Knutsford Railway Station car park. There will be no access to or from the car park once the roads have been temporarily closed ahead of the parade. Council staff and volunteers will be on-site to monitor the assembly and any potential movement from cars parked in the car park while assembly takes place. The parade would then proceed onto King Street and follow the usual route up King Street, onto Minshull Street and finally arriving in Canute Place. The parade would end behind the barriers behind the stage.

The parade will no longer need to proceed any further than this point as there will be no need to move the reindeer through Canute Place to the pen as in previous years; this means the parade will be simpler and safer in this new format and less marshalling will be required.

Roads will be closed at the same points as in previous years and marshals will be on-site at road closure points for the entire duration of the procession to ensure safe delivery of the parade (Annex A).

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The costs for the parade as proposed are as follows:

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| LED Light Performers | £ 600 |
| Character Actors | £ TBC |
| Costumes for Characters | £ 120 |
| Balloons for school children | £40 |
| Santa and Elves | £0 |
| Vehicle and Trailer | £0 |
| Sleigh Hire option | £599 |
| Sleigh Purchase option | £1600 |

The total cost for the hire option would be £1,359 with costs of £1,239 in 2020.

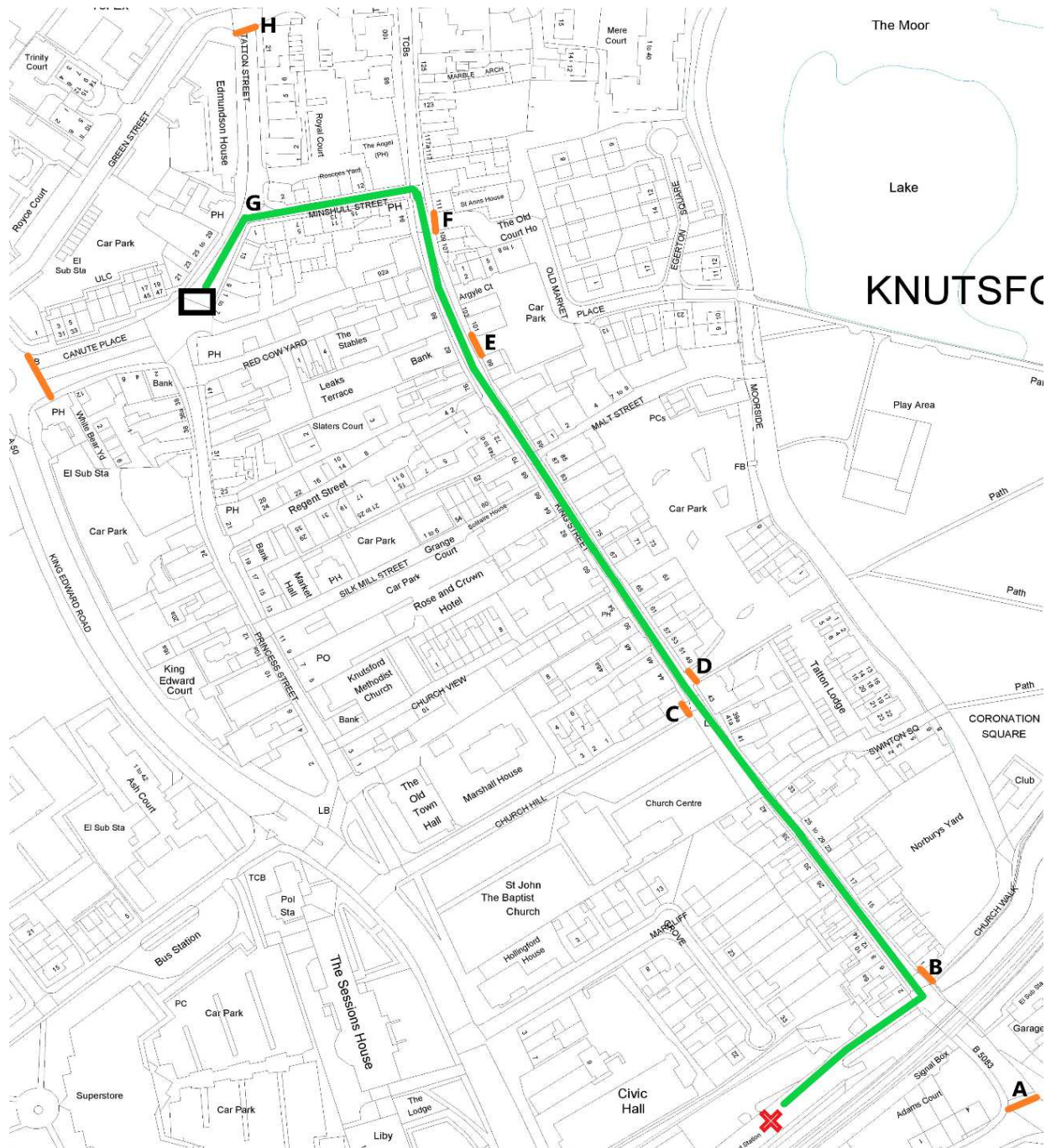
The total cost for the purchase option would be £2,360, with costs of £640 in 2020.

The hire of reindeer for the parade in previous years was £2,250 and the cost of a brass band was £200.

4.0 DECISIONS REQUIRED

It is recommended that the committee approves the new format for the Santa Parade and, in recognition of the ongoing savings, that the option of purchasing the sleigh is chosen.

ANNEX A: PARADE ROUTE



KEY

X = Parade assembly point in Knutsford Railway Station car park, proceed onto King Street

----- = Road closed points

----- = Parade route from bottom of King Street, onto Minshull Street and into Canute Place

A-H = Marshall points

□ = Parade end at stage in Canute Place, no procession past this point

ANNEX B: PROPOSED SLEIGH AND LIGHT PERFORMERS

