

Report to: Events Committee

Report Ref: E1921
Meeting Date: 27th April 2020
Agenda Item: 11a
Prepared By: Events Officer



Subject: Christmas Events 2019 Feedback

1.0 BACKGROUND

The Christmas Weekend took place on 30th November and 1st December 2019 and the Crib Service on Saturday 7th December. This report provides a short summary of the feedback received for elements of the Christmas Weekend and the Crib Service to aid improvement for future years and help inform decisions to be made for the set-up of the 2020 events.

2.0 FEEDBACK RECEIVED

2.1 CHRISTMAS MARKET

Due to an error in stall set-up there was a 3mx3m gap at the junction of Princess Street and Silk Mill Street. Some complaints were received from stalls either side as the gap was not attractive and was detrimental to their stalls, and many traders were one stall over from where they should have been located as a result. A spare gazebo was placed in the gap as a makeshift walkway point but officers will ensure the same error does not occur at the 2020 event.

There was an issue with gazebos on the Sunday morning which had frosted on top overnight when stored; some stalls, particularly those located on Silk Mill Street, were badly affected. Officers managed to move most of the badly affected stalls to empty spots on Princess Street from no-show traders. This has not occurred previously, Buddha Group staff informed staff the issue arose due to the extremely cold temperatures which the event had not previously experienced.

Stall numbers on Silk Mill Street were reduced as reports from the 2018 event suggested that sales were very low for stalls located further back with one trader reporting no sales for the entire day. The stall plan for the Sunday layout was replicated from the Saturday layout meaning there was a single line of stalls each day; no income was lost due to the increase in stall fees for 2019. Traders further down Silk Mill Street located past the Market Hall still reported low footfall and lower sales at the 2019 event than when they have been located somewhere else previously. Suggestions that stalls on Silk Mill Street shouldn't extend past the bricks of the building opposite the Market Hall or that some sort of attraction is needed to draw more visitors down the street were received.

The one-way system was implemented for a second year but still not widely recognised. Large signage was used at entry points of the market instead of smaller signs dotted around but this was still not widely adhered to. Signs that are higher up and more visible might be more effective, suggestions from Officers include use of banners installed high up above stalls or one-way arrows attached to each

trader gazebo as well as additional signage on the ground. It is noted that the implementation of any new system will take several years to really take effect; volunteers on site actively promoting the one-way system may help.

The Park and Ride shuttle bus system was also implemented for a second year after a successful trial run in 2018 and was even more widely used. A total of £716.57 was raised, an increase of £216.57 on the 2018 total of £500. Volunteers from the Cheshire Badger Vaccination Programme volunteered for a second year alongside volunteers from the Knutsford Royal May Day. From volunteer reports, the car park was utilised more all weekend than in 2018 and buses appeared fuller on each journey from officer assessment. Clickers could be provided in 2020 to provide more accurate data.

There were small issues with rubbish build up near instant consumable stalls; bins either need emptying more frequently or bigger bins should be provided in the food and drink area to reduce risk of rubbish being littered on the ground due to bins being full.

Suggestions of small improvements for 2020 included a Knutsford Town Council informational stand where stall locations can be provided, maps can be handed out and information regarding the weekend's activities can be provided. This could be a KTC branded gazebo which could be used for other purposes as well as the market. A proper photobooth could be an exciting feature with Christmas props and a hashtag competition on social media for the best photos which will help to promote the event further. A baby feeding/change tent could be incorporated, as well as a designated buggy drop off point as buggies vastly decrease available space on the pavements.

The Funfair didn't receive much positive feedback; the Events Officer received many comments from traders and event attendees during the weekend which remarked they were not aware the funfair was even in attendance due to lack of signage directing to the funfair. Some comments received suggested it is not the right fit for the Christmas event and something more festive might be more appropriate. The Funfair providers feedback suggests they had an ok weekend but not their most successful year.

Traders reported fantastic sales for the most part but many commented that sales were harder due to the extremely cold temperatures all weekend, that customers were stopping less at stalls and sales had to be really driven; this could also reflect the lower attendance at the funfair if attendees thought it was too cold. Attendance generally at the market appeared unaffected by the very cold weather.

2.2 SANTA PARADE

Feedback received regarding the new set-up of the parade was mostly positive; the most positive comments received complimented the new LED light performance and the Christmas character elements. Attendance was extremely high as large crowds turned out to watch the parade.

Some comments received suggested that the vehicle and trailer with a sleigh was less impactful than the reindeer and that a large vehicle was not appropriate for such a busy parade. A different type of vehicle would be more appropriate where Santa is more visible as this builds excitement when he can be seen approaching from down the street.

A small number of complaints were received regarding no reindeer presence in the parade, though the positive comments about implementing this change vastly outweighed the number of complaints received.

Suggestions that more music was needed in the parade were received as the procession was quite long and music from the back of the parade could not be heard at the front of the parade. The traditional brass band could lead the parade with a community choir following to sing along to the carols, followed by the rest of the procession for a blend of traditional and modern features.

Parade participants from Bexton Primary School and Knutsford Little Theatre really enjoyed being part of the parade and staff from the school said it was a great experience for the children.

Some feedback from participants in the parade included incorporating more community groups into the parade and giving them all a different theme to add more visual impact to the parade, and maybe including even more performers in the procession.

Overall feedback was extremely positive and remarked that the parade was now more of its own feature rather than just moving Santa through town, and that the new format should be kept in place moving forward.

2.3 SWITCH ON

Switch On entertainment was very successful once again and was enjoyed by many people throughout the day. There was a small issue with pyrotechnics during the actual Christmas Lights Switch On as the presenters on stage were too far forward, leading to a slightly less impactful moment as the pyrotechnics could not be used due to health and safety risks. A clear taped line will be installed on the stage in 2020 to ensure anyone on stage is behind the line and the pyrotechnics can go ahead.

There was a small delay in getting the headline entertainment going after the switch on; Mark Radcliffe's UNE were the headline performers, but the complicated set-up was inappropriate for this event which has quick changeover times. This will be heavily considered when selecting the 2020 headliner.

Suggestions received that the raffle winners from the Mayor's fundraising stall do not need to be drawn on stage as they are seldom present to collect their prizes and usually prizes are collected from the stall later or after the event. This would save time allowing the Mayor more time to give their speech before the switch on.

2.4 CRIB SERVICE

Set-up for the 2019 Crib Service was much more smoothly carried out than the 2018 event. A different provider was used with a more specific specification for set-up of a small stage and suitable for outdoor use PA system to combat any issues with flooding of cables such as at the 2018 service in case of bad weather. Weather was perfect and dry which meant no issues in set-up or running of the service at all.

There were no issues with road closures following the 2018 Lantern Parade/Crib Service; due to the absence of the Lantern Parade only the small stretch of Princess Street was closed outside the Lost and Found and the road closure was properly carried out and marshalled throughout set-up and de-rig of the service and the service itself.

Comments were received that the Lantern Parade was missed and whether it could be re-instated as an annual event given that the Crib Service continues to take place annually.