

REPORT TO EVENTS AND TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE KNUTSFORD CHRISTMAS MARKET FEEDBACK



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Agenda Item 12
Prepared by Events Officer

1.0 BACKGROUND

Knutsford Christmas Market is an annual Christmas event which has been organised by the Town Council since 2013. The market invites local traders to trade over a weekend and usually incorporates the Christmas Light Switch On, Santa Parade and Santa's Grotto.

The 2020 Christmas Market was originally planned to take place on 28th and 29th November, but was postponed to 12th and 13th December due to the second national lockdown period in November 2020.

The market was held on Princess Street car park, Silk Mill Street car park and Princess Street with around 70 traders per day and Covid-19 preventative measures in place including no hot food or drink stalls.

2.0 FEEDBACK FROM 2020 EVENT

Feedback from the 2020 event has been positive, with traders detailing that they had a moderately successful weekend despite the lower attendance at the event, though trade was not as high as a 'normal' year which was expected.

The amended layout with stalls being positioned mainly on the two car parks worked well, as it offered plenty of space for gazebos to be spaced out which allowed ample room for social distancing amongst visitors. The cellophane purchased for creating screen barriers on stall frontage worked well initially but was challenging to install and on the windier day began to tear, so if clear barriers are required again in the future some alternative options should be investigated. Some traders declined the screens as they felt it detrimental to their stalls, though traders did appreciate the efforts to reduce potential virus transmission. The one-way system worked well with most people following the system around the two sites, following the signage displayed.

Traders commented that though the amended layout worked well for this year that the normal layout with the bulk of stalls on Princess Street is much preferred as this results in better trade for them from the busier crowds. A mixture of the food and drink and craft stalls is preferred instead of separating these into two sites as we did this year, as this increases trading opportunities as some customers may only be seeking out specific stall types, but neighbouring traders may also experience trade if customers can see their products on offer. These thoughts were echoed by some members of the public who provided feedback to the Events Officer during the event.

The live entertainment and parade were missed as these are very popular aspects of the usual event. The hot food and drink stalls were also missed, as many visitors to the market enjoy having a hot drink or some hot food while they walk around the market. Residents remarked that the Christmas Light Switch On was missed and they were disappointed the planned livestream had been cancelled, though officers did communicate the reasons behind the cancellation.

The presence of first aiders all weekend at the event was positive and though there were no incidents to attend to, their presence offered reassurance to members of the public, traders and staff.

Businesses provided feedback to the Town Centre and Marketing Officer which has been included in their Town Centre Management report. Some initial discussions have taken place between the Events Officer and TCMO regarding how town centre businesses, particularly those who are separated from the market on King Street, Regent Street and Minshull Street, could be more involved in the event. Ideas include a 'Knutsford Village' at the Christmas Market which features only permanent businesses with to highlight that these traders can be visited all year around; a prize draw where the winner receives a prize that requires them to return to the town soon after the event such as a restaurant voucher with an expiry date of 31st December and other such ideas that promote return visits will be considered.

3.0 2021 EVENT

It is proposed that the dates for the 2021 event be set as 27th and 28th November 2021. Feedback from town centre businesses suggests that this is much less intrusive on the busy Christmas shopping period than a December market, and the earlier date also means the Christmas Lights will be switched on for the whole of December.

Throughout 2021, officers will continue to monitor government guidance around coronavirus and planning for the 2021 event will begin fully in the summer, when the committee can review the position. Until the summer, initial tentative arrangements will be made to secure contractors for the market and parades, but bookings will not be confirmed until the summer.

4.0 DECISIONS REQUIRED

It is recommended that the committee agree the dates for the 2021 event and authorise the Events Officer to make the preliminary arrangements noting the position with respect coronavirus will be reviewed as the year progresses.