

REPORT TO EVENTS WORKING GROUP

AUTUMN / WINTER 2021 EVENTS PROGRAMME

Report Reference E-21-09
Meeting Date 12th July 2021
Agenda Item 9
Prepared by Events Officer



1.0 PUMPKIN PATH

1.1 OVERVIEW

Knutsford Pumpkin Path is an annual Halloween event that has been organised by the Town Council since 2017. The event involves the closure of King Street, Church Hill and Minshull Street to allow a large number of attendees to freely roam the streets as they search for carved pumpkins inside shop windows each of which contains a letter spelling the phrase 'pumpkin path'. On-street entertainment and giveaways also feature during the popular event.

Due to the coronavirus pandemic, the 2020 event was changed to be a week-long simple trail without road closures or additional entertainment to minimise risk of transmission of the virus.

1.2 2021 EVENT

Subject to the prevailing coronavirus guidance, it is expected that a normal version of the event could proceed on 31st October. It is therefore proposed the event is organised as usual between the hours of 4-7pm on 31st October, with road closures on King Street, Church Hill and Minshull Street and some on-street entertainment in the form of singing and dance performances. Entertainment would be provided in Wallwood with spooky displays and character entertainers roam the general event site. The

If government restrictions do not allow the event to proceed in its normal fashion, it is proposed that the event is held in the same prolonged fashion as the 2020 event, which was well received. This would involve no road closures and no additional entertainment, with no formal event on Halloween evening.

The Events Officer will work on the core plans for the event which involves securing pumpkin 'host' shops, sponsorship (of which £150 is already secured), prizes for the event and other core elements, with the further details to be decided following potential further easing of restrictions on 19th July. A marketing campaign will accompany the event, which will promote the makeup and guidelines for this year's event to the public.

2.0 CHRISTMAS EVENTS

2.1 OVERVIEW

Subject to the prevailing government guidance at the time, it is expected that the Christmas programme of events can be planned as usual. The dates set for the 2021 Christmas Weekend are Saturday 27th and Sunday 28th November, with the line-up ideally consisting of the Christmas Market, Christmas Light Switch On, Santa Parade and Santa's Grotto, with the Lantern Parade and Crib Service to take place the following weekend on 4th December 2021

Arrangements that have been made with contractors to date are provisional and can be cancelled without cost should restrictions prevent the event from proceeding in its usual fashion.

2.1 PARK AND RIDE

The Events Officer has booked the shuttle buses for the park and ride. Feedback has been continually positive from this service and it is recommended it continue to reduce burden on town centre car parks during the busy weekend. Should it be required at the time, coronavirus measures including full cleaning and face coverings can be implemented on the service as per the 2020 arrangements.

2.2 CHRISTMAS MARKET

The Christmas Market is set to be held on 27th and 28th November, the market would be held in its usual fashion on Princess Street and Silk Mill Street with the usual number of stalls and timings back to the standard times of 12-7pm on Saturday and 11-4pm on Sunday. Applications inviting traders to apply will open as usual in July with advice as per 2020 advising that restrictions may result in changes or cancellation of the event. Should restrictions still be in place that disallow the usual set-up of the market, the market could operate in a reduced fashion such as the 2020 market and the committee would give consideration to this at a future meeting if applicable.

2.3 CHRISTMAS LIGHT SWITCH ON

Feedback from 2020 was that the Christmas Light Switch On was sorely missed and that it was disappointing that a livestream switch on was planned to later be cancelled (following a recommendation from Cheshire East Council that this should not proceed.)

The usual switch on event will be planned as part of the Christmas Weekend. Should restrictions prevent this the Events Officer will explore alternative ways to deliver a safe livestreamed switch on.

2.4 SANTA PARADE

The Santa Parade will return on Saturday 27th November; as advised to the committee in 2020, it is recommended that the 2019 format remain in place following positive feedback. The parade would include community involvement from local groups and clubs and local primary schools, as well as some entertainment provided by City of Chester Brass Band to lead the parade, followed by LED light performance troupe Travelling Light Circus who were very popular in the 2019 event.

In terms of transporting Santa through town, the Events Officer has explored the option of borrowing a sleigh from We Are Knutsford who had a Santa ride through town in 2020 to spread joy to local residents. However, due to limited availability of trailers used it does not appear this will be possible.

It will be possible, however, to borrow the sleigh to use for photo opportunities for the Christmas weekend which could be used as an additional feature on Silk Mill Street to draw footfall to these stalls.

The recommended course of action is to proceed with the 2020 recommended option which is to book a red vintage fire engine vehicle which is open topped and will allow full visibility of Santa as he approaches in the parade. This vehicle is fully operational and can be driven so will not require a car to pull the vehicle. The vehicle will also offer space for a winner of a 'ride with Santa' competition to join Santa in the vehicle along with a parent if desired.

2.5 LANTERN PARADE AND CRIB SERVICE

The Lantern Parade was due to return in 2020, however due to the pandemic was postponed to 2021. The Lantern Parade will precede the Crib Service on Saturday 4th December. Handmade Parade have been booked to carry out two lantern making workshops and provide feature lanterns for the parade. City of Chester Brass Band will lead the parade and join the Crib Service to perform the selected carols. The parade will commence at 5pm and the Crib Service will follow at approximately 5.45pm outside the Lost and Found on Princess Street.

3.0 YOUNG ARTIST OF THE YEAR COMPETITION

The Young Artist of the Year competition is a new initiative, initially planned to be launched in autumn 2021. The idea of the competition is to highlight local young artists and offer them a platform to showcase their work.

Following discussion with the Events Committee Chairman, it has been agreed to postpone the competition to 2022. The Events Officer will work to programme the event for autumn 2022.

4.0 DIRECTION REQUIRED

Members are asked to review the arrangements for the events as outlined.