

**CONGLETON TOWN COUNCIL**

**COMMITTEE REPORTS AND UPDATES**

<b>COMMITTEE:</b>	Community Committee		
<b>MEETING DATE AND TIME</b>	27 June 2024 7 pm	<b>LOCATION</b>	Congleton Town Hall
<b>REPORT FROM</b>	Jackie MacArthur, Communities and Marketing Manager and Deputy Chief Officer and Rachel McCarthy, Town Centre and Events Officer.		
<b>AGENDA ITEM REPORT TITLE</b>	<b>10 Christmas 2024</b>		
<b>Summary</b>	<p>This paper has been written to give members an insight into the plans being developed for Christmas 2024 in Congleton and the improvements we are planning to this year's switch-on following feedback from last year.</p> <p>Since 2013 the town council has taken responsibility for the Christmas lights and decorations, the health and safety of the event, most of the entertainment and infrastructure bookings and the publicity. The Town Council is also the main sponsor of the switch-on and takes the lead on pulling together publicity about all the various Christmas-related activities occurring in Congleton.</p> <p>The Town Council invests</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• £10k into the Christmas Lights budget, which covers everything to do with the installation, repair, maintenance, storage, testing and removal of the lights and large main tree. The Town Council also invests</li><li>• £6k in the Christmas activities – the switch on, promotion and marketing</li><li>• £4k on the projections for Christmas and Remembrance.</li><li>• The Switch-on budget is usually doubled through sponsorship, fees for stalls, installation of small trees and donations</li></ul> <p>The Christmas Lights falls under this Committee under item 5.4 of the terms of reference:</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Deliver specific events in Congleton such as the Christmas lights switch-on, Play Days, Health &amp; Wellbeing Fayre, Remembrance Day and White Ribbon Day.</b></p> <p>The Town Council works closely with Congleton Community Projects on the event planning and CCP organises the lantern procession, running lantern-making workshops in the lead-up to the switch-on.</p>		
<b>Project Plans for 2024</b>	<p>1. <b>Decorating the Town with Christmas Lights:</b> <i>(See Committee item 11 re the Contract for the Christmas lights)</i></p> <p>The Town Council invested in a significant number of new lights in 2024. The only lights that are now substandard are the lamp post lights in Mill Street and West Street. These lights failed last year and are not worth installing this year. New lights in West Street and Mill Street will cost around £4,000 to £5,000.</p> <p>There was a problem with some of the new lights on Lawton Street. We have been advised that these lights are in good working order and need to check the electricity supply to the lamp posts.</p>		

2. **Main Tree:** A traditional Christmas tree will be installed and decorated in the usual spot in the pedestrian area near Higher Ground. We will seek sponsorship to cover the cost of this tree.
3. **Projections on the Town Hall:** This has been very popular for the past four years and a separate budget of £4k has been created for Town Hall projections (Remembrance and Christmas). This budget allows for 14 days of projection at Christmas.
4. **Small Christmas Trees:** Local shops will be given the option to purchase 5-6 foot trees which are installed above the shop. This is managed in a similar way to the hanging baskets. The shops cover the cost of the tree, provide the lights and the electricity and pay £12.50 for CTC to install and remove the trees. There are usually around 100 small trees above shops and the installation money goes towards the cost of the switch-on.
5. **Switch-on Event:** In 2024 the switch-on will take place on Friday 29 November from 4 pm – 8 pm with the lights being turned on at 6pm. This will give 4 shopping weekends with the Christmas lights on.  
Improvements/ lessons from last year:
  - Road closures will include Mill Street and Swan Bank the same as in 2023 – the additional space is needed for the activities and amount of people in attendance
  - The Santa's Grotto will be hosted by the Cygnet Club
  - The Community Stage will be moved from the centre of the pedestrian area to Swan Bank near Rumba
  - We are investigating a large screen for Mill Street near where the parade gathers to create a large safe space where families can see what is happening on the main stage
  - We have booked a slightly smaller Main Stage to give more room in the High Street
  - We have booked smaller, one-sided stalls so that there is more room in the pedestrian area and all traders can face out – with a clear free-flowing pavement behind them
  - More barriers will be used around the stage to protect the area
  - Discussions are underway with the Congleton Market Quarter to make the most of the space cross-market the Christmas offer
  - A discussion has been held with the Equal Access Advisory group on improvements
  - Quiet areas are being explored
  - The aim is to include as many local businesses as possible
  - Work is underway on securing entertainment and sponsorship
6. **Window Dressing Competition:** We are hoping to attract at least 24 shops into a window competition where we can highlight a window a day and create an advent trail.

	<p>7. <b>Tree of Light:</b> We will once again support Congleton Rotary with the Tree of Light Appeal – where they sell stars to go on a real tree planted in the Community Garden. The switch-on for this tree will be on Saturday 30 November.</p> <p>8. <b>Totally Locally Christmas:</b> We will be working with the Totally Locally Team to boost independent shops at Christmas.</p> <p>9. <b>Toy Appeal:</b> Congleton Town Council will work with Plus Dane, Congleton Chronicle, NSPCC and Boots Barn Road on a toy appeal for local families – this will run through until the week before Christmas. This has grown year on year and Plus Dane has good links to the schools and uncovering Congleton people most in need.</p> <p>10. <b>Christmas Town Centre Saturday:</b> There will be a Markers Market on the 30 November and 21 December. We are looking for other activities to give a Christmas buzz in the town centre on the 7 and 14 December.</p> <p>11. <b>Christmas Guide:</b> We will produce a Guide to Christmas in Congleton to include public events and activities, but also tips for making your Christmas Greener and support over Christmas.</p> <p>12. <b>East Cheshire Hospice Christmas Tree Recycling:</b> We will be working with the hospice to help promote its Christmas Tree recycling system which raises funds for the hospice.</p> <p>13. <b>Cheshire East Free Parking Days:</b> Cheshire East Council is no longer offering Town Councils with fee-paying car parks free parking after 10 on a proportion of the car parks. A price has been requested in case CTC wish to purchase this option.</p> <p>The Christmas activities are being led by the Town Council’s Communities and Marketing Team with support from Congleton Community Projects, Congleton Rotary and other volunteers. The town council is the major sponsor and will be seeking more sponsorship and volunteers to help with the events.</p>
<b>Proposal</b>	<b>For the Committee to consider the paper and add any actions or comments</b>
<b>Financial Implications</b>	<p>The Town Council is the main sponsor of the Christmas lights and switch-on, but a£6K - £8k of additional revenue needs to be secured to host an event of a similar size to 2023 but also include additional accessibility improvements.</p> <p>If Christmas lights are to be installed on West Street/ Mill Street the Town Council will need to invest around £5k of capital on new lights.</p>
<b>Environmental Implications</b>	The team will follow event guidance to reduce the environmental impact of Christmas activities and events.
<b>Equality and Diversity</b>	Full consideration is being given to making the event as accessible as possible to all members of our society and considering how their needs can be met at this major event.
<b>Decision Requested</b>	For councillors to consider this report into Christmas 2024. Add any comments or actions and approve the paper for officers to action.

