

BLYTH TOWN COUNCIL
Special Community Development Committee
Tuesday 29 August 2023

Decision Report
Christmas Events

Recommendation

Members to consider the following options for Christmas Events for 2023 due to updated information regarding building work and road closures in the town centre and resolve to agree that option 3 be implemented.

Ward

Not ward specific.

Risk Management

To ensure that events are organised considering all elements of finance, health and safety and other issues relating specifically to each event. The format of some of the events are still to be agreed or where further work may need to be carried out.

Objective

To promote the environmental, social, and economic wellbeing of the town and its community by organising a variety of events for the public to enjoy/participate within. All options are within the Christmas budgets available.

Report

Due to the hoardings on the marketplace being placed at a 3-metre distance from surrounding buildings and a date for the installation still unconfirmed, we need to decide based on the knowledge we currently have. We also must take into consideration the road closure on Bridge Street and loss of the Freehold Street car park as it becomes the compound for the works.

I have spoken with Inspector Jonathan Caisley and Donna Reed from Force Resilience about the concerns they have over closing any further roads as were previously suggested by the Events working group including Bowes Street. This means we cannot safely create a pedestrianised area to host the event as previously thought.

After speaking with many groups and people who would normally be involved and contribute to an event like this, we have a greater understanding of how we can safely produce and manage this event.

There are 3 options to consider:

Option 1

The lights are turned on in the Town without a 'Swich On Event' and have an alternative Christmas Event elsewhere which would not involve the 'Lights on' element. This could be at Ridley Park like last year's Christmas Market. However, this is very weather dependant, and there are no places for people to shelter/warm up, like there is in the town centre, so is harder to keep people there for any amount of time.

Option 2

We continue with the lights on event, but without a stage and focus point. We have entertainment spaced around the town centre. Street theatre, Choirs and Brass Bands and some items of interest including snow globes and lights. We can speak with local businesses to encourage them to stay open later and have a festive shopping night in Blyth. We can also utilise the space in Morrisons car park for rides and some food traders.

Option 3 (**recommended**)

We have a smaller 'Lights on' event in conjunction with the Keel Row Shopping centre's lights on, they will delay this by 1 week to coincide with ours. We can have a brass band and carol singing around the tree as well as some street theatre to entertain people including a Victorian magician and a fire show.

We could then use the remaining budget to enhance the Saturday's in December when we will already have the Santas Grotto. We utilise the empty units in the keel Row to co-ordinate activities for children and families to get involved in like Circus and Magic Workshops, Panto and Acting Workshops and Art workshops. We could create a graffiti workspace for children to express themselves and encourage local groups to come along and show case what Blyth still has to offer. We can also invite groups that may wish to run 'have a go' workshops like the Boxing or Karate Club, or the Gymnastics. Other options including Wreath making workshops and Fun Little Foodies classes for children. We can also decorate the windows in the shopping centre with snow art and encourage other shops around the town to do the same.

For all these options we have had provisional permissions from the Keel Row and Morrisons to use their facilities as outline above pending further information. We can have the craft market attending these events as well.

The dates for the proposed would-be Friday 17th November, Lights on and Saturday 2nd, 9th and 16th for the Keel row events.

Julie Summers
Events Co-ordinator

21 August 2023

Appendix 1 – Image of Proposed Christmas Tree on Church Street

Appendix 2 – Town Map for Christmas