



**Report to: Place and Economic Development Committee, 1 November 2021**

**Report of: Managing Director**

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**Subject: CHRISTMAS IN WORCESTER UPDATE**

**1. Recommendation**

**1.1 That the committee notes the update on Christmas in Worcester activity.**

**2. Background**

- 2.1 At the PED committee meeting in June 2021, members requested regular updates on the planning for Christmas in Worcester this year.
- 2.2 New Christmas lights suppliers have been contracted and a new illuminations scheme will be installed this year. The lights will be switched on at an event on Saturday 27 November from 2-6pm.
- 2.3 The Victorian Christmas Fayre will take place from Thursday 2 – Sunday 5 December in the usual format, with some changes to layout to account for the installation of the wooden chalets on the High Street. Street entertainment and Victorian-themed installations will be in place throughout the event and local retailers will be encouraged to trade from outside their shopfronts to take advantage of the increased footfall
- 2.4 The Worcester Christmas Market is a new event designed to attract visitors to the High Street to support local retailers and hospitality businesses during the crucial pre-Christmas trading season. It consists of 25 wooden chalets which will be installed in the High Street from Monday 6 – Wednesday 22 December. Additional market stalls will be installed in Cathedral Square and the High Street on the weekends of 11-12 and 18-19 December.

**3. Festive Parking Offers**

- 3.1 A £50,000 recovery fund has been set aside for parking incentives to support the economic recovery of the city. This will be used during the festive period to encourage people to visit the city to shop, dine and enjoy the festive events.

**4. Summary of planning activity - Worcester Christmas Lights**

- 4.1 Work has been carried out on New Road roundabout in preparation for the lighting of the red chestnut tree.
- 4.2 The defunct Christmas lights have been removed from the trees on the High Street.
- 4.3 Christmas lights will be installed throughout the city during November ahead of the Christmas lights switch on event on Saturday 27 November.

4.4 The stage will be in Cathedral Square with entertainment from 2pm and the lights being switched on at 6pm. This will be complemented by activity throughout the city centre, with appearances from local pantomime stars and offers from local retailers and restaurants. The tourism and events team, along with partners including Worcester BID, Crowngate and Cathedral Square, are working with retailers and restaurants to encourage them to get involved with the event and spread the festive atmosphere throughout the city.

## **5. Summary of planning activity – Victorian Christmas Fayre**

5.1 Trading stalls at the Fayre are now sold out. These include both previous attendees and new stallholders with a wide range of products. A waiting list has been set up for interested parties and the team is reviewing the layout of the event to determine if it will be appropriate to add in additional stalls anywhere.

5.2 Hostile Vehicle Mitigation barriers have been procured for the event. The successful supplier is Crowdguard who have significant experience with this type of installation.

5.3 Since the last meeting, the team have carried out further marketing to group travel bookers and coach companies but by the end of September, we had still received only 50% of the coach bookings which would normally have been received by this time. It is clear that coaches are booking later than usual this year, but it will be difficult to predict expected numbers because bookings have not followed the traditional pattern. We have been engaging with all relevant suppliers to update and discuss options.

5.4 The team have begun the process of booking schools and community groups for the entertainment stages and have currently booked one-third of the available performance slots. Further promotion of this opportunity will be carried out.

5.5 The carol service has been confirmed with Worcester Cathedral and this will be followed by the traditional procession to the official opening ceremony of the event.

5.6 A business newsletter has been sent to retailers in the Fayre area to raise awareness of the event and encourage them to get involved to maximise the opportunities presented.

## **6. Summary of activity – Worcester Christmas Market**

6.1 The layout of the market has been confirmed with 25 wooden chalets along the High Street, located to avoid blocking access to existing retailers and businesses.

6.2 22 chalets are booked currently, and discussions are ongoing with other potential traders to fill the rest of the vacancies.

6.3 In addition to the wooden chalets, additional stalls will be put in place in Cathedral Square and the High Street over the weekends of 11-12 December and 18-19 December. A programme of entertainment is booked for both weekends to entertain shoppers.

## **7. Risk Management**

- 7.1 Following the publication of the Autumn and Winter Plan on 14 September the Government issued a proposal for its Plan B which could be brought in over the Winter if the country is faced with a surge in Covid cases and unsustainable pressure on the NHS. Officers are monitoring the situation closely.

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**Background Papers:** PED Committee report September 2021