

**Report to: Place and Economic Development Committee, 7<sup>th</sup> June 2021**

**Report of: Corporate Director, Place**

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**Subject: VICTORIAN FAYRE AND CHRISTMAS MARKETS**

## **1. Recommendations**

**That the Committee agrees to contract with Cotswold Markets for the following:**

- 1.1 Management of the market stalls at the 2021 Worcester Victorian Christmas Fayre; and**
- 1.2 Installation and operation of wooden chalets on the High Street for the month of December as part of an extended City Centre offer in the pre-Christmas period.**

## **2. Background**

- 2.1. The Worcester Victorian Christmas Fayre is scheduled to take place from Thursday 2nd to Sunday 5th December 2021. Since 2016, the event has been organised by Worcester City Council with the management of the market stalls contracted to an external supplier. The previous contract came to an end on 31<sup>st</sup> January 2021.
- 2.2. Due to Covid restrictions, the 2020 Victorian Fayre did not take place and, instead, the Council commissioned market operators to deliver Christmas gift markets for each weekend in December. The markets were well-received by members of the public with positive feedback received on social media and were well-attended, despite some challenging weather. Stallholders reported that they traded well at the markets and several have since contacted us to request that we put these on again.
- 2.3. To support local businesses, the Council worked with the market operator to ensure there was no clash with retailers, stalls were positioned to be complementary to existing businesses and that products were not competitive. Local businesses were asked for feedback after the event and responded positively.
- 2.4. It is anticipated that the impact of the pandemic will still be felt during December and consumer sentiment surveys indicate that people may still be uncomfortable with large crowds. Considering this and based on previous feedback from businesses and visitors that the Fayre can become very crowded, officers have sought to review the layout of the event, distributing and reducing the number of stalls accordingly.

## **3. Preferred Option**

- 3.1. This report seeks approval to put in place a one-year contract with Cotswold Markets for management of the stalls at the Worcester Victorian Christmas Fayre in 2021, alongside a wooden chalet Christmas market for the month of December.

- 3.2. Discussions have taken place between Council officers and representatives of Cotswold markets about the commercial terms, potential income and costs, details of which are included in the exempt appendix.
- 3.3. Officers recommend a single year contract with Cotswold Markets in order to undertake a review of the Fayre and better understand the commercial model of extending the Christmas market for the whole of December. A longer-term procurement will be carried out after the event.
- 3.4. Proposed details for the Victorian Christmas Fayre
  - Thursday 2 – Sunday 5 December 2021
  - Market stalls throughout the city centre
  - Traditional Victorian Fayre format
  - Street entertainment and Victorian-themed installations will be in place throughout the event, arranged by the Council
  - Local retailers will be encouraged to trade from outside their shopfronts to take advantage of the increased footfall
- 3.5. Management of the stalls at the Victorian Fayre
  - 3.5.1. Cotswold Markets operate a variety of events including retail, farmers, and craft markets; as well as stand-alone events, such as street fairs and festivals all over the UK. They have over 30 years' experience of working in markets.
  - 3.5.2. Subject to approval, Cotswold Markets will act as market operator for the Worcester Victorian Christmas Fayre for one year (2021) only. The Fayre will operate under the usual model, but the team will improve the layout of the event based on feedback from visitors and businesses in previous years. The Council will arrange and manage the entertainment offer which sits alongside the market stalls.
  - 3.5.3. This will reduce the number of temporary Fayre stalls and will include the addition (subject to approval) of 30 wooden chalets on the High Street discussed in point 3.7, below. Full details of the event are to be confirmed, but one example of improvements to be made are that this model will enable the team to remove the catering concessions from the front of the Guildhall and install festive wooden chalets which presents a more attractive impression for this key tourist attraction.
  - 3.5.4. The following arrangements will be put in place via a written agreement to include:
    - i. Recruitment, selection and invoicing of stallholders
    - ii. Ongoing management and communication with stallholders,
    - iii. Installation, ongoing maintenance, and de-rig of market stalls
    - iv. Stewarding of stallholders at set up and breakdown each day
    - v. Provision of onsite contacts, to sit in or near the Fayre office
    - vi. 24/7 emergency contact for the period of the Fayre
    - vii. Trade waste removal
  - 3.5.5. Cotswold Markets will supply the following:
    - i. Contact details for the site team and details of business continuity arrangements
    - ii. Risk assessment covering usual operation
    - iii. Risk assessment covering additional factors due to COVID and any COVID-secure measures implemented
    - iv. Public Liability insurance

- v. Assurance that they have reviewed and accepted the risk assessment and PLI for each trader
- vi. Method statement and details of installation

3.6. Proposed details for the wooden chalet Christmas market are:

- Thursday 2 – Thursday 23 December
- 30 wooden chalets to be installed in the High Street, 7 days a week
- The stalls will be dressed and lit to add to the festive atmosphere
- Additional market stalls to be installed in Cathedral Square on the weekends only (11-12 and 18-19 December)
- Promotion to residents and visitors through the Christmas in Worcester campaign
- To complement existing retailers in the city centre, working alongside local businesses to maximise positive impacts on trade

3.7. Management of the wooden chalet Christmas market

3.7.1. Subject to approval, the wooden chalets would be in situ from Thursday 2nd December (day 1 of the Fayre) to Thursday 23rd December. The operator would be required to engage with local businesses to ensure there was no unfair competition and that the impact is positive. The Council will work with the operator to ensure that opportunities to take up a chalet are promoted to local businesses.

3.7.2. Cotswold Markets will be responsible for the following, to be put in place via a written agreement:

- i. Recruitment, selection and invoicing of stallholders
- ii. Ongoing management and communication with stallholders,
- iii. Installation, ongoing maintenance, and de-rig of market stalls
- iv. Stewarding of stallholders
- v. Provision of onsite manager
- vi. 24/7 emergency contact for the period of the market
- vii. Trade waste removal

3.8. Cotswold Markets will supply the following:

- i. Contact details for the site team and details of business continuity arrangements
- ii. Risk assessment covering usual operation
- iii. Risk assessment covering additional factors due to COVID and any COVID-secure measures implemented
- iv. Public Liability insurance
- v. Assurance that they have reviewed and accepted the risk assessment and PLI for each trader
- vi. Method statement and details of installation

#### **4. Alternative Options Considered**

4.1. Do not deliver a Christmas market alongside the Victorian Fayre. This is not recommended because:

- (I) The cancellation of the Fayre in 2020 led to some city centre retailers reporting hardship because of the loss of income, but feedback was that the addition of smaller markets over multiple weekends mitigated some of the negative impacts.

(II) The Fayre traditionally attracts a lot of tourists to the city, but the two Christmas weekend markets will provide more reasons for residents to visit the city to do their gift shopping from local retailers and market stalls.

4.2. Conduct a full procurement for longer-term delivery of the Fayre. This is not recommended because it is not considered that it would give best value at this time while the economic impacts of the pandemic are still being assessed.

## **5. Implications**

### **5.1. Financial and Budgetary Implications**

The current estimate of income and expenditure for the Fayre is included on the next page, however it should be noted that much is still to be confirmed, for example, consumer confidence for booking coach trips may still be negatively impacted by the effects of Covid-19 at that time this impacts both income and expenditure.

It has been identified that the numbers of people expected at the event will lead to a requirement for Hostile Vehicle Mitigation (HVM) measures to be installed. The exact specification and price is to be confirmed but it is estimated to be the same as in 2019 which cost £36,500+VAT. This has been included in the detailed income and expenditure information set out in the exempt appendix.

Taking into account all current forecast income and costs the Fayre currently is projecting a shortfall of c.£39,000. This could change depending on the risks to the event (see risks section below). Any shortfall in the income and expenditure of the Christmas Market will be need to be met from the Council's Income Contingency Reserve.

### **5.2. Legal and Governance Implications**

A contract will be put in place to manage and monitor delivery. This contract is subject to a procurement exemption. The value of the one-year contract is below the threshold for tendering under the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 and therefore there is a legal basis for not undertaking a procurement process.

### **5.3. Risk Implications**

There is a risk that restrictions may be reintroduced because of Covid-19 variants and, if so, this will impact the delivery of the event. The impact of any resurgence in Covid-19 or variants will have an impact on visitor numbers, trader confidence and the availability of staff or infrastructure. This will be monitored, and contingency plans will be put in place (for example, cancellation, partial cancellation, event layout review, etc). The Council will agree the process for managing this risk with the operator.

The income for both the Fayre and the Christmas market is calculated on a per stall basis, not a total price, so if the number of stalls is reduced (for example due to reinstated social distancing restrictions) the income will reduce accordingly. Some elements of the costs for the event can be mitigated on this basis through supplier agreements.

The team will need to monitor the numbers of coaches booking in order to justify the development of the coach management system as this normally costs in the region of £10,000.

5.4. Corporate/Policy Implications

The events will support the Council's Covid economic and community recovery strategies.

5.5. Equality Implications

There are no significant equality implications arising from this report. The Council will work with the operator to ensure that the events are reasonably accessible to people with different needs and access requirements.

5.6. Human Resources Implications

The relationship with the operator will be managed by existing resources within the team.

5.7. Health and Safety Implications

The operator's procedures will be subject to review by the Council's Health and Safety Manager and the county's Safety Advisory Group which will review the event management plan.

5.8. Social, Environmental and Economic Implications

The vitality and vibrancy of the city centre is key in supporting the economy to recover from the impacts of COVID-19 and so providing valuable support to local businesses. Events and markets play an important role in attracting residents and visitors back to the city.

**Ward(s):** All Wards  
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**Background Papers:** None.