



**Report to: Place and Economic Development Committee, 6 September 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 this year's Victorian Christmas Fayre and Christmas market.

2.2 The Victorian Christmas Fayre will take the usual format, with some changes to layout to account for the installation of the wooden chalets on the High Street.

**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
- Local retailers will be encouraged to trade from outside their shopfronts to take advantage of the increased footfall

2.3 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.

**Details for the Worcester Christmas Market:**

- Thursday 6 – Thursday 23 December
- 25-30 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
- 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. Summary of planning activity – Victorian Christmas Fayre**

3.1 Nearly 75% of available stalls have been confirmed by Cotswold Markets, our market operator for the event. These include some previous attendees as well as several new stallholders.

- 3.2 Procurement has commenced for the Hostile Vehicle Mitigation barriers required for an event of this scale. The closing date was Monday 23 August.
- 3.3 The Worcestershire Safety Advisory Group has been engaged with the first meeting scheduled for Wednesday 15 September. This allows officers to update the emergency services and other key stakeholders to ensure that the event is planned to be delivered in a safe manner.
- 3.4 A programme of coach marketing is underway with adverts scheduled in several group travel publications, including Coach Tours UK, the WI magazine and Group Travel Today.
- 3.5 By the end of July, we had received only 50% of the coach bookings which would normally have been received by this time. The team will be monitoring numbers and carrying out additional promotion to group travel organisers. It is anticipated that people may book later than usual this year.
- 3.6 The traditional funfair has been confirmed for the Cornmarket car park.
- 3.7 The team have been working with Worcester Cathedral to confirm details of the traditional Opening Ceremony on Thursday 2 December.
- 3.8 Planned activity for September includes the booking of professional entertainers, engagement with businesses and continuing supplier negotiations.

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

- 4.1 Cotswold Markets are currently working with the chalet hire company to agree layout, logistics and timings. The installation will take place in the week leading up to 1<sup>st</sup> December.
- 4.2 Officers are considering options for engagement with local businesses, producers and suppliers to maximise the benefit of the market to the local economy.
- 4.3 A programme of entertainment will be booked for each of the weekends and a number of evenings through December to encourage visitors to the city and remind people to shop in Worcester this Christmas.

#### **5. Risk Management**

- 5.1 The event is subject to stringent risk management procedures, including a risk register and health and safety assessments which will reference Covid-19 and other public health issues.
- 5.2 The risk register reviews the impact of the risk of cancellation or restrictions which may be imposed on the event due to public health concerns and is updated on a regular basis.
- 5.3 As discussed at the Committee meeting in June, the Council will support the operator and traders with unrecoverable costs in the event of a late cancellation of the event or impact of restrictions due to Covid. Where costs cannot be met from insurance or other sources and cannot be mitigated or reduced, the Council will offer to fund those costs itself, provided they have been previously agreed, are transparently itemised and are reasonable.

The extent of this possible commitment is still being scoped and will be subject to a maximum sum which will be brought back to Members should it exceed current budgeted provision.

- 5.4 Cotswold Market have agreed to refund traders or roll over their booking if the event needs to be cancelled due to Covid-19.

## **6. Worcester Christmas Lights 2021**

- 6.1 Following the end of the previous supplier contract, officers conducted a procurement exercise and have engaged with a new supplier for the festive illuminations – LITE Ltd. This contract will last for three years.
- 6.2 LITE’s concept for the new festive lighting scheme for Worcester city centre has been designed to reflect the traditional and historic nature of the town’s architecture, whilst incorporating some of the latest “cutting edge” technology featuring fully controllable “Twinkly Pro” LED mini lights in appropriate areas, well away from traffic. These lights can be programmed to display a light show at intervals which will attract attention, drive footfall and increase dwell time in the city centre.
- 6.3 The remainder of the scheme has been designed around a gold and silver “Christmas Angels and stars” theme, which provides numerous opportunities for introducing large elegant cross street displays dressed in tasteful twinkling gold lights.
- 6.4 The Cathedral roundabout will be decorated with a lit 35-foot tree dressed with warm white lights in keeping with the traditional location.
- 6.5 This year, the existing large tree on New Road roundabout will be dressed with lights and the roundabout will also feature a separate feature decoration providing an attractive visual display welcoming visitors to St Johns. Throughout St Johns, mini Christmas trees will be installed above shops as in previous years.
- 6.6 The Christmas lights switch on event will take place on Saturday 27 November and will feature entertainment throughout the day leading up to a festive switch on event in the evening.
- 6.7 All of the above activity will be promoted via the annual Christmas in Worcester marketing campaign jointly coordinated with Worcester BID.

**Ward(s):** Cathedral  
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**Background Papers:** PED Committee report June 2021