

Community Services Committee

Title:	Christmas Proposal 2024
Date:	16 July 2024
Contact Officer:	Belinda Lee, Communications & Events Officer (Maternity cover)

Purpose of the Report

1. To propose Christmas events and activities throughout November/December 2024

Background

2. Christmas in Thame has always had a special feel to it with beautiful street & tree lights, festive cheer, and plenty of events. This report outlines our suggested programme for November/December 2024, taking into consideration:
 - Christmas Lights Switch-On event.
 - The staging/promotion of additional events throughout December in partnership with other organisations.
 - Engaging help and support from councillors.
 - Creation of Christmas booklet to generate revenue (through advertising).
 - Combining Santa's Grotto with the Christmas Craft & Charity Craft Fair.
 - An expanded Street Food Market to generate revenue.

Proposal

3. To stage one main Christmas Lights Switch-On event on Friday 29th November. This event will mark the start of a month-long Christmas campaign of community events and activities aimed at attracting residents from Thame and surrounding villages, and visitors, to the Town Centre (and into local businesses). The events should also provide Christmas cheer and lift community spirits.
4. This year we are looking to have a **reindeer** theme, which will be used across all promotional materials and activities throughout the month.

Date	Event/Activity
Friday 29 th November	Main light switch on to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Street Food Market around the back and sides of Town Hall, delivered by Ay Streetmeat (tbc) with tall standing tables for people to eat and drink without crowding walkways. • A Children's Christmas Parade – children/families and local primary schools are invited to dress 'Christmassy' – they can don their favourite Christmas jumpers or dress as Christmas trees, Santa, elves, baubles, stars, or their favourite Christmas characters. They can even dress the family pet! A short parade would take place along the High Street to the main event area.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outside Town Hall, entertainment to include fun activities presented by compere, music from Thame Concert Band, and an invitation to Thame Players to perform 12 Days of Christmas (panto song). • A special guest appearance for children from either Bluey, Chase (Paw Patrol), or the Gruffalo (with possible tie-in sponsorship to cover costs) – meet compere and then walk through crowd. • At the other end of the High Street carpark, a carousel (which also provides music for that end), community group stalls with more traditional Christmas fare - mulled wine, mince tarts, churros, hot chocolates etc, tombola fundraising stalls, as well as a small group of Christmas gift/craft stalls. More tall standing tables at this end also to spread the crowd. • Late night shopping: businesses will be encouraged to stay open until 7pm for late night shopping. • Evening culminates with visit from Santa and light switch on by 3 children chosen by primary schools to celebrate personal achievement. • After the tree lighting, a local choir (or school group) sings a selection of up-tempo, children friendly Christmas songs to keep people in Town Centre longer – <i>Jingle Bells, Jingle Bell Rock, Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer, Frosty the Snowman, Let it Snow</i> etc. • Visitors will be encouraged to stay on after light switch-on to soak up the atmosphere, take a selfie, and enjoy the eateries and a spot of late-night shopping.
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5. Throughout the month of December, competitions and activities to include, but not limited to:

- Sally Evans craft fairs (dates tbc) – Charity Christmas craft fair to include Santa’s grotto downstairs, to make event bigger and encourage more people into the Town Hall.
- Senior Citizens tea party (Wednesday 11 Dec)
- Shop window display competition: Shoppers invited to post selfies in front of participating shop windows and post to a specially made Christmas in Thame Instagram account. Everyone who uploads an image goes in the draw to win a Christmas hamper of donated products from participating Thame businesses. (One of the conditions of entry would be that every photo entitles person to one entry – and they can only enter one picture per venue. This would encourage people to visit every business with a window display for more chances to win).
- Create a Christmas trail for children to find Santa’s lost reindeer – Rudolph, Dasher, Dancer, Prancer, Vixen, Comet, Cupid, Donner, and Blitzen. Each reindeer’s name is uncovered through a series of letters in each location – and each location is given a letter. The location letters spell out the word CHRISTMAS. Completed entries could be dropped off at the Library and/or Town Hall to win an instant prize and /or go in the draw for a major prize.

- Colouring-in images of reindeer to be sent to all primary school children to enter a competition and have their reindeer displayed at the library.
- Letter to Santa to support the work of the Red Kite Family Centre.
- Information Centre to sell reindeer ears for mayor's charities. Encourage everyone at the light switch-on to wear their ears.
- A reindeer selfie-station located at the Town Hall.
- To investigate hosting a wreath-making workshops in the Town Hall chamber and/or a Christmas craft workshop for children.
- Residents encouraged to take part in Winter Wanderland, decorating their front windows and posting to our Christmas in Thame Instagram account.
- Christmas carols in front of the Town Hall on Christmas eve (24 Dec) with community group stalls providing mulled wine, hot chocolate, and mince tarts.

Promotion

6. A booklet containing all the details of our Christmas events, as well as other upcoming community events. To be distributed to each home in Thame prior to 29th November. The events will also be promoted through the Thame Town Council newsletter and social media sites.

Risk Assessment

7. Each activity/event will have clear risk assessments in place and be carefully managed.

Resource Appraisal

8. Expenditure will be confined within the Christmas event budget with sponsorship and donation opportunities offered to businesses to offset any additional costs.
9. We will aim to get many of the events and activities sponsored by local businesses.
10. Staff time to help with planning and to work at the switch on event.

Action:

- i) To note the report.*
- ii) To provide ideas and feedback to improve the event offer.*