

STRONGER COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

Date: Monday 21st September 2020

Title: Christmas Events

Contact Officer: Operations and Estates Officer – John Hickman

Background

The purpose of this report is to update Councillors on the current position regarding the Christmas Lights Switch on and the Advent Fayre.

Christmas Lights Switch On

The Rotary Club of Witney normally run the Christmas Lights switch on evening on behalf of WTC on the last Friday of November annually. The Town Clerk has been in touch with the President of the Rotary Club regarding this event and has been informed that the Rotary Club are not intending to run a Switch on Event this year due to the current Covid 19 situation.

Given that the council will also have a reduced Christmas lights display this year and the associated issues with running any type of event of this nature in the current Pandemic situation and the requirement to try to prevent large gatherings of people the Operations and Estates Officer would suggest that the lights this year very simply with no fuss simply switched on overnight on Friday 27th November by the Christmas lighting contractors.

Advent Fayre

The Advent Fayre normally takes place in the Corn Exchange on the Sunday directly following Christmas Lights Switch the date this year being Sunday 29th November. This year it is felt that with the current Pandemic and the associated issues with public gatherings in doors and in particular the restrictions in place regarding Covid 19 the Advent Fayre should not take place this year. Given the type of event it is – craft based – the logistics around sanitising equipment between families/sessions would be labour intensive and not really appropriate at this time.

Environmental impact

Having declared a Climate Change Emergency at its Council meeting on 26 June 2019 – with this in mind Councillors should have due regard to the environmental impact of any decisions they make with regard to its facilities and services it operates.

Risk

In decision making Councillors should give consideration to any risks to the Council and any action it can take to limit or negate its liability.

In the current pandemic situation, it would be wrong for the Council to encourage public gatherings of any sort.

Financial Implications

The Council normally gives the Rotary Club a grant to assist with the costs of putting on the switch-on event.

With regard to the Advent Fayre, the Council does have to purchase craft materials and also funds the small fair rides in the Market Square.

Officers would recommend that the budgets are either rolled over to the next financial year or are offset against the loss of income from other areas of the Council's business.

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and agree the cancellation of this year's Christmas Lights Switch-on and Advent Fayre due to the pandemic.