



Committee	Assets & Services
Month	December 2023
Report Title	Events & Activities Update
Report Author	Colette Kerr – Events & Activities Officer Claire Haddock – Weddings, Venues & Market Co-Ordinator
Attachments	None

Agenda item: 6

Events & Activities update - Christmas 2023

Lantern making workshops

Free lantern making workshops were held in Jubilee Hub on Saturday 4th and Saturday 11th November. Both were well attended which saw families using their creative skills to make their own lantern - all in readiness for the annual lantern parade to follow. Town Mayor, Cllr Heather Asker joined in the fun, along with cast members of Saffron Players' 2024 Pantomime of Little Red Riding Hood. Volunteers gave their time including Saffron Walden Lions Club, Trilby Roberts, Cllr Alex Reeve, Cllr Richard Porch, Cllr Jeanette Curtis, Cllr Denise Jones and UCAN.

Lantern Parade & Light Switch on

Friday 17 November saw the start of the Christmas festivities in Saffron Walden. Following the Town Crier's Proclamation in the Market Square, Saffron Community Choir entertained with a Christmas selection. It was then the turn of Saffron Walden County High School Choir and Tempos Performing Arts.

The Lantern Parade was led by the Town Crier (David Razzel), Father Christmas (Brien Walker) and the Town Mayor, Cllr Heather Asker. It departed St Mary's Church and headed for The Market Square, following in the Lantern Parade was SWCHS Choir, Tempos Performing Arts, Saffron Players and plenty of families. At 18.00, with over 2000 residents in the Market Square, the Lights were switched on and a Christmas Disco party continued the evening. Stuart Vant from InXpress compered the event and was the evening's DJ – he offered his services free of charge.

Saffron Walden was lucky to have Father Christmas take time out of his busy schedule to visit twice over that weekend; on Friday 17th and again on Sunday 19th. The free specially created Grotto in the Committee Room (Town Hall) gave 360 children and their families a chance to see and talk with Father Christmas. By charging just £1 per child, it raised over £300.

Additionally, on Sunday 19th November, a bustling market saw **Fayre in the Square** enjoyed by many and offered a perfect chance for Christmas shopping. The event was a success with many traders selling out by the end of the day. Running alongside this throughout the weekend in the Town Hall was the Christmas Gift Fair.

SWTC has thanked all its sponsors and stewarding by volunteer groups - The Saffron Walden Lions, UCAN, Barclays Bank and Councillors; Cllr Alex Reeve, Cllr Ralf Meloy, Cllr Patrick Hawksmith, Cllr Jeanette Curtis and Cllr Denise Jones; Town Crier – David Razzel, St Mary's

Church and Father Christmas (Brien Walker, David Barrs, Lee Dorrington and Henry Rowe) and his elves! - students from Saffron Walden County High School!

Markets

The Christmas Markets took place on Sunday 19th November and Sunday 3rd December, there was a happy hum with traders and shoppers saying how much they enjoyed the markets. With the exception of a couple of stalls all of the trader were different at each market giving shoppers a different offering.

Some trader on 3rd December, were original traders from October's first Start Up market; they had never traded at a Christmas market before and were very impressed. SWTC supported them by providing gazebos and tables, leaving them just to present their stock. They all reported great takings. Feedback from one trader read, *"Just wanted to let you know the market on the 3rd was a great success lots of new customers and the staff were all very helpful and professional. Once again thank you for your professional approach and look forward to talking with you soon"*. The Christmas markets give residents the opportunity to shop locally and find something a little different from the retail offering; most traders sell handmade items.

Other activities

The Mayor's Christmas Tombola in aid of her chosen charities was well supported by local businesses and market traders who kindly donated prizes, the tombola soon sold out!

The Gift Fair in the Town Hall also gave a great report back over the two weekends, they had some of the busiest days they had ever had, at one point they couldn't keep up with people coming to their Tombola stall, they had to call friends and family in to help run it. The gift fair give to the Mayors Charities in due course.

The Community Carol singing held on Friday 8th December was also well attended by residents of all ages. SWTC's last Christmas event saw Peasegood & Skeates join over 70 residents to sing Christmas carols in the Market Square in view of the 'Memory Tree'. Saffron Building Society Community Choir and Hadstock Silver Band led the way with some wonderful Christmas pieces with everyone joining in to sing along to a selection of Christmas Carol favourites. Ashdon Primary School choir also attended and magically owned 'Away in Manger'!

The Christmas tree on the Square is once again being used as a "Memory Tree" and SWTC would like to thank Peasegood & Skeates for their continued sponsorship of the initiative. Residents can add their own personal message to the tree - wooden commemorative bauble decorations are available from the Tourist Information Centre, for a suggested minimum donation of £2. All funds raised will be given to the Mayor's chosen charities; Faircroft House Arts and Media Centre and the Saffron Walden Youth Outreach Project. Decorations will be on sale until 2pm on Saturday 23 December 2023.

Local businesses support for Town Council's Christmas programme

SAFFRON WALDEN Town Council is delighted with the support it has received from local businesses in the build up to its community Christmas events programme. Donations and support from main sponsor McCarthy Stone and advertising sponsor Intercounty will significantly fund the exciting schedule of events and activities planned for the local community.

Intercounty Saffron Walden have been regular supporters since the Platinum Jubilee celebrations in June 2022. Said manager David Moss: "We are pleased to be supporting the Town Council again and hope that residents have a wonderful time in the build up to Christmas."

McCarthy Stone's Divisional Marketing executive for the South East Dominic Reece added: "McCarthy Stone are proud to sponsor Saffron Walden's Lantern making workshops and Christmas Light Switch On event. With our local presence in Jacob Place, a development of one and two bedroom apartments designed exclusively for the over 70s soon to be available in Saffron



● Advertising sponsor Intercounty with SWTC officers: Georgia Arnold, Lisa Courtney, Kerry Hill, David Moss, Colette Kerr, Claire Haddock

Walden, we look forward to working closely with the Town Council over the coming years, supporting the community work it does".

Several other local businesses and Saffron Walden BID have pledged their support for the Town Council's yuletide schedule which starts with free fun lantern making workshops on Saturday November 4 and 11. This will be followed by the Lantern Parade and Light Switch On, on Friday November 17, the Fayre in the Square on Sunday November 19 and a chance to meet Father Christmas in his Grotto on both the Friday and the Sunday.

Said SWTC's Events & Activities Officer Colette Kerr: "We are extremely grateful for the support received from local businesses, enabling the continued accessibility of community events for all to enjoy. If you or your businesses would like to support future community events in any way please register your interest at events@saffronwalden.gov.uk or on 01799 516501 (option 6)".



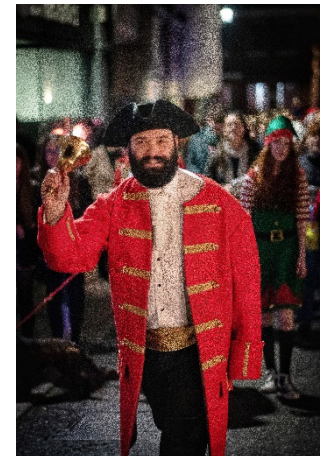
● Main Sponsor McCarthy Stone with SWTC Officers: Georgia Arnold, Chad Goldsmith, Lisa Courtney, Colette Kerr, Dominic Reece, Claire Haddock

Christmas Events Budget

The Events & Activities Officer sought local sponsorship, totalling £5,100.00

This was made up of £300 Ward Members Initiative Fund an UDC Councillor for Saffron Walden – thank you to Cllr Choe Fiddy – and sponsorship from 11 local businesses, totalling £4800.00. Thank you to McCarthy Stone, Intercounty, SW BID, Peasegood & Skeates, Tela, Adams Harrison, Warm Touch Plumbing, Shire Trees, Blackmore Roofing Construction and B&R Carpets.

Marigold Twenty Photography; The Lantern Parade and Light Switch on 2023



Press



Officer Recommendation

- a) The Events & Activities Officer will continue to seek business sponsors and grant funding opportunities, whilst promoting additional sources of revenue.
- b) A 2024 provisional 'save the date' events calendar will be presented in the January meeting. This will include all community events, additional specialist markets, Mayoral fundraising events and promotion of the Food Tour. All 2024 dates will be agreed in advance to allow for advertising to take place as a whole project rather than individual dates.
- c) To note the contents of this report.