

**COMMUNITY AND PARTNERSHIPS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
19TH MAY 2010**

Report of the Director of Loughborough Regeneration

ITEM 7 RETAIL BUSINESS UPDATE – CHRISTMAS 2009

Purpose of Report

To set out what actions have been taken following the Committee's consideration of the matter at its meeting held 20th January 2010 and subsequent report submitted to the Cabinet, together with further proposals for 2010.

Action Requested

The Committee consider the information detailed in the report and any actions required.

Policy Context

One of the main aims of the Council's Corporate Plan is to promote the regeneration and development of Loughborough Town Centre. In Particular the Council works with the Loughborough Town Centre Partnership to promote and deliver a programme of events in the Town Centre throughout the year. The most important of these events is the Christmas Programme which has gone from strength to strength over the last three years.

Background

At its meeting held on 20th January 2010, the Committee considered a report to review the Christmas period across the Borough for the retail trade. At that meeting the Committee submitted a report to the Cabinet on 18th February 2010 with the following recommendations:

1. that the following proposals be explored:
 - (i) the role of the Charnwood Together Board in respect of co-ordinating future Christmas events across the Borough;
 - (ii) the possibility of a Borough wide insurance policy to cover all future Council, Town and Parish Christmas events across the Borough;
 - (iii) the possibility of an organised rolling programme of Christmas events across the Borough;
2. that publicity in respect of future Christmas events across the Borough be disseminated in a more inclusive manner;
3. that available funding for festive lights and recyclable bags for Town and Parish Councils across the Borough be investigated;

Reasons

1(i) To further improve the experience of the Christmas period for retailers and shoppers across the Borough.

1(ii) To allow adequate insurance cover for the Borough, Town and Parish Councils for Christmas events, with each paying a percentage of the total fee, which overall could be a reduction in costs for all those involved.

1(iii) To co-ordinate the events and ensure the maximum attendance at each event.

2. To ensure publicity for all events is available to all residents across the Borough, including the use of Town and Parish Council news letters.

3. In order that Town and Parish Councils have access to information in respect of available funding.

Following consideration of those recommendations Cabinet resolved as follows:

“that the recommendations of the Community and Partnerships Scrutiny Committee, in respect of Retail Business Update – Christmas 2009, be referred to the Chief Executive for consideration and any further action (if necessary)

Reason - To ensure that the financial and risk implications of the recommendations would be explored prior to any action being taken”.

The Committee received a feedback report at its meeting held on 10th March 2010. At that meeting it was agreed to request a further report setting out what actions had been taken following the Committee’s consideration of the matter at its meeting held 20th January 2010 and subsequent report submitted to the Cabinet, together with further proposals for 2010.

Progress on the Committees Recommendations

a) The Role of Charnwood Together

This Matter was referred to the Charnwood Together Board Executive at its meeting on 19th April. The following is an extract of the minutes of that meeting:

“At the meeting of the Community and Partnerships Scrutiny Committee, held on 20th January 2010, an item was considered in respect of ‘Retail Business Update – Christmas 2009’, where it was proposed that the role of the Charnwood Together Board in respect of co-ordinating future Christmas events across the Borough be explored. Members of the Executive were requested to consider including an item on a future Board agenda to explore this proposal further. Members made comments as follows:

- a) **Co-ordinating advertising for Christmas events across the Borough would be appropriate, through Charnwood News rather than the responsibility of the Board.**
- b) **Town and Parish Councils had precepts to fund events.**
- c) **The Board could promote events to its members and publish details on its website.**
- d) **The Board had no funding to co-ordinate Christmas events across the Borough.**

AGREED

- 1. that the Board promote Christmas events across the Borough on its website and to its members;**
- 2. that Charnwood News was the appropriate vehicle to advertise Christmas events across the Borough”.**

In response to the comments from Charnwood Together, officers will ensure that they are supplied with material to promote the Christmas Programme through their web site and that Charnwood News continues to be used to promote the Programme.

b) A Borough-wide Insurance Policy

This matter was investigated with the Council’s Insurance Team who have spoken with the Council’s Insurers. They can’t offer ‘umbrella’ cover, but they might be able to put something together for named specific parties on an annual basis – i.e. not just for Christmas events, but for all sorts of events during the year.

However, Town and Parish councils are likely to already have their own general public liability cover, which would include events. Legally they would need to continue to have this general cover as well.

It is suggested that this matter be referred to the Events Forum (see below) and further advice be taken from the Council’s insurers as necessary.

c) A Rolling Programme of Events and Coordination of Christmas Events publicity

The Town Centre Partnership Christmas Event Planning Group supported by CBC Officers has now started to meet to plan for Loughborough’s Christmas programme. Agenda items have been drafted for the next meeting to address the matters raised by the Committee as follows;

1. to consider the possibility of an organised rolling programme of events across the Borough and report recommendations to the TCP board
2. to consider the best way to publicise Christmas events across the Borough

Other actions to report that will assist with this initiative are

1. A meeting has been held with Oak fm who wish to develop stronger links with the TCP and receive information on programmed events in Loughborough and Charnwood.
2. The Happening in Charnwood Web site is now able to promote events all across the Borough and can provide a one stop shop for people wanting to know what’s going on in the Borough. This web site has been set up to harvest the village web sites to assist event organisers from having to populate several web sites.

3. Charnwood Events Forum has been set up and led by Charnwood Borough Council primarily to share information with regard to known community events with the various bodies involved, and this is well attended by Police, Fire and Ambulance Services, Leicestershire Highways, and officers from CBC to advise on Health and Safety, Environmental Health, Licencing and event planning. In addition the Forum offers assistance to parish councils, uniformed groups, and other community event organisers, with regard to planning and organisation, help and advice with delivery of events in public places, appropriate documentation, advice as to whether a Road Closure is necessary, risk assessments etc. The link to the Charnwood Event Forum can be found at http://www.charnwood.gov.uk/pages/charnwood_events_forum which will provide access to a list of current events, an Events Manual for guidance, and up to date information regarding meetings of the Forum. This information can be disseminated to the Happening in Charnwood Web Site.
4. A media mailing list has been developed and Town and Parish Councils have been made aware of this to assist in promoting their events plans

d) Festive Lights and Reusable bags across the Borough

Festive lighting grants to parishes were included in the Community Grants review and it was agreed that the scheme would cease to be offered from 2010/11. The reason for this was to focus the Council's resources on community and voluntary sector organisations. As part of the review, Parish and Town councils were asked for their views and no negative responses were received, although a query about the availability of these grants was received subsequently. The review report can be found on the Council's website at http://www.charnwood.gov.uk/committees/cabinet?paper_q=&paper_classification=&paper_startDate=2010-03-18&go=Search.

In respect of other initiatives (such as the re-usable bags which have been procured by the Loughborough Town Centre Partnership as part of its "Buy Local" campaign) it has been suggested that some of the experience and good practice of the Loughborough Partnership could be disseminated more widely in the Borough. Members will recall that they were assisted in their consideration of these issues at their January meeting by the Chair of the Loughborough Town Centre Partnership and also by representatives of the Syston Chamber of Trade and the Shepshed Partnership. A preliminary meeting in Syston is being convened through the Town Council to bring together interested parties in the town. This approach could be followed in other areas.

Options Available with Reasons

It is considered that there are two basic options available for Members:

- a) To note the report and accept the progress which has been made in investigating the Committee's recommendations
- b) To make further recommendations for consideration by Cabinet

Financial and Legal Implications

There are no legal or financial implications.

Risk Management

There are no specific risks associated with this decision.

Background Papers: None

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