

Bath & North East Somerset Council		
MEETING/ DECISION MAKER:	Cabinet	
MEETING/ DECISION DATE:	23 June 2021	EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN REFERENCE:
		E 3280
TITLE:	Bath Christmas Market: Thursday 25th November to Sunday 12th December 2021	
WARD:	Kingsmead	
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM		
<p>List of attachments to this report:</p> <p>Appendix One: Bath Christmas Market Proposal to the Safety Advisory Group for Events</p> <p>Appendix Two: Bath Christmas Market Visitor Survey 2019</p> <p>Appendix Three: Bath Christmas Market Site Plan v3.3</p> <p>Appendix Four: Bath Christmas Market Budget</p> <p>Appendix Five: Bath Christmas Market Financial Overview</p> <p>Appendix Six: Risk Assessment and Key Decision Dates – Financial/Public Health</p> <p>Appendix Seven: Bath Christmas Market Equalities Impact Assessment</p> <p>Appendix Eight: Bath Christmas Market Sustainability Policy 2021</p>		

1 THE ISSUE

- 1.1 The Bath Christmas Market transferred from Visit Bath to the Council in January 2021.
- 1.2 With the expected lifting of social distancing measures in June, or at some point shortly after, the Council now needs to decide whether to proceed with planning and delivery of Bath Christmas Market in 2021, with the uncertainty over the pandemic and variants of concern entering the UK.
- 1.3 The Bath Christmas Market provides the gateway to an annual economic uplift for multiple commercial sectors such as accommodation, retail, hospitality and tourism in the B&NES region. The market gives a platform to local charities and supports community groups through a wide range of projects and local initiatives.

2 RECOMMENDATION

The Cabinet is asked to:

- 2.1 Approve the Bath Christmas Market for 2021, from Thursday 25th November to Sunday 12th December, as set out in **Appendix one** (SAGE proposal)
- 2.2 Approve capital budget of £27,200 funded from revenue for the purpose of financing 2021/22 improvements to chalets.
- 2.3 Approve the creation of a smoothing capital replacement reserve to be funded from annual profits.
- 2.4 Delegate to the Director of Place Management in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Children & Young People, Communities & Culture, SAGE and the Director of Public Health, key gateway decision dates on whether to:
 - (1) Scale back the plans
 - (2) Cancel the event

A decision-making framework incorporating Covid-19 related indicators, national guidance on Covid-19 restrictions and risk mitigation measures is appended at **Appendix six**. Decision dates will be aligned with financial milestones. This process aims to reduce both risk to public health and pressure on council budgets.

3 THE REPORT

- 3.1 The Bath Christmas Market is in its twentieth year, having been cancelled in 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic.
- 3.2 Bath Christmas Market is ranked in the top 10 in Europe. It attracts 400,000 visitors per year, with an estimated spend in the City of £32.5 million (2019). As well as supporting accommodation, retail and hospitality sectors the Market provides an economic uplift to visitor attractions in the winter months. 2019 Bath Christmas Market Visitor Survey is appended at **Appendix two**
- 3.3 Express planning permission is not required this year, due to changes in legislation which allows councils to deliver market events. Councils are permitted to use land for a market for up to 28 days until 31 December 2021. The dates of the market will be from Thursday 25th November to Sunday 12th December. A residents evening will be held on Wednesday 24th November. The dates reflect the ongoing covenant the market has with the city in that it shall not operate nor cause disruption to residents in the week leading up to the 25th December on any given year.
- 3.4 The proposed footprint of the 2021 Christmas Market is shown in **Appendix three**, Bath Christmas Market Site Plan v3.2. This shows the market will encompass a similar footprint to 2018/19 with the re-introduction of the areas around Bath Abbey. There will be a significant reduction in the number of chalets proposed from 205 to 161. This will allow greater free space to give visitors increased opportunity to move through the event site during traditionally busy periods.

- 3.5 Overall consideration will be given to the general layout of the market and performance areas will be situated only where static audiences do not impede or obstruct non-market pedestrian routes. With a reduction in chalets and increased footprint it will be possible to create 'content free zones' where visitors can find space away from the market. Creating extra space will give the public better access to the incumbent retail outlets, as well as entertainment zones across the footprint.
- 3.6 Due to the nature of the event, being open-access, prevents the restriction of number of visitors attending, although measures will be put in place to disperse footfall and encourage the public to visit mid-week.
- 3.7 As well as the usual attractions and retail offer, it would incorporate the elements of the 2020 Bath at Christmas campaign and work in partnership with Bath Business Improvement District and various external organisations to support cultural activations and events, coordinated through the B&NES Cultural Events Group. These would include indoor performances, carnival style processions, lantern parades and a festive programme of Arts. Shop fronts would be animated with festive themes where required to promote the high street regeneration programme. The event would be marketed 'in full' and messaging would encourage visitors to attend from both regional and national areas. There would be no intentional international marketing of the event in 2021
- 3.8 Several UK Christmas Markets have commenced their planning process for 2021, with some already opening applications for stall holders:

York Christmas Market - Advertised and open for stallholder applications

Edinburgh Christmas Market - Council approved two thirds of the plans, but part withheld Parliament Square section due to ongoing concerns around lack of accessible parking spaces.

Birmingham Christmas Market - Planning has started but Birmingham City Council will await further government advice before making a formal public announcement.

Liverpool Christmas Market - Advertised and open for stallholder applications

3.9 Management of Coach Parking

- (1) The Council manages up to 1,000 coaches during the 3 week period of the Christmas Market to ensure passenger have a safe and controlled location to board and alight and to minimise the impact of coaches on the network at this peak time.
- (2) New charges were introduced, through a Single Member Decision (E3253) to encourage operators visiting the Market on off-peak days to reduce the impact on the City and the network. See charges below:

Visit day	£ per seat
Monday	£1.00
Tuesday	£1.00
Wednesday	£1.25
Thursday	£1.25

Friday	£1.25
Saturday	£1.50
Sunday	£1.50

- (3) With the closure of Riverside Coach Park, coach drop off was relocated to on-street locations at Pulteney Road, Royal Avenue and the existing locations of Terrace Walk, James Street West and North Parade. These locations will be managed through a pre-booking system, charged per seat, as per above. All of these locations will be staffed to ensure safe management of passengers and coaches and to prevent coaches who have not booked from occupying these spaces.
- (4) Coaches will then be directed to one of 3 layover locations, sited at Odd Down Coach Park, Lower Bristol Road and Wellsway. These locations will also be manned.
- (5) The parking will be managed through the on-line booking system – MiPermit.

4 STATUTORY CONSIDERATIONS

- 4.1 Regulation 4 amends Class BA of Part 4 of Schedule 2 of the General Permitted Development Order to allow for the additional temporary use of land from 1 January 2021 to 31 December 2021.

5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCE, PROPERTY, PEOPLE)

- (1) The Christmas Market is budgeted to be self-funded for the 2021/22 Market. From 2022/23 the Market is expected to generate a surplus, which will be reinvested back into future Markets and provide a sustainable income stream to the Council.

Year	Income	Expenditure	Reserves
2021	£699,150	£699,150	Nil
2022	£700,000	£650,000	£50,000
2023	£730,000	£660,000	£70,000

- (2) During the on-going Covid-19 response, there remains a significant financial risk to the Council. The 2021/22 target revenue is £651,150 that leaves a £48,570 deficit. This is due to higher operating costs to support social distancing and preventative measures, with funding sought from the Covid Outbreak Management Fund of £48,570 to bring the budget to a breakeven position. Please refer to the Budget at **Appendix four** which outlines the expenditure and income profile of the Market from 2021 to 2023. The Risk Profile, identified in the Financial Overview at **Appendix five**, demonstrates the key dates, alongside Public Health principles, and the decision-making process to limit the financial exposure of the Council.
- (3) If the event is cancelled due to COVID and outside of the Council's control the mitigations would be to access the non-ringfenced Covid Grant Funding to minimise the financial impact on the Council.

- (4) An estimated capital budget of £27.2k in 2021/22 is required to finance improvements to the chalets and will be funded by a revenue contribution through stallholder income in the first year. Annual capital expenditure is based on a three year cycle where expenditure is highest in year one and reduces in year two and again in year three.
- (5) A smoothing capital replacement reserve is proposed to balance future annual capital requirements. The average annual capital spend on chalets is estimated to be £10,000 in 2022 and £5000.00 in 2023 which will be an annual revenue contribution to the smoothing reserve. The reverse will then provide (or receive) the balance of funding to the actual requirement in any particular future financial year. It is proposed to set aside profits resulting from the 2021/22 Christmas Market to establish the working balance for this new reserve. Please refer to the Budget at **Appendix four** which outlines the expenditure and income profile of the Market from 2021 to 2023.

6 RISK MANAGEMENT

- 6.1 A risk assessment related to the issue and recommendations has been undertaken, in compliance with the Council's decision-making risk management guidance. This will incorporate a public health gateway decision-making framework that supports decision-making on the continuation, scaling back and cancelling of the Bath Christmas Market. National and local Covid modelling results will be used to inform our decision gateway dates. The framework complements national guidance and powers and will be kept under regular review. This will be appended in Appendix Six.
- 6.2 In addition, a full dynamic Risk Assessment will be undertaken in the planning and operational delivery of the event, which will be scrutinised as part of the Safety Advisory Group for Events process, prior to approval for the event to go ahead and in line with the Public Health timeline for decision-making.

7 EQUALITIES

- 7.1 An equalities impact assessment has been undertaken. The Council has a public sector equality duty, under the Equality Act 2010, to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between different people carrying out their activities. This is appended in **Appendix seven**.
- 7.2 Bath Christmas Market is a free public access event open to all members of the public and consideration has been given to those with limited mobility and/or impairments.
- 7.3 Visitors attending the market who may have limited mobility due to impaired vision, loss of hearing or require the use of a wheelchair or walking aid, the appointed security company will be asked to provide "Mobility Helpers" who will offer help to members of the public with accessibility requirements. The Mobility Helper will be able to step into a stewarding role in the event of an emergency or incident. The Mobility Helper will be briefed to be familiar with the event layout, content and general directional information as required to enhance the visitor

experience at the event and to provide a vital role in the event of an incident requiring management of members of the public with limited mobility.

8 CLIMATE CHANGE

- 8.1 Sustainability sits at the heart of Bath Christmas Market, and year-on-year, we look to improve its approach to economic activity, environmental responsibility and social progress, ensuring the Market is a leader in event sustainability for the Bath and North East Somerset region and to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030.
- 8.2 The organisers recognise that by embedding sustainability into the planning and delivery of Bath Christmas Market, we can improve efficiency as well as minimise the impact on the environment.
- 8.3 A copy of the Market's Sustainability Policy is attached at **Appendix eight**

9 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 9.1 Four scenarios were given consideration and presented to Renewal Board for comment. It was decided that scenario 3 would be selected. Scenarios 1, 2 and 4 are presented below:
- 9.2 **Scenario 1: Repeat of 2020's 'Bath at Christmas' event.**

Detail: Small to medium scale festive event working in partnership with Bath BID, Bath Festivals and a local artisan market provider. Event would include a light trail, small artisan market, small carnival style processions with lanterns and musicians as well as some indoor cultural events curated by Bath Festivals. Christmas animation of vacant units in Milsom Quarter, working in partnership with businesses including Milsom Place and local artisan food consortiums.

Economic benefits: Low: Not enough content to encourage large ingress of visitors or overnight stays in the city. Some small-scale dispersal of footfall through the city would be achieved but the event would be incidental to the general festive atmosphere at this time of the year.

Community benefits: Medium: The event encourages some local community groups and schools to participate.

***Risk to Public Health:** The event itself will not attract large numbers of visitors from outside of the region and content is spaced out across large areas.

Financial risk: The event will not generate a profit and will require some financial backing. In 2020 the Council gave financial assistance of circa £30,000 to enable the event to go ahead (£20K events/festivals, £10K animation).

Reputational Risk: It may be felt this event does not go far enough to assist in the recovery and regeneration of the sectors who have encountered financial pressures over the last 12 months. May not compete with other cities Christmas offers.

9.3 Scenario 2: Larger Scale “Bath at Christmas” Event

Detail: Medium to large scale festive event working in partnership with, Bath BID, Bath Festivals and a local artisan market provider. Event would include introduction of music stages and entertainment areas, a light trail, medium size artisan market and larger carnival style processions as well as some larger scale indoor cultural events curated by Bath Festivals

Economic benefits: Low to medium: Well curated content may encourage a larger ingress of visitors and overnight stays into the city. Greater dispersal of footfall through the city would be achieved due to the placement of entertainment stages and increase in the retail offer.

Community benefits: Medium: The event encourages some local community groups and schools to participate.

***Risk to Public Health:** The event itself would attract a reasonable number of visitors from the B&NES area.

Financial risk: Medium: The event is unlikely to generate a profit and may require some financial backing from B&NES Council in the region £40,000. However, we would look to offset the additional £10K on 2020 with increased tickets sales for indoor events if audience capacity can be increased.

Reputational Risk: Medium: It may be felt this event does not go far enough to assist in the recovery and regeneration of the sectors who have encountered financial pressures over the last 12 months. Accommodation sector unlikely to benefit, although retail may see an upturn in footfall. May not compete with other cities Christmas offers.

9.4 Scenario 4: Full scale Christmas market/ incorporating Bath at Christmas

Detail: Using a larger Christmas market footprint and increase in chalet numbers as well as incorporating the elements of the Bath at Christmas event. This event would see a longer festive campaign running from the start of November to the end of December with activations and events bookending the Christmas Market. Additional space released from the Abby footprint and Archway projects would be used to host the increase in chalets.

Economic benefits: High: Well curated increased content will encourage a large ingress of visitors and overnight stays into the city. Dispersal of footfall through the city would be achieved due to the placement of entertainment stages and destination specific activities.

Community benefits: Medium to High: The event encourages local community groups and schools to participate as well as providing financial benefits to many local charities.

***Risk to Public Health:** Large numbers of visiting public to the city from all U.K regions including international visitors.

Financial risk: Low: Event would be profitable, estimated profit after expenditure circa £50,000. A recent weak economy may affect uptake from stallholders and caterers, public spend may be curtailed, spend on high end gift items may reduce after a period of financial insecurity. (not proven)

Reputational Risk: Low: Visitor satisfaction expected to remain at similar levels to 2019

10 CONSULTATION

10.1 Consultation has been carried out with the Council's senior responsible officers, including the Chief Executive, S151 and Monitoring Officers, the Chief Operating Officer, Director of Place Management, Director of Public Health and the Corporate Sustainability Manager as well as the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Economic Development & Resources, the Cabinet Member for Children & Young People, Communities and Culture and the Ward Councillors for Kingsmead

10.2 Consultation has been carried out with Bath Business Improvement District, Visit West, Federation of Bath Residents Association, The Abbey Residents Association, Traders Associations, and the Safety Advisory Group for Events.

Contact person	Lynda Deane – 07890 382940 Mick Heath – 07800 543295
Background papers	E3245 - Future of Destination Management – December 2020 E3253 - Addressing air quality and traffic management issues through the management of parking behaviour on the highway – February 2021
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