

Classification: Public

Key Decision: Yes

Gravesham Borough Council

Report to: Community & Leisure Cabinet Committee

Date: 12 November 2020

Reporting officer: Director (Communities)

Subject: Christmas Programme 2020

Purpose and summary of report:

To provide an overview of the Christmas programme planned for Gravesend Town Centre for 2020 and the winter lights festival in January 2021, given Covid-19 restrictions.

Recommendations:

1. That Members note the contents of the report and comment on the development of these programmes.

Please note that this report was finalised prior to the Government's announcement of new national restrictions from 5 November 2020. The Committee will be updated on the implications of these to the Christmas programme at the meeting.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Planning a programme of events to celebrate the Christmas season has been challenging given the restrictions placed upon gatherings of groups and a need to ensure that activities are Covid-19 safe. This has meant that many of Gravesend's traditional Christmas events cannot take place this year in a form that they normally would.
- 1.2 However, there is a determination that a Christmas programme should be in place to support businesses that continue to trade in the face of the impact of the pandemic and during what is for many the most important trading time of the year; and the Borough's communities who want to be able to celebrate Christmas.
- 1.3 This report outlines the programme of Christmas events which have been planned by a team of Council officers and its partners. All events have been designed to meet Covid-19 safety requirements, notably bookable events, appealing to small groups whilst maintaining physical distances. The programme will be subject to changes if Covid-19 guidance changes.

- 1.4 Many of the events lend themselves to generating images and memories which can be shared on social media and the public will be encouraged to do that via Instagram accounts.
- 1.5 This is an important time for the Town and the wider community to come together in a different way this year and to demonstrate its resilience, especially during these difficult winter months. To this end an additional winter lights festival has been added to the programme to give the Town a lift, lighting it up towards the end of one of the darker months of the year.

2. Christmas Programme 2020

Gravesham Christmas Lights Trail

- 2.1 The Christmas Lights Lantern Parade, involving hundreds of school children in the switching-on of the Christmas lights cannot take place this year and is being replaced by a Christmas Lights Trail, organised by Cohesion Plus working in partnership with the Council and Kent Equality Cohesion Council.
- 2.2 The trail comprises specially commissioned large light displays installed around Community Square, in St Andrew's Gardens and in Town Pier Square, all within walking distance of each other. The trail will take place between 4pm and 8pm on Friday 20 and Saturday 21 November and supplements the Christmas lights scheme within the Town and the traditional Community Square Christmas tree which will be lit for the Christmas festive period.

Christmas in Gravesend Borough Market

- 2.3 Christmas Weekend Markets have been planned for every Saturday and Sunday from Saturday 28 November until Saturday 19 December. A series of special offers, incentives and decorating own bauble for a Christmas Wishes Tree or Christmas post box.
- 2.4 Late night Christmas crafts with workshops (6.30pm to 8.30pm) as follows:
 - 2.4.1 Friday 27 November: Chocolate making workshop with Coastal Cocoa
 - 2.4.2 Friday 4 December: Christmas wreath making with Denys and Fielding
 - 2.4.3 Friday 11 December: Christmas pottery painting with Infinity Moments
 - 2.4.4 Friday 18 December: Family Christmas quiz with Head Chef Matthew Kearsey-Lawson.
- 2.5 All ticket only for bubbles of a maximum of 6 people.
- 2.6 A Christmas Record Fair will be held on Sunday 20 December.

Drive-in Cinema

- 2.7 Four bookable festive Christmas films are being shown in a drive-in cinema on Friday 4 December and Saturday 5 December at Milton Road, Gravesend.

Dickens at St Andrew's

- 2.8 Reflecting Charles Dickens' connections to the founding of St Andrew's Riverside Mission Church, an immersive journey with the world-famous author and some of his 'friends' will take place between 10am and 3pm on Saturday 5, Sunday 6, Saturday 12 and Sunday 13 December.

Nativity on the big screen

- 2.9 Gravesend's annual telling of the Nativity story, performed in partnership with Gravesham Churches Together, cannot take place live this year around the Town, but it will take place on Saturday 12 December on a big screen between 11am and 4pm.
- 2.10 Filming locations have been made possible with the help of Meopham Valley Vineyard, Owletts and Cobham village.

Christmas Choirs

- 2.11 Local choirs are taking to the screen and have recorded some of their festive favourites to be combined in a virtual concert to be enjoyed on screens throughout the town and online.
- 2.12 Choirs taking part include Make a Noise, Centre Stage, Gravesend Grammar School and The Gr@nd, and possibly more. The Patrick Mitchell Big Band will also make an appearance.

Santa Selfie Experience

- 2.13 A visit to Santa's Selfie Experience at Gravesend Town Pier can be booked through a reserved timed slot and via five fabulously festive and traditional scenes, each self-contained in its own booth. Overseen by Santa's elves, they will be working extra hard to keep everyone Covid-19 safe with hand sanitiser and cleaning thoroughly between visits. Groups 6 or under and all proceeds going to the Mayor's Charity Fund.
- 2.14 This Experience will be open at specified times, Friday 18 to Sunday 20 December.

12 Days of Gravesham Christmas Trail

- 2.15 12 Christmas displays will be placed around the Town Centre creating a trail to encourage the public to find all twelve and enter into a draw for tickets to The Woodville. The trail starts Friday 20 November. Trail maps available from the Visit Gravesend visitor information point in Gravesend Borough Market.

Elf-led Creative Workshops

- 2.16 Virtual Elf training workshops for children of all ages available during December. Dates to be confirmed shortly.

3. Winter Lights Festival

- 3.1 To light up the Town post Christmas and towards the end of January a lights festival is being created for the evenings of Friday 30 and Saturday 31 January.
- 3.2 The Council is working with Strange Cargo, 8Point3 LED, and local artists to light up historic buildings and create feature lit sculptures around the Town Centre.
- 3.3 This will be complemented by a shop window trail featuring specially commissioned illustrations based on local stories, legends and history.
- 3.4 Attendees are asked to adhere to all COVID19-related guidance and legislation that is in place at the time, to observe social distancing at all times and restrict groups to no more than six.

4. The Woodville Panto

- 4.1 A tremendous effort has been made to ensure that a Christmas panto can take place in Gravesend this year. The Woodville and Wicked Productions will be staging Rapunzel with a seating plan to safely accommodate audiences.
- 4.2 Much creative thought has been given to planning, writing, production of a pantomime where the cast will socially distance and they will perform to a smaller, socially distanced audience. Covid-19 safe guidance will apply to all involved, including backstage and crew to ensure that this year's production is as fun as ever.
- 4.3 The show runs from Friday 11 December to Sunday 3 January.

5. Communications

- 5.1 The Christmas programme is being publicised in the Winter edition of Your Borough, via www.visitgravesend.co.uk, www.gravesendboroughmarket.co.uk and through the Council's social media channels. Press releases are also being issued to local media.
- 5.2 Many of the events will be bookable via www.woodville.co.uk.

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Anyone wishing to inspect background papers should, in the first place, be directed to Committee & Electoral Services who will make the necessary arrangements.

IMPLICATIONS	APPENDIX 1
Legal	No direct implications.
Finance and Value for Money	The Christmas programme is budgeted from G109/79873 Christmas Events. The winter lights festival is funded from a commitment made earlier in the year at Council to decorate the Town Centre.
Risk Assessment	Risk assessments are prepared for each event and will include a health and safety risk assessment to meet Covid-19 requirements. These will adjusted if Covid-19 requirements/guidance changes.
Data Protection Impact Assessment	<i>A data protection impact assessment (DPIA) should be carried out at the start of any major project involving the use of personal data or if you are making a significant change to an existing process.</i>
	a. Does the project/change being recommended through this paper involve the processing of personal data or special category data or criminal offence data ? A definition of each type of data can be found on the Information Commissioner's Office website via the above links.
	b. If yes to question a, have you completed and attached a DPIA including Data Protection Officer advice?
	c. If no to question b, please seek advice from your nominated DPIA assessor or the Information Governance Team at gdpr@medway.gov.uk .
Equality Impact Assessment	a. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have potential to cause adverse impact or discriminate against different groups in the community? If yes, please explain answer. No
	b. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper make a positive contribution to promoting equality? If yes, please explain answer. Yes, the Christmas programme is designed to appeal to all sections of the Gravesham community.
	<i>In submitting this report, the Chief Officer doing so is confirming that they have given due regard to the equality impacts of the decision being considered, as noted in the table above</i>
Corporate Plan	#2 Place
Climate Change	No direct implications.
Crime and Disorder	No direct implications.
Digital and website implications	The Christmas programme are being promoted via the digital and website channels available to the Council.

Safeguarding children and vulnerable adults	
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