

## **FULL COUNCIL**

### **Community Christmas Event**

#### **1. Background:**

1.1 At the Planning, Leisure and Environment Committee on 3 October, Councillors considered a number of options that would create an opportunity to celebrate Christmas with West Swindon residents. Promoting access to foodshare schemes might also be helpful. The Parish Manager was tasked to contact key organisations to identify what is happening locally and to identify options to work with existing groups to support their Christmas Activities. Consideration to be given to targeting families most in need.

#### **2. Summary:**

- **Toothill Big Local:**

2.1 TBL are holding a pantomime at Toothill Church. In the past this has included a Santa and a selection box. This year the group would welcome funding to provide the selection box.

- **Freshbrook Church/Foodbank:**

2.2 Freshbrook Church are working hard on a warm spaces project alongside foodbank. They have been invited to give feedback on what extra support they might need over the Christmas period.

- **West Swindon Library:**

2.3 West Swindon Library would really like to be involved and have offered any Saturday (not 24<sup>th</sup>) in December to a Christmas/Santa event. This could be a grotto, a letter to Santa, a visit from Santa, Christmas story time. The library has no funding but would clear a suitable space.

- **Westlea Fire Station:**

2.4 The Fire Station have held Christmas Open Days to promote important fire safety and prevention messages. Past events have included fundraising for the Firefighters Charity with a Santa Grotto and refreshments. Historically they have had presents donated and sold tickets for £2 but are flexible about this. Fire Service are keen to work in partnership and could include a space within the garage area for a grotto and letter to Santa type activities. The Parish Council could partner and deliver the grotto part of the open day. Previous open days have been popular with 100s of visitors. The fire service provided hot drinks and displays. Current plans Saturday 17 December – timing 10-4 (to be confirmed).

2.5 On the Grotto theme, consideration needs to be given as to whether or not children receive something such as a gift, sweet/selection box. A cap on numbers both in terms of cost and practicalities would need to be considered.

- **Outdoor Christmas Tree**

2.6 The Committee also considered funding an outdoor Christmas tree in a suitable visible space. The green area by the Police Station at West Swindon District Centre was identified. A quote has been obtained, see Appendix A.

**3. Financial and Practical Considerations:**

3.1 Targeting children or families for gift giving is problematic as it inevitably excludes people. In terms of numbers of children living in West Swindon who could be interested, based on school age numbers – there are 342 reception children and 302 in year one in West Swindon schools. This would not account for families with older or younger children.

3.2 If the Parish Council wished to target participation, it could pass this on to another organisation such as Schools who could distribute tickets based on their knowledge. This could leave families with multiple children with not enough tickets.

More achievable might be gifts as a sweet, a selection box, or donations from supermarkets or lucky dip.

3.3 The Parish Council has a budget of £1500.00 for events.

**4. Recommendation**

4.1 A small group have met to review progress to date and recommend that the Parish Council supports an existing event due to the short timeframes remaining.

4.2 The existing quote for an outdoor tree is in excess of the available budget. This could be a project for a future year, where there would be time to seek sponsorship or budget accordingly.