

## **COUNCIL – 13 DECEMBER 2021**

### **CHRISTMAS LIGHTS AND FESTIVAL**

The Christmas Festival took place on Friday 26 November. Due to the pandemic Members had previously agreed that the existing Christmas lights scheme would be switched on at installation in order to reduce potential congestion generated by the community gathering in Fore Street for an official lights switch on event.

The format for the event was changed from previous years, dispensing with the parade and the Santa Express train, and instead introducing a larger market providing quality craft gift stalls and hot food spread throughout the town, namely in Fore Street, Glanvilles Mill and Erme Court car park. The event started at the earlier time of 3pm until 8pm with late night shopping being encouraged, and a variety of music and fresh entertainment still including some longstanding popular performers was provided by the Town Council.

In addition to the funds from the Christmas Festival budget, sponsorship was sought, and the Town Council was successful in securing two main sponsors at £500 plus VAT each, namely London and Cambridge Properties who are the owners of Glanvilles Mil, and Palladium Building Supplies, and Lawsons sponsored the choir at £150 plus VAT.

To ensure a larger market, as a local leading organiser of street food and artisan events with connections to many exhibitors, Miss Ivy Events was invited to manage the Christmas Festival. The Chamber of Trade had previously used Miss Ivy Events on a number of occasions to successfully run market events in Glanvilles Mill. The Town Council's arrangement with Miss Ivy Events was for her to bring in revenue from the stalls which would offset a proportion of her fee, with additional charges for marketing and staffing to manage the market, the remainder of the Town Council's funds mainly being used for the Christmas lighting and entertainment.

In order to enable a viable market, it was considered necessary for the duration of the road closure to be much longer than the usual 3 hours in the evening, and an application was placed to close the one-way section of Fore Street from 1pm to 9pm. As this was a significant change to the usual duration, prior to submitting the application the Assistant Town Clerk and Admin Officer visited and consulted with businesses and householders in the town, and incorporated marshalled access and egress into the application for those affected. The Glanvilles Mill car park was considered essential to accommodate the additional parking requirements in the town, and the funfair application was therefore refused by South Hams District Council.

Miss Ivy Events helped to coordinate the event in an extremely professional manner. She brought in the higher end of the expected revenue and secured some excellent entertainment, including the extremely popular Paw Patrol.

Careful consideration was also given so as not to place all the emphasis on a market, and prior to the event the Town Clerk, Assistant Town Clerk and Admin Officer visited the businesses on a number of occasions, identifying who planned to stay open and promoting this on social media, also producing notices for them to display advising the public of this.

Much deliberation was also given to applications from food stalls wishing to attend so as not to compete or conflict with hot food already being sold in the town. Applications from a coffee van and a cake stall were declined, and at the very last minute when it became known that Gribbles had closed a hot dog and burger stand was invited to attend.

The event ran smoothly and the road closure of Fore Street, and partial closure of Erme Court car park worked extremely well, and businesses and householders appeared very satisfied with the assistance they were given to avoid any disruption to them and their deliveries.

The running of the event was successful not only due to the assistance of a professional events coordinator, but also to the management on the day by the dedicated Town Hall team with the help of their families, a couple of members of the public and some Rotary Club members plus a few councillors. The staff are grateful to all those volunteers as without their help in safely managing the road closures and the car park the event would not have been possible.

Despite the weather forecast, which resulted in some of the Fore Street market traders and bouncy castles cancelling, and with some wet weather contingency plans in place for Paw Patrol with the help of The Watermark team, the feedback on social media from the community and businesses has been extremely positive.

The Assistant Town Clerk and Admin Officer have since visited all the businesses in Fore Street, Glanvilles Mill and Erme Court providing them with a questionnaire of what they felt went well, what didn't go so well and if they would be interested in donating or sponsoring towards next year's event. Once all feedback is received it will be brought to a future Full Council meeting for consideration regarding next year's event.

Mrs Julie Gilbert  
Assistant Town Clerk