

MINUTES of a meeting of the COALVILLE SPECIAL EXPENSES WORKING PARTY held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Coalville on THURSDAY, 15 DECEMBER 2022

Present: Councillor D Everitt (Chairman)

Councillors M B Wyatt, E G C Allman, J Geary, J Legrys, J Windram and M French

In Attendance: Councillors

Officers: Mrs A Crouch, Mrs C Hammond, Mr P Wheatley and Ms R Haynes

16. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor A Black.

17. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor M Wyatt declared a registerable interest in all items, as the owner of two businesses in Coalville.

18. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 11 October 2022.

It was moved by Councillor J Legrys, seconded by Councillor E Allman and

RESOLVED THAT

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 October 2022 be confirmed as an accurate record of the proceedings.

19. EVENTS UPDATE

The Head of Property and Regeneration presented the report and provided the meeting with an evaluation of the Events Programme which had concluded and confirmed that planning for the 2023 Events Programme and Christmas in Coalville Event would soon commence.

The cost of the events to the CSEWP was outlined, along with the objectives for these events. It was noted there had been evidence that these events were indeed proving successful in achieving the objectives set out.

The meeting was also informed that there had been evidence to indicate a correlation between the holding of events and increased footfall and also evidence to show that the council had successfully supported town centre retailers to begin to recover from the worst impacts of Covid-19.

A member asked that slide presentations also be provided in paper form or as an update sheet, officers agreed that this would be borne in mind for future meetings and agreed to circulate the slides following the meeting.

Officers provided information on Christmas in Coalville, which encompassed the Christmas lights and Christmas in Coalville event. The budget for these events was discussed and it was highlighted that the budget had faced a 40% budget reduction in real terms.

Chairman's initials

A member asked for clarification on figures for event expenditure and officers referred members to the appendices of the report, which showed the figures indicating how the calculation was arrived at. Members asked for a column to show total event expenditure in order to make it clearer to read at a glance and officers agreed that this would be incorporated in future reports.

The rationale for holding the Christmas in Coalville event in various locations was outlined along with an explanation of what the event comprised of. It was noted that members had recommended that the Council did not hold the firework finale and this had been carried by Cabinet. A member suggested that the space at Memorial Square could have been better utilised

The feedback which had been obtained from local residents who attended the Christmas in Coalville event was outlined, with lack of free parking being a common theme amongst the negative feedback. However it was suggested that this would not be something which the council could influence, as it does not own the majority of the car parking facilities in the town centre. A member suggested that a scheme be considered to offer traders to have a Christmas tree installed on their premises, at a fee, in order to promote a more decorative high street.

Officers proposed that members consider a review of what the "ideal" Christmas in Coalville would look like, in order that officers can provide information on costs and technical issues, so that members would be able to decide on what is practical and affordable.

In terms of planning for 2023, members were advised that officers wished to work closely with members in order to improve the event.

A member noted that the town appeared to be becoming increasingly busy and congratulated officers on this success, along with the Christmas switch on event which was very positive. However the lack of Christmas decorations in the Belvoir Centre was raised as an issue and it was suggested that the council should encourage the private owners of the shopping centre to increase their efforts. Officers advised that they had held early communications with shopping centre managers, however other factors may have influenced the approach which the shopping centre owners had taken.

A member advised that they had consulted local residents who had expressed disappointment at the lack of free parking, the lack of decorations in the precinct and the lights, which it was suggested had not consistently been working. It was suggested that more be invested in an improved stock of lights. With regards to the fireworks, it was suggested that members of the public had largely expressed satisfaction that this aspect of the event had been cancelled. Officers agreed that use of council car parks for free parking could be considered for future events and also agreed that there could be more Christmas lights and that this should be considered for forthcoming years. The problems of electrics within the street light columns and the clock tower were described to members, and it was noted that this would be a problem which the County Council would need to resolve as owners of the columns.

A member noted that the car parks had been full and that children seemed very happy with the event but that the lack of effort made by the private shopping centre owner had been very disappointing.

A member suggested that the opinions of members had not been taken into consideration when planning this event. Officers advised that there had not been a decision taken to change plans and suggested maybe there hadn't been sufficient discussion to ensure absolute clarity as to what Members wanted to see. A member informed the meeting that the lack of a main stage had been disappointing.

Chairman's initials

Officers advised that the snow globe had been introduced to bring a degree of “freshness” to the event and clarified that there had been no conscious decision by Officers to cancel the stage, but that officers would investigate and return to members with any findings relating to the decision to cancel the stage. The importance of more regular discussions entailing rigorous scrutiny of what the Christmas event would involve was highlighted. A member requested that the report which went to Cabinet regarding the Christmas event be provided to members of the Working Party, officers agreed to arrange this but wished to clarify that it was believed that only the decision to cancel the fireworks featured in this report.

The Democratic Services Team Manager confirmed that the minutes of Cabinet reported that the only decision by Cabinet pertained to the cancellation of the fireworks and not the cancellation of the stage.

A member suggested that more cohesive working between officers and members would lead to a bigger and better event in future. Officers highlighted that the level of decision making to which members wished to be involved may need to be clarified and suggested that better, more regular and more detailed communication about the Christmas event be adopted between officers and members.

A date was decided upon for a meeting of an events sub group and Paul Wheatley and Anna Crouch agreed to be available to attend this meeting in order to maintain continuity.

By affirmation of the meeting, it was

RESOLVED THAT

- 1) The progress update on 2022/23 events be noted.
- 2) The proposed Member engagement for 2023/24 events be noted.

The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm

The Chairman closed the meeting at 7.50 pm