



Failsworth & Hollinwood District Executive

Review of the Failsworth and Hollinwood Christmas Celebration Events

**Report of Carol Brown, Assistant Executive Director,
Economy Places and Skills**

21st January 2014

1. Purpose of Report

To provide the Failsworth & Hollinwood District Executive with a summary of the Christmas Lights Switch on Events of 2013.

2. Recommendations

3. Current Position

3.1. Hollinwood Christmas Lights Switch On - 27th November 2013

Overview

In previous years the Hollinwood Christmas Tree was situated at the former Roxy site but it was agreed with the potential development of this site, a new site would have to be identified. In spring 2013, a living tree on Hollins Road adjacent to Oasis Academy was agreed as the new site for the tree.



Hollinwood Christmas Tree
Hollins Road
Adjacent to Oasis Academy

A small committee was formed to organise the event, it was agreed that Father David Hawthorn would conduct the blessing; Sponge Bob Square Pants would switch on the lights and refreshments were served at Oasis Academy. A lantern parade took place at the beginning of the night, lead by Sponge Bob Square Pants from Asda car park to the tree.



3.2 Promotion

The Christmas Lights Switch on was promoted via a dedicated social media page, radio and poster campaign.

3.3 Attendance

The event attracted approximately 400 residents, which was a dramatic increase from previous years.

3.4 Issues to be addressed in 2014

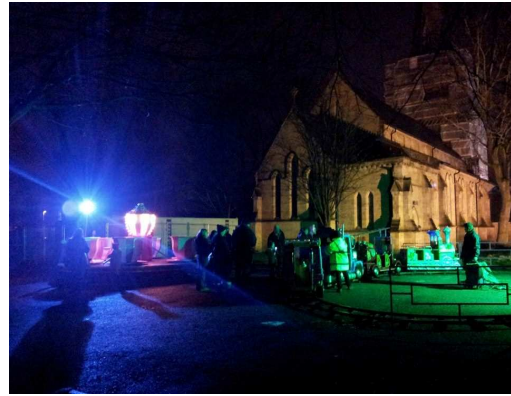
- 1) Appropriate safety barriers along Hollins Road required
- 2) Power supply to incorporate a socket outlet
- 3) A portable PA system
- 5) Increased resident and partner involvement

3.5. Failsworth Christmas Lights Switch On - Friday 6th December 2013

Overview

In previous years the Failsworth Christmas Lights have mainly centred around the Pole, with all entertainment and celebrations focused within this area. It was felt that the Switch On event needed a revamp and discussions took place with members, residents and council officers to discuss how the event could be improved.

The event was up scaled to include a Christmas Market at St Johns Church which ran from 1pm-7pm, along with small fun fair rides situated in the car park of St Johns and the car park of the Royal Oak. Entertainment at the pole included a local DJ, Santa's Grotto, a vintage American police car, choirs, face painting and refreshments.



The character parade lead by Moonbeam and Moonchester was extremely popular with the children, characters including Peppa Pig, the Gruffalo, Spiderman and Micky Mouse.

The Christmas Market, a new addition to the festivities was very successful with 18 local businesses taking part, each stall proved very profitable and each

stall holder has said they would like to be involved next year and with any other local events.

3.6 Promotion

A member of the public designed the events social media page, gaining over 600 likes in a few weeks; this was also supported by a poster campaign circulated within the area.

3.7 Attendance

The entire event ran from 1pm-7pm it is estimated that over 1800 people attended.

3.8 Issues to be addressed in 2014

- 1) Contingency plans to be devised for adverse weather conditions
- 2) Increase in security
- 3) A portable PA system
- 4) Improved organisation

4. Summary

Both Failsworth and Hollinwood Christmas Light Switch on events proved to be hugely popular and there was extremely positive feedback from all who attended both events.

Like any new events there were some small issues that were identified which will require remedying before Christmas 2014. The most positive element of both events was the greater involvement of community members and Elected Members who were actively involved which led to the events feeling like they were owned by the community rather than being delivered to the community by the Council. That said there was still a huge demand placed on the District Team in terms of time but this time was well invested when considering the outcomes of both events. The community members were able to secure assistance from a number of small business and entertainers etc, who supported the events either for free or for a small charitable donation. This enhanced the previous offer and was instrumental in significant levels of people attending both events.

Planning meetings for both events in May 2014, community members and partner organisations from both the public and private sector will be encouraged to these planning meetings and to take an active role in the events for 2014.

Some of the options that may be considered are a Christmas Market in Hollinwood; working with Oasis Academy, Regenda, Contour and First Choice Homes their residents including local social enterprises.

The provision of more Christmas Lights for the tree in Hollinwood which is significantly larger than previous trees. The provision of a suitable PA system and any other practical ideas that the community wish to take forward.

In terms of the Failsworth event it has been suggested that a road closure notice be considered for Pole Lane due to the large crowd that invariably strayed into the road from the Pole area. The extremely successful Market at St Johns Church Hall was at times a little too crowded and consideration will need to be given as to whether some stalls could be situated outside perhaps on Pole Lane and others remaining in the Church Hall. Demand for stalls is expected to be significantly higher than 2013 when we were actually oversubscribed by ten applications for stalls. Extra space would allow significantly more local social enterprises to become involved and also enhance the offer to visitors and residents. Many of the businesses were new start up and sole traders and in future years it may be possible to offer support to these stalls holders after the event in terms of business advice and such like. There will of course be further suggestions from Elected Members and community members who were instrumental in increasing the size and scale of the event in Failsworth and without whose assistance the event could not have taken place on the scale described.

5. Recommendations

- 1) The District Executive notes the success of both the Hollinwood and Failsworth Christmas Light switch on events which were much more in line with the Councils vision of a Co-operative Borough than previously.
- 2) The District Executive continues to support these events in 2014 both financially and in terms of other resources etc.
- 3) The District Executive through the District Team encourages partners and residents to play an active role in the events in 2014 and supports them in their various roles
- 4) The District Executive notes the potential for residents to grow and use the practical skills they develop whilst planning and working on these events to seek employment or to use the skills within their current employment.
- 5) The District Executive notes the opportunity for local businesses to show case and sell their products to a wide audience of local residents and visitors from other Districts and outside of the Borough.
- 6) The District Executive supports the convening of two working groups which will commence to meet in May 2014 ensuring that the small issues that were experienced at both events can be eliminated and to begin planning both the marketing and delivery of both events for Christmas 2014.