

### **Artisan Market**

Decembers Artisan Market was our last one until March, and whilst there were only 11 stalls at this market that was because most of the traders had sold out of their stock at the Christmas event and therefore chose not to have the day off!

One thing that we did note was that having outside face painters when the temperature has dropped significantly, is perhaps something that we won't do next December – as cold paint on kids faces is not warmly received!

It was still a lovely atmosphere and the stall holders that were there had a great day.

### **Remembrance Service**

The Remembrance Service went well with no issues, thank you to those Councilors who marshalled on the day.

### **Christmas Lights Extravaganza**

Your staff have done an in-depth de-brief of the Christmas Lights Event on 25<sup>th</sup> November and can share the following with you:

#### **Set Up**

Set up of the event went very smoothly on the whole – Santa's Grotto was in C Residential, so the build was less frantic and arduous and saved time. Craig Mantle built us a fireplace which I painted, and this was a lovely backdrop in the C Res offices.

However, the decorating of the tree and set up of the Grotto area took some time, and meant that one member of staff was tied up with that for most of the day.

There was an issue with the queuing inside C Res for Santa which would need to be addressed if we used the same premises next year.

*Recommendation: If councilors were able to support this activity next year it would be really helpful and free up officers to be able to do other things.*

#### **Christmas Lights**

There were a couple of issues with the light company being able to position the lights on the run up to the event, largely due to extreme weather issues, but also with logistics of hardware on the buildings in Upper Brook Street.

This did mean a delay in the completion of the set up for Upper Brook, but I'm sure you'll agree the town now looks wonderful. We have received many comments from the community both on social media and in person that these are the best Lights that Rugeley has ever had. There are two lampposts which have been deemed as unsafe for lighting and are not being used this year (on the pedestrianized passage from Brook Square to the market hall).

## **Fairground rides**

This year we positioned the Fairground rides in Anson Street and Upper Brook Street. On the whole we were pleased with the outcome, as were the Fairground team. It meant that we could free up Market Square as a central location for entertainment and market stalls.

*Recommendation: we have discussed the placement of rides for next year which will be in similar locations, but the physically larger rides will be placed in the wider areas of town as this has given us a couple of bottlenecks which we want to avoid next year.*

We have also identified that we could take more rides in the \*Brewery Street area of town and are currently looking for something that would be suitable for \*Bow Street – which is much narrower.

\*Brewery Street and Bow Street were overlooked a little this year as the Snow Globe was unable to be positioned in Bow Street as the wind reading was too high for it to be safe, and Market Stall holders did not want to be positioned in Bow Street as it is quiet.

We lost a few stalls in the week of the event due to illness which did impact our stall plan and had a knock on effect on the placement of the food trucks and entertainment around Brewery Street, and Brook Square, which is why there was little placed there on the day.

We were expecting Brewery Street/Den 101 to have the band outside again this year, which didn't happen, so we felt that Brewery Street was a little quiet.

*Recommendation: a suitable sized attraction is found for Bow Street which will not be affected by the weather, and we will place some fairground rides down Brewery Street to draw people into the Brewery Street Arcade.*

## **Market Stalls**

We have had a huge amount of positive feedback from our stall holders this year, as everyone felt that they were in a 'prime position' and there wasn't any positioned in less prominent areas of town. Obviously, the placement of the stalls makes a huge difference to whether your day is successful or not.

We felt that the set up on Market Square was successful and conducive to visitors browsing and enjoying the entertainment and street food options on offer.

### **A few of the testimonials from stall holders:**

*Really enjoyed the atmosphere, songs and entertainment, thank you for having me part of Rugeley Town Council Artisan Market along with other fabulous stall holders, once again and see you all In March ❤️*

*A very successful event for me as a stall holder and great to see so many people about. Well done for all your hard work. Very well organised 😊 see you soon with my wax melts*

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*Just the most wonderful day, everything was so well organized and the atmosphere was so happy! Thanks so much for the free hot drinks, you really go the extra mile!*

*This was a spectacular event which looks like so many people made it happen! This is why I love Rugeley! the town/community spirit is amazing!*

*Had an amazing day and night doing my first ever stall with my home made fudge Magpie Fudges xx*

*The Rugeley Artisan Market and Christmas Event has honestly become my most successful market of the year. The staff are lovely and so helpful, and the organization that goes into these kind of events is huge. I'm pulling out of other markets that have really disappointed me recently but will always support Rugeley, because they make us feel supported in return.*

### **The Stage**

The stage hire company upgraded us to the same, larger stage than we had for the Jubilee event, free of charge, which was a bonus. The large stage makes more of a statement and is much easier to see the acts. Having that focal point in Market Square for the entertainment and activities which are happening during the day gives us a more professional edge.

We also felt that having the entertainment on the stage going on until the end of the event was successful.

*Recommendation: Pre-book the stage for next years event in a hope to benefit from this year's pricing structure.*

### **Santa**

C Residential very kindly 'housed' Santa this year which made a real difference to the set up of the grotto and the environment which Santa was in. Thank you so much, it made a huge difference on the day.

We did feel that we were having to tell a lot of people where Sant was on the night though, and should he be in the same place or similar next year, we will need a lot of signage indicating that.

I think we need to have feedback from Cllr Cooney as to how she felt that it went, being in her offices, as it obviously has an impact upon her business during the day.

We are also a little concerned about the fact that the Brewery Street Arcade also have a Santa on the same evening, which is a little confusing for children (and parents) and it was suggested that potentially we look at moving Santa into Brewery Street so that he is in the warm in that setting, drawing people into the Brewery Street Arcade, and keeping the 'magic' of only having one Santa.

Thanks you to Cllr Lyons once again for supporting Santa.

*Discussion: Cllrs views on location and 'buddying up' with Brewery Street for the Grotto experience.*

## **Security**

Unfortunately, we had issues with the security team that we booked this year – and they didn't turn up. In previous years we have always used Oakwood, however this year they have been taken over by a new company - Parallel.

Thankfully after a desperate phone call to Oakwood they managed to send up some qualified staff to see us through the busiest part of the day.

A full review of the new company and assurances are being sought currently.

## **Police**

The police were great on the day, and even though we were unable to add them to our 'allocated staff/security' numbers on the day, they were very present and a huge help during the fireworks.

A huge thank you to Kevin Lee and his team.

## **Fireworks**

We had some issues with the fireworks this year, mainly due to a lack of councilor support to facilitate the road closure and health and safety aspect of the event.

For the first time Staffordshire County Council insisted that we have a road closure at considerable cost, and the police/PCSO's were unable to facilitate that for us, or Marshall it.

This meant that on the day we were reliant on both County and District Councillors to act as marshals. To be very honest, this left us short of staff and had they not volunteered the fireworks would not have been able to take place.

This brings us on to Councilor/Volunteer support at the event as a whole.

This year, we were extremely short on Councillor help and support. Given the make up of our council staff team, we are unable to physically manage an event such as this by ourselves and we are reliant on the support of Councillors.

Not all support roles are manual or involve heavy lifting, as mentioned previously, the decoration of the grotto in C residential could have been undertaken by anyone, as could support in the tea/information tent throughout the day, taking messages which council staff could then act upon.

We have seen a significant hike in the cost of all aspects of the event this year, and we will need to increase budgets accordingly to be able to continue to the successful level that we have established ourselves. But we will also require significant budgeting to employ more casual staff on the lead up and day of the event should we not receive significant Councillor support at future events.

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*Please find a copy of a letter which I sent to Cllr Hodgson, Chair of Community Engagement Committee on 5<sup>th</sup> December 2022:*

***Cllr Hodgson,***

*As Chair of CEC, I just wanted to feedback to you on the Christmas Lights event on 25th November, with some frustrations.*

*Whilst we were incredibly pleased with the event itself (full report will be discussed at the next CEC meeting) there is one issue which has become problematic for us as organizers which we need to address, and that is the lack of support given to the operational running of our events. As a council of 17 members, it is incredibly disappointing that we can count on one hand, the councilors who supported us at what is a huge event for the Rugeley Community.*

*We are fully aware that a lot of the event takes place during the working day, though that happens to be the quietest period of the day, with it starting to get busier after 3pm. We also acknowledge that not all councilors are suited to jobs which involve 'heavy lifting' which we have addressed by ceasing to use a 'built grotto' and swapped building our own stage on the day to hiring one in – but there are many support roles, where councilors' assistance is vital.*

*As members of staff, we are unable to sustain the operational management of these scale of events by ourselves. Physical numbers of staff for the marshalling of fireworks for example, are paramount to the safety regulations of holding such an event. Without the support of the Cannock Chase District and Staffordshire County Councilors for the fireworks, we would have been in danger of being unable to facilitate the road closure and health and safety requirements which would have resulted in the last-minute cancelling of this element of the event. Should we fail to receive the support of councilors moving forward, I fear that our budgeting for these larger events will require significant inflation to be able to hire in casual support staff on the lead up to and during the events. Prices for all elements of the event have increased significantly over the past 12 months, and it has been a challenge to keep within our approved budgets this year.*

*I would be very grateful if you would be able to raise this ongoing issue with Full Council.*

*Many thanks*

*Sam*

***Sam Bird***  
***Rugeley Development Manager***