

Overview and Scrutiny

Meeting date: 15 January 2024

Member Questions on Tourism and Town Marketing Provision

1. Question from Councillor Jackie Chelin

In relation to the following paragraph on page 8 of the paper in section 3.3:

A programme of training courses is being set up for customer facing staff in local businesses to create a team of 'Cheltenham Ambassadors' and equip them with knowledge about Cheltenham's offer to support visitors. This will include food and drink venues, accommodation providers and attractions.

How will this be managed? How to identify which places and which people to involve? Train station springs to mind, also taxi drivers.

A: The training plan is currently in development, and we are looking at date options for this to start as soon as possible. The team will run 'open invite' sessions and also deliver bespoke sessions to particular groups where these are identified.

This opportunity will be promoted to Marketing Cheltenham and BID member businesses initially, as we already have existing networks. This will be followed by promotion to other businesses which will include taxi drivers, train station staff and bus drivers. We have good relationships with GWR and Stagecoach and will reach out to taxi representatives to gauge interest and the best options for delivery. This is planned to be an ongoing programme and the course content will be updated seasonally to reflect the latest developments (e.g. new businesses opening) in the town and current event calendar.

2. Question from Councillor Jackie Chelin

On behalf of people concerned about the (negative) impacts of the ice rink on the gardens in which it is has recently been located (aesthetic, saturation of lawns, etc), how is the decision made about location and how can residents be involved in discussing the drivers and barriers to the different options?

A: During 2023, we reviewed several potential options for the venue of the ice rink, including all council owned car parks and open spaces. Imperial Gardens was chosen for 2023 for the following reasons:

- 1. Planning permission was already in place having been achieved in 2022 to host the ice rink for three events (subject to conditions being met).**

Given the timings involved with delivery and the resources required to develop a full planning application, this presented a strong justification to select this location.

- 2. The site is an established event location and has event infrastructure in place, including onsite power (which enabled the effective power solution for the 2023 event).**
- 3. The site is close to several local businesses and the economic impact on surrounding businesses is proven.**

If the ice rink goes ahead in 2025 and beyond, a new full planning application will be required. The team would then re-visit the assessment of all locations as part of this process.

Residents in Imperial Square were vocal in their opposition to the event during the planning stages due, in part, to negative experiences with the 2021 rink. The team were committed to introducing new measures to ensure that the event did not cause the same issues for residents in 2023. This was also a requirement for the planning approval for the event.

A resident engagement plan was created for delivery throughout the set up and operation of the event, with activities including:

- 1. Meetings with representatives of the Imperial Square residents' group to understand their experiences from the previous event.**
- 2. Procurement documentation and event management plans set out that consideration must be given to the needs of the residents. The team engaged proactively with all suppliers to ensure that conditions were met.**
- 3. Resident letters were sent before the start of the event including 24/7 contact details.**
- 4. Noise management solutions were hired to ensure that residents were not disturbed by the ice rink. In the end, the generator did not run overnight thanks to the innovative power solution which was created for the event.**

Positive feedback has been received from residents of Imperial Square, highlighting improvements in the look and feel of the rink, noise management, communication, and power solutions.