

Subject: Ice Rink – Great Yarmouth Town Centre

Report to: EMT – 18<sup>th</sup> August 2016

Economic Development – 7<sup>th</sup> September 2016

Report by: Group Manager: Tourism & Communications

#### **SUBJECT MATTER/RECOMMENDATIONS**

This paper provides a final update on the work undertaken in scoping the running of an Ice Rink in Great Yarmouth's Town Centre for the second year. This has mainly been focussed around exploring sponsorship opportunities with an estimated income of £35,000 being presented in this paper for a 2016 Ice Rink event.

Members are therefore asked to make a decision on the following three options

1. To provide an investment in the running of an Ice Rink for 2016 from the Town Centre Initiative funding totalling £92,500.
2. And to recommend additional funding of a 2 or 3 year investment to reduce the annual costs of another one off event, to Policy and Resources Committee of either an additional £90,000 or £180,000 respectively from the Town Centre Initiative funding.

#### **1. INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND**

Great Yarmouth Town Centre has experienced a steady decline in occupied shops and footfall figures. Residents, businesses and stakeholders are all concerned about this. Retailers in particular want to see some immediate improvements. This need for Town Centre improvements was further supported through a Public Consultation exercise which was undertaken at the end of 2014.

Therefore a Town Centre Initiative with a £1,000,000 investment was agreed as part of the budget setting process in February 2015. Through the Town Centre Initiative funding short term improvements have been implemented while a longer term master planning exercise is undertaken to understand the future vision for the Town Centre and to support future investment.

#### **2. IMPACT**

Part of the short term initiatives saw investment in Town Centre events. This included the decision to provide an Ice Rink in the Town Centre from 20<sup>th</sup> November 2015 to 3<sup>rd</sup> January 2016. The installation of the rink was a bold headline statement of the Council's commitment to the Town Centre and clearly got people talking about and visiting the Town Centre during its period of opening. This can be evidenced through footfall figures in comparison with the previous year, the highlights of which include

- Lights Switch-On up 25%
- Coca-Cola Truck up 48%
- Last Wednesday before Xmas up 10%
- Boxing Day up 10%
- Tuesday after Bank Holiday up 12%

It has been harder to translate this footfall increase into retail spend. It was disappointing to note the lack of engagement from some traders to take the opportunity to draw customers into shop. For example many traders did not open in line with the Ice rink evening opening times where there was a clear increase in footfall into the Town Centre.

Customer feedback about the rink was very positive, from schools and their children writing into the Council about their experience to website feedback which includes statements such as *“It was a success, people were loving it and all ages were using it and others were standing and watching the skaters. It was a welcome diversion and uplift for Yarmouth Town Centre and for a change”* and *“All town centers of small towns are struggling to stay alive and to be honest it would be so very easy for local business and authorities to just let it die. Life is about enjoyment and in your busy life if you stopped to either look at the fantastic Christmas lights, took a stroll through the Christmas Market or where indeed brave enough to have a go on the ice rink you would have seen happiness everywhere”*.

Media coverage for the event was extremely positive with weekly articles both in the Mercury and Advertiser.

## FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

**Ice Rink:** Assuming costs will be subject to a 2.5% rise and income is set at 5% growth.

ICE RINK (6 weeks)	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019
Costs (x 2.5%)	£202,239	£197,295	£202,477	£207,789
income – Admissions (x 5%)	(£66,556)	(£69,884)	(£73,378)	(£77,047)
Income – Sponsorship	(£27,137)	(£35,000)	(£40,000)	(£42,500)
Net Cost	<b>£108,546</b>	<b>£92,411</b>	<b>£89,099</b>	<b>£88,242</b>

*These figures are estimates; procuring the ice rink would necessitate a formal tendering process.*

Building on the experience of Year 1 spare capacity periods can be specifically targeted to increase skate admissions. Income targets have been set as a 5% annual increase; thus maintaining an annual expenditure of around £90k, which is the amount members are being asked to consider funding from the Town Centre initiative Reserve for each year they wish this event to be held.

Further work has been undertaken by officers to explore sponsorship opportunities since Economic Development Committee considered this event in June 2016. Whilst it is estimated that sponsorship this year could rise to £35,000 it needs to be noted that there is now some competition with sponsorship as a result of the proposed Air Show in 2017.

### **3. RISK IMPLICATIONS**

There are numerous potential risks, which include

- The Ice Rink not being of a satisfactory quality which could affect the reputation of the Council. Correct specification during tender process could mitigate against this
- The Ice Rink could break down during use, again this could affect the reputation of the Council. Correct specification during tender process could mitigate against this
- Bad weather may prevent full usage of the Ice Rink and reduce estimated income for the Council. Difficult to mitigate against unless a covered Ice Rink is procured.
- The Council could fail to obtain the estimated financial levels of sponsorship income. This becomes more of an issue if the decision is further delayed to host an Ice Rink.
- Health and safety risks of staging such an event. Detailed event planning and risk assessments will be undertaken to mitigate against this.

Specifically members are asked to note that the

- Request for funding is through a dedicated earmarked reserve for the Town Centre Initiative. Members are asked to note that this is “one of” money and that there are still budgetary pressures in terms of this Authorities medium term financial planning.
- If money is used from the Town Centre Initiative to fund the Ice Rink it may limit other initiatives being explored from this funding over the next 6 to 12 months.

### **4. CONCLUSIONS**

Potential benefits for the installation of the Ice Rink include a major headline event that will encourage visitors outside of the Borough into our Town Centre over the Christmas period, increase footfall and make a statement of commitment to improving the Town Centre and its overall perception.

However this comes at cost to the Council during a period of budgetary pressures with the need to balance the Council's financial strategy over the next 3 to 5 years.

### **6. RECOMMENDATIONS**

Members are asked to make a decision on the following three options

1. To provide an investment in the running of an Ice Rink for 2016 from the Town Centre Initiative funding totalling £92,500.
2. And to recommend additional funding of a 2 or 3 year investment to reduce the annual costs of another one off event, to Policy and Resources Committee of either an additional £90,000 or £180,000 respectively from the Town Centre Initiative Funding.

### **7. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Ice Rink – Great Yarmouth Town Centre (Economic Committee 6<sup>th</sup> June 2016).

<b>Area for consideration</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Monitoring Officer Consultation:	N/A
Section 151 Officer Consultation:	Yes - See officers recommendation
Existing Council Policies:	Corporate Plan
Financial Implications:	Yes
Legal Implications (including human rights):	N/A
Risk Implications:	Yes – see risk section in main report
Equality Issues/EQIA assessment:	N/A
Crime & Disorder:	N/A
Every Child Matters:	N/A