

Subject: Review of Ice Rink – Christmas 2017

Committee: Economic Development Committee – Monday 19th February 2018

Report by: Kate Watts, Strategic Director

REPORT OVERVIEW

On 5th October 2017 Council resolved to the hire of an Ice Rink in Great Yarmouth's Town Centre for the period of 23rd November 2017 to 2nd January 2018.

It was also requested that a detailed evaluation of this Ice Rink be presented to the Economic Development Committee in the New Year. This report details this evaluation.

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 As part of the ongoing commitment of the Council to revitalizing its Town Centre there has been substantial investment in Town Centre events since 2014, with the aim of;

- creating a vibrant atmosphere
- entertaining those already in the Town Centre
- encouraging new customers to the Town Centre
- encouraging lapsed customers back to the Town Centre
- encouraging repeat visitors
- raising the profile of the Town Centre and ultimately the Borough

1.2 And with the objectives for staging events in the Town Centre to include;

- increasing footfall
- increasing sales in Town Centre shops and Marketplace
- contributing to the overall strategic objective to sustain and build upon the retail offer in the Town Centre

- establishing the Town Centre as a key element of the Great Yarmouth offer

2. INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 As part of this Town Centre investment an Ice Rink in the Town Centre was installed from 20th November 2015 to 3rd January 2016. The installation of the rink was a bold headline statement of the Council's commitment to the Town Centre.
- 2.2 Although an Ice Rink was not installed the following year (2016), Members reconsidered this event and in doing so agreed to the hire of an Ice Rink for Christmas 2017.
- 2.3 The build for this Ice Rink started on Monday 13th November with the construction site being clearly defined. On Tuesday 14th November the Arena UK team arrived onsite with the rink equipment, site plant, and generators. Construction of the rink was completed on Wednesday 22nd November and tested on Thursday 23rd November. Operationally the Rink was open from Friday 24th November 2017 to Tuesday 2nd January 2018.
- 2.4 The Rink was closed on Christmas Day and unfortunately on the 27th December due to bad weather. The site was fully cleared by 10 am Thursday 11th January 2018.
- 2.5 Funding for the Ice Rink was agreed to be allocated from the Town Centre Initiative Reserve, with a request that a detailed evaluation of the Ice Rink be presented to Members early 2018. This report presents this evaluation.

3. FOOTFALL FIGURES

- 3.1 Footfall data has been supplied by the Town Centre Business Improvement District for the five week period the Ice Rink was in use. Table 1 shows the footfall figures and % comparison with figures in 2016 and the UK average comparison figures against 2016.

Table 1 – Comparison % of Footfall Figures

| Week Commencing Date | % Comparison with 2016 Figures for the Town Centre | % Comparison with National footfall figures for 2016 |
|-----------------------------|---|---|
| 19th November 2017 (Wk47) | +8.3% | UK – 1.3% |
| 26th November 2017 (Wk48) | +3.4% | UK – 4.6% |
| 3rd December 2017 (Wk49) | +4.0% | UK – 4.3% |
| 10th December 2017 (Wk50) | - 5.7% | UK – 8.8% |
| 17th December 2017 (Wk51) | +22.6% | UK +9.2% |
| 24th December 2017 (Wk52) | - 3.1% | UK – 19.3% |

3.2 In all weeks the % comparison for our Town Centre was better than the UK comparison figures. However during weeks 50 and 52 there was a drop in footfall compared to 2016 in relation to our Town Centre.

3.3 Table 2 shows actual footfall numbers for our Town Centre for the last three year period which includes the installation of the Ice Rink in 2015 as well as 2017. This table shows that footfall totals were highest in 2015, and although figures were higher for 2017 than 2016, they still did not match the 2015 figures.

Table 2 – Actual Footfall Figures for Great Yarmouth's Town Centre

| | Wk47 | Wk48 | Wk49 | Wk50 | Wk51 | Wk52 | Wk1 | Total |
|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|------------|--------------|
| 2015 | 62177 | 63996 | 70468 | 72472 | 62192 | 55761 | 51570 | 438645 |
| 2016 | 56594 | 58585 | 58742 | 63383 | 64197 | 53216 | 46245 | 400962 |
| 2017 | 69413 | 60565 | 61111 | 59420 | 78736 | 51590 | 51681 | 432516 |

4. MEDIA AND MARKETING COVERAGE

4.1 A Marketing budget was utilised to widely advertise the presence of the Ice Rink to encourage maximum usage of the Rink both from residents in Great Yarmouth but also from visitors across Norfolk and Suffolk.

4.2 This budget was spent on the following activities;

- Press Advertising which included a sold out edition of the Mercury with the Skate Yarmouth wrap on 17 November
- 75,000 leaflets printed and distributed
- Radio coverage including a partnership deal with the Beach – which ended with superb vox pops radio advert of people loving the ice rink
- Skate Yarmouth web pages included all Christmas activity and what's on info as well as everything ice rink – 5476 unique visits to skateyarmouth landing page
- TV advert from 2015 updated and used on website and on social media
- 10 PIPs with Christmas calendars
- All car park signs included Christmas calendars
- 70 buses with adverts either on sides or rears

4.3 A Communications plan and joint social media plan was also produced to support the marketing and advertising of the Ice Rink with the overall aim of co-ordinating effects across all Channels. This plan was implemented from October and ran until the rink was closed and cleared away.

4.4 This plan achieved the following outputs;

- 10 press releases were issued between early October and early December
- Weekly coverage achieved in the Mercury during this period
- Two front pages secured on the Great Yarmouth Advertiser
- Some coverage in the EDP and online across the various Archant websites
- Five solid minutes of live TV coverage from the rink on ITV Anglia, ahead of the ice hockey tournament
- Mercury altered their masthead logo for 2 or 3 editions to incorporate our brand for the town centre Christmas offer: "Skate Yarmouth Mercury"
- the ice rink featured on the front page of the Borough News and I also wrote the Skate Yarmouth "wrap", which went around the Mercury.
- The two promotional videos secured a total of 3,200 views and 36 shares (1,000 views for the initial video and 2,200 for the sponsor video shot at launch) on social media

- The total reach of posts relating to Skate Yarmouth was 75,995.
- The total shares of posts relating to Skate Yarmouth was 200
- The most popular posts by reach were:
 - Photos of the newly-frozen rink to open this week – 14,483 reach and 84 shares.
 - Post announcing the whole Skate Yarmouth line-up – 4,150 reach and 13 shares.
 - Post announcing the special offers on tickets – 3,578 reach and 18 shares.
- The total retweets of posts relating to Skate Yarmouth was 190
- The total likes of posts relating to Skate Yarmouth were 187

4.5 When reviewing the social media outputs there were a number of comments that were left, some of these have been detailed below;

- Emily has been 3 times and is going at least once more. Most of her friends have been several times all buying drinks, sweets and chips when they are in town. Normally they do not even go to the town but stay in Gorleston especially now there is a cinema. So I for one think it was a great idea.
- I think a permanent one in the winter gardens would be fabulous and much more attractive to look at than the ugly brute that is there at the moment.
- It makes Yarmouth feel like Christmas, its Lovely to watch the youngsters enjoying themselves. Each time I have been to Yarmouth there have been quite a few people using the rink
- The market square is looking great this year thank you
- Such a waste of money
- I have to visit this place!!!
- Well done Great Yarmouth -the atmosphere on this rink in 2015 was fab -let's repeat again this year
- I didn't realise we've got money to waste what's a waste of money waste of time is nothing good in Yarmouth anymore.....
- I think it's lovely especially for the kiddies and xmas

4.6 It is clear that the marketing and media coverage of the Ice Rink was wide ranging. In evaluating this work it is hard to identify any additional activity officers would have taken accepting that this work could have provided further benefit if it had been run over a longer period of time.

5. SURVEY INFORMATION

- 5.1 The Town Centre Partnership annually undertakes a survey of its Members to gain feedback regarding Christmas. In total 25 responses were received and in summary most retailers agreed that the ice rink helped to deliver more footfall into the Town Centre, but that this footfall did not always equate to increased spend by consumers.
- 5.2 The respondents also felt in general that the late night shopping this year was poor, even on the light switch on evening, and again the late night shopping offer in general did not increase retail spend. The best spend period for the retailers was the week before Christmas.
- 5.3 Regarding the Ice Rink, comments noted that although the rink was well received the feeling was that ticket prices were too high, and the discounts were not wide ranging enough. Table 3 below shows the answers of a question asked specifically in relation to the Ice Rink.

Table 3 - What impact did the Ice Rink have on Christmas performance?

| | |
|-------------------------------------|-----|
| Created a festive atmosphere | 77% |
| Helped boost sales and footfall | 28% |
| Helped boost footfall only | 35% |
| Had no positive impact on Christmas | 15% |
| Would support its return next year | 70% |

- 5.4 Surveys were also undertaken with the market traders, of which 34 responses were received. Of these responses 90% thought the Christmas Fayre and especially the ice rink was a waste of money and it had done nothing for the town. They rated the advertising as fair.
- 5.5 Comments provided by the Market Traders included;
- Fullers Hill Roundabout roadworks blamed for lack of trade alongside car park charges
 - Don't waste money on ice rink use ice rink monies to reduce car park charges. Have more lights and trees

- The ice rink had no positive impact and was too expensive the ticket price should be halved. Plus there should be free parking
- The Ice Rink created a festive atmosphere and did boost the local economy, however should be at the north end

5.6 In summary the survey information seemed to indicate that whilst the Ice Rink increased footfall into the Town Centre, it did not increase spend for retailers. There was also a theme that indicated that the pricing structure to use the rink was a little high.

6. TICKET INFORMATION AND SALES

6.1 Tickets were sold both through an online box office facility which opened on the 10th November and at a physical box office which was located next to the Ice Rink, which opened on the 24th November. Table 4 below shows this ticket prices set for both 2015 and 2017.

Table 4 – Ticket Prices

| Ticket Type | 2015 | 2017 |
|--------------------|-------------|-------------|
| Adult Ticket | £7.50 | £10.00 |
| Child Ticket | £5.00 | £7.50 |
| Family Ticket | £20.00 | £30.00 |

6.2 For 2017 offers were also set. These included a £1.00 discount to residents using their resident advantage card, and a Mercury discount offer which ran from 27th to 29th December and included £2.00 off family membership, £1.00 off an adult ticket and 50p off a child ticket. There was also a free skate offer once someone had used the rink 5 times.

6.3 Data shows that no one used the free skate offer. 38 Adults and 67 children used the Mercury last day half price voucher. 8 people used the Residents Advantage Card offer.

6.4 The number of people using the rink in 2017 was 7010. Compared with the number of people which used the rink in 2015 (11344) there is a variance of 4,334 down in comparison with 2015.

7. SPONSORSHIP

- 7.1 Sponsorship letters were sent to 28 medium to large sized local business on the 2nd October 2017, providing these businesses with information about the Ice Rink proposals and the sponsorship opportunities for these businesses. This letter included a glossy leaflet outlining the various sponsorship opportunities available. See Appendix 2 for a copy of this leaflet.
- 7.2 Alongside these letters several businesses were contacted directly by officers with the hope of obtaining sponsorship.
- 7.3 Ringside sponsorship was also advertised to smaller businesses, of which five small businesses purchased a banner.
- 7.4 Businesses were re contacted once the Ice Rink had been formally agreed by Council in October, and whilst a number of businesses made initial indications of sponsoring the rink, as timescales progressed sponsorship did not materialise or was agreed, but at lower financial levels that initially indicated.
- 7.5 Feedback from companies regarding sponsorship was that many companies had already agreed sponsorship of other things, and that these decisions tend to take place between January and April each year.

8. FINANCIAL INFORMATION

- 8.1 Members are asked to note that the paper agreeing the hire of the Ice Rink that was debated at Council on 5th October 2017 showed an estimated cost for the rink as £222,441 and an estimated income as £125,200 with the funding gap estimated as £97,241 which was to be funded through the Town Centre Initiative Reserve. The gap for 2015 totalled £111,927 which was also funded from the Town Centre Initiative Reserve.
- 8.2 Actual figures have now been collated. Income for the Ice Rink totals £81,100. The ticket sales totalled £60,140 and the sponsorship and signage totalled £20,960. The sponsors for the rink were the Town Centre Partnership (BID), Proserve, Market Gates, Palmers, Norse and Virgin.
- 8.3 The actual cost of the Ice Rink totalled £200,066. Therefore the resultant gap and finance required from the Council's Town Centre Initiative reserve is £118,966. The remaining uncommitted balance of this reserve will subsequently total

£209,860.

- 8.4 Although the actual cost of the rink was lower than presented to Members at the October Council meeting, the estimated income was much lower. This was a result of both reduced sponsorship deals and ticket sales. For information sponsorship in 2015 totalled £33,272 and Ticket Sales totalled £51,263.
- 8.5 Appendix 1 attached shows actual figures against the financial information presented to Members at Council in October 2017.

9. STAFF COSTINGS

- 9.1 As part of collating information for this evaluation officers kept timesheets in relation to the hours they worked in the preparation, set up, running and site dismantling of the Ice Rink. The total number of hours worked were 273.75 which translate to a cost of £4655.60, although this was not at an additional cost. This relates to hours worked for five members of staff.
- 9.2 In terms of timescales, staff worked incredibly hard over a short period of time to ensure that the Ice Rink was a successful and professionally run event.

10. CONCLUSIONS

- 10.1 It is clear that the installation of an Ice Rink in the Town Centre provided the headline statement it was intended for. Footfall figures showed an increase in people visiting the Town Centre and there was a clear buzz about its installation.
- 10.2 However the Rink did come at significant cost and officer resource. It is therefore for the Members to consider whether or not they would want to see another Ice Rink installed for Christmas 2018, which is likely to be at a similar cost to this year's Ice Rink or whether they would like to explore an alternative Christmas event proposal.
- 10.3 The Town Centre BID has already confirmed that the light switch on for 2018 will be the 30th November. It is therefore suggested that a Christmas festival be built around this date lasting a period of at least four weeks to encourage not just one off footfall into the town centre, but through the programming of events, repeat

footfall during this period.


- 10.4 In considering the running of either an Ice Rink or alternative Christmas proposal, Members should take into account the overall projected budget deficit for the Council from 2018/19 onwards which currently assume no growth in the revenue position and whilst funding remains in the Town Centre Initiative reserve it needs to be noted that funding from reserves can be used for one-off purposes and should not be seen as a source of funding for ongoing budget gaps and funding growth.

| Area for consideration | Comment |
|--|---|
| Monitoring Officer Consultation: | N/A |
| Section 151 Officer Consultation: | Yes |
| Existing Council Policies: | "The Plan" "The Town Centre Masterplan" |
| Financial Implications: | Yes in relation to the Town Centre Initiative Reserve |
| Legal Implications (including human rights): | N/A |
| Risk Implications: | N/A |
| Equality Issues/EQIA assessment: | N/A |
| Crime & Disorder: | N/A |
| Every Child Matters: | N/A |

Appendix 1 shows actual figures against the financial information presented to Members at Council in October 2017

| COSTS | Business Case Figures – Oct 17 | Actuals – Jan 18 |
|--|---|-------------------------|
| Hire of rink, structure, skates, staffing (incl) equipment (chiller package) & furniture | £138,479 | £129,504 |
| Lighting & Sound | £6,000 | £5,667 |
| Site Logistics (Ground work, water, fuel, utilities etc) | £21,750 | £14,644 |
| Security & medical | £29,000 | £29,081 |
| Insurance | £3,000 | £3,920 |
| Media & publicity | £20,500 | £16,984 |
| Contingency 5% | £3,713 | £246 |
| Totals | £222,442 | £200,066 |
| | | |
| INCOME | | |
| Ticket Sales | £74,400 | £55,122 |
| Skate Aids | £9,800 | £5,018 |
| Sponsorship | £38,000 | £18,960 |
| Signage | £3,000 | £2,000 |
| Totals | £125,200 | £81,100 |
| | | |
| FUNDING REQUIRED FROM TCI RESERVE | £97,242 | £118,966 |

Appendix 2 – Sponsorship Opportunities Leaflet



| | Title Sponsor £25,000 + VAT | In Association Sponsor £15,000 + VAT | Event Partner £5,000 + VAT | Presenting Partner £2,500 + VAT | Event Sponsor £1,000 + VAT |
|--------------------------------------|---|---|--|--|---|
| Naming rights | Integrated name of company to name of event e.g. The 'A Company Name' Ice Rink, Great Yarmouth and used in all instances e.g. print, radio, online | The Great Yarmouth Ice Rink, in association with 'A Company' Or The 'A Company Name' Ice Rink, Great Yarmouth in association with 'A Company' used in all instances | | | |
| Collateral – printed material | Logo on all printed material and adverts, as long as sponsorship confirmed by 23 October | Logo on all printed material and adverts, as long as sponsorship confirmed by 23 October | Logo on all printed material and adverts, as long as sponsorship confirmed by 23 October | Logo on all printed material and adverts, as long as sponsorship confirmed by 23 October | Logo on all printed material and adverts, as long as sponsorship confirmed by 23 October |
| Collateral – online | Logo on all digital material, e.g. Facebook, event webpages, as long as sponsorship confirmed by 6 November | Logo on all digital material, e.g. Facebook, event webpages, as long as sponsorship confirmed by 6 November | Logo on all digital material, e.g. Facebook, event webpages, as long as sponsorship confirmed by 6 November | Logo on all digital material, e.g. Facebook, event webpages, as long as sponsorship confirmed by 6 November | Logo on all digital material, e.g. Facebook, event webpages, as long as sponsorship confirmed by 6 November |
| On site branding | Logo in gable ends (entrance and exit) of skate change marquee Logo on heras panel around stillage area Logo on 2 flags on diagonally opposite sides of ice rink Logo on 2 marquee doors (internal and external) Logo strip on 4 external ice rink hoardings facing the crowd | Logo on heras panel around stillage area Logo on 2 flags on diagonally opposite sides of ice rink Logo on 2 marquee doors (internal and external) Logo strip on 4 external ice rink hoardings facing the crowd | Logo on heras panel around stillage area Logo on 1 marquee window (internal and external) | | |
| Ice rink usage | Exclusive ice rink use for two hours one evening in November / early December for up to 70 guests plus free parking for guest cars for that evening | Exclusive ice rink use for one hour one evening in November / early December for up to 50 guests plus free parking for guest cars for that evening | Attendance at an ice rink sponsors event for up to 20 guests plus free parking for guest cars for that evening | Attendance at an ice rink sponsors event for up to 12 guests plus free parking for guest cars for that evening | Attendance at an ice rink sponsors event for up to 6 guests plus free parking for guest cars for that evening |

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