Welshpool Town Council, The Vicarage Gardens, Welshpool, Powys, SY21 7DD
Tel: 01938 553142 Email: office@welshpooltowncouncil.gov.uk

Document / Report #890

Author	Kimberly Wright Events & Markets Manager
Title	Winter Festival 2026
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OFFICERS RECOMMENDATION

1. **That Members consider the entertainment options set out within the report and agree a preferred programme of entertainment for the 2026 Winter Festival within the approved budget of £2,200.**
2. **That the Events and Markets Manager be authorised to confirm availability and make the necessary bookings following the Committee's selection, subject to the total expenditure remaining within the approved budget.**
3. **To consider the other event queries and ideas as set out in Section 4.**

1. Purpose

1. To consider the entertainment options available for the 2026 Winter Festival and agree the preferred entertainment programme within the approved budget.

2. Background

1. The Council organises an annual Winter Festival in Welshpool town centre, incorporating a range of entertainment and activities, Santa's Grotto with a gift for every child, market stalls and the Christmas lights switch-on.
2. Officers have sought quotations for a range of entertainment for the 2026 event, including children's entertainment, live performances, walkabout characters, interactive activities and visual entertainment.

3. Advice

1. The following entertainment options have been identified for consideration by Members:
    1. **Disco Daddy – Children's Entertainment – £200**
    Disco Daddy is an experienced children's entertainer offering a fully hosted, high-energy and interactive show designed to encourage children and families to participate together.

The quotation provides for one hour of entertainment. The standard cost is £250; however, a reduced introductory price of £200 has been offered for the first booking.

2. **LED Dance Entertainment – from £375**
   LED Dance Elegance offers a range of illuminated performances, including LED ribbon dancers, lantern dancers, flag performers, ballerinas, acrobats and stilt walkers. The LED Stilt Walkers option includes three 40-minute walkabout sets, while other options can be provided as choreographed performances or ambient entertainment.

3. **Peter Jolly's Circus – Petting Zoo – £550**
   A petting zoo has been quoted for the Winter Festival between 1.00pm and 6.00pm, providing an attraction throughout the main event period.

4. **U-Toons Ltd – Caricatures – £200**
   U-Toons Ltd has offered to provide caricature drawings free of charge to visitors throughout the Winter Festival for a total cost to the Council of £200.

2. **Potential Headline Entertainment**
   1. **Frozen Tribute – from £800**
      The Frozen Tribute provides a family-friendly show based around music from *Frozen*. Available options include one 30-minute show or two 20-minute shows, with the option of adding a 20–30 minute meet-and-greet session.

   2. **Circus Christmas Adventure – from £1,050**
      Elf Quest – A Circus Adventure combines aerial arts, acrobatics, juggling and clowning. The performance uses a mobile stage and provides interactive mini-shows suitable for family Christmas events and town-centre settings. Packages range from two mini-shows totalling approximately 30 minutes to six mini-shows totalling approximately 90 minutes.

3. **Walkabout and Character Entertainment**
   Walkabout entertainment could provide a strong visual attraction throughout the town centre and provide opportunities for photographs, visitor engagement and social media content.
   1. **Animatronic Unicorn and Character – £1,220**
      The animatronic unicorn provides a large-scale visual attraction accompanied by a character who guides the animal around the event. The quotation provides for three 20-minute sets over a four-hour period.

   2. **Northern Grinch – from £735**
      The Northern Grinch offers a range of activities including meet-and-greet and photo opportunities, story time, Christmas market appearances, Christmas lights switch-on appearances and DJ sets. Individual sessions are generally based around one hour.

   3. **Nightmare Before Christmas Characters – from £550**
      Jack Skellington and Sally impersonators are available as walkabout entertainment. The quotation provides either four 20-minute walkabout sets or three 30-minute sets.

4. Members should consider the overall balance of the entertainment programme, including entertainment for children and families, a headline attraction and entertainment which can operate throughout the town centre rather than from a fixed location.

4. Other considerations

1. Corn Exchange Kitchen - to select a local organisation to use the Corn Exchange kitchen during the event.

2. Other ideas

1. To consider the ideas for this year's Winter Festival from Councillor Kelly Meredith:-
    1. Window contest
    2. Tree contest
    3. Baked goods contest
    4. Think of how to redesign the meet Santa area
    5. For light switch on, villain steals lever. Kids have to find lever in a window display. Finder gets to turn on light
    6. Rides need to be winter themed
    7. House Display Contest (previously agreed in June 2026)
    8. Wreath competition
    9. Gingerbread house contest
    10. Can we have the livestock Xmas market on the same day as the switch on?
    11. Make it also the day St Mary’s opens its doors for the tree display?
    12. Have a game room for kids - include snowball toss (kids throw balls at a snowman stack), reindeer ring toss (toss onto deer antlers)

5. Links to Strategic Objectives and Interim Strategic Plan

1. EV4 - Expand Winter Festival with competitions, music, family activities and more following 2025 event

6. Resource & Legal Implications

1. The approved budget for Winter Festival entertainment is £2,200, with a separate budget of £300 for gifts from Santa. Christmas lights, staffing, equipment and road closure costs are provided for through separate Council budgets.
2. A combination of entertainment can therefore be selected by Members provided that the final programme remains within the approved £2,200 entertainment budget. Several quotations are expressed as starting prices and final costs will need to be confirmed before bookings are made.
3. All entertainers and contractors will be required to provide appropriate public liability insurance, risk assessments and any licences, certification or other documentation relevant to their activities.
4. Particular consideration will be required for activities involving animals, aerial or circus performances, mobile stages and large walkabout attractions. These will need to be incorporated within the Council's overall event management and risk assessment arrangements.

7. Specific Implications

1. **Risk Management** - Principal risks include adverse weather, contractor cancellation, crowd management, safeguarding, animal welfare and the operation of performance equipment within a public event. These risks will be managed through the Council's event risk assessment, contractor documentation and appropriate contingency arrangements.

8. Recommendation

1. That Members consider the entertainment options set out within the report and agree a preferred programme of entertainment for the 2026 Winter Festival within the approved budget of £2,200.
2. That the Events and Markets Manager be authorised to confirm availability and make the necessary bookings following the Committee's selection, subject to the total expenditure remaining within the approved budget.
3. To consider the other event queries and ideas as set out in Section 4.

9. Decision

1. To resolve to adopt the recommendations as above along with the other event queries and ideas as set out in Section 4.