

Meeting	Community Development Committee
Date	3 rd February 2026
Report Title	Christmas Carnival Event Audit
Agenda Reference	16
Author	Liz Matthews – Marketing & Events Co-Ordinator

Christmas Carnival '25 – ELF Movie Themed

When	Friday 5 th December 25, 4pm - 7pm (indoors) until 8pm (outdoors) Carols by Lantern Light	
Venue	GLL Haydon Centre, Main Sports Hall and Car Park	
Theme	ELF the Movie with Festive Carnival	
Weather Conditions	Heavy rain showers throughout the evening	
Overview	The event built on last year's success with a festive carnival incorporating ELF movie themes. It provided an indoor warm space alongside outdoor activities, with a vision of schools, churches and community groups participating in lantern displays and carols.	
Financial Summary	Category	Amount
	Budget Allocated	£3,000.00
	Income from Stalls	£450.00
	Total Costs	£3,470.40
	Net Expenditure	£3,020.40
	Variance	£-20.40 (0.7% over budget)
	Performance: Exceptional financial management with only 0.7% overspend despite challenging weather requiring last-minute adaptations. Stall income included space for 3 young entrepreneurs raising funds for personal challenges. Data Gap: No attendance figures recorded - recommend implementing data collection for future events.	
Engagement	What Happened Family Participation - Successful: - Lantern workshops well attended by families - Families showcased their created lanterns at the event	



	• Multi-generational attendance despite severe weather • Strong community turnout Schools, Churches & Community Groups - Did Not Materialise: • Multiple organisations approached but none actively participated in lantern displays or carols • Haydonleigh School promoted event to families (valuable indirect support) and requested we avoid first Friday in December (their fete date - accommodated) • St Johns Church unable to commit when approached by Cllr JI • The Good Afternoon Choir (who rehearse at St Johns) provided brilliant opening performance (indirect connection) Young Entrepreneurs: • 3 young people given stall space to raise funds for personal challenges Why the Gap? • December is busiest month for schools and churches • 7:00pm carols too late for young children (despite 4:00pm event start) • Organisations need July/September outreach, not October/November • Wrong participation model (As 2024 prepare kits with higher value item to keep as Umbrellas) Key Learning: Individual family participation worked extremely well, even without institutional involvement.
What Worked Well	Indoor Activities LEGO Zone - Outstanding success. Hours of engagement for youngest residents, impressive 3D New York model with moving train, freed parents to browse stalls. Expand for future events. Live Music - The Good Afternoon Choir (brilliant opening), Swindon Event services = acoustic duo, Nicki Pearce, Swindon Brass (finale indoors due to rain). Created fantastic festive atmosphere throughout. Market Stalls - Successful Christmas shopping experience, £450 income, included young entrepreneurs, well-utilised by parents. Decorations - Paper snowflakes and chains created by staff, councillors and volunteers. Brilliant low-cost, high-impact solution. Recyclable, provided pre-event volunteer engagement. Candy cane forest entrance and 3D New York model successfully created ELF movie experience.



	Father Christmas - Described as "BRILLIANT" by attendees. Outdoor Activities (Despite Torrential Rain) Food & Drink - The Spud Shack sold out despite rain. Fandangoes Bar provided excellent service plus critical lighting support. All vendors showed resilience. Gazebo provided shelter. Live Nativity - Appreciated by those who braved weather Funfair - George Scarrott's attended despite weather, provided essential power supply, donated two Christmas trees. Entertainment - Stilt Walkers UK (Buddy and Candy Cane) maintained energy and smiles throughout. Pre-Event Lantern Workshops - Well attended by families, created anticipation, families proud to showcase creations. 2 sessions organised with 16 families/45 seats booked Continue and possibly expand.
Challenges and Areas for Improvement	1. Timing - Critical Issue with Carols Problem: Whilst the event started at 4:00pm (good timing for families), Carols by Lantern Light at 7:00pm was too late for families with young children. Many families who made lanterns had already left by 7:00pm, missing the opportunity to showcase their creations during carols. Few residents stayed - carols became backdrop to traders packing away. Rain forced Swindon Brass indoors. Solution: Move Carols by Lantern Light to earlier in the programme (e.g., 5:30pm or 6:00pm whilst families are still present). This allows families to participate and showcase their lanterns as the center piece activity, whilst maintaining the 4:00pm start for other activities. 2. Equipment Failures Lighting: Frames damaged in transit to GMF storage - loss of asset, highlights vulnerability of this type of equipment. Gazebos: Rapid rain takedown mixed parts between kits - will cause problems next time. Solutions: • Implement colour-coded gazebo system (each kit one colour, all parts marked) • Begin purchasing own festoon lighting (see Partnership Evolution section) 3. Institutional Engagement Gap



	Original vision of schools/churches/groups creating displays didn't happen. Event still highly successful with families, but lost opportunity for larger collaboration. Decision needed: Continue pursuing institutional participation (requires major strategy change) OR focus on successful family model? 4. Data No attendance figures, activity participation breakdown, Father Christmas visits. We do know 70 wishes were attached to the Christmas Wishing Tree. Implement data collection protocols.
Recommendations for Next Year	Critical Priorities 1. Reschedule Carols by Lantern Light • Keep 4:00pm event start (this works well for families) • Move Carols by Lantern Light to 5:30pm or 6:00pm (not 7:00pm) • This allows families who made lanterns to showcase them during carols • Creates natural centrepiece whilst families are present • Later activities can continue for those staying beyond 7:00pm 2. Decide on Engagement Strategy Choose one: • Option A (High Effort): Revise approach for schools/churches - September outreach, take workshops to them, weekend timing • Option B (Lower Effort): Focus on proven family participation model, treat institutional involvement as bonus • Option C (Recommended): Hybrid - primary focus on families, one or two strategic institutional partnerships planned very early 3. Equipment Investment Implement 3-year festoon lighting purchase plan whilst maintaining Fandangoes partnership: • Year 1: £500 (starter set) + Fandangoes supplement • Year 2: £500 (expansion) + minimal Fandangoes hire • Year 3: £500 (complete inventory) + Fandangoes backup only Colour-code all gazebo kits immediately before storage. Continue & Expand Success • 4:00pm event start (good timing for families)



	• LEGO type zone (consider expanding given success) • Live music programme throughout event • Paper decoration volunteer preparation • Young entrepreneur stalls (add outcome tracking) • Indoor market alongside child activities Planning Improvements September/October (for December event): • Data collection protocols • Recruit young entrepreneurs / Local makers • Schedule family workshops to support the theme • If pursuing institutional engagement: contact organisations Equipment: • Purchase Year 1 festoon lighting • Test before event • Equipment inventory system Operational: • Weather protected walkways to outdoor vendors • Weather contingency communications Evaluation: • Post-event attendee survey • Track activity participation • Vendor feedback • Young entrepreneur outcomes Financial • Review £3,000 budget sustainability • Explore additional income (donations, raffle, tombola, photos) • Seek sponsorship
Community Impact	Successes: • Built on previous year • "True community spirit" despite severe weather • "Magical" experience



	• Warm indoor space provided • Intergenerational engagement • Supported local performers and businesses • Empowered 3 young entrepreneurs • Maintained Haydonleigh Primary School relationship • Maintained church connection via Good Afternoon Choir Social Value: • Inclusive gathering space • Youth development opportunity • Volunteer engagement through decorations / set up • Strengthened family connections • Positive memories and traditions • Environmental responsibility (recyclable decorations) Unmet Aspirations: • Multi-organisational collaboration didn't materialise • Community-led carols without church/group leadership • School lantern displays absent Note: Event highly successful despite gaps - these are evolution opportunities, not failures.
Partnership Evolution	Continue & Strengthen Abe's Brick Corner - Outstanding LEGO zone. Consider expanded role. Fandangoes - Bar service + lighting support. Recommended transition: From sole lighting provider to supplementary/backup as we gradually purchase own festoon lighting. Maintain strong partnership throughout. George Scarrott's - Funfair, power supply, donated trees. Always reliable despite weather. Musicians - Good Afternoon Choir (explore continuing), Swindon Event Services - acoustic duo, Nicki Pearce, Swindon Brass, Stilt Walkers UK - all professional and resilient. The Spud Shack - Sold out despite torrential rain. Exceptional commitment. Haydonleigh Primary School - Valuable promotional support. Explore continuing, respect their fete date needs.



	Learning Opportunities St Johns/Other Schools/Groups - If pursuing future involvement: require fundamentally different approach (earlier outreach, go to them, daytime workshops). Volunteers Staff, councillors and volunteers created decorations collaboratively - low-cost, high-impact. Event day volunteers flexible despite weather. Formalise decoration preparation as annual activity, record hours for recognition.
Conclusion	The Christmas Carnival was a resounding success, achieving its core objectives of community inclusivity, festive celebration and providing a warm indoor space during winter. The event demonstrated exceptional financial management (only 0.7% over budget) and remarkable resilience, with both organisers and attendees demonstrating true community spirit despite severe weather conditions. Major Successes: The indoor activities—particularly the LEGO zone and continuous live music programme—were standout successes that should form the foundation of future events. The innovative volunteer-created paper decorations proved both cost-effective and community-building, whilst support for young entrepreneurs demonstrated commitment to youth development. The Spud Shack selling out despite torrential rain exemplifies the determination of all participants. The 4:00pm event start provided good timing for families to attend. Critical Learning - Timing: The most significant learning concerns the timing of Carols by Lantern Light. Whilst the 4:00pm event start worked well for families, scheduling the carols at 7:00pm was too late for families with young children who had attended lantern workshops. Many families had already left by 7:00pm, preventing them from showcasing their creations during the carol centrepiece. Moving Carols by Lantern Light to 5:30pm or 6:00pm whilst keeping the 4:00pm event start would allow families to participate in this showcase moment and create a natural programme flow. Critical Learning - Engagement: Pre-event lantern workshops successfully built family engagement and anticipation. However, the original vision of organised school, church and community group participation did not materialise. This reveals the gap between institutional engagement aspirations and December timing reality. The event succeeded wonderfully with individual family participation, and organisers must now decide whether to invest significant effort revising the institutional engagement strategy or focus resources on strengthening what already works well. The hybrid approach—primarily focusing on proven family participation with one or two strategic institutional partnerships planned very early—offers a balanced path forward.



Critical Learning - Equipment: Equipment management emerged as requiring strategic investment. Lighting frame damage during transit to GMF storage highlighted borrowed equipment vulnerability. The recommended **hybrid lighting strategy**—gradually purchasing festoon lighting over three years whilst maintaining the valuable Fandangoes partnership—provides financially prudent equipment ownership that spreads costs, reduces risk and maintains backup capacity. The colour-coded gazebo system will address organisational challenges immediately.

Notable Indirect Successes: Local school's promotional support and the Good Afternoon Choir's brilliant opening performance demonstrate that indirect institutional connections can be valuable even when direct organised participation proves difficult.

Overall Assessment: Highly successful event that met objectives and demonstrated strong community value. Important learning about realistic institutional engagement in December and the critical need to schedule Carols by Lantern Light earlier in the evening whilst families are present. Clear, actionable recommendations identified to enhance timing, equipment management and family accessibility for future iterations. Strategic equipment investment plan will build organisational capacity and long-term sustainability.

The community spirit evident throughout—from volunteers creating decorations to families braving the rain—confirms this event's importance to Haydon Wick. With the recommended improvements, particularly rescheduling the carols to 5:30pm or 6:00pm and strategic equipment investment, future events can build on this strong foundation.



Social Feedback

  35

7  3 

 Like

 Comment

 Share

Most relevant ▼



Comment as Haydon Wick Council



George Scarrott

Always a privilege to carry on our proud tradition with Scarrotts fairgrounds in Haydon Wick! 🥰🎡🎢🎢🎢🎢

Bett... [See more](#)

5w Like Reply Hide

2 



Abes Brick Corner

Thank you for having us! We had a great time, nice to see so many people playing with Lego! 🧸

5w Like Reply Hide





Caroline Curtis

Was a lovely evening and we thoroughly enjoyed it. Well done for another great event all!

5w Like Reply Hide





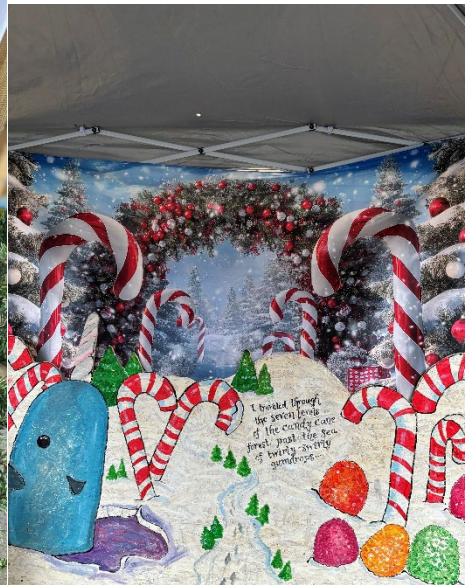
Lynn Wright

Fantastic effort from all

5w Like Reply Hide



Set Up Gallery









**2026 Christmas
Carnival Date
Proposal**

Friday 27th November