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Meeting	Community Development Committee
Date	3rd November 2026
Report Title	Christmas Activities & Events
Agenda Reference	14
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Officer's recommendation:

1. To note the report.

Background

Christmas is a busy time of year, with plenty of activities taking place and positive news stories to share with the community.

The November and December programme will focus on community engagement, seasonal events, fundraising and providing support to residents during the festive period. This report outlines the planned activities and provides operational details, including key dates, arrangements and preparations required to ensure each event runs smoothly.

Opening Hours

The Office will be closed from Wednesday 23rd December 2026 (with exception of the Companions Café on Thursday 25th December) and reopen on Monday 4th January 2027.

The Parks & Open Spaces will be running a reduced service throughout 29th – 31st December primarily focused on emptying the public litter and dog waste bins and dealing with any reactive works i.e. hedge cutting, fallen trees, fly tipping, broken street furniture, etc.

Christmas Lights

Last year, the Parks & Open Spaces Team installed permanent lights to the Council Offices, as with previous years these are lit up from 1st December through to 4th January and will be on from 4pm – 10pm.

Christmas Card Competition

Our annual Christmas Card Competition has now been launched and is being promoted through both our website and community magazine. Children from local schools and community groups are invited to design the Council's official Christmas card, with the competition open to all children aged 11 years and under.

The competition will close on 16 November, after which a shortlist of entries will be prepared and circulated to the Committee for consideration. Members will then be invited to select the winning design for the 2026 Christmas Card.

The competition provides an opportunity to celebrate the creativity of young people within the parish, while encouraging engagement with the wider community.

Christmas Parcels

The Christmas Parcel scheme is open to anyone 70 years and over, who live alone in the

parish of Haydon Wick. The application form is now live on the website and in the newsletter. The Administrator is writing to local companies asking for donations of non-perishable goods and the content list will be like previous years.

The items will be purchased throughout October and November. The RCCG Church have offered their support again this year.

Budget
There is a budget available of £1,200.00. Previously sponsorships have helped to stretch this budget. We will monitor the uptake of the parcels and report any budget amendments to Council as soon as possible.

To note:
With inflation rises we will estimate approx. £7.50 for the HWPC items x 165 parcels = £1,196.25.
Last year's parcel value was £6.28 per head and we distributed 164 parcels = £1029.92
RCCG Church's contribution to the parcel was approx. £4.00 x 164 parcels = £656.00

Timeline

W/C 05/10/2026	Magazine deadline for application form
W/C 12/10/2026	Start writing to sponsors, arrange content list; confirm funding etc
W/C 02/11/2026	Clear eaves for storage / start collecting parcel content
30/11/2026	Update to Community Development Committee
09/12/2026	Closing date for applications
11/12/2026	RCCG separate packing date (if applicable)
12/12/2026 - 9.30 - 11.30am	Packing
12/12/2026 - 11.30am - 1.30pm	Delivery
15/12/2026	Press release
18/12/2026	Collate feedback

Proposed content for 2026 Christmas Parcels

Teabags 80	Individual Christmas Pudding
Coffee	Packet Instant Custard
Sugar	Mince Pies
Shower Gel	Confectionary
Washing Up liquid	Instant cuppa soup
Cream Crackers	Sweet Biscuits
Jam	Selection of tinned produce
Tuna / Corned Beef	Tissues
Emergency items may be considered – verbal update to follow.	

Personal handmade gift
Last year, members of the Craft and Connect group created a handmade gift for inclusion in each Christmas parcel. We hope to continue with this again as it adds a special and thoughtful touch to the parcels.

Volunteers
We have already made good progress in recruiting volunteers to assist with both the packing and delivery of the Christmas parcels. The scheme continues to receive strong support from the local community and has become a well-established annual event that many people look

forward to being involved in. The willingness of volunteers to give their time and support is instrumental to the successful delivery of the project each year.

Suggestions from 2025

The following recommendations were identified during the 2025 review and will be considered as part of the planning process for this year's Christmas Parcel Scheme:

- Include additional festive food items, such as Christmas cake, nuts, or tins of ham, where budget and availability permit.
- Continue with the reduced parcel weight introduced last year to support volunteers with packing and delivery.
- Maintain the same packing model used in 2025, which proved effective and efficient.
- Continue to bulk-purchase items from suppliers such as Aldi, Morrisons, and Farm Foods, with collections taking place the day before packing to minimise storage requirements and reduce the need to move products multiple times.
- Review and amend delivery rounds to achieve a more even distribution of parcels between volunteer groups. This will be dependent on the number of applications received and the geographic location of recipients.
- Provide each delivery team with a parish map to assist volunteers who may be less familiar with the area and to support efficient delivery routes.

Christmas Celebration in Lights

- Haydon Wick Parish Council will host its annual Christmas Event on 27th November at St John's Church, Thames Avenue, providing residents with an opportunity to come together and mark the beginning of the festive season.

- The event will commence at 4.00pm, with attendees invited to participate in a community wishing tree activity by creating and decorating a Christmas wishing star. These stars will be displayed on the wishing tree throughout the festive period, creating a meaningful focal point for the celebration.

- Festive entertainment will be provided throughout the afternoon, including performances of traditional Christmas carols and seasonal music by a brass band. The event will culminate in the official Christmas Lights Switch-On at 5.30pm, signalling the start of the parish's Christmas celebrations.

- As part of the event, complimentary refreshments, including mince pies and hot drinks, will be available to attendees. The occasion will provide an opportunity for residents, families and visitors to meet, celebrate and enjoy the festive atmosphere within the local community.

- In addition, the Council's illuminated festive fleet will travel throughout the parish, helping to extend the celebrations beyond the event venue and bringing festive cheer to residents across Haydon Wick.

- This Christmas Celebration in Lights hopes to continue as a valued annual event within the parish calendar, promoting community spirit and providing a welcoming and inclusive environment for residents to celebrate the festive season together.

Christmas Pantomime Event Update

- Preparations for the promotion of the Peter Pan Christmas Family Event are progressing as planned.
- A programme of "Save the Date" communications will commence during the October half-term period to begin raising awareness amongst residents and library users.

This initial activity will focus on introducing the event and encouraging early interest ahead of the main booking campaign.

- To maximise impact, a more targeted sales and marketing campaign will be launched from 11th November, incorporating social media promotion, website content, community marketing channels, and direct audience engagement. This phased approach is intended to build momentum and support ticket sales in the lead-up to the performance.
- A dedicated pull-up banner has been produced and will be positioned within North Swindon Library ahead of the half-term period. The banner will provide a prominent visual presence within the venue, helping to raise awareness amongst regular library users and visitors.
- Further updates on ticket sales, marketing performance, and audience engagement will be provided as the campaign progresses.

Timeline of Christmas Events

- 15 November– 18 December: Bike Shed Donations
- 27 November: Christmas Event
- 10 December: Christmas Jumper Day
- 12 December: Pantomime
- 12 December: Christmas Parcels
- 14 December: Christmas Haven
- 15 December: Parish Council gathering once Full Council concludes
- 17 December: Wreath-Making Sessions
- 23 December: Memory Café Christmas Event
- 24 December: Companions Cafe

Summary

The November and December programme aims to bring people together through festive activities, creative sessions and community events, while continuing to provide practical support to residents.

Fundraising opportunities and Christmas hampers will also help extend support to local groups and individuals during the festive season.