

Notes from a meeting of Wem Town Council Event Liaison Group to be held on 16.4.26 at 17.00 to review the 2025 Christmas Festival

Present

Kate Williams, Anita Thompson – Sweets and Treats, Rev Jukes – St Peter and St Pauls Church, Claire Glover - The Fruitful Deli, Jenny Hegglin – Wem Scouts, John Dinsdale, Peter Jones - Wem Town Hall,

Wem Town Council Councillors, Hudson, Towers and Broomhall (Chairman), Penny O'Hagan Town Clerk.

1. Apologies for Absence – to receive.

Cllrs Soul and Cotterell

Tom Bateson - Wem Scouts, Nathan Burley – Wem Baptist Church, Paul Thornhill – Wem Rotary, Pam King – Wem Town Hall.

2. Notes from 15.1.26 – to approve.

It was agreed to approve the meeting notes from 15.1.26 and they were signed by the meeting chairman.

3. Shropshire Festivals Report – to discuss report produced by Shropshire Festivals with suggestions.

The Clerk outlined the key points raised in the report as follows

Item	Issue Raised in Report	Report Recommendation
Jubilee Square	<p>The Square currently:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feels visually disconnected from the High Street, • Lacks a strong central draw, • Has hosted inconsistent or low-impact attractions, • Does not fully capitalise on its footfall position <p>There is an opportunity to reposition this space as a defined “destination zone” within the event footprint.</p>	<p>Jubilee Square : Create a defined Christmas Market Village or Feature Zone. Options include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uniform gazebo layout for visual cohesion. • Feature attraction such as a traditional carousel. • Dedicated lighting scheme.
Underpricing of Market Pitches	<p>Current pitch pricing is significantly below regional benchmarks, which may impact on traders wanting a pitch</p>	<p>Increase pitch prices for commercial and food pitches.</p>
Traffic Management & Safety Exposure	<p>Road closures are currently managed without professional traffic management contractors. This presents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal liability risk, • Insurance concerns, 	<p>The appointment of a professional traffic management contractor for the implementation and supervision of all road closures. The estimated</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased stress on staff and volunteers. <p>Given national developments including Martyn's Law expectations, professional traffic management is strongly advised.</p>	cost of £1,500 - £2,500 should be viewed not as an optional enhancement but as risk mitigation and compliance protection.
Event Management & Risk Governance	<p>Whilst an Event Management Plan exists, there are concerns around:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formal sign-off responsibility, Insurance alignment, Lost child procedures. 	<p>It is recommended that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Formal authority to sign off the EMP is minuted by Council. 2. The EMP is externally reviewed periodically. 3. Professional traffic management is incorporated. 4. A documented event governance structure is included within the plan. <p>Consideration is given to obtaining specialist event safety advice annually</p>
Food offer		<p>Introduce limited, street food. This must avoid direct duplication of High Street offerings, Consider mulled wine operator. Properly positioned food stalls can enhance the event rather than compete with local businesses.</p>
Sponsorship	Lack of budget to run festival	Introduce Structured Sponsorship Framework

It was reported by the Clerk that the items below had already been actioned.

Restructure Market Pitch Pricing - Prices have been set by Town Council £35 commercial stall, £20 organisation food retailer £50

Structured Sponsorship Framework – this has been agreed and is being implemented by Town Council.

Other items raised in the report were considered

Jubilee Square

Several suggestions were made including removing all activities from the square, possibly creating a seating area for food etc.

ACTION –

- All present would consider options for use of The Jubilee Square during the festival including using it a space for local organisations to have stall that offered games / activities for slightly older children 5 -10 year olds.
- The Clerk to talk to Carnival Committee about use of any games they may have.
- The Clerk to investigate the feasibility of locating a marque on the square and holding silent discos throughout the day. It was also agreed that lighting the trees on the square temporarily using lights borrowed from The Millennium Green would also enhance the area.

Traffic Management & Legal Compliance

All present felt that due to the risk involved with this issue and the increasing risk around event management it was important that an external company was used to manage the road closure. This would free up time for volunteers to set up the event. All present acknowledged that the cost of this may be prohibitive but it was something that could not be ignored.

Recommendation that the Town Council consider this matter and seeks quotes for a company to manage the road closure for the duration of the road closure.

Food offer

Increasing the amount of food available throughout the day was felt by all to be something that would be welcomed by attendees. It was explained that as the event is primarily to support local businesses all present should be mindful of the fact that bringing in food vendors in the form of food trucks could impact on takings of local cafes. A suggestion was made of the cafe's being allowed a stall outside their premises (or close by) to enable them to offer street food. Those present felt that one or two food trucks could be permitted on the proviso that they did not sell items sold by the cafes and would bring something extra to the event e.g Crepes.

ACTION Clerk to invite representatives of all the café's in the Town to discuss this in more detail and report back to the meeting.

Event Governance & Risk Review

Recommendation that the Town Council considers recommendations raised in the report when creating the event management plan.

4. 2026 Festival to discuss progress report in particular location of market and activities on Jubilee Square.

It was felt that this item was covered sufficiently under item 3
Peter Jones and John Dinsdale left the meeting at 17.51

5. Sponsorship – for discussion.

It was reported that two companies have been approached for sponsorship and a meeting is to be held next week.

6. Any other matters - to consider.

Santa - Following a discussion on the best location for Santa all present agreed that the use of the Youth Club Car Park on Leek Street and the covered area in the Youth Club would be a better location for Santa and the Sleigh. This would mean that the sleigh could be parked outside Youth Club on an area was away from traffic, Santa would be undercover. In addition, more could be made of the arrival of Santa through the main car park on his Sleigh. The suggestion was made that a trail could be created using Christmas Trees and directional arrows to lead people down Leek Street towards Santa.

ACTION Rotary to discuss this location and a representative to visit The Youth Club before the next meeting to see if it would be suitable

7. Next meeting – to agree.

Next meeting to be held at 5pm on Thursday 8th June 2026

Meeting ended at 17.15