

Young Star to light up town!

Residents and visitors alike are being wooed to Colchester as the town goes all out to impress this Christmas!

On Sat 19 November we will be kicking off the festive calendar for Colchester with the grand switch on of the town centre Christmas lighting scheme and a programme of special events are being planned to make this Christmas really special.

A simultaneous switch on will take place at 4.30pm with Colchester Mayor officially switching on the towns lights from the Town Hall on the High Street. Our Mayor will be helped by Violet Wilson aged 6.

Violet entered a competition to switch on the lights with the Mayor which was organised in partnership by the Christmas Group and the Garrison Radio.

Violet won with her amusing and inspired answer to "Why would you like to be Mayor?" ("**...so I can eat sweets and stop thieves**"). Violet has said that she is very excited about winning and will be wearing a special princess party dress for the occasion!

Whilst all this is going on in the High Street, at the same time (4.30pm) a simultaneous switch on will happen in Culver Square by the Giant Christmas Tree, with entertainment throughout the day provided by Heart Radio.

The fun does not stop there, as there will be a second chance to get involved with seasonal fun in Lion Walk shopping centre with for special show of pyrotechnics at 5.15pm!

Garrison FM will be comparing the switch on event and getting an atmosphere going in the High Street for all to enjoy. Culver Square will be getting the party going with Heart FM, Lion Walk will be pushing the boat out with a mega entertainment program throughout the afternoon with Dream 100 as hosts, complete with live feeds throughout the afternoon, plus 5 live musical acts and film character's from 'Invasion Colchester' entertaining the crowds.

There will be Santa's helpers and characters from the Mercury Theatre Panto Company about the town centre spreading festive cheer.

This year the lighting scheme will provide a wider coverage in the town centre than last year and is themed around stars. This is a celebration of Colchester's heritage and its connection to the famous *Twinkle Twinkle Little Star* nursery rhyme.

The lights are provided by Blachere Illuminations, a French-based company, which specialises in festive lighting all over the world including the Champs Elysée in Paris and Regent Street in London.

Councillor Nick Barlow, the Council's Portfolio Holder for Economic Development and Sustainability said: "The Christmas lights and events around the town centre make Colchester an even more desirable place for people to visit and enter into the festive spirit.

"The aim is also to encourage local people to retain their spending in the local economy, support local businesses and help to sustain local employment through these tough economic times."

Christmas in Colchester is being co-ordinated by the Colchester Christmas Group, which includes retailers through the Colchester Retail & Business Association (CoRBA), Culver Square & Lion Walk Shopping Centres, the Church, Destination Colchester, Firstsite, Mercury Theatre and Colchester Borough Council.

Chair of the Christmas group is Michelle Reynolds of the Colchester Retail and Business Association. Ms Reynolds said: "The partnership approach adopted this year has been extremely productive and worthwhile. This year Christmas in Colchester will be the light up and a programme of festive activities aimed at attracting people into the town. We want local people to embrace the town this year, shop locally and support the festive activities. We also hope the businesses of Colchester will fully support and embrace the festive opportunities and help us make this year special."

The project is part of Colchester's drive to bring Colchester an even better town centre. Such projects as Christmas lights offer new things to see help promote Colchester to visitors, help support business and retailers and improve the

experience of Colchester after dark. For more information:

www.bettertowncentre.com

For borough-wide Christmas events and activities across the whole festive season visit:

www.visitcolchester.com

Remember Colchester Borough Council's special **Christmas parking deals** at the following car parks - Vineyard Street , Britannia and Priory street . On Sundays there is 50p all-day parking deal. In the same three car parks a Wednesday late-night shopping deal - 50p to park from 3pm to midnight, this extends to every Wednesday late-night shopping over Christmas only.

There is so much going on, so come along, enjoy some festive fun and get that Christmas shopping done!