

Appendix One - ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

Christmas Village Debrief

**Monday, 25 January 2015
Committee Room 2, Town House
9.30-11.30am**

Present: Angela Scott, Chief Executive, Aberdeen City Council (ACC) (Chair)
Dawn Schultz, City Promotions & Events Manager, ACC
Alana Donald, Communications Business Adviser, ACC
Ross Grant, Aberdeen Inspired (AI)
Gordon Riddell, Station Manager, Scotland Fire & Rescue Service
David Blackwood, Event Planning, Police Scotland
Dick Sutton, Event Planning, Police Scotland
Davie Henderson, Senior City Warden, ACC
Mark Yule, Public Transport Unit, ACC
Daniel Laird, Commercial Manager, First Aberdeen
Doug Ritchie, Traffic Management, ACC
Takki Sulaiman, Head of Communications & Promotion, ACC
Nick Glover, Environmental Health, ACC
Mark Nicholl, Environmental Health, ACC
Karen Allan, Communication Business Adviser, ACC
Steven Shaw, Environmental Manager, ACC
Julie Ritchie, Operational Planning, Police Scotland
Gill Flett, Licensing, Police Scotland
Chief Inspector Graeme Mackie, Local Area Commander, Police Scotland
Gary Craig, Chief Executive Officer, AI
Angela Joss, Project Manager, AI
Carla Furneaux, Marketing & Communications, AI
John Codona, Director, John Codona's Pleasure Fairs
Alfred Codona, Director, John Codona's Pleasure Fairs

Apologies: Stephen Dyker, Showsec
Mike Cheyne, Roads ACC
Claire Hunter, Programme Manager, ACC

Agenda Item	Discussion
1 Introductions	<p>Angela Scott welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were made. The purpose of the meeting is to reflect on the Christmas Village 2015 to see what went well and what can be improved on.</p>
2 Summary of why the event was set up and original aims and objectives	<p>Angela invited all partners to reflect, from their perspective, whether the event was a success and if so, what made it a success.</p> <p><u>Aberdeen Inspired</u></p> <p>From AI's point of view it was a huge success and exceeded their objectives which were to achieve increased footfall to Aberdeen city centre and put on a credible event which would rival other Scottish cities. Estimated attendance figures were 50,000 which were based on 10 times the amount of people who used the ice rink last year. This number was exceeded in 2½ days. The footfall was 516,000 over the 5 weeks of the village which included 2 days closure due to adverse weather conditions. Aberdeen Inspired board members have discussed the outcome of the village and they are delighted.</p> <p>A survey by Aberdeen and Grampian Chamber of Commerce has been commissioned to ascertain the economic impact of the Christmas Village, and benefits gained for other businesses and agencies. It is hoped this will be available next week.</p> <p>Businesses have stated a positive impact on what has been a difficult year. All the feedback has been positive although some improvement could be made. Committee approval was not received until September therefore timescales were tight to deliver an event of this scale. In particular the delay meant we did not have many stall holders to choose from, we had to rush the consultation with businesses and residents and the preparation of the Event Manual with input from all partners was more stressful and time consuming than had been expected. The delay also impacted on the licensing process which was only finalised a day before we opened.</p> <p>AI are keen to continue, be involved and/or organise possibly with a view to committing to 2-3 years so best value can be achieved and delivery timescales are reduced in the planning phase with suppliers etc.</p> <p><u>John Codona's Pleasure Fairs</u></p> <p>The look, feel and atmosphere of the Christmas Village was good. The general public feedback was that it was well done with a family friendly environment. There is a feeling we got it right. Codona's are very proud of the final finished look of the event.</p> <p>The timescale for delivery the event put a lot of pressure on Codona's and it took a lot of work to get it off the ground, which affected the financial viability.</p>

	<p><u>Police Scotland</u></p> <p><u>Local Area Command</u> The event was well run however the late approval of the event caused concerns. It was a community style policing event. A personal thank you was given to Codona's on their running of the event. There are no issues from a policing perspective. Going forward in terms of counting footfall, the location makes it slightly challenging however there were no issues regarding operation from a Community Policing perspective. The daily report and weekly meetings ensured partners were aware of any matters arising.</p> <p><u>Scottish Fire & Rescue Service</u> There were no incidents recorded and SFRS supported what Police Scotland said in that not 100% convinced that Union Terrace is the correct location. A more joined up approach in terms of working with the Caledonian Hotel re evacuation procedures would have been better. If discussions had been held earlier there would have been a clearer understanding of issues effecting businesses and how they were being addressed. All parties need to ensure that they have the correct information going forward and that the event plan is available earlier for consideration.</p> <p><u>First Aberdeen</u> Traffic disruption was less impacted than originally thought. There were concerns but in general it was not too bad which it was felt was aided by less of a Christmas rush this year. This was aided by less of a Christmas rush this year.</p> <p><u>Aberdeen City Council</u></p> <p><u>City Events</u> The event met a lot of Elected Members' expectations and desires to add to the city's existing portfolio of events. Aberdeen City Council have been keen to support an event of this type for a number of years.</p> <p><u>Transport</u> Traffic Management went well and a lot better than expected. The traffic volume within the City Centre was similar to previous years. The positive media campaign helped in getting people to use all available car parks from the direction they approached the city and journeys from North to South were greatly reduced.</p> <p><u>Communications & Promotion</u> Part of the winter festival campaign was focused on driving behaviour change of the public and it worked well. The city got positive coverage within the city region and beyond the North East and beyond Scotland. Visitors to the city noticed a change in atmosphere from last year. It is hoped the tangibles will benefit the City.</p>
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	<p><u>Environmental Health</u> It went well and the impact was lower than anticipated. There were 3-4 noise disturbances with one ongoing for some time which will need to be considered for future events. The complaint was from one resident regarding the entertainment marquee although acknowledged that AI responded by changing the musicians.</p> <p><u>Environmental Services</u> There were very few complaints regarding waste management. Officers in Ground Services were unsure of the ice rink installation but once installed understood the benefit of the location. The art installation was a first for the Ground Services team but they worked through this and enjoyed the experience.</p> <p>There was a plumbing issue which was escalated and dealt with</p>
<p>3 Review of the event procurement, planning, set up and delivery process</p>	<p><u>Aberdeen City Council</u> Angela invited all partners to identify areas for improvement from their perspective and stressed the purpose was to ensure lessons are learned which can then be applied to the 2016 event.</p> <p><u>City Events</u> The conversation regarding the Christmas Village was started in March and there was a long period to June/July discussing what locations were feasible e.g. Union Street and Castlegate to see what would and wouldn't work. We now have a very good idea of the elements which work/don't work which can be taken forward. We are challenged for spaces within Aberdeen City. There was a general discussion regarding infrastructure in Union Terrace Gardens in relation to ingress/egress and accessibility for less abled bodied people. This was being investigated along with lighting, amenities and weathering on the site. Lighting is a big issue. There is only temporary lighting which is expensive.</p> <p>March to summer absorbed lot of time. Union Street was, at a late stage, rejected due to transportation impact re Union Square and the team had then to quickly test the feasibility of Union Terrace. It was acknowledged that the late decision re the venue did compromise planning by other partners and businesses and citizen enjoyment.</p> <p>The engagement of partners and their understanding of what is required of them and the allocation of tasks is important.</p> <p>Angela asked whether at planning stage, there had been enough consideration of the Winter Festival and Hogmanay events as two complimentary events.</p> <p>Communications & Promotion wanted the two events to be integrated. Union Street was the preferred choice for the Hogmanay celebrations however this was not an option. It was noted there were lots of people in the area where ACC wanted the stage located. It may be an idea to cut out traffic for a couple of hours this Hogmanay. Schoolhill is a good site however there was a single footway which became congested very quickly.</p>

Transport

Criticised for not consulting with certain groups e.g. disability groups and the general public in relation to the bus diversions. It is hoped to have more time to consult with these groups this year. The previous bus problems at RGC were resolved where discussions took up a lot of time. There were also discussions held with HMT due to the number of buses coaching children to the pantomime and also St Mark's Church.

Officers don't have data on car parks and Park & Ride however all car parks were full by 10.00am on Friday, Saturday and Sunday throughout the whole of the festival.

Environmental Health

One resident made a complaint due to their location and the impact of the loud music. The street level noise was deemed excessive. This was for the event operators to deal with. It was acknowledged there was a noise management plan in place which needs to be tweaked to provide more clarity regarding the roles and responsibilities of operators and Aberdeen City Council. The general sense was there a delay informing residents.

Issues:

- More communication required between operators, Environmental Services and residents
- The situation got quite political and made the press due to decisions made after discussions with the resident
- Noise management plan drawn up by Codona's with advice from Environmental Health. Maybe some more communications re information so the residents can be advised appropriately. Codonas' were not aware of what had been discussed. Need to work on clear issues raised at this event.
- Consideration to be given to the location this year. Maybe a bit more forewarning to residents which then comes back to having enough time to devise a noise management plan.

AI informed there were 4 shows on a Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday – 2 music and 2 comedy shows. A couple of the bands were too loud therefore choosing the right kind of band is important.

Codona's informed that general noise and background music was an issue. There weren't enough speakers to cover the sound and they had to be turned up high and the structure and fabric of the event were all facing the buildings. Half the amount of speakers again will be put in for this year's event thereby reducing noise levels. If there are more market stalls this year, the speakers could be facing onto Union Terrace Gardens and consideration will be given to the location of the music tent as well as the nature of music played.

Police Scotland

Local Area Command

There were no issues regarding drunkenness or unruly behaviour.

A discussion needs to be held regarding whether Aberdeen as a place wants to have family events with alcohol

available. Could an event be run without alcohol? We have this year's event to go on but going forward there is the issue of Scotland's association with alcohol and where it fits commercially and in terms of health. Need to start this discussion early where we can hear each other's views and present sensible views, including the Alcohol and Drug Partnership.

Event Planning

From an emergency planning perspective, we need to prepare for the worst and plan for the best. There was a lot of discussion with all partners and a lot of work behind the scenes. Time collapsed quickly and we need to ensure there is time given to get behind procedures and discuss. We now know how we all work together. Everyone had their expectations and it is now a matter of looking at the details of the plan.

It would be good to cut down on the disruption to all businesses and residents and involve them more. There were misunderstandings which were mostly down to tight timescales. If there had been earlier discussions, things would have run more smoothly.

AI informed that they wrote to residents and businesses three times and invited them all to the briefing session at the Caledonian Hotel. Only ten people turned up. AI also visited all businesses personally and some residents and were surprised some people were not aware of the event. Improvements could be made in communication if approval was forthcoming earlier.

The Caledonian Hotel had raised about half a dozen issues regarding toilet provisions and guest access based on their experience of the International Market. AI was in regular contact with the manager of the hotel and there were issues regarding evacuation however these were resolved.

There were 5 complaints from residents, three from businesses, one from a performer; four from members of the public due to the cancellation of music. One business claimed loss of business. There was a noise complaint from a resident however this was resolved.

John Codona's Pleasure Fairs

It comes down to the timeframe to produce a good and safe event. The pressure was huge to deliver this event. The deadlines were set for June and then extended to September. A significant amount of experience has been gained which will eliminate a lot of the planning for the 2016 event.

Angela queried what impact the delay had on the ability to sell the stalls. Codona's informed that the diversity of the stalls was an issue and they had said from the start that they would be booked up by September. Seventy-five local businesses were contacted but they didn't know much about the event. It was a busy time of year therefore take up locally was poor.

We need to advertise earlier and it is hoped Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire businesses might be more interested now the event is established. Codona's would like to see the event doubled in size in some areas. They noted a lot of people walking through the event and commenting on the items for sale but not taking advantage of the stalls. The stall decoration looked good with the insides being decorated individually. It was noted that the 'Bomber' ride and the art installation were not compromised by the late decision making. Codona's advised they had started speaking to ride operators in February. The 'Drop Tower' ride was lost due to the delay in decision making however the 'Bomber' became available.

First Aberdeen

The routes 3 and 12 were mostly affected. The stakeholders were consulted and there was a severe impact on customers. Fifty thousand passenger journeys were lost on the 3 and 12 routes. Groups with mobility issues were impacted more.

There had been a discussion regarding park and rides buses but due to timescales this was not investigated further. This needs to be considered earlier on in the planning. It has been understood that additional park and ride facilities had been suggested but this didn't happen in the end.

Scottish Fire & Rescue Service

The road closures were challenging for emergency services. SF&RS would like to review the amount of roads closed in future and for SF&RS and ACC to work in partnership on this issue. Colleagues confirmed there is a meeting next month regarding this issue.

Security

In respect of licensing, stewarding numbers were an issue. There had been a lot of discussion regarding how many were required and how much it would cost. AI wants to review. There were too many stewards on the midweek days. Not sure there is the requirement for so many at the next event.

First Aid (raised by Police Scotland in the absence of Scottish Ambulance Service)

Police Scotland Event Planning stated that stewarding numbers were a concern. If the event was successful, difficult to know how busy it would be. However, it was a family friendly event with a good atmosphere and we can look to review this and how it can be adapted.

First Aid provision had to be adhered to and the responsibility to outside partners. Numbers needs to be revisited to ensure adequate cover.

Overall summary of issues:

- Fundamental delay in decision making by ACC which impacted on the planning by all partners and contractors. Quality and restricted choice were the main issues.
- Consistent themes raised by all partners

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alcohol debate • The delay in decision making also impacted on partner ability to understand the level of public engagement they would have liked. • A clearer understanding of the requirements for the delivery of the Event Plan and how this impacts on the resultant safe event.
4 Review of performance during the operation of the village – i.e. operational overtime of the themes outlined in the daily brief <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Event management (stalls, operating issues, rides, programming and content, marketing) b. Footfall c. Event safety (capacity and crowd management, structures, access issues, medical welfare) d. Noise nuisance e. Traffic management f. Waste management g. Public order h. General public complaints i. Media, social media and wider marketing issues 	<p>a. <u>Event Management</u></p> <p>The rides were all generally straight forward with no issues. The queue system on the children's rides was adjusted to avoid blocking the path through the village.</p> <p>After the first week it was agreed to adjust the ingress/egress on the ice rink. The ice rink operator had suggested 65 people on the rink at one time. People would be on the rink and then come off before the next group could go on. Codona's wanted a crossover but there was not enough room therefore a holding area was built to ensure short queues.</p> <p>The ice rink levels were very high and this would be worth flagging with Ground Services team. Previous years figures were 5,000 for Union Terrace Gardens and the Castlegate. This year the figures were in excess of 20,000. The ice rink was a stand out piece of the Christmas Village and it was the highlight for a lot of people.</p> <p>There is the opportunity to increase the size of ice rink by 50% (20 x 15 metres) which would make it more enjoyable for customers.</p> <p>Environmental Services were initially concerned about the damage the ice rink would do to the ground however this was sorted by suggesting a redesign of the grounds. Codona's stated they were concerned about meeting the Ground Services team but informed the guys were great.</p> <p>There was a delay in lighting for the installations within the gardens. The design is in place for the lighting of the gardens but ACC did not have it in place for 2015 but had temporary lighting. Union Terrace Garden lighting needs to be upgraded properly in 2016.</p> <p>b. Discussed in Item 3</p> <p>c. Discussed in Item 3</p> <p>d. <u>Noise nuisance</u></p> <p>Mark Nicholl thanked Alfred Codona's for his earlier explanation for the variable levels of background music levels. There was quite a large speaker near the entertainment marquee therefore 2 noise elements together. The location of speakers will have to be thought about for the next event.</p> <p>e. <u>Transport</u></p> <p>There was a minor issue where on a number of occasions the emergency vehicle route was blocked. Security</p>

	<p>staff were using the barriers to usher the public out at the end of the night. Transport officers spoke to Codona's and issue was resolved.</p> <p>The event proposals were discussed with the taxi group and there were no complaints.</p> <p>f. <u>Waste management</u> There were no real issues regarding waste management. There was very little litter on Union Terrace Garden. Codona's advised of an issue regarding the resident's bin on the first weekend of the event. The bin was changed to a locked lid and Codona's placed one of their bins in front of it. Codona's stated their surprise at how little waste was dropped on the street. They had a member of staff sweeping the street daily.</p> <p>g. Discussed in Item 3</p> <p>h. Discussed in Item 3</p> <p>i. <u>Media, social media and wider marketing issues</u> Once the daily information was received, it was sent out to all partners and agencies by ACC. This had been discussed at the table top exercise and worked well and everyone agreed it should be repeated.</p>
<p>5 Consideration of the suitability of the event</p>	<p><u>Codona's</u> From the point of the view of the public and partners the event was a big success. It is hoped to increase market stalls for the next event and add 50% to the size of the ice rink. Don't want to make too many changes at once as hopeful this event will run for a long time. There could be one major renewal per year with a couple of tweaks. If we keep to the same template the public will get excited. Overall, Codona's happy with location.</p> <p><u>Aberdeen City Council</u></p> <p><u>Transport</u> There is the scope to look at better integration with the Winter Festival and Hogmanay events by looking at Union Street next year. Overall, on balance content with the location.</p> <p><u>Communications & Promotion</u> The Winter Festival provided connectivity with smaller events e.g. for the Xmas Light Switch on, people were coming down from Union Street but there was nothing to eat or drink. Increased street signage would be better. We need to activate more parts of the city. Overall, Union Terrace is a good location.</p> <p><u>Environmental Services</u> The art installation was a huge success and it would be shame to overlook Union Terrace Gardens as part of the Christmas event. Overall, Union Terrace is a good location.</p>

	<p><u>City Events</u></p> <p>A separate conversation is to be held regarding different events. The art installation came in mid-December and left early January and we are now moving towards the SPECTRA festival. We need to fill a gap to ensure the city doesn't look dark and dead and there is something for Aberdeen's citizens to look at all year round. The art installation worked and well done to AI. We could look at sponsorship for art installations. Overall, Union Terrace a good location.</p> <p>Angela advised that the City Centre Director will start in February and his key role is the regeneration of Aberdeen city centre therefore he should be part of the project team going forward.</p> <p><u>Scottish Fire & Rescue Service</u></p> <p>Everyone is keen for the location to remain the same and that Union Terrace is the best location for 2016.</p> <p><u>First Aberdeen</u></p> <p>Echoed SF&RS' comment however stated there is a need to consider the impact on the public. First Aberdeen provided a shuttle service which they paid for however they won't absorb the costs this year. ACC need to think Edinburgh re connectivity and transport as it is not disrupted when it hosts major events.</p> <p><u>Aberdeen Inspired</u></p> <p>AI stated the event exceeded expectations. There is a need to keep the location and template so we can get on and market this year's event. If ACC decides to change location AI requested it do this quickly but they reserved their position as only Union Street or Union Terrace meet the wishes of the local business community.</p>
<p>6 Recommendations for 2016 and any citywide or extraneous factors to consider</p>	<p><u>Marketing of event</u></p> <p>AI informed that winter brochures are finished by summer and they will need to be agreed in March/April. There is huge scope for hotel deals. AI advertised Aberdeen as a place to come, eat and stay on STV. There was a further advertisement for the Christmas Village and due to the bridge closure; this was extended to Dundee and Fife.</p> <p>Angela reflected that future growth in number of attendees will have to come from outside the city and immediate surrounding areas, give the high local footfall this year. She suggested an enhanced marketing effort and need to pull in Visit Aberdeen.</p> <p><u>Key Recommendations</u></p>

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Overall, retain Union Terrace as the location 2. Get event planning up and running ASAP to ensure sufficient time for consultation and engagement 3. Accept the suggested improvements referred to throughout the meeting 4. Retain the overall template from the 2015 Winter Festival and build on it rather than a fundamentally different programme 5. Work in collaboration with Visit Aberdeen to promote the 2016 event further afield. <p>Angela Scott thanked Codona's, AI, ACC and all partners involved for their support in making the event a success and for contributing to the debrief. Angela indicated that the draft would be circulated to partners prior to it being shared with the Council.</p>
7 AOCB	No other business was discussed.