

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

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| COMMITTEE | Finance, Policy and Resources |
| DATE | 9 March 2017 |
| INTERIM DIRECTOR | Bernadette Marjoram |
| TITLE OF REPORT | Aberdeen 365 – Operational Plan |
| REPORT NUMBER | CHI/17/042 |
| CHECKLIST COMPLETED | YES |

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is to provide members with an operational plan that supports the delivery of the Aberdeen 365 Events Strategy.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

Members are asked to:

- i. Agree the development of the events programme detailed on pages 7-9 of the Operational Plan (Appendix 1 to this report) and budget of £1.4m for delivery of the Aberdeen 365 Events Strategy;
- ii. Approve the establishment of an advisory Events Group to oversee the delivery of the Aberdeen 365 Events Strategy;
- iii. Agree that the organisations detailed in the body of the report can be approached to participate in a new Group.
- iv. Note the information update on the delivery of the Tall Ships in Aberdeen.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Currently the funding associated with the delivery of public facing cultural and sporting events is fragmented – within the Council, and externally across stakeholders in the city and wider region.

The approach detailed in this report proposes the consolidation of existing Council budgets to achieve a coordinated and corporate approach that supports the strategic objectives detailed in the regional economic strategy where Aberdeen and the wider North East is established as a tourism destination and this is a major factor in the overall image and perceptions of quality of life.

Currently the Council invests the following across services on cultural and event activities:

| | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------|
| City Events Programme 2017/18 | £530,000 |
| Culture Programme 2017/18 | £710,000 |
| City Centre Masterplan 2017/18 | £230,000 |
| TOTAL | £1,470,000 |

The delivery of the Aberdeen 365 Operational Plan will be staffed and funded from existing resources already identified within Aberdeen City Council. As a result, and with a more integrated internal approach, this report does not require additional funding and as such there are no immediate financial implications.

In the future there will be the opportunity to prioritise investment to support events using the criteria agreed by the FP&R Committee on 7 December 2016 to better inform the local authority's decision on whether to invest in an event. By applying these criteria, capacity could be created in the events programme in future to develop opportunities to secure sources of external funding to support the development of an events programme that maximises economic benefit for the city and wider region, and showcases a legacy that showcases the region's capability on the national and international event stage.

4. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Collaboration

Just as the Operational Plan will benefit from better internal coordination, there is also an opportunity to collaborate more effectively with external stakeholders with an interest in events. The Council already supports a number of additional events-related activities:

- Funding and support to VisitAberdeenshire – destination development and marketing;
- Funding and support to Aberdeen Festivals;
- Development of the new Aberdeen Arena and Conference Centre and the appointment of a new operator, SMG Europe.
- Funding and support to Aberdeen Inspired and the City Centre Manager role in engaging with city centre businesses to maximise the commercial opportunities from events.
- Development and delivery of tourism/ events activity in the City Centre Masterplan, and Aberdeen 365's development.

It also works with Opportunity North East (ONE), VisitScotland and EventScotland in development of the tourism and leisure sector itself.

Staffing

Aberdeen City Council will adopt a pragmatic approach with the skilled and experienced staff that already exists within a number of Council services, and those who could be co-located to create a centralised events unit in the future if that was necessary.

In the coming months performance will be monitored against Aberdeen 365 KPIs and regional economic objectives allowing time to examine the longer term options for management and delivery structures.

5. BACKGROUND

Following the approval of the Aberdeen 365 Events Strategy in December 2016, officers have been reviewing the accompanying Operational Report (Appendix 1) provided by the consultant team. It suggested a number of proposals for a new programme of events for Aberdeen, and a new Steering Group model. A single joined up approach towards the strategic development, coordination and delivery of the Council's events programme, complementing other events, would result in a more effective programme and response to the needs of the Council, and individual and specific events.

The delivery of events is currently addressed internally through the work of the City Events Team in conjunction with Cultural Services. These officers work with internal and external partners in the delivery of events. There are indications that there is a need for greater coordination and communication across the public and private sector, and cultural organisations to maximise the opportunity to increase tourism activity, promote and market the city/ wider region, and improve the reputation of the city as a 'must visit' destination.

The Aberdeen 365 project stream creates a compelling programme that supports the Regional Economic Strategy and the City Centre Masterplan (CCMP) objectives. The Council's Finance, Policy & Resources Committee approved the Strategy as a framework for the delivery of events by the Council and partners. It highlights the need to shape a new portfolio of events that can be attracted to Aberdeen that develop the city's offering as well as continuing to meet priorities within the existing events and festivals programme, and can be accommodated in new 'event space' that is coming forward under the Broad Street and Union Terrace Gardens proposals.

6. DELIVERY

As detailed in Appendix 1 – Aberdeen 365 Events Strategy – Operational Plan, it is our intention to develop the existing events programme which are detailed on pages 7 - 9 of the attached report, with a view to establishing a headline or feature event each calendar month, while determining how the local authority can still recognise and support those events that fall out with these categories.

It is essential that the existing events programme demonstrates the key events which have the potential to be a major attraction under the previously agreed criteria, and the prioritisation of funding to help the event grow and develop now and in the future.

All current events will be challenged to secure future investment by detailing where it will focus its efforts in relation to the strategic criteria and how they will support the ambitions of Aberdeen and the wider economy through an established programme of core events.

Aberdeen City Council will also need to consider commissioning new activities to enhance existing events or buy in entirely new ones to widen the offering of the city and region. The key focus will be on home-grown events to support our long term strategy of building capacity, sustainability and sense of place through the cultural narrative. New events and activities will be core to the development of an exciting events programme in Aberdeen and to meet the ambitions of the Aberdeen 365 City Centre Masterplan ambitions.

Following the review of the Strategy and the accompanying Operational Report, officers propose that the establishment of an 'Aberdeen Events Group' to provide greater strategic value to the Council and external partners and stakeholders and ultimately maximise the economic impact of events in the city.

The Group would be an advisory forum with the following objectives to:

- Develop a clear programme and calendar of all events in the city and region that is available to all stakeholders.
- Coordinate on the attraction of events to the city and ensure an integrated response and pitch is provided.
- Coordinate on decisions to bid/ host events subject to the agreed appraisal criteria in accordance with procurement legislation and internal procurement regulations.
- Monitor implementation of the Aberdeen 365 Events Strategy, taking a lead role in bidding of events complementary to the city, the regional tourism objectives and the work being undertaken by Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce on a narrative for the city and wider region.
- Ensure the wider economic impacts of events are being maximised, and that local businesses are benefitting from the programme of events.
- Advise on the overall programme development and key priorities.
- Advise on the resourcing and funding of priority events.
- Ensure better marketing and promotion of events to key tourism and leisure markets, working with VisitScotland, EventScotland and VisitAberdeenshire.

As well as the benefits of this approach to the delivery of the events programme itself, outwith the region it would provide a positive signal

that Aberdeen is a nationally and internationally competitive location for specific events (international, national and regional). Consultations with a number of city and national stakeholders suggest setting up such a Group is a positive step in delivering the recommendations of the Aberdeen 365 Events Strategy for Aberdeen.

Based on the review of the work, the experience of the Council's Events Unit and the wider consultation, it is proposed that the Aberdeen Events Group could be comprised of representatives of the following organisations:

- Aberdeen City Council – Economic Development, City Events, Cultural Policy
- SMG Europe
- Aberdeen Inspired
- Visit Aberdeenshire
- VisitScotland
- EventScotland
- Sport Scotland
- Sport Aberdeen/Aberdeen Sports Village
- Aberdeen Performing Arts
- Aberdeen Festivals
- Aberdeenshire Council – developing regional links to events

If the Council agrees to establish the Group, this mechanism will also strengthen the relationship and engagement with EventScotland and relevant national agencies, who can provide financial assistance in attracting events of scale with economic impact to Aberdeen and the wider region. Key targets for this could include golf (e.g. Scottish Open/ Women's Scottish Open) or cycling (e.g. Tour of Britain 'Grand Depart').

Working with SMG Europe, this will also be beneficial to attracting new events to the city from 2019 and the new infrastructure provided by the new arena and conference facilities.

Appraisal of events

Recognising the importance of Aberdeen City Council's existing events programme, and the need for a more strategic approach to attract new events in the future, by using the criteria for future event investment agreed by FP&R Committee. An appraisal of each event in the existing programme, and any potential new events will be appraised using the agreed criteria which enable the Group to assess the likely impact of an event (resource and support), across the four broad categories:

- **Headline events**
Established, bought- in or start up events that can secure a national and international profile for Aberdeen and attract a large number of visitors.
- **Feature events**

Established, growing or one off events that have the ambition/potential to achieve national profile and attract visitors to the Aberdeen.

- **City events**
Cultural or sporting events delivered at a city level that although of a recognised quality are predominantly aimed at residents which have limited impact or attraction to visiting audiences from outwith Aberdeen environs.
- **Community events**
Smaller scale community events and festivals that are important to the city but fall outwith the scope of the Aberdeen 365 approach.

Tall Ships

At the request of the Council's Finance, Policy & Resources Committee, contact was made with Sail Training International (STI) the international voice of Sail Training, a registered charity (not-for-profit organisation), which has worldwide membership and activities. Its purpose is the development and education of young people through the Sail Training experience, regardless of nationality, culture, religion, gender or social background.

STI organises the annual Tall Ships Races and other international Tall Ship sailing events. STI members are 29 national Sail Training organisations around the world and STI's head office is in Gosport, Hampshire, UK.

The earliest Regatta event being 2020 but the deadline for this has passed, with Tall Ships Race event bids going live in March 2018 for a 2022 event.

The criteria for 2022 is not yet available for consideration.

Research has shown that recent bids including the Tall Ships in Sunderland 2018 detail a high level estimate of £3m to deliver the event.

Considerations for committee would be the following:

- Available funding in challenging economic climate
- Costs to be met local authority
- Local partner support to be determined re resources and financial commitment
- Strategic focus of the Aberdeen 365 Events Strategy, existing, committed events programme in the city
- Timescale to prepare a robust bid and the time of year the event would be held to be determined
- Options appraisal to ascertain the most advantageous maritime events for the city to host

7. IMPACT

Improving Customer Experience

Events and participation by the Council provide an opportunity to promote and enhance the long-term economic prosperity of Aberdeen and the wider region by attracting additional visitors to the city on account of the event. In turn this attracts additional commercial activity in the city and officers will work with business customers to maximise both the benefit of the event on city-centre businesses and provide information on the event itself.

Supporting and delivering a diverse programme of city events is expected to improve the customer experience by:

- Enhancing the reputation of the city for staging local, national and international festivals and events;
- Better positioning of Aberdeen as a leisure tourism destination for those looking for new and unique event experiences
- Providing city infrastructure that attracts and supports external event organisers

Improving Staff Experience

Staff within the Council's Communications Service will work closely with colleagues from Economic Development, Culture, Transportation and Environmental Communications to improve the economic impact of the events in the city. The Strategy and subsequent operational plan allows much greater alignment of effort and resources within the Council and with external partners and stakeholders. Consideration should be given to improving the existing internal structures within which the City Council's events are strategically planned and delivered, to enable the maximum benefit of the city's investment and the expertise within the staff teams. Delivering a diverse events programme provides the staff involved with valuable experience of dealing with a wide range of internal (Elected Members, senior officers) and external (businesses, contractors, suppliers etc) customers from diverse sectors including creative, cultural and event industries.

Improving our use of Resources

Collaborating with local, regional and national partners improves our use of resources and maximising financial leverage to secure an event. By working in partnership the Council is able to share the workload and take lead or supporting roles where appropriate, without compromising the level of service delivered.

Corporate

The Council is a member of VisitAberdeenshire and Aberdeen Inspired. At a strategic level, it has a key role in the long-term development of tourism in the city and North East of Scotland. Aligned to this, is its

corporate role in providing confidence to the events market that the Council supports the attraction of the 'right' event for the city, and the contribution to wider economic, tourism and City Centre Masterplan objectives.

The report is also directly contributing to delivering the Smarter Aberdeen Objectives.

Public - This report is not of interest to the public as the financial implications of the report are minimal. There are no requirements for an EHRIA or a PIA.

There may be some public/media interest in the parts of the city events programme that involve participation by Elected members and/or officers.

8. MANAGEMENT OF RISK

The risk to the Council would be managed through specific contracts for each event between the organiser and the Council. This would be drafted in conjunction with the Head of Legal and Democratic Services and the Head of Commercial and Procurement Services. Any such agreement will seek to mitigate financial risk to the Council and the necessary procurement processes will be undertaken to adhere to procurement legislation and the internal Procurement Regulations

There is a reputational risk to the Council if an event does not develop as planned. This is mitigated by the experience of Council officers in securing and supporting the delivery of international events and a robust internal and external communications plan for any and all events.

Aberdeen's city events programme is key to the destination promotion that Aberdeen City Council, VisitAberdeenShire, Aberdeen Inspired and VisitScotland currently undertake.

Should this diverse and engaging programme not continue, then Aberdeen could potentially cease to be an attractive destination for visitors and local residents with economic spend being distributed elsewhere in Scotland and event organisers considering alternative delivery locations.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Blue Sail research presented to the FP&R Committee on 7 December 2016.

10. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

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