

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	City Growth and Resources
DATE	28 October 2020
EXEMPT	Not Exempt, except for Appendix 3 - Paragraph 8
CONFIDENTIAL	No
REPORT TITLE	Aberdeen's Winter Event Programme
REPORT NUMBER	COM/20/183
DIRECTOR	
CHIEF OFFICER	Richard Sweetnam
REPORT AUTHOR	Stephen O'Neill
TERMS OF REFERENCE	3.2

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval to cancel elements of Aberdeen's winter event programme, due to the impact of Covid-19; and to approve the repurposing of the funding budgeted for the 2020 Christmas Village to support the city centre at Christmas.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the Committee:-

- 2.1 Instructs the Chief Officer, City Growth to cancel the 2020 Christmas Village, Carol Concerts, Nativity Service, and Aberdeen's Hogmanay celebrations, due to the impact of Covid-19.
- 2.2 Approves the revised proposals to the Christmas Village at paragraph 4 of this report and instructs the Chief Officer - City Growth to implement them;

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 On 27 August 2020, the Strategic Commissioning Committee agreed that due to issues relating to Covid-19, Committee recommends to the City Growth and Resources Committee that Council no longer proceeds with a Christmas village for 2020 as planned, and instructs the Chief Officer – City Growth to work with Aberdeen Inspired and other stakeholders to consider alternative uses for the funding budgeted to support the city centre at Christmas and report back to City Growth and Resources Committee.
- 3.2 Following the introduction of a lockdown to minimise the spread of Covid-19, the Scottish Government published a 'route map through and out of the crisis'.
- 3.3 As of the 24 August 2020, some outdoor events with restricted numbers, increased hygiene measures, and social distancing, were permitted to take place in Scotland. This relaxation permitted Outdoor Open Spaces Events and

Outdoor Seated Live Events, which can demonstrate they are able to sufficiently mitigate risks associated with Covid-19. To accompany this phased relaxation, the Scottish Government updated their sectoral guidance, to include specific restrictions, including:

- Event capacities must ensure 2m social distancing between households, up to limit of 200 attendees at any one time.
- Attendees must be able to enter and exit via fixed points in order to control capacity.
- Contact details of those involved in the events and those in attendance must be recorded and held to support Test and Protect measures.

- 3.4 A 'normal' Aberdeen's Winter Event Programme traditionally encompasses the 5 November Fireworks Display, Christmas Light Switch On Parade, Christmas Tree Switch On, Aberdeen's Christmas Village, Carol Concerts, the Blessing of the Nativity Scene and Aberdeen's Hogmanay celebrations. Delivery of this programme would not be able to adhere to the guidance and restrictions as a result of Covid-19, as they would attract significant levels of attendance. It is not possible therefore to deliver a safe programme of events.
- 3.5 The Council's Incident Management Team, an officer-led group set up in response to day-to-day management of the response to Covid-19 has already cancelled Aberdeen's Highland Games, Armed Forces Day, 5 November Fireworks Display, the Christmas Light Switch on Parade and the Christmas Tree Switch on celebration.
- 3.6 Elements of the Winter Events Programme will still go ahead as planned, such as the 12 Days of Christmas Sculpture Trail and although the switch-on ceremonies have been cancelled, the Union Street Christmas lights, the Christmas Tree at the Castlegate and Nativity Scene in St Nicholas Kirkyard will be installed as normal.
- 3.7 Officers are investigating options for celebrating the Council's festive programme digitally in the absence of a normal programme of events.
- 3.8 As instructed by the Strategic Commissioning Committee, officers have worked with Aberdeen Inspired, and other relevant stakeholders, to consider alternative proposals to the 2020 Christmas Village to support the city centre at Christmas.
- 3.9 Officers explored the use of the Marischal College Quadrangle to accommodate market activity. However, the appraisal showed that it would not be possible to install the required crowd management/ public safety measures without impacting the day to day operations that have been installed to maintain the Customer Service Centre safely during the pandemic. As a result, use would be restricted to the weekends, that in turn raised questions around the feasibility of a market in relation to the infrastructure costs involved for what would only be an eight day (four weekends) offer.

4. THE REVISED PROPOSAL

HAAN @ the Gallery

- 4.1 HAAN features a diverse collection of artistic enterprises showcasing the work of local and national designers and makers. Since 2017 HAAN has showcased over 150 creative practitioners by providing them with high quality events to sell jewellery, ceramics, textiles, illustration, apparel, homeware and lifestyle products.
- 4.2 Each year HAAN delivers a high-quality Christmas Design Pop-Up Market that has become a highlight in the festive calendar, as well as being highly profitable for the creative practitioners involved. The proposal for 2020 is to hold a pop-up event within Aberdeen Art Gallery on 27-29 November. By locating in the Gallery, it will help to raise the profile of local designers and makers and their products. It will also complement the aims of Aberdeen Art Gallery to attract visitors to the iconic venue in the city. Further details on the proposal are provided in Appendix 1 to this report.

Festive Dressing of the City Centre

- 4.3 Feedback from the work of the Business Resilience Group (set up in response to Covid-19 and the second lockdown in the city in August) and the Socio-Economic Rescue Plan Implementation Group has been to prioritise attracting footfall back into the city, increasing consumer confidence and improving the atmosphere in the city centre. In response, this proposal aims to transform the city centre environment with additional festive lighting installations to create a new 'trail' throughout the city centre, to encourage people to dwell longer and support local businesses. The Projects covered by this proposal include:
- Guild Street - four column mounted lighting features will be installed between Guild Street and Carmelite Street, leading people from Union Square / Train and Bus Station to the Green;
 - The Green - visitors and residents will be welcomed by a 9.5m artificial Christmas Tree, spotlights highlighting the NUART murals on Aberdeen Market and Trinity Centre, and over 1,000 white 'p lights' decorating the trees in the area;
 - Correction Wynd - leaving The Green, pedestrians will be led towards Correction Wynd and under Union Street, where the underside of the bridge will be lit with overhead sheet lighting, creating a welcoming and festive ceiling of light walkway. Festoon lighting will be installed on both sides of Correction Wynd to compliment the historic environment that leads pedestrians towards St Nicholas Street;
 - St Nicholas Street - Two 9.5m artificial Christmas Trees will welcome people to the pedestrian area of St Nicholas Street;
 - Union Street - Three 9.5m artificial Christmas Trees will be located in the pedestrian area of Union Street, between Market Street and Bridge Street, that has been created as part of the Space for People project. This will add to the existing cross street festive lighting in this area and the Nativity within St Nicholas Kirkyard, which will be installed as normal.

- Broad Street - will see the return of three Christmas trees at the front of Marischal College, with the addition of a new arched lighting feature on the raised grass area and a giant Santa positioned to the left of Marischal College welcoming people to the area;
 - George Street - Leaving the Bon Accord Centre onto George Street people will immediately see a 9.5m artificial Christmas Tree to the left of the entrance to John Lewis. Heading towards St Andrew Street the pedestrian area will be lined with eight column mounted lighting features;
 - The West End – eight column mounted lighting features will be installed between Rose St, Thistle St and Chapel St, complimenting the Spaces for People works within this area and extending the Council’s annual festive lighting offering.
- 4.4 The proposal is to purchase the column mounted lighting features, on George St, The West End and Guild St, so that they may be installed annually, along with the current festive lighting contract. Further details of this proposal are provided in Appendix 2 to this report.
- 4.5 The proposals would also be complemented by two further initiatives being developed as part of the Council’s Socio-Economic Rescue Plan: extension of Aberdeen Restaurant Week beyond the Business Improvement District (BID) area; and the launch of an Aberdeen Gift Card. Further update on these initiatives is included elsewhere in the Agenda to this Committee.

Supporting Marketing Campaign

- 4.6 Officers will work with Aberdeen Inspired to develop a marketing campaign which promotes the winter festival installations and activities and showcases the retail and hospitality sector of Aberdeen, driving additional footfall to the city centre over the festive period.
- 4.7 All options within this report will be subject to, and depend on, the public health position, guidance and legislation at the time and may therefore subject to change. It is anticipated that these decisions would be made by Chief Officer, City Growth.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 At its budget meeting in March 2020, the Council approved that £150,000 would allocated from the Common Good Fund to the support the 2020 Christmas Village. As a result of this report, it is proposed to repurpose this budget to support the revised proposals. A full breakdown of the proposed costs is provided in Appendix 3 to this report, which total £87,026.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The service has liaised with the CPS Legal Team in regards to the recommendations and will seek any further input from CPS Legal Team as required regarding the implementation of the new proposals.

7. MANAGEMENT OF RISK

Category	Risk	Low (L) Medium (M) High (H)	Mitigation
Strategic Risk	Aberdeen's winter programme fails to contribute to the objectives of the City Centre Masterplan, due to the impact of Covid-19.	Low	The proposals allow for the city centre to be activated safely whilst encouraging residents and visitors into the city and supporting local businesses during the festive period.
Compliance	Aberdeen's festive offer breaches Covid-19 guidance and legislation, subsequently putting residents at risk.	Low	Officers will work with suppliers, contractors and Aberdeen's Safety Advisory Group to ensure that any activity is delivered in line with industry specific guidance, legislation and in accordance with best practice at the time.
Operational	Resources within the City Growth and supporting clusters are not sufficient to deliver these projects Health & Safety of staff required to oversee the installation and delivery of these proposals.	Low	The Chief Officer – City Growth will identify and allocate resources to deliver the programme of Christmas activities taking into consideration the wellbeing of relevant officers. A risk assessment has been carried out, to ensure that City Events staff can carry out their duties, related to the delivery of these proposals, safely.
Financial	Projects exceed the funding approved by City Growth and Resources Committee.	Low	Projects have been costed during the preparation of this report. A contingency of 10% has been factored in, to the attached budget to account for unforeseen costs. The Chief Officer – City Growth, will maintain a

Category	Risk	Low (L) Medium (M) High (H)	Mitigation
			close watching brief on the budget associated with the proposals.
Reputational	Aberdeen City Council uphold the principles of the Common Good Fund. The cessation of festive activities, which support the city centre during the festive period, could result in the breakdown of projects 'which are good for the community as a whole'.	Low	<p>Whilst the traditional programme is not viable, due to the ongoing public health risks presented by the pandemic, the proposals ensure that Aberdeen City Council can support the city centre over the festive period without the risk, liability and costs of the original projects.</p> <p>Officers will work closely with delivery partners and contractors to ensure that the projects supported by the committee are delivered safely and successfully.</p>
Environment / Climate	Additional lighting results in increased carbon footprint within the city centre over the festive period.	Low	<p>Additional lighting installations will utilise modern low power LED lights.</p> <p>Projects will also utilise fixed power supplies within the city centre, mitigating the need for mobile generators, further reducing the carbon footprint of the proposals.</p>

8. OUTCOMES

<u>COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN</u>	
	Impact of Report
Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement	The proposals within this report support many of the objectives of the City Centre Masterplan:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting the view of Aberdeen city centre as an energetic, inclusive and fascinating place where people will want to live, work and visit. • Creating a stronger and more diverse city centre economy. • Building on local distinctiveness and maximising local business opportunities. • Ensuring Aberdeen city centre reflects its distinctive local culture, so it is like no other place.
Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan	
Prosperous Economy Stretch Outcomes	The report and the proposal contribute to the economic growth strands of the Prosperous Economy chapter of the LOIP. Effective delivery will further enhance the city's profile and standing over the festive period and make the city a more attractive retail and hospitality destination.
Prosperous People Stretch Outcomes	In addition, the proposals will support growth in retail and hospitality sectors in particular, as well as local makers and producers.
Prosperous Place Stretch Outcomes	Aberdeen's competitiveness as a destination for retail and hospitality in the lead up to Christmas– is reliant on our strong festive offer, which has been dramatically impacted by Covid-19. The proposals look to support the Prosperous Place theme, with new, Covid-secure, alternatives to our traditional programme.
Regional and City Strategies	The proposals support the City Council's Economic Rescue plan by strengthening local supply chains and contributing towards local business growth; creating space to move and enjoy; and supportive the Shop, Visit, Eat Local initiatives.
UK and Scottish Legislative and Policy Programmes	Any event / activation will be subject to, and dependant on, the public health position, guidance and legislation at the time and are, therefore, subject to change.

9. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
Impact Assessment	Not required
Data Protection Impact Assessment	Not required

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 10.1 Strategic Commissioning Committee, 27 August 2020, Christmas Village 2019 Evaluation - COM/20/105

11. APPENDICES

- 11.1 Appendix 1: HAAN Market at Aberdeen Art Gallery;
- 11.2 Appendix 2: Additional Festive Dressing of the City Centre;
- 11.3 Appendix 3: Budget Breakdown

12. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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