

## ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

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<b>COMMITTEE</b>	Finances and Resources
<b>DATE</b>	29 March 2023
<b>EXEMPT</b>	The report is not exempt but Appendices 2a and 2b are exempt under paragraph 6 - Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (other than the authority).
<b>CONFIDENTIAL</b>	No
<b>REPORT TITLE</b>	Christmas Village Feedback Report
<b>REPORT NUMBER</b>	COM/23/098
<b>DIRECTOR</b>	Gale Beattie
<b>CHIEF OFFICER</b>	Richard Sweetnam
<b>REPORT AUTHOR</b>	Matthew Williams
<b>TERMS OF REFERENCE</b>	2.1 & 3.2

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### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To present the evaluation of the 2022 Christmas Village and to seek approval for the proposed delivery model for the Christmas 2023 Festival

### 2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the Committee -

- 2.1 Notes the findings of the evaluation of the 2022 Christmas Village;
- 2.2 Instructs the Chief Officer – City Growth to carry out the necessary undertakings to deliver the additional activities for the 2023 edition detailed in this report;
- 2.3 Instructs the Head of Commercial and Procurement, following consultation with the Chief Officer - Finance and Chief Officer – City Growth to vary the current service level agreement with Aberdeen Inspired and contract with John Codona’s, Pleasure Fairs Ltd to deliver the 2023 event that reflects the changes detailed in this report; and
- 2.4 Instructs the Chief Officer – City Growth to report back to the Finance and Resources Committee in March 2024 with the evaluation report of the 2023 event.

### 3. CURRENT SITUATION

- 3.1 Aberdeen Inspired has been a funding partner, with responsibility for the delivery of the Christmas Village event, from its inception in 2015 until the service level agreement ceased in 2019. During this period Aberdeen Inspired

contracted John Codona's Pleasure Fairs Ltd., as the Christmas Village Operator to manage the event on its behalf.

- 3.2 In May 2019, the Council's Strategic Commissioning Committee agreed to extend this service level agreement for a further year to include Christmas 2019; and instructed the Chief Officer City Growth to provide a Procurement Business Case detailing options for the Christmas Village from 2020 to 2023.
- 3.3 This approach (PLA019) was supported by Aberdeen Inspired as delivery and funding partner and approved by the Strategic Commissioning Committee in November 2019, with an Open Procedure Invitation to Tender following shortly thereafter. Following a one-year postponement due to the Covid 19 pandemic, the delivery contract was subsequently awarded to John Codona's Pleasure Fairs Ltd for an initial period of one year (2021), with the Council reserving the right to extend the contract by a further 12 months up to a maximum of three events up to and including 2023.

### **2022 Christmas Village Feedback**

- 3.4 John Codona's Pleasure Fairs Ltd delivered Aberdeen's Christmas Village in 2022, supported by officers of the Council, Aberdeen Inspired, and charity partner Charlie House. In accordance with the contract, the operator procured an independent evaluation of the event. This was undertaken by Aberdeen and Grampian Chamber of Commerce and the report is attached as Appendix 1. The key findings from the Evaluation are that:

- 88% of visitors surveyed rated the market as 'good' or 'excellent'
- 75% said the event improved their opinion of Aberdeen
- 75% said they were 'very' or 'completely likely' to recommend the event to friends and family
- 60% of visitors from previous years returned to the Christmas Village in 2022, with others belonging to a new audience
- 33% of return visitors thought that the market was better than in previous years
- The average spend per 'party group' was £65 across the Christmas Village (£25) and wider city centre (£40)
- 94% of businesses in the Curated in the Quad Market said that the stall was good for their business
- 86% of city centre businesses surveyed responded that the Christmas Village gave a boost to the city centre
- 63% of city centre businesses surveyed responded that the event was good for their business directly

- 3.5 On the basis of the evaluation the Board of Aberdeen Inspired indicated its agreement to continue to support the event in 2023.

### **Christmas Village 2023**

- 3.6 The 2023 edition will operate from 16<sup>th</sup> November 2023 to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2023. The Curated in the Quad market will follow its usual pattern and open Friday-Sunday each week and run until Christmas Eve.

- 3.7 However for 2023, there are opportunities to activate other parts of the city centre to reflect the availability of Union Terrace Gardens and its role as an events location. In response and following a review of the delivery of the event at Broad Street, officers have been assessing options for the 2023 edition of the Christmas Village.
- 3.8 These options have been discussed and refined to reflect the views of Aberdeen Inspired and John Codona's Pleasure Fairs Ltd. The preferred option will still utilise Broad Street and also activate Union Terrace Gardens to secure a greater contribution from providers of locally sourced and produced food, drink and retail goods. Other proposed changes include:
- One of the 'thrill rides' on Broad Street to be replaced by a big wheel; Hot food offering to be increased on Broad Street by involving existing food businesses located nearby and/or other regional artisan street food and drink vendors using high-quality local ingredients – in conjunction with John Codona's Pleasure Fairs Ltd, and Aberdeen Inspired;
  - New approach to facilitate greater presence of artisan makers to include more micro-businesses in the Curated in the Quad space, based on the success of previous year, in conjunction with Charlie House, Tea Green makers markets, and product buyers at Aberdeen Art Gallery;
  - Opportunity for busy market traders to upgrade to a stall on Broad Street to increase their trading hours, most likely artisan food and drink producers from the city and Aberdeenshire;
  - Improved signposting to Provost Skene's House and adjacent local businesses in Marischal Square and Upper Kirkgate.
- 3.9 Proposals to activate Union Terrace Gardens include:
- Relocating the nativity scene to the park;
  - Exploring options for additional festive scenes in the glazed arches in conjunction with local creative organisations, charities and businesses;
  - Leading visitors around the Gardens and to the Christmas Village on Broad Street with the QR code-enabled Christmas sculpture trail;
  - Subject to confirmation by local producers, addition of artisan hot food vendors and/or market traders of local produce in the three weekends prior to Christmas (final number dependent on commercial response);
  - Offering local creative groups, schools, children and youth groups, charities and businesses the opportunity to join a public programme of community-led events on the three weekends prior to Christmas to include carol singing, live performance of music, dance and drama, and other creative activities;
  - Introducing a more festive atmosphere to the park by adapting current park lighting and incorporating new and existing Christmas lighting elements where possible.
- 3.10 Officers will continue to work in conjunction with local food businesses represented by organisations such as Opportunity North East and Grampian Food Forum to find suitable high-quality producers and vendors of food and drink who based in the region and using locally-sourced ingredients.

Participants will be selected through an open call-out and selection process comprising local food specialists, officers and Aberdeen Inspired.

- 3.11 Officers will co-ordinate the call-out and submissions for the community-led events programme ensure a variety of performances throughout the day. Promotion will be included in all Christmas Village communications via the Council, Art Gallery and Museums marketing, VisitAberdeenshire and event partner channels, as well as participating businesses and organisations themselves.

#### **4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 The Accounts for the 2022 Event are provided in exempt Appendices 2a and 2b.

Key points:

- Profit increased 4% on prior year
- Production costs rose 14% while trading costs rose 12%. Mainly driven by staff and power costs, as well as higher maintenance fees
- Sales increased 5% improved margin which offset the cost increases above

These robust figures represent an immediate gain to the local economy and support jobs in the city. They indicate the continuing financial sustainability of the event, and cost control advantages of working with a commercial supplier, particularly at a time of inflationary pressure for the events industry.

- 4.2 Funding of £150,000 for the 2023 Christmas Village was approved from the Common Good Fund as part of the Council's 2023/2024 budget setting process.
- 4.3 Additional financial support of £50,000 from Aberdeen Inspired is anticipated.
- 4.4 If Aberdeen Inspired do not provide financial support to the event, Aberdeen City Council would require to find an additional £50,000 in order to deliver the Christmas Village 2023 to spec, or provide a reduced event.
- 4.5 Additional grant funding will be sought to add further festive lighting to Union Terrace Gardens and officers will look to align to existing lighting activities for Christmas and associated budgets.

#### **5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 This report is expected to have no impact on Aberdeen City Council's contractual arrangements with John Codona's Pleasure Fairs Ltd for the 2023 event.

## 6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 As part of the Council's tender process for the current contract, bidders were scored on how their plans would assist the Council in furthering its sustainability and community benefits objectives in relation to this Contract.
- 6.2 A summary of the sustainable practices employed by John Codona's Pleasure Fairs Ltd. for the Christmas Village 2022 is contained within Appendix 3 of this report.
- 6.3 Due to the 'mains' power supply on Broad Street being insufficient for some of the larger infrastructure requirements at the event, there is a reliance of temporary mobile generators. These have a negative environmental impact. Similar generators may needed for Union Terrace Gardens if 'mains' power is not sufficient for vendor needs.
- 6.4 However, to minimise this negative impact, improvements were made to the mains power source in the Quadrangle. This allowed the market to operate using solely mains power which reduced the reliance on temporary generators and reduces the environmental impact of the event. This measure supports the Council's duty to adapt to climate change.
- 6.5 As part of the event's marketing activities, efforts were made to promote and encourage sustainable transport options.

## 7. RISK

The assessment of risk contained within the table below is considered to be consistent with the Council's Risk Appetite Statement.

Category	Risks	Primary Controls/Control Actions to achieve Target Risk Level	*Target Risk Level (L, M or H)  *taking into account controls/control actions	*Does Target Risk Level Match Appetite Set?
<b>Strategic Risk</b>	No significant risks identified against the category.			
<b>Compliance</b>	Risk that Aberdeen City Council's appointed Christmas	The council's contract with John Codona's Pleasure Fairs sets out their legal obligations as the 'occupier' under the Occupiers Liability Act	L	Yes

Category	Risks	Primary Controls/Control Actions to achieve Target Risk Level	*Target Risk Level (L, M or H)  *taking into account controls/control actions	*Does Target Risk Level Match Appetite Set?
	<p>Village delivery partner fails to comply with statutory obligations, whilst delivering an event on Council land.</p>	<p>(Scotland) 1960. Additionally, the contract stipulates that they are responsible for ensuring that all aspects of their work-related activity are safe, fit for purpose and compliant with all relevant codes of practise, regulations &amp; industry best practise.</p> <p>Finally, the contract stipulates that health and safety documentation, relating to the event, must be submitted to Aberdeen and that all relevant regulatory permissions are in place. These documents include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Event Manual</li> <li>• Contingency Plan</li> <li>• Crowd Management Plan</li> <li>• Traffic Management Plan</li> <li>• Wind Management Plan</li> <li>• Counter Terrorism Plan</li> <li>• Noise management Plan</li> <li>• Risk Assessment</li> <li>• Fire Risk Assessment</li> <li>• Communications Plan</li> <li>• Marketing Plan</li> <li>• Insurance</li> <li>• Sub-Contractors Documentation</li> <li>• Food Safety Documentation</li> </ul>		

Category	Risks	Primary Controls/Control Actions to achieve Target Risk Level	*Target Risk Level (L, M or H)  *taking into account controls/control actions	*Does Target Risk Level Match Appetite Set?
		These documents will be shared with multi-agency partners six weeks prior to the event to allow for feedback and advice to be given as required.		
<b>Operational</b>	The event restricts access to Marischal College, which prevents members of the public accessing the services which they require.	Measures will be put in place to maintain public access to Aberdeen City Council services and Police Scotland's customer service centre.	L	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Financial</b>	If Aberdeen Inspired pull their funding contribution, the event will no longer be viable and Aberdeen City Council may need to find an additional £50,000	Officers have engaged with Aberdeen Inspired who have given assurance that this contribution is secure	L	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Reputational</b>	Constituents have grown accustomed to a high-quality Christmas Village offering. Failure to meet these expectations represents reputation	As is demonstrated with the feedback report, contained as Appendix 1, the current Christmas Village offer meets the expectations of those who were surveyed.	L	<b>Yes</b>

Category	Risks	Primary Controls/Control Actions to achieve Target Risk Level	*Target Risk Level (L, M or H)  *taking into account controls/control actions	*Does Target Risk Level Match Appetite Set?
	risk for the organisation and the city.			
<b>Environment / Climate</b>	No significant risks identified against the category.			

## 8. OUTCOMES

<b><u>COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN</u></b>	
	<b>Impact of Report</b>
<b>Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement</b>	<p>The proposals in this report support the delivery of the Partnership's Policy Statement for a Vibrant City: Aim to make Aberdeen a premier destination for festivals, productions, conferences, bands and events.</p> <p>And a Prosperous City: Develop our economy in a genuine partnership with the private sector, third sector and residents</p>
<b><u>Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan</u></b>	
Prosperous Economy Stretch Outcomes	<p>The proposals within this report support the delivery of LOIP Stretch Outcome 2.1 Supporting labour market to recover from impact of Covid-19 on employment.</p> <p>Events supported by the Council, such as the Christmas Village, 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 because of the event. In turn this attracts additional commercial activity in the city. Officers work with partners including Visit Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen Inspired to maximise</p>

	both the benefit of events on city-centre businesses and provide information on the event itself.
<b>Regional and City Strategies</b>	The proposals support the Regional Economic Strategy and the Council's City Centre Masterplan, Events 365 Plan and Empty Shops 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.

## 9. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
<b>Integrated Impact Assessment</b>	Not required.
<b>Data Protection Impact Assessment</b>	Not required.
<b>Other</b>	Not required.

## 10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

### 11. APPENDICES

- 11.1 Appendix 1: Christmas Village Feedback Report
- 11.2 Appendix 2a: Christmas Village Production Accounts – Exempt
- 11.3 Appendix 2b: Christmas Village Trading Accounts – Exempt
- 11.4 Appendix 3: Christmas Village Sustainability Report

### 12. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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