

ITEM No ...7.....

REPORT TO: CITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE – 27 JUNE 2022
REPORT ON: FUTURE APPROACH TO DUNDEE FIREWORK DISPLAYS
REPORT BY: EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CITY DEVELOPMENT
REPORT NO: 173-2022

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 This report outlines significant issues with regards to public Fireworks Displays in the city and recommends that the Council ceases hosting such events due to site constraints and recommends that the budget is reallocated to support the city's wider events programme.

2 RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 It is recommended that Committee:
- a notes that an assessment of Baxter Park in the context of the Protect Duty has established that it is no longer a suitable venue for the delivery of a free, un-ticketed public fireworks display; and
 - b agrees not to progress public fireworks displays, with the budget reinvested into a broader events programme.

3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 The City Development Revenue Budget contains £50,000 for fireworks displays. It is proposed that this budget is invested in other events in the city, including an enhanced winter events programme.

4 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Fireworks displays have traditionally been run by Dundee City Council simultaneously in Lochee Park and Baxter Park. It is estimated that approximately 20-25,000 people attend each display. The events have been free to access without the need for a ticket. Due to the COVID pandemic, displays did not take place in 2020 or 2021.
- 4.2 Following the tragic events in Manchester Arena in 2019, the UK government consulted with the public and stakeholders during 2021 on how the Protect Duty can make the public safer at publicly accessible locations. A response to this consultation was published in January 2022, and this will inform legislation.
- 4.3 In light of this, and in preparation for a return to large events following the pandemic, the emergency response plans for events in public spaces which attract large crowds, including the Fireworks Displays, has been reviewed. This review was undertaken by Council Officers along with colleagues in Police Scotland and the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service.
- 4.4 The review concluded that the fireworks display in Baxter Park does not have adequate emergency exiting capacity for the number of people that attend. The concerns relate to the wall and railing that surrounds the park. Although there are multiple exits, their restrictive width presents a significant challenge to enabling a safe emergency evacuation. The assessment has taken account of the diverse age range of those attending fireworks events and the fact that they take place during hours of darkness. All parties agree that the event cannot proceed in the same format as it has in the past as there is a foreseeable risk of harm to the public if anything happened to cause a panic and the public were to rush for the exits.

- 4.5 To deliver a safe fireworks event in Baxter Park, the number of people attending would have to be limited to less than 15,000. This would be extremely difficult to manage. Even if entry to the event was to be ticketed, given the history of free access to Council run firework displays, there is significant concern that crowds more than this number would still seek to gain entry to Baxter Park. It is therefore concluded that this venue is not suitable for a free, public fireworks event.
- 4.6 The review concluded that the fireworks display in Lochee Park does not raise significant issues in terms of an emergency evacuation due to the low wall that surrounds most of the park that can be readily climbed by most people. However, Lochee Park would not be a suitable venue for a single fireworks display serving the whole of Dundee, which may be expected to attract up to 40,000 spectators due to the size of the park, lack of parking, public safety concerns and transport infrastructure.
- 4.7 Against this background, consideration has been given to the suitability of other public parks in the city for a fireworks display. Drumgeith and Fairmuir Parks were ruled out due to size and access considerations. Dawson Park is a possible alternative venue. It has the benefit of being a large open space; reasonable public transport links; and would serve the eastern half of the city.
- 4.8 However, it would be necessary to remove some of the fencing around the park on a temporary basis to enable easy access and egress for the scale of crowd that might be expected. There would also be challenges due to the residential nature of the surrounding area; the impact of the event on Arbroath Road (the main eastern arterial route in the east of Dundee); the impact of car parking on surrounding streets; and the need to protect the surface of the artificial pitch from fireworks.
- 4.9 Although some of these challenges also exist at Baxter Park, this use has become established over the years and knowledge of the issues raised has allowed them to be managed. A new space will bring different challenges and will require careful and concerted planning.
- 4.10 Factoring the relevant procurement processes to be undertaken in time to deliver the events on 5 November, this could not be achieved in 2022.
- 4.11 It is proposed that the budget for the fireworks displays is allocated to support other events in the city, including the delivery of an enhanced winter programme.

5 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 This report has been subject to an assessment of any impacts on Equality and Diversity, Fairness and Poverty, Environment and Corporate Risk. There are no major issues.

6 CONSULTATIONS

- 6.1 The Council Leadership Team were consulted in the preparation of this report.

7 BACKGROUND PAPERS

7.1 None.

Gregor Hamilton
Head of Planning and Economic Development

Author: Gregor Hamilton

Robin Presswood
Executive Director of City Development

Dundee City Council
Dundee House
Dundee

GH/CD/KAS

1 June 2022

This page is intentionally left blank