

# ITEM No ...9.....

**REPORT TO:** RECOVERY SUB-COMMITTEE - 10 AUGUST 2020  
**REPORT ON:** REVIEW OF FUNDING FOR CHRISTMAS LIGHTS AND FESTIVE EVENTS  
**REPORT BY:** EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CITY DEVELOPMENT  
**REPORT NO:** 176-2020

## **1 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 This report seeks approval to refocus the existing budget for Christmas trees, lights and decorations across the city to develop an enhanced city centre offer comprising improved decorations and a programme of activities over the festive trading period. Outside of the city centre it is proposed that the Council no longer provides Christmas trees and decorations, but allocates a budget towards an enhanced Festive Fund that will support communities across Dundee to provide trees, decorations and activities during the festive period.

## **2 RECOMMENDATION**

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Sub-committee:
- a approves the proposed funding for Christmas lights in the city centre as set out in this report;
  - b agrees the establishment of a Festive Fund as set out in this report and remits the Executive Director of Corporate Services to agree an approach that allows local community organisations to apply for funding contributions towards Christmas lights and/or festive activities in their areas;
  - c remits the Executive Director of City Development to focus on the city centre offer and approves funding as set out in the report for a programme of festive events to create a vibrant and exciting destination and supporting the retail and hospitality sectors at this critically important time; and
  - d remits the Executive Director of Neighbourhood Services to explore for future years, the planting of trees in community locations which can be decorated as Christmas trees as a sustainable alternative to providing cut trees.

## **3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 3.1 The City Development Revenue budget allocates £151,000 towards Christmas Lights. This is supplemented by £30,000 from the Common Good Fund. In 2019, £108,000 was spent on decorations in the city centre with the balance of £73,000 spent on trees and decorations elsewhere in the city.
- 3.2 Looking ahead, it is proposed that the budget of £181,000 is allocated as follows:
- a £110,000 is to be committed to installing lights and decorations in the city centre;
  - b £30,000 to be allocated towards a new Festive Fund which will be combined with the existing Hogmanay Fund to give a total of £50,000; and
  - c £41,000 is to supplement the existing City Development revenue budget that delivers the Christmas Light Night to create a programme of festive activities.

#### 4 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Dundee City Council has historically funded Christmas trees, lights and other decorations in various locations throughout the city. The breakdown of expenditure in 2019 was as follows:

City Square/Centre	£108,000
Seabraes	£8,000
Stobswell	£8,000
Westport	£8,000
Lochee	£11,000
Broughty Ferry	£30,000
Whitfield	£8,000
Total	<b>£181,000</b>

Note: the figures include the cost of trees, installation and removal and all electrical work and support. In 2019 a Christmas tree was also provided in Coldside, funded through a contribution of £10,000 from the Hogmanay Fund.

##### Proposals for Dundee City Centre

- 4.2 Dundee aspires to be a great place to live, work, and visit. For this to be achieved, the city centre must be a vibrant and exciting place that people want to visit. A successful city centre is key to the wider economy of Dundee, and will assist in attracting visitors, investment and talent.
- 4.3 It is important that the city builds on the positive image and perception arising from the opening of V&A Dundee and the national and international exposure that has been gained as a result.
- 4.4 The period leading up to Christmas is a critical time of year for the city centre. However, it is recognised that in recent years the Christmas offer in Dundee city centre has not reflected the city's growing aspiration to be an attractive, all-year visitor destination or its status as a UNESCO City of Design. The city's current Christmas decorations lack impact with many having been repeated over several years. The lack of an associated programme of curated festive activities has been a source of criticism, particularly when compared with other city centres. There is a growing expectation of a quality, visible Christmas offer for a city of this size.
- 4.5 Cities everywhere provide specific focus to their main centre over the Christmas period, recognising that this is where there is the greatest concentration of retail, hospitality and visitor attractions. Competition for visitors regionally, nationally and internationally at Christmas is strong. Other comparable Scottish and UK cities have all developed their Christmas offering ensuring they have additional attractions to bring people into their city and city centres.
- 4.6 The footfall numbers available for Dundee over the festive period in 2019 indicate that there was a decline in the number of shoppers on the previous year. Looking ahead to the festive period in 2020, it is clear that the city centre will continue to face challenges as a result of the Covid-19 crisis and will require support to ensure that people are encouraged to return. If Dundee city centre is to compete with other cities and respond to the challenges it will face, it must develop its Christmas offer. By doing so, it will give local people more reason to visit shops and attractions as well as encouraging visitors from out with the city, leading to increased expenditure in city centre businesses, overnights stays and driving future investment
- 4.7 The proposed approach is two-fold. Firstly, a specialist provider will be engaged to design, install and maintain the Christmas lights and decorations in the city centre. This refreshed

approach will lead to enhancement of the city centre festive environment, encouraging footfall from both shoppers and leisure visitors.

- 4.8 Secondly, it is proposed to supplement the existing Christmas Light Night budget to support an extended programme of events and activities over the period from the traditional switch-on date through to the end of the festive period. The activities may include a Christmas market, play activities, music and dance performances, art and lighting installations. Further funding to augment this budget will be sought through Event Scotland and private sponsorship as relevant.
- 4.9 It is likely that in 2020, restrictions will remain in place regarding large gatherings as a result of Covid-19, so events and activities will need to meet physical distancing requirements, and as a consequence may not include a large switch-on event. Appendix 1 of this report outlines a draft programme of activities that are proposed for 2020.
- 4.10 An enhanced city centre Christmas offer, alongside refreshed lighting and decorations, will instil confidence in the city centre amongst businesses, stakeholders, locals and visitors. The focus on the city centre will also support other workstreams and city centre actions including the City Centre Investment Plan and Covid 19 Recovery Plan that are being developed.

#### Festive Fund

- 4.11 Outside of the city centre, a number of areas have benefited from an outdoor Christmas tree display. Where trees and/or decorations have been installed, the investment in different areas has varied considerably. This provision is historic and there is no published or transparent rationale for how this situation has evolved.
- 4.12 Evidence from other towns and cities in Scotland suggests that Councils do not directly provide Christmas trees and decorations. In some locations, innovative solutions to support community provision have been introduced. This can include providing a financial contribution towards the community's own tree/decorations, or indeed to support the planting of a tree which can be decorated by the community each year, thereby reducing longer-term costs.
- 4.13 At present, Dundee City Council operates a Hogmanay Fund that invites applications from Dundee based community groups and cultural organisations who are planning celebrations to mark Hogmanay, offering grants of between £500 and £3,000.
- 4.14 It is proposed to supplement this existing fund and create a new larger "Festive Fund", the scope of which will be expanded to include support for communities to organise their own Christmas trees/decorations. Recognising the higher expenditure associated with this, the maximum grant will be increased to £8,000. Applications would be sought each year and will need to provide evidence of fundraising or support from other sources to supplement the Council's contribution. Funding applications for Christmas trees/decorations will also be required to demonstrate that health and safety matters will be satisfactorily addressed.
- 4.15 A detailed application process will be developed that will set out maximum grant levels; eligible organisations; and other distribution criteria.

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**APPENDIX 1****DUNDEE CITY CENTRE FESTIVE PROPOSAL 2020**

The proposal seeks to ensure that Dundee city centre is vibrant and animated during the festive season. It encourages people to visit and enjoy the season and in turn support businesses and visitor attractions. The focus is a season of installations which people can visit in their own time, enjoying a longer duration but at smaller capacity events.

Further discussion will take place with the City's cultural agencies including Dundee Rep Theatre and UNESCO City of Design to add value to the proposal and include additional activities.

The programme below illustrates some of the activities proposed.

ACTIVITY	
<p><b>1 Thursday 26 to Sunday 29 November</b></p> <p><b>St Andrew's Fair Saturday</b></p> <p>Large photo exhibition project in city square with social/charitable focus – The people behind charitable activity in Dundee -Dundee heroes/Foodbanks/other charity.</p>	
<p><b>2 30 November – 7 January</b></p> <p><b>Festive Shop Window Trail</b></p> <p>Update to the summer windows. Commission six artists to create a trail of selfie friendly festive shop windows in empty units. Could be paint, fabric, silhouette led. Overgate and Wellgate units could be included.</p>	

### 3 Thursday 10 – Sunday 20 December

#### Projections in Reform Street

A bespoke projection installation with soundscape. Taking up the bottom half of Reform Street with a Dundee specific design.



**4 3–14 December****Dundee Christmas Card**

An interactive artwork by local artist which people can walk through and pose for pictures while keeping distanced.

On display in City Square.  
Pictures are illustrative only.

**5 Pingoo**

Penguin decoration will sit in the centre for the season – location TBC.

