



Subject:	Operational Amendments to St Patrick's Day 2018
Date:	11 October 2017
Reporting Officer:	Donal Durkan, Director of Development
Contact Officer:	Gerry Copeland, City Events Manager

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues
1.1	This paper is to seek approval from Members in regard to proposed operational changes to the 2018 St Patrick's Day celebrations. This item was raised at September's Committee meeting and deferred to this month.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	Members are asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Agree that the Council amends its operations for the 2018 St Patrick's Day (Saturday 17 March) celebrations to a parade-only event and not to stage a concert in Custom House Square.

3.0	Main Report
3.1	<p>As Members are aware, the issue of health and safety is an ongoing and a changing dynamic. Across the Council, Officers continually work to ensure the safety of the public, staff and contractors when staging BCC's events programme. This involves a continual review of arrangements, whether the event is a one-off, an annual or multi-annual project. As part of this review process, Members are being asked to endorse changes to the St Patrick's Day Celebrations. These changes are designed to increase the robustness of health and safety plans attached to the event.</p>
3.2	<p>Members are being asked to endorse the removal of the concert element of the Council's annual St Patrick's Day festivities – the day normally involves both a concert and a parade. Over the last eleven years, both events have been staged to mark the Bank Holiday, with a city centre audience in excess of 20,000. However, the capacity to host the concert, at Custom House Square, has become an issue of concern in the last number of years. The key is the number of people trying to access the concert site after the parade, with significant congestion and safety issues at the intersection of High Street, Victoria Street and Queen's Square/Custom House Square. It is expected that the level of congestion will increase significantly given that the 2018 event will be staged on a Saturday. In addition to this, it is notable that after the initial influx, audience numbers tend to fluctuate, particularly depending on the weather. Therefore, for 2018, and subject to the Council's Events and Festival strategic review, Officers are seeking approval to expand the parade element of St Patrick's Day. This would involve a larger procession which would assemble in Custom House Square and then follow a city centre route which would traverse through the main retail district and return to Custom House Square. To enable this to happen it would mean there would be no concert on the day. Recent surveys by Belfast City Council indicate that the best way to improve the St Patrick's Day event would be the upscaling of the parade.</p>
3.3	<p>Therefore, given that St Patrick's Day, in 2018, will be delivered by Belfast City Council on a Saturday, there is a unique opportunity to attract a wider, representative audience to the event by growing the parade and carnival aspect of the day. This would involve an increase in spend to provide additional workshops, performers, props and expenses to allow more groups to participate from across the community. Any expenditure on this aspect would be found within the existing event budget. Plus, if permission is given, to rethink the musical element of the event, by moving away from a mainstream concert at Custom House Square, and instead look towards 'pop up' musical and street performance to be staged within Belfast city centre in areas such as Writers Square, Bank Square, Corn Market, St Anne's Square and Cotton Court. The time frame for the event activities would also be increased to run from 11:00 to 17:00, contributing to a more festival feel throughout the city for the day. Such changes would adhere to suggestions from Belfast City Centre Management and Belfast Chamber of Trade and Commerce.</p>

3.4	<p>Overall, it is envisaged that these changes would assist in reducing significant health and safety concerns that now pose a major risk to the public, contractors and Council staff during the St Patrick's Day events. However, additional health and safety elements may be required due to ongoing reviews connected to overall security in public spaces in the light of recent terror attacks. Any arrangements would be introduced and conducted in conjunction with PSNI and would be subject to ongoing analysis.</p>
3.5	<p><u>Equality & Good Relations Implications</u></p> <p>As with all major public facing cultural projects, the above events have the potential to bring together people from a wide range of backgrounds and therefore promote good relations in the city and across Northern Ireland.</p>
3.6	<p><u>Financial & Resource Implications</u></p> <p>It is envisaged that there will be limited additional costs connected to the proposed amendments. Any changes would be subject to input from PSNI and the Department for Infrastructure (Roads). However, Officers would be hopeful that any cost implications would be found within the Development Department's City Events Unit budget for 2017-18.</p>
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	None