



Subject:	City Events and Festivals: proposed future investment and support
Date:	7 March 2018
Reporting Officer:	Donal Durkan, Director of Development
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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	The purpose of this report is to highlight the key findings and recommendations from the recent review of Council-funded Events and Festivals undertaken by Festivals and Events International (FEI) and to secure Committee agreement on a development plan for moving forward, taking account of FEI's recommendations.

2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Note the key findings of the review of Events and Festivals undertaken by FEI • Endorse the findings and consider the recommendations set out in sections 3.13-3.14 as the broad direction of travel • Agree to proceed to engagement with key partner organisations on the basis of the current findings and recommendations and to consider a draft Events and Festivals Strategy – taking account of external partner input as well as ongoing engagement across Council departments – in June 2018 • Commission further analysis work on the potential to attract sponsorship funding to support additional investment in Events and Festivals.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	<p>In July 2017, Festivals and Events International Limited (FEI) were commissioned to develop a new Events and Festivals Strategy (2018-2023) for the Council, its partners and other stakeholders across the City. The brief included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A review of current portfolio • Consultation with stakeholders, Events and Festivals (via Festivals Forum) • Benchmarking how Events and Festivals are funded and delivered in other cities • Consideration of pre and post event impact modelling • Consideration of future structures for delivery • Making recommendations for the identification, securing, funding and delivery of Events and Festivals in Belfast.
3.2	<p>FEI undertook an extensive round of consultations with stakeholders. These included face to face meetings; telephone interviews and workshops with Events and Festivals organisers and cultural organisations. They also drew up a survey for completion by festival organisers. In total there were 36 face-to-face interviews; 11 telephone interviews; 2 workshops covering 45 groups; and 14 survey returns.</p>
3.3	<p>FEI also undertook engagement with Members of the Council's City Growth and Regeneration Committee and the Council's Corporate Management Team. In addition, they attended meetings of the Council-supported Festivals Forum Steering Group as well as a meeting of the Festivals Forum. Following completion of the draft report, Officers undertook</p>

Party Group Briefings with all parties to update on the key findings and recommendations.

Funding and Delivery of Current Festivals and Events in Belfast: Current Portfolio

3.4

As part of their review of the existing provision, FEI looked at the current portfolio of Events and Festivals in Belfast. Overall, FEI indicated that while Belfast has a strong reputation in organising, managing and delivering very successful Events and Festivals, is not currently recognised, nationally or internationally, as an Events and Festivals destination. If the Council has ambitions to sell the City in this way, FEI suggested that there will be a need to work with partners to re-focus investment in Events and Festivals, particularly those that have the potential to drive visitor numbers and spend. FEI did acknowledge that there was a broad programme of activity undertaken. However they noted that the objectives for many of the activities focused on supporting community cohesion and social development. They recognised the value of these events to local communities but considered that the Council and partners should take a differentiated approach to investment in events that aimed principally at supporting community cohesion and those aimed at generating economic value and profile for the City. In that way, FEI advised that funders could be clear about what outcomes they expected from their investment and project promoters could be clear about what deliverables were expected of them, in turn.

3.5

FEI identified around 200 Events and Festivals and categorised these according to an industry standard segmentation process (see Appendix 1). These categories are:

- Mega events
- Major events
- Signature events
- Growth events
- Local events
- Neighbourhood events (an additional category to capture some of the Council's Neighbourhood-level funding streams).

3.6

Using this categorisation, FEI concluded that, if the Council wants to maximise the economic return on investment from its events, it may need to look again at the balance of investment across the various event “categories”. FEI identified the following breakdown of Events and Festivals in Belfast by number:

- 5 Signature Events/Festivals
- 17 Growth Events/Festivals
- 88 Local Events/Festivals

- 90 Neighbourhood Events/Festivals.

3.7

It should be noted that there are currently no Mega or Major Events identified within Belfast's Events and Festivals portfolio. Belfast is not likely to ever host a Mega Event (such as the Olympics), given the scale of the infrastructure required. The City has hosted Major events in the past, such as Giro d'Italia and MTV EMAs and is currently bidding to host the UEFA Super Cup in 2020. Given the significant investment and resources associated with hosting these events, they don't tend to happen every year. If the City was to secure Major Events on a more regular basis, consideration would need to be given to investing appropriate levels of resources on an ongoing basis in order to meet the significant financial commitments associated with these events.

Funding and Delivery of Current Festivals and Events in Belfast: Current Funding Mix

3.8

FEI noted that the funding of Events and Festivals in Belfast is exceptionally complex. The Council is one of a number of funders – other major funders include Tourism NI, Sport NI and Arts Council of Northern Ireland (ACNI). In the financial year 2016/17, the Council invested around £3.42million in Events and Festivals, supporting 200 events.

3.9

The analysis suggests that the return on investment (ROI) for Events and Festivals in Belfast ranges from £9 to £25 across the different funding streams. In other benchmark cities – such as Edinburgh – public investment can lever up to £43 for every £1 invested. Although Edinburgh is widely acknowledged as a Festival City, other comparator cities also appear to drive a significant return on investment – at the higher end of the Belfast figure and above. FEI point out that the impacts of many of the Local and Neighbourhood Events are qualitative as well as quantitative – and it is important that the Council is clear about its metrics in supporting the range of Events and Festivals. FEI recommends that the smaller Neighbourhood Events should be separated out from other Events and Festivals funding and managed through the City and Neighbourhood Services Department, in order to ensure alignment with wider investment in Community Safety and Community Services. All Events and Festivals – as with all Council activity – needs to align to agreed metrics within the Belfast Agenda.

Benchmarking

3.10

FEI undertook benchmarking against five European cities: Aarhus (one of the 2018 European Capitals of Culture); Edinburgh; Galway; Liverpool and Rotterdam. From this analysis, they concluded that Belfast could achieve a higher return from its Events and Festivals investment

if a more strategic approach was taken to investment in some of these activities. The benchmarks provided a number of useful lessons for Belfast to consider, namely:

- There is an opportunity to generate significant commercial income if the right structures are put in place and if a more commercial approach to event delivery is taken (lesson learned from Liverpool)
- Independent Events and Festivals can make a huge contribution to the City's cultural and tourism offer, with the right approach to investment (lesson learned from Galway)
- There are a range of operating models across the benchmark cities for delivery of Events and Festivals. These range from in-house (current Belfast approach) to fully independent delivery, with City support (the approach in Rotterdam).

Key Findings

3.11

FEI found that the Events and Festivals portfolio showed a great deal of creativity, innovation and passion. However, they noted some weaknesses in the current approach to funding, principally the fragmented approach across a range of funders. Given that the various funding streams have evolved over time and have not been reviewed in recent years, there is no process to ensure strategic alignment to the key documents driving Council investment, particularly the Belfast Agenda. In addition, there is limited co-ordination across funders on mechanisms for supporting Events and Festivals. This can make the application process complicated and reduces opportunities to invest at the appropriate levels in those events that have the potential to grow and contribute to the cultural and economic life of the City in a meaningful way.

3.12

FEI also concluded that securing funding for Signature and Growth Events is particularly challenging and that, because of this fact, the ability of these events to reach their growth potential can be inhibited. FEI have proposed a longer-term investment in a number of targeted events to support their development and give them the time to focus on building the event without having the concern of applying for annual funding. In addition to the funding support, FEI note the important developmental role that Council Officers can play in supporting events, helping them to consider their artistic development, supporting them with their sales and marketing and considering their organisational development needs. This, in turn, will support the longer-term sustainability of the sector. It also means that, with the right support, Growth Events may become Signature Events in time. Likewise, Local Events may grow into Growth Events.

Key Recommendations from the FEI report

3.13

Given the issues identified, the consultancy team's key recommendations focused on a number of areas including Funding Streams, Capacity Building Support, Evaluation and Measurement and Governance and Delivery. A summary of their recommendations is set out below. A note has been added where Officers consider there would be a potential practical difficulty with implementation in the short-term, or where Members have already expressed alternative views through the Party Briefings.

Funding Streams

- Need to adopt the standard classification of Events and Festivals as Major, Signature, Growth, Local and Neighbourhood (see **Appendix 1**). This is used by most other locations and by many other funders. Adopting this will make it easier to develop a joined-up approach to events funding with other partners;
- Need to re-position investment to maximise return by supporting a smaller number of Signature, Growth and Local Festivals to a greater value, aligned to the Belfast Agenda. Note: it is recognised that Belfast City Council also invests for social as well as economic return and that this is an important aspect of the Belfast Agenda. It is acknowledged that the circumstances in Belfast at the time that a lot of the Events and Festivals were developed (particularly in Neighbourhood and Local Events and Festivals) were very different to those being experienced in other benchmark cities used in this study. FEI do make the point, however, that if Belfast wants to be recognised as an Events and Festivals City, and if it does want to generate a higher level of economic return from Events, there will need to be a higher level of investment and more focused support for Major, Signature and Growth Events and Festivals;
- Need to consider the implications of the ongoing Grants Review for the funding of Events and Festivals;
- Need to separate the funding and reporting of Neighbourhood Events from Major, Signature, Growth and Local Events and consider relevant metrics for measuring impact of these events (which should be different from the other events);
- Need for greater engagement with partners from government e.g. Tourism NI, Sport NI to bid for major events that offer a proven investment, using agreed investment/evaluation criteria, and Visit Belfast in terms of Event marketing.

Capacity building support

- Need to develop a "portfolio" approach with all Signature and Growth events. This will involve Council Officers developing a "client management" relationship with these

Events and considering how they can bring together packages of support, training and capacity building appropriate to the scale and ambition of the respective Events and Festivals, in order to help them achieve their growth potential and ambitions;

- Need to consider multi-annual funding arrangements for Signature and Growth Events and Festivals (four year agreements for Signature Events; two year agreements for Growth events, with five year and three year business plans respectfully)
- Need to consider bidding for at least one Major event every third year;
- Need to support at least six Signature Events each year (those events with budgets of £800k+);
- Need to support at least twelve Growth Events each year (those events with budgets of £50k+);
- Need to develop a programme of support and development for Local Events and Festivals at an appropriate level. This support should include opportunities to consider how some of the Local Events and Festivals can become Growth Events and Festivals.

Evaluation and Measurement

- Adopt the proposed investment/evaluation criteria for all Events and Festivals funding and simplify annual evaluation based on demonstrating value against the Belfast Agenda, ensuring that the level of evaluation is commensurate with the scale of the event;
- Introduce standardised reporting in line with relevant indicators set out in the Belfast Agenda.

Governance and Delivery

- Need to improve internal co-ordination across Council for those working on events. FEI proposed simplification of the internal structures and sub-sections who deal with Events and Festivals in the City, particularly to ensure integration between the City Events Team, Parks Events Team and the Tourism, Culture, Heritage and Arts team. This may include merging elements of existing activity at the appropriate time;
- Need to consider moving towards commissioning for certain events – this will support the development of the cultural sector by providing long-term sustainability and improved partnership working;
- Establish an internal Events and Festivals Coordination Group to consider how events can be better planned and how Council can engage with external

organisations to support the delivery of Events and Festivals;

- Consider the establishment of a Members Working Group to monitor the work of the internal group (above). Note: Members have expressed a view that the practicalities of this need to be considered and reports may need to be brought back directly to Committee;
- Given the need for greater partnership with other major funders of Events and Festivals, need to establish a “Strategic Events Partnership” to coordinate Events and Festivals strategy and funding across Belfast City Council, Arts Council of Northern Ireland, Tourism Northern Ireland and other relevant funders;
- Consider the potential of moving towards joint agreement by the key funding partners (as set out above) on the City approach to Events and Festivals with a view to possibly establishing an independent organisation to deliver the annual events programme and support collaboration across Events and Festivals at a future date. Note: It is recognised that there is unlikely to be a political appetite to take such a radical step at this stage.

Feedback from Member briefings

Following completion of the draft report, the Director of Development undertook a series of Party Briefings to provide insight into the key findings and the recommendations within the report. A summary of the key issues identified by Members included:

- Wide-ranging support for the current investment in Events and Festivals and recognition of the value of this support within local communities;
- Need to secure alignment with other major funders (Tourism NI, Sport NI, ACNI) in taking long-term approach to investment in events – otherwise the Council approach will be undermined;
- Support for simplification and streamlining of existing processes, commensurate with the level of investment;
- Support for additional openness and transparency in the process for supporting Events and Festivals;
- Need to give consideration to opportunities for generating revenue through Events where appropriate. At the September 2017 meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, Members agreed that the Council should take a commercial approach to more activities, including sponsorship/events, to generate additional income. Approval has been given to create a new post of Commercial Manager, funded from Invest to Save, to support this approach;

3.14

- Need to consider how Events and Festivals can support delivery of Belfast Agenda ambitions, including inclusive growth;
- Support for making the distinction between Signature/Growth/Local events and Neighbourhood Events – agreement with proposal to transfer Neighbourhood Events to City and Neighbourhood Services Department to ensure alignment with core service delivery and wider investment;
- Recognition of the impact and role that Neighbourhood and Local Events and Festivals can play in local communities;
- Acceptance that further/additional investment is required in Signature and Growth Events if these Events and Festivals are to generate the return on investment that other cities are experiencing
- Lack of agreement around the establishment of a Members Working Group on this issue – consideration that there are too many meetings and structures and that it may be better to update through the regular Committee process.

3.15

During the course of the Party Briefings, Members were also updated on the key findings of the report from Féile an Phobail regarding future opportunities for the development of the St Patrick's Day celebrations in the City. It is recommended that the report recommendations are considered as part of the implementation plan for the Events and Festivals Review recommendations.

Alignment with European Capital of Culture Activity

3.16

Members will be aware that, since the European Commission's decision in November 2017 that the participation of the UK in the European Capital of Culture in 2023 is still under dispute, Officers have been in discussions with the other four bidding cities and the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). Work is ongoing to resolve this issue and agree on a clear way forward for the cities involved.

3.17

Officers are also considering how, regardless of the outcome of these discussions, an effort is made to ensure that the energy, enthusiasm and work undertaken by the cities and partners is harnessed and mobilised. Any future developments in this activity will be considered in light of the recommendations set out in this report to ensure a joined up approach across Council.

Regardless of the outcome, plans are being made to deliver some of the ambitious cultural projects considered during the first phase of the bidding process with a view that these would

3.18	<p>be linked to the desire to growth the number of Signature Events and Major Events. It would still be the ambition to build up this strategic programme from now to 2023, which could culminate in a significant year-long programme.</p>
3.19	<p>It is recommended that the financial planning process initiated to deliver the European Capital of Culture is aligned to this framework which would then allow a series of Major Events and programmes to be delivered between now and 2023 and provide more sustainability beyond 2023 as well. However, a more detailed report will be brought back on this following Member meetings with DCMS and the European Commission</p>
3.20	<p>The proposals in the report on a City of Music (see separate report) are also part of this more strategic approach to Events and Festivals, focusing on our unique strengths and building our reputation internationally, using local talent.</p>
3.21	<p><u>Proposed Implementation Plan</u></p> <p>Subject to Member feedback on the key recommendations, it is proposed that the implementation plan for the revised approach to Council support for Events and Festivals will involve a number of key steps in order to ensure that this renewed approach is in place for the 2019/20 financial year. In line with any policy change, the draft strategy will also need to go to public consultation, in keeping with guidance from the Council's Equality and Diversity Team. Feedback from this consultation exercise will also be critical in the development of the final approach. Consideration will need to be given to the establishment of a specific improvement should be given to the establishment of a dedicated Project team to oversee and manage the implementation of this important area of work.</p>
3.22	<p>A draft implementation plan, focusing on activities in the coming year, is set out in Appendix 2. The key actions will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement with other key funders (Tourism NI, Department for Communities, Arts Council of Northern Ireland, Sport NI) to secure agreement around re-alignment of existing funding streams in line with the report recommendations and engagement with Visit Belfast to consider opportunities for enhanced marketing of Events and Festivals • Securing appropriate levels of financial support to ensure delivery of the relevant funding programmes across the Council departments and exploring opportunities to lever additional resources through other public or private partners • Development of and agreement on assessment criteria for each of the funding

streams

- Development of an engagement programme with the cultural sector to advise of proposed changes, update on consultation outcomes and advise on changes to funding streams, in order to enable them to plan for future investment proposals
- Consideration of staff resource implications of the proposed approach, including any skills development support issues
- Establishment of the Internal Officer Events and Festivals Co-ordination Group in order to improve co-ordination and planning across the various teams involved in Events and Festivals delivery and support and consideration of any potential Member Engagement mechanisms.
- Creation of a Strategic Events Partnership Group with key City stakeholders in order to improve co-ordination and forward planning in attracting Major Events.

3.23

Following the public consultation process, a report will be brought back to the Committee highlighting progress made to date; updating on feedback from the public consultation exercise and the engagement with key partner organisations and making final recommendations on the way forward for the Council in supporting Events and Festivals from the financial year 2019/20. This emerging framework for investment will align to the Belfast Agenda and, given that the aspiration is that the final approach will lead to agreement on a City Strategy for Events and Festivals as opposed to a Council approach, it will be essential that the other funding partners are in agreement with the proposals put forward.

Financial & Resource Implications

3.24

The Council's current investment in Events and Festivals is around £3.4 million annually with £295,000 of that amount met through a variety of external funders. A significant proportion of this budget is allocated via grants at a local and neighbourhood level and some of the funding is from external partners. The consultants' recommendations are based on maintaining the current budget, but re-focusing resources to maximise return on investment. However, when the implementation plan is brought forward, it is likely to recommend that further allocation is made to ensure the delivery of more Signature and Major Events, and that this aspiration is met through additional sponsorship and other forms of revenue raising from the private sector, as well as aligning the financial allocations for European Capital of Culture.

The budget is subject to annual agreement, as part of the rates setting process.

<p>3.25</p> <p>3.26</p> <p>3.27</p>	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications</u></p> <p>The development of a strategically-directed programme of Events and Festivals will assist in creating a City that is open to all and as such has the potential to promote good relations and equality by bringing together people from a wide range of backgrounds.</p> <p>The consultation process will allow further consideration of any equality and good relations implications and these will be addressed in the final report to Committee.</p>
<p>4.0</p>	<p>Appendices – Documents Attached</p>
	<p>Appendix 1 – Industry Standard Classification of Events</p> <p>Appendix 2 – Draft Development Plan</p>