

<b>Report on</b>	Corporate Events – Halloween and Christmas Update 2021
<b>Date of Meeting</b>	16 September 2021
<b>Reporting Officer</b>	Michael Browne
<b>Contact Officer</b>	Sharon Arbuthnot

<b>Is this report restricted for confidential business?</b>	Yes	
If 'Yes', confirm below the exempt information category relied upon	No	X

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report</b>
1.1	To update members on the proposals for both Halloween and Christmas 2021, as the district continues to move out of restrictions being mindful of the fluid environment.
1.2	To seek approval to move forward with the recommendations.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Background</b>
2.1	In Northern Ireland, 1,291,417 over 18's has received a first dose of the vaccine. This represents approximately 87.5% of the adult population.
2.2	As of the figures available from the Department of Health NI on 02 September 2021; Mid Ulster District Council is rank 5th of 11 Local Government Districts with 18,711 individuals testing positive and 2nd of the 11 local government districts for cases per 100,000 of the population.
2.3	As society takes some tentative steps back towards life as we knew it pre-Covid - 19, The Events team have continued to closely monitor the evolving situation, including intensive communication with Council's Corporate Health and Safety team and regular discussions with other councils' events teams across NI. The continued outcome from these meetings is a collective approach in the delivery of safe corporate events throughout Northern Ireland.
2.4	Corporate events have both economic and social benefits to residents and businesses within Mid Ulster. The Events team will continue to work with our Regeneration Managers who provide a vital link with our Town Centre businesses.
2.5	The Council will continue to follow the both the Public Health Guidance and recommendations on managing COVID-19.
2.6	Changes will have to be made with the aim of taking small steps to creating a new way of doing things whilst rebuilding the confidence and health and wellbeing of

	residents within the Mid Ulster District at the same time as protecting the reputation and financial interests of the Council.
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main Report</b>
3.1	<p>Even with the current relaxations of covid-19 regulations, a risk-based approach must remain. The main points to consider include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are still risks with proceeding with large events, which is not only a potential risk to the residents who might attend the event, but also to the Council staff, contractors, artists, statutory authorities and agencies who collaborate with Council to deliver the Halloween and Christmas Events.</li> <li>• Council is not in control of the external factors and in this fluid environment these could change.</li> <li>• In the current climate events could add additional pressures to town centre businesses. Consultation will be undertaken with town centre businesses to discuss suitable activities / entertainment that would enhance the customer experience when visiting the town centres during events.</li> <li>• At this time a safe social distancing distance of 2m is still recommended by the NI Executive. Taking this into consideration, attendance figures at any event would be greatly reduced. Furthermore, event budgets would not be reduced to reflect this, in fact operational and health and safety costs may increase expenditure to accommodate social distancing, queue management, first aid requirements and hand sanitising etc.</li> <li>• It is predicted the number of positive cases of Covid-19 will increase in the autumn and winter periods, and as a result it is difficult to accurately forecast the infection rate in October 2021. Factors such as the season, recommencement of the school year, Covid-19 restrictions/relaxations; foreign travel associated with the end of the summer holiday period and vaccine uptake in younger age profiles may influence COVID infection.</li> <li>• With the reduction in Covid-19 restrictions and the gradual introduction of Events attracting mass gatherings, the NI Executive recommend Rapid COVID-19 tests – known as Lateral Flow Device (LFD) tests. The use of LFD testing is important as an additional measure alongside the range of existing safety measures in place across organised events. It is strongly recommended that anyone participating in, or attending, any event which will bring them into close proximity with other people from outside their existing bubble should test themselves before they attend, and on days 2 and 8 after the event. The purpose of this testing is to identify any positive cases in advance of the event and allow them to self-isolate. Post event testing will also help to identify any asymptomatic COVID-19 infections arising from the event, or social interactions that may occur before or after an organised event.</li> <li>• All large events which would attract mass gatherings should be ticketed to manage numbers; assist with Track and Trace and facilitate the management</li> </ul>

3.2	<p>of the LFD testing. This process would increase the work pressures for staff on top of current workload, in addition to the organising the events.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• With the possible introduction of LFD testing within the workplace (voluntary); we must be mindful this could potentially have an impact on staffing levels during the Autumn and Winter months.</li> </ul> <p>We must also continue to move forward in rebuilding our events portfolio back up to attracting people back into our towns in a gradual, controlled, and safe manner.</p> <p>As part of the process these proposals will: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rebuilding confidence within the district by delivery a positive and attractive marketing campaign.</li> <li>• Increasing the atmosphere within our town centres during Halloween and the Christmas period with a combination of smaller and unique events.</li> <li>• Encouraging shoppers to prolong their stay in our town centres and help increase the overall attractiveness of the town centres during the Christmas shopping experience.</li> </ul> <p>To achieve the above the following is proposed: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deliver a series of thematic events during the the last weekend of October in each of the towns to mark and celebrate Halloween.</li> <li>• Organising a programme of safe events in each of the town's every Saturday (4<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup> &amp; 18<sup>th</sup>) during December to help enhance and promote our local town centre businesses.</li> <li>• To work collaboration with the town businesses</li> <li>• Organise smaller interactive pop-up events to include but not limited too; magic shows, live music, jugglers, children's workshops, play sessions etc.</li> <li>• Using council facilities to deliver indoor workshops and/or a Santa grotto which would enable children within the district to visit Santa in their local town centre on the run up to Christmas.</li> <li>• To work alongside other external organisations to enhance their Christmas celebrations.</li> <li>• To recruit a professional skilled and creative company to produce and film the Christmas Lights Switch on videos which will showcase the Mid Ulster District towns. Besides celebrating the town Christmas lights switch on they will also mark the start of the town centre events in the lead up to Christmas. The videos will be transmitted during the last weekend of November, with each town giving out its own unique and individual message.</li> </ul>
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<b>4.0</b>	<b>Other Considerations</b>
<b>4.1</b>	<b>Financial, Human Resources &amp; Risk Implications</b>
	<p>Financial: Activities will be delivered within budgets allocated for Christmas events.</p> <p>Proposed budgets for Halloween Events</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dungannon - £7,000</li> <li>• Magherafelt - £7,000</li> <li>• Cookstown - £7,000</li> <li>• Coalisland - £5,000</li> <li>• Maghera - £5,000</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: right;">Total £31,000</p> <p>Proposed budgets for Christmas Events</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dungannon - £20,000</li> <li>• Cookstown - £20,000</li> <li>• Magherafelt - £20,000</li> <li>• Maghera - £10,000</li> <li>• Coalisland - £10,000</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: right;">Total £80,000</p>
	Human: n/a
	Risk Management: Adhering to the Executive guidance and advice from our Health and Safety team is paramount. We must continue to follow the legalisation and guidance yet be mindful restrictions could be introduced again.
<b>4.2</b>	<b>Screening &amp; Impact Assessments</b>
	Equality & Good Relations Implications: N/A
	Rural Needs Implications: N/A
<b>5.0</b>	<b>Recommendation(s)</b>
5.1	With restrictions remaining in place the primary focus in planning for this year's Halloween and Christmas Events will be a programme comprising multiple sites that accommodate footfall and social distancing while enabling people to enjoy a variety entertainment and experiences safely.
5.2	Develop a programme of events both live and online events to enhance the customer experience when visiting the town centres during last weekend of October to celebrate Halloween and the four weekends prior to Christmas.

<b>6.0</b>	<b>Documents Attached &amp; References</b>
	N/A