

Report on	Halloween and Christmas Corporate Events 2021
Date of Meeting	17 June 2021
Reporting Officer	Michael Browne
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Is this report restricted for confidential business?	Yes	
If 'Yes', confirm below the exempt information category relied upon	No	X

1.0	Purpose of Report
1.1	To provide an update on Halloween and Christmas corporate events and seek approval for recommendations.
2.0	Background
2.1	<p>Planning for corporate events is extremely challenging in this fluid environment. Event planning is an annual process which involves a minimum of 9-12 months preparation that includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation between vital stakeholders at least 6-12 months prior to each event. • The development of unique event concepts; • Procurement and the gathering of valid Health and Safety documentation is a lengthy process. • Alongside these a marketing plan which must be developed, designed and implemented.
2.2	This report has been compiled after extensive communication with Council's Corporate Health and Safety team.
2.3	In addition, the corporate events teams have had regular discussions with other councils' events teams across NI. The outcome from these meetings is a collective approach in the delivery of safe corporate events throughout Northern Ireland.
2.4	Safety is paramount in addition to rebuilding the confidence and health and wellbeing of local residents within the Mid Ulster District at the same time as protecting the reputation and financial interests of the Council.
2.5	Mid Ulster District Council has placed third out of the eleven local authority areas with a total of 12,733 positive Covid-19 cases.
2.6	Latest Executive Guidance/Legalisation valid from 24 May 2021 states up to 500 people can attend outdoor gatherings. For the purposes of the Regulations,

	<p>spectators and event participants are regarded as two separate gatherings. The maximum number of spectators that can attend events will be limited to 500 people. The maximum number of participants in the event, including performers and staff, will also be limited to 500 people. The organiser must also take all reasonable measures to limit the risk of transmission of the coronavirus.</p>
2.7	<p>Pilot events permitting 1000 spectators have been permitted for logistical and operational learning. It is not known when or if the results of the learning will be published as these might inform plans for the safer return of all types of larger audience-based events.</p>
3.0	Main Report
3.1	<p>There is still a great deal of uncertainty regarding events. The events team have often been left with more questions than answers. Now more than ever, a risk based approach must be taken, however Council is not in control of the external factors and in this fluid environment these could change. The main points to consider include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The vaccination programme is on target, most over 40's have received at least their first vaccine. The number of positive cases has been on the steady decline which reduces the pressures on our health service. • The number of cases of Covid-19 is greatest 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, foreign travel associated with the end of the summer vacation period and vaccine uptake in younger age profiles may influence COVID infection. • Guidance from the NI Executive still recommends a safe social distancing space of 2m. • In permitting the return of 1000 spectators to the Irish Cup final the legislation required the event organiser to obtain relevant information including information related to booking and the, taking, or the results of, a rapid COVID Lateral Flow Test. If such requirements remain this may result in increased administration and management in addition to having potentially significant financial and resource implications to Council in providing events safely. Particularly during peak times like Halloween and Christmas where there are five events scheduled over one weekend, this would have a significant impact on the number of staff required to facilitate the events. • It is also difficult to predict outdoor space maximum capacities for the Halloween and Christmas events as this could change at any given moment. The current regulations will be reviewed on 10 June 2021. • It is important to highlight that if the maximum number of spectators currently permitted to attend Halloween or Christmas events is limited to 500 people; should these current maximum capacities remain in legislation approximately only one sixth spectators attending these events in 2019 could legally attend.

3.2	<p>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.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The risk of non- ticket holders attending the area outside the event arena. Depending on the probability of this occurring and the level of risk associated the PHA and/or the PSNI could cancel the event due to public safety. • Most of the Halloween and all the Christmas events occur within Mid Ulster town centres. Restricting the numbers and capping the audience in this environment would prove extremely difficult. Shop fronts and footpaths would have to always remain clear. <p>Corporate events have both economic and social benefits to residents and businesses within Mid Ulster. As a result of Covid-19 life has dramatically changed; Covid Restrictions, social distancing, face masks and hand sanitiser has become the new 'norm'. Events cannot be organised as they were before Covid, changes will have to be made with the aim of taking small steps to creating a new way of doing things whilst building and restoring confidence.</p>
4.0	Other Considerations
4.1	Financial, Human Resources & Risk Implications
	Financial:
	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.
4.2	Screening & Impact Assessments
	Equality & Good Relations Implications: N/A
	Rural Needs Implications: N/A
5.0	Recommendation(s)
5.1	Council do not organise any corporate events inviting large numbers of people to gather in unmanaged sites or town centres where safe capacity numbers cannot be managed and maintained, as this could potentially encourage non-compliance to the current Government Legalisation and guidance.
5.2	Council owned sites in each town will be identified where safe events could take place to celebrate Halloween and Christmas within the Mid Ulster District.

5.3	A programme of entertainment specific to the topography of each site will be examined based on executive guidance.
5.4	Town centre activities will also be investigated which will not include large gathering of people but will enhance the atmosphere.
5.5	The events team will compile an update report in September which will include proposals of events to celebrate Halloween and Christmas within the Mid Ulster District.
6.0	Documents Attached & References
	N/A