

Corporate Policy and Strategy Committee

10.00am, Tuesday, 5 August 2014

Edinburgh's Christmas and Edinburgh's Hogmanay 2013/14 Event Update

Item number	7.3
Report number	
Executive/routine	
Wards	All

Executive summary

This report provides an update on the delivery of the 2013/14 Edinburgh's Christmas event programme and Edinburgh's Hogmanay festival by the consortium comprising Underbelly Ltd and Unique Events Ltd. This was the first year of a three-year contract between the Council and this consortium (approved following a procurement process by the Finance and Resources Committee on 21 March 2013).

The contract includes an option to extend for a further two years. The contract agreement transfers all financial risk to the consortium contractor.

Under the terms of the contract, Underbelly Ltd has operational responsibility for delivering the Christmas elements of the programme, and Unique Events Ltd has operational responsibility for delivery of the Edinburgh's Hogmanay festival.

Links

Coalition pledges	P24
Council outcomes	CO8, CO20, CO26
Single Outcome Agreement	SO1

Edinburgh's Christmas and Edinburgh's Hogmanay 2013/14 Event Update

Recommendations

- 1.1 Note the delivery of year one of the new Edinburgh's Christmas and Edinburgh's Hogmanay.

Background

- 2.1 Edinburgh's Christmas and Edinburgh's Hogmanay festival together offer a rich and varied programme of activities, events and celebrations designed to attract and entertain residents and visitors.
- 2.2 Edinburgh's Christmas event takes place over a six-week period from November to January in and around the city centre.
- 2.3 Edinburgh's Hogmanay is an internationally renowned New Year festival, taking place over 3 to 5 days centred on 31 December. The festival provides unrivalled promotion for the city. Images of the midnight fireworks are broadcast around the world to significant international audiences. Social media coverage is also extensive.
- 2.4 The current contract replaced two separate contracts, and transfers all financial risk to the consortium contractor comprising Unique Events Ltd and Underbelly Ltd.
- 2.5 The term of the contract is three years from 2013/14 (at a cost of £3,937,368) with an option to extend for two further years.
- 2.6 The maximum subsidy in any year to the contractor is £1,312,456. The contractor will be liable for any costs that exceed the agreed subsidy.
- 2.7 The consortium is required to report regularly against contractual terms throughout the year.

Main report

- 3.1 **Edinburgh's Christmas** was substantially developed and enhanced for year one of the new contract. Traditionally sited in East Princes Street Gardens and consisting principally of a market and funfair attractions, in 2013/14 Edinburgh's Christmas took place in two key arenas in the city centre, St Andrew Square and East Princes Street Gardens.

- 3.2 Given that this was a renewed offer and enhanced format for Edinburgh's Christmas, the consortium undertook business and visitor research. Key findings are set out below.
- 3.3 The activities on offer in East Princes Street Gardens were enhanced and refreshed to include 'Santa Land' for young families (comprising a Christmas Tree Maze, the 'Santa Train' and 'Santa's Grotto'); a European Market; an ice rink; a double carousel; and a Big Wheel.
- 3.4 The Maze was visited by 19,000 people; the ice rink attracted 33,000 visitors; the Santa Train, 45,000 visitors; the double carousel, 46,000; and the Big Wheel, 120,000 visitors.
- 3.5 St Andrew Square was a new arena for the event. It included a Spiegeltent which housed family entertainment during the day, and 'Limbo', in the evening, a critically acclaimed show. The family shows were attended by 6,791 people while Limbo attracted 17,329. A Children's Market in St Andrew Square provided activities for families including craft workshops and present-making. A traditional carousel attracted 23,800 visitors. The site also housed a Scottish Market. The major addition to the activities was the Star Flyer attraction which drew 62,000 people. Overall, Edinburgh's Christmas sold 397,000 tickets for its various attractions and performances.
- 3.6 Edinburgh's Christmas marketing campaign was significantly more extensive than in previous years. The success of this was demonstrated, for example, by the attendance at the renewed free opening event, 'Light Night', which took place in George Street and attracted 26,000 people – more than double the projected numbers. Also, the new website was launched in autumn 2013. A social media campaign generated increases of fans and followers by a total of 30,000.
- 3.7 A new box office system was also introduced ensuring easy access on one system to buy tickets for all attractions and shows. A new booking system was also installed on the website, improving customer experience.
- 3.8 Footfall was recorded through both arenas and represented an increase of 7.6% on the previous year. The UK average for the period was -2.9%. Footfall was particularly high on Princes Street in the area adjacent to Edinburgh's Christmas events where it increased by 16.8% on the same period last year.
- 3.9 The results of the visitor research by Edinburgh's Christmas confirmed this renewed event's positive impact on the city centre. Half of the event's visitors were from Edinburgh (37%) and the Lothians (13%); 24% of visitors came from other parts of Scotland; 14% of visitors were from other parts of the UK; and 11% of visitors came from abroad. The event was cited as the sole or an important reason to come to the city centre on the day by 73% of respondents from Edinburgh and the Lothians and 51% of respondents from outwith Edinburgh and the Lothians.

- 3.10 City centre businesses were also asked for their views about the programme's impact. Nearly 90% of respondents said trading in December 2013 was up on the previous year and 100% of responding hospitality businesses reported the same.
- 3.11 The press and media coverage for Edinburgh's Christmas was extensive. However, there were a number of critical articles about some aspects of the programme. Based on reader feedback, concerns were raised in the local media regarding the affordability of some of the activities for families in the city. This feedback has directly influenced the planning for the 2014 event. The continuation and development of co-operative promotional campaigns with key local media will also be explored for this year's event.
- 3.12 An incident involving one of the attractions at Edinburgh's Christmas resulted in the closure of the ride for two days while the Council's Public Safety team responded swiftly to the incident. A full safety inspection of the attraction was undertaken before reopening to the public. Although the incident provoked a large amount of media coverage the ride continued to prove attractive to the public for the remainder of its installation.
- 3.13 Planning is well developed for Edinburgh's Christmas 2014/15. The contractor plans to enhance the family activities and improve ticket offers for Edinburgh residents. While the extent and quality of family entertainment in 2013/14 was greater than in previous years the contractor has committed to offering a more affordable programme of attractions for 2014/15. There are also plans to extend the reach of the event and to offer more attractions. A revised layout for the 'Light Night' opening event is planned to ensure maximum attendance with minimum disruption. The Star Flyer requires to be relocated for 2014/15 following the on-site start and enclosure requirements of a major building demolition and re-development in St Andrew Square. Council officers are working with the contractor to identify a suitable alternative site for the Star Flyer. The full programme for Edinburgh's Christmas will be launched in late September; the programme for Edinburgh's Hogmanay will be launched in November.
- 3.14 **Edinburgh's Hogmanay** festival comprises the following core events: the Torchlight Procession and the Street Party which includes the Fireworks, the Concert in the Gardens and the Keilidh.
- 3.15 A post-event evaluation report was not commissioned for 2013/14. However, it is intended that evaluation and research be commissioned for 2014/15. Five out of six ticketed events in the Hogmanay programme sold out.
- 3.16 The Torchlight Procession proved very popular once again, with an estimated 8,500 torch bearers and estimated total attendance of 35,000. Given the event's popularity, crowd management will be reviewed for 2014/15, while working within the same budget.

- 3.17 The Street Party and its event components, including the fireworks at midnight and the Concert in the Gardens, continue to ensure Edinburgh is one of the world's top New Year destinations.
- 3.18 The three-day programme also included non-core events: the Candlelit Concert in St Giles Cathedral on 31 January and on 1 January the Loony Dook and Scot:lands. The latter in particular depends on funding and sponsorship from other partnership sources, including the Scottish Government's Edinburgh Festivals Expo Fund. The Scot:lands event on 1 January attracted a record audience of 15,000 people.
- 3.19 As in previous years, press and media coverage for Edinburgh's Hogmanay 2013/14 was extensive and very positive. The number of online stories this year nearly doubled from 353 in 2012/13 to 598 for 2013/14. In total, press coverage generated from the 2013/14 festival included over 101 news stories in the national and Scottish press (against 94 in the previous year). Broadcast coverage was also excellent. For example, through live coverage on BBC television and radio and on Sky News, of the Torchlight Procession and throughout the evening of 31 December, Edinburgh's Hogmanay was available to view by a potential audience of over a billion in 200 different countries and territories around the world.
- 3.20 The second year of 'Blogmanay', the social media travel blogger initiative, attracted extensive engagement. Conceived in 2012 as a means of using international travel bloggers, this high-impact social media campaign showcases the unique experience of Edinburgh's Hogmanay, whilst welcoming over 20 international and local travel bloggers to experience the festival using it as a gateway to explore Edinburgh and Scotland, the 'Home of Hogmanay'.
- 3.21 The campaign garnered 65 million impressions and reached over 4.6m people, a 24% increase of 900,000 on 2012/13. The campaign also:
- 3.21.1 inspired over 19,000 tweets by the public, a 94% increase of 9,220 tweets;
 - 3.21.2 trended at least once a day between 29 December and 1 January;
 - 3.21.3 produced 2,383 photographs on Instagram, with over 75,000 likes and comments and 5 million impressions; and
 - 3.21.4 attained over 5.5 million impressions on Facebook.
- 3.22 The appointment of a digital media manager from November 2013 meant that all the digital content, including the addition of Instagram, was shared across platforms as appropriate. This gave Edinburgh's Hogmanay the opportunity to use social media to respond instantly and personally to customer queries on the ground.

Measures of success

- 4.1 The events contribute to the delivery of the Council's outcomes.
- 4.2 The contractual agreement ensures reporting requirements are met.

Financial impact

- 5.1 The subsidy from the Council for delivery of both events is £1,312,456 per annum, fixed for 3 years. This is in line with the previous combined budget for both events.
- 5.2 The maximum subsidy in any year is £1,312,456. The contractor will be liable for any costs that exceed the agreed subsidy.
- 5.3 The final net cost for Edinburgh's Christmas and Edinburgh's Hogmanay in 2013/14 was not less than the Council contribution of £1,312,456, and therefore the Council did not receive a percentage share of the balance.

Risk, policy, compliance and governance impact

- 6.1 The Council's contribution to these events is within budget and financial risk rests with the contractor.
- 6.2 The events comply with all Council event management and safety policies.

Equalities impact

- 7.1 The events are required to meet contractual social cohesion and quality of life proposals for people across the city included in the contractor's procurement submission. Measures include commitment to provide work placement or training opportunities to those in education; recruit long term unemployed and disadvantaged or young people; provide outreach/education events or programmes to relevant groups.

Sustainability impact

- 8.1 The contractor has an Environmental Policy including undertaking to minimise impact on the environment which includes the reduction of emissions; the efficient use of energy; the use of biodegradable and recycled products and minimisation of waste amongst others.
- 8.2 Edinburgh's Hogmanay participates in the Festivals Edinburgh Green Venue Initiative which promotes best practice in sustainability. The contractor will maintain membership.

Consultation and engagement

- 9.1 The contractor has ensured consultation and engagement with local businesses; stakeholder agencies and organisations as well as community groups, schools and other groups and individuals in the planning, delivery and assessment of events and attractions. This is expected to continue.

Background reading/external references

Reports to Finance and Resources Committee on [21 February](#) and [21 March 2013](#).

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Links

Coalition pledges	P24 Maintain and embrace support for our world-famous festivals and events
Council outcomes	CO8 Edinburgh's economy creates and sustains job opportunities CO20 Culture, sport and major events – Edinburgh continues to be a leading cultural city where culture and sport play a central part in the lives and futures of citizens CO26 The Council engages with stakeholders and works in partnership to improve services and deliver on agreed objectives
Single Outcome Agreement	SO1 Edinburgh's economy delivers increased investment, jobs and opportunities for all
Appendices	