

# Culture and Communities Committee

10.00am, Tuesday, 7 March 2023

## Edinburgh's Christmas and Edinburgh's Hogmanay - Outcome Report

Executive/routine Wards Council Commitments	Executive All
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### 1. Recommendations

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- 1.1 It is recommended that Culture and Communities Committee:
  - 1.1.1 Notes the performance of the 2022/23 editions of Edinburgh's Christmas and Edinburgh's Hogmanay;
  - 1.1.2 Agrees that performance in 2022/23 was satisfactory, recognising the challenges (particularly in respect of Edinburgh's Christmas); and
  - 1.1.3 Refers this report to Finance and Resources Committee to:
    - 1.1.3.1 Approve a one-year extension of the contract award to Unique Assembly for Edinburgh's Christmas for 2023/24; and
    - 1.1.3.2 Ratify the continuation of the contract for Edinburgh's Hogmanay, as approved by Finance and Resources Committee on 16 June 2023.

**Paul Lawrence**

Executive Director of Place

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## Edinburgh's Christmas and Edinburgh's Hogmanay – Outcome Report

### 2. Executive Summary

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- 2.1 This report details the outcomes and lessons learned from Edinburgh's Christmas and Edinburgh's Hogmanay 2022/23 and seeks the agreement of Culture and Communities Committee to refer this report to Finance and Resources Committee for approval of a one-year extension to the contract award to Unique Assembly for Edinburgh's Christmas for 2023/24 and to ratify the continuation of the contract for Edinburgh's Hogmanay.

### 3. Background

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#### **Edinburgh's Winter Festivals Contract Award**

- 3.1 On [16 June 2022](#), Finance and Resources Committee agreed the award of contracts for Edinburgh's Winter Festivals.
- 3.2 Edinburgh's Christmas was awarded to Angels Event Experience Limited for a period of three years with two optional extension years; Edinburgh's Hogmanay was awarded to Unique Events Ltd for a period of three years with two optional extension years.
- 3.3 Both contracts included a break clause after year one should performance be unsatisfactory.

#### **Edinburgh's Christmas Emergency Contract Award**

- 3.4 On [10 October 2022](#), Finance and Resources Committee considered a request to put in place a contract award for Edinburgh's Christmas, as Angels Events Experience Limited had notified the Council that it was not able to deliver the contract as awarded in June 2022, and had asked to be released from the contract.
- 3.5 Following this Committee meeting, the contract with Angels Event Experience Limited was terminated and a contract award for Edinburgh's Christmas was made to Unique Assembly Limited.

- 3.6 The contract was for a period of two years, comprising one initial year with an option to extend for one additional year.
- 3.7 Finance and Resources Committee agreed that any extension would be approved by the Culture and Communities Committee and Finance and Resources Committee in early 2023, following submission of an outcome report on the 2022/23 event.
- 3.8 It should be noted that Angels Event Experience Limited ceased trading at the end of January 2023 and the company has been wound up.

## 4. Main report

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### **Edinburgh's Christmas 2022/23**

- 4.1 Edinburgh's Christmas ran from 25 November 2022 to 3 January 2023 across five city centre sites – East Princes Street Gardens (top level only); West Princes Street Gardens; Ross Bandstand; Mound Precinct and George Street.
- 4.2 The key components of Edinburgh's Christmas were market stalls and funfair rides in East Princes Street Gardens and Mound Precinct, Santa Land in West Princes Street Gardens, and Lidl on Ice (ice rink) on George Street.
- 4.3 Overall footfall across all the sites was measured at 2.4 million over the 39 days of Edinburgh's Christmas.
- 4.4 The Big Wheel attracted over 140,000 people; Santa Stories in West Princes Street Gardens was attended by over 9,000 children; and the ice rink on George Street attracted 66,500 skaters.
- 4.5 The high footfall figures demonstrate that there is a significant demand for Christmas celebrations. Despite large daily attendance, the maximum queue time for entering East Princes Street Gardens was 10 minutes.
- 4.6 The audience breakdown for Edinburgh's Christmas was as follows:
- Edinburgh – 36%;
  - Lothians – 12%;
  - Rest of Scotland – 26%;
  - Rest of UK – 20%; and
  - International – 6%

### **Christmas Community Benefits**

- 4.7 Edinburgh's Christmas provided a number of community benefits to residents. Over 6,000 tickets were given to 30 local charities and community groups. Edinburgh residents also secured 82,200 discounted tickets for 20% off rides and attractions across all the sites. In total, 112 entries were received from Edinburgh schools for

the Winter Windows competition, with the winning 12 entries displayed within West Princes Street Gardens.

- 4.8 Edinburgh's Christmas supported a number of local charities through a range of fundraising initiatives. Tickets for Santa Paws included a donation to Edinburgh Dog & Cat Home, while a series of free community events at the Ross Bandstand included an outdoor Family Ceilidh and a Nativity Carol Concert which was organised in collaboration with Edinburgh Churches Together supporting The Salvation Army Christmas Appeal and Blackhall St Columba's Church supporting Fresh Start and Bethany Christian Trust.
- 4.9 Edinburgh's Christmas worked with 'When You Wish upon a Star' Children's Charity helping them deliver their annual Santa Fun Run and Walk and a donation was made to the Lord Provost's One City Trust from Silent Disco Headphone sales.
- 4.10 In total, these activities raised over £6,000 for local charities.
- 4.11 Edinburgh's Christmas also supports Social Bite's Festival of Kindness festive campaign (based in St Andrew Square) collecting donations to help provide Christmas meals, gifts, and essential items to homeless and vulnerable people. £5,320 was raised via online donations.

### **Lessons Learned**

- 4.12 Edinburgh's Christmas 2022/23 proved to be extremely challenging to deliver, with only seven weeks to deliver an event which would normally take nine-12 months planning and preparation. This resulted in significant pressure on the contractor, Council officers and event delivery partners. Nonetheless, Edinburgh's Christmas was successfully delivered, attracting large audiences and positive media coverage for the city.
- 4.13 As part of the evaluation of Edinburgh's Christmas each year, a multi-agency debrief is held.
- 4.14 As noted above, the emergency contract award was made to Unique Assembly Limited on 10 October 2022, with activities beginning on 25 November 2022. Where possible, Unique Assembly Limited utilised plans which had been developed by Angels Event Experience Limited, but this timescale did present challenges both in terms of planning and preparation.
- 4.15 The delivery challenges caused by the timescale and the pressures this created for the contractor and partners was the single biggest issue raised by all agencies as part of the debrief. All have stated that an early decision on Edinburgh's Christmas 2023 (and any subsequent contracts) is required to allow partners to have sufficient time to put in place the necessary resources.
- 4.16 In addition to the time constraints, the following issues were also identified to be addressed in 2023/24 and beyond:
  - 4.16.1 The importance of ensuring appropriate protection of trees in green areas. Officers are currently reviewing the measures that were put in place in 2022 and the associated monitoring procedures and will report back on the

outcome of this to Committee in May. In addition, a Council officer working group (including officers from Parks, Forestry, Events, Public Safety and Planning) has been established to consider how this can be improved and impact minimised in future years. Should the contract for Edinburgh's Christmas 2023/24 be awarded to Unique Assembly, they will be invited to attend this group when appropriate; and

4.16.2 A key priority is providing a safe and positive customer experience to accommodate the number of attendees given the audience demand, events, activities and safety measures required. While the city centre remains a key location for Edinburgh's Christmas, officers are currently exploring opportunities for greater dispersal of events around the city centre and into other areas of the city.

### **Edinburgh's Hogmanay**

- 4.17 Edinburgh's Hogmanay 2022/23 welcomed over 65,000 people to events across the three days of the festival. Data provided by Essential Edinburgh indicates that city centre footfall on 31 December 2022 was up 61% on 2019, peaking between 11:00 and 18:00.
- 4.18 The Hogmanay festival commenced on 30 December 2022, with a Night Afore Concert at the Ross Bandstand, headlined by Sophie Ellis-Bextor.
- 4.19 Hogmanay itself saw a reduced capacity street party, with a sold-out audience of 30,000 and 9,500 people attending the Concert In The Gardens which was headlined by Pet Shop Boys.
- 4.20 A large programme of entertainment on 1 January 2023 saw 10,000 people attend free events in the National Museum of Scotland (Sprogmanay), family ceilidhs, live music in multiple venues across the Old and New Town (First Footin') and a concert at the Ross Bandstand, featuring Hamish Hawk, Elephant Sessions and Tide Lines.
- 4.21 5,000 reduced price tickets were made available for Edinburgh residents and were sold out. An additional 100 tickets were given to various charities and community groups.

### **Resident and Business Engagement**

- 4.22 In response to previous feedback, the Street Party arena was deliberately designed to avoid disruption wherever possible. By reducing and reconfiguring the arena layout, Unique Assembly were able to increase accessibility for businesses and residents and reduce the need for passes to access properties.
- 4.23 A digital briefing was delivered, via Essential Edinburgh, to all businesses located within the 'live' arena footprint and on adjacent streets. A printed letter was distributed to all residential and commercial addresses located within the 'live' arena footprint and on adjacent streets – a total of 929 letterboxes. Information letters were also available from the George Street Box Office.
- 4.24 Full event information, including arena maps and road closure information, was made available on the Edinburgh's Hogmanay official website.

- 4.25 Residents and businesses within the 'live' arena footprint were able to apply for Access Passes online, in order to safely access their properties throughout the event period, via dedicated safety lanes. In total, 2,367 Access Passes were booked by residents/businesses.
- 4.26 The audience breakdown for Edinburgh's Hogmanay was as follows:
- Edinburgh – 23%;
  - Lothians – 3%;
  - Rest of Scotland – 10%;
  - Rest of UK – 34%; and
  - International – 30%.

### **Lessons Learned**

- 4.27 The debrief for Edinburgh's Hogmanay focussed on five key areas:
- 4.27.1 Timing caused by pressures from Edinburgh's Christmas;
- 4.27.2 The interaction between Edinburgh's Christmas and Hogmanay in West Princes Street Gardens and the need for better co-ordination;
- 4.27.3 Hostile Vehicle Mitigation and the time taken to reach the delivered safe solution;
- 4.27.4 Event control and governance; and
- 4.27.5 Ticketing/queuing on 31 December.
- 4.28 In planning for the 2023/24 event, all of these areas will be addressed.

### **Key Performance Indicators 2022/23**

- 4.29 The Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for Edinburgh's Christmas and Edinburgh's Hogmanay are contained within Appendix 1.
- 4.30 The KPIs are set by the Council and agreed at the start of the contract with the supplier. This allows longitudinal annual comparison of the performance of both events. The KPIs were included as part of the tender pack and form part of the contract for both events.
- 4.31 Annual audience research is undertaken by the producers of Edinburgh's Christmas and Edinburgh's Hogmanay. Audience feedback from the events in 2022/23 is still being gathered.
- 4.32 Given the very late award of contract for Edinburgh's Christmas and the short time to deliver the event, not all KPIs for Edinburgh's Christmas were deliverable or achievable.
- 4.33 To protect the stallholders who had already been contracted, Unique Assembly fulfilled the contracts agreed by Angels Event Experience Limited, of whom only 58% were from Scotland. However, if awarded year 2, this is a service that Unique

Assembly would deliver directly rather than via a third party market provider, ensuring greater control over stallholder selection.

- 4.34 Similarly, the KPI of three sites outwith the city centre has not been achieved due to the short planning time. If the contract for 2023/24 is agreed, Unique Assembly will put measures in place to meet all of the KPIs.

## 5. Next Steps

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- 5.1 As noted above, audience feedback for Edinburgh's Christmas and Edinburgh's Hogmanay 2022/23 is still being gathered and is not available at the time of completing this report. If possible, officers will provide a verbal update on this at Committee.

### **Edinburgh's Winter Festivals 2023/24**

- 5.2 If Culture and Communities Committee is satisfied with the performance of Unique Assembly Limited in the delivery of Edinburgh's Christmas 2022/23, it is recommended that this report be referred to Finance and Resources Committee to approve the award of the second year of the emergency contract agreed on 10 October 2022.
- 5.3 A one year contract, with one year's extension, represented the best balance of risk but did not completely insulate the Council from legal challenge. Instead, it offset the risk of no Christmas activity with the potential increased risk of legal challenge of an extended appointment.
- 5.4 As outlined in the feedback from partners, effective delivery of Edinburgh's Christmas requires nine to 12 months planning and preparation. Committee is asked to note that, should year two not be awarded, it will be difficult to secure a contractor and the necessary permissions to deliver Edinburgh's Christmas 2023/24 in the time available.
- 5.5 Culture and Communities Committee is also asked to note the performance in respect of Edinburgh's Hogmanay 2022/23 and to refer this report to Finance and Resources Committee to ratify the continuation of the contract awarded on 16 June 2022 for the initial period of three years (with the possibility of an optional extension of the contract for a further two years).

### **Edinburgh's Winter Festivals 2023/24**

- 5.6 If the Council agrees to the above contract awards, the actions arising from the lessons learned will be progressed and the following actions will be taken in preparation for 2023/24:
- 5.6.1 Review each of the spaces/streetscapes used in 2022 and the layouts for each component;
  - 5.6.2 Design each event arena, sympathetically to the space available, taking into account its "business as usual" profile;

- 5.6.3 Seek further commercial support from reputable and appropriate potential partners for the market, including ensuring a greater number of Edinburgh based businesses have the opportunity to participate;
- 5.6.4 Expand the Christmas footprint to other locations within the city centre;
- 5.6.5 Investigate the opportunity to reinstate the Torchlight Procession with a new route and finale event (subject to funding);
- 5.6.6 Set up a series of city centre local consultation groups with surrounding businesses, organisations, and other interested parties;
- 5.6.7 Introduce stricter management of third-party operators including potential pricing caps for stall holders, bringing the majority of the operators in-house under direct management of Unique Assembly;
- 5.6.8 Explore further family friendly Hogmanay programme elements including on Hogmanay evening;
- 5.6.9 Expand and enhance the Christmas community programme at the Ross Bandstand.

### **Edinburgh's Christmas 2024 onwards**

- 5.7 As requested by the Council, in May 2023 Culture and Communities Committee will receive a report on the future options for delivering from Edinburgh's Christmas 2024 onwards. The options will examine quality, reliability, community engagement, supporting local traders and sharing the celebrations around the city.
- 5.8 In advance of this, and in response to feedback from suppliers, a Prior Information Notice (PIN) for Edinburgh's Christmas 2024 onwards has been issued to the marketplace and supplier engagement is already underway. This will help inform the development of the future options, and associated procurement models.
- 5.9 Further, in preparation for this report, the Festivals and Events All Party Oversight Group will seek input from local traders' groups, community groups and from Councillors in wards that could benefit from extending the winter festival beyond the City Centre.

## **6. Financial impact**

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- 6.1 A budget of £812,456 is in place for Edinburgh's Hogmanay. The Council has no further financial liabilities for Edinburgh's Hogmanay beyond some additional Public Safety measures (e.g. Hostile Vehicle Measures), for which the Council receives a contribution from the event organiser.
- 6.2 Edinburgh's Christmas operates on profit split model between the contractor and the Council. Given the high set up costs, last minute appointments and honouring of existing commercial arrangements with stallholders and operators, an income from Edinburgh's Christmas for 2022 is not expected.



## **7. Stakeholder/Community Impact**

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- 7.1 The supplier is expected to ensure that the two programmes remain attractive to Edinburgh residents, and Edinburgh's Christmas in particular included indicators to ensure that it remained attractive and accessible to families, and accessible to community groups.
- 7.2 The supplier engaged with local businesses, stakeholder agencies and organisations as well as community groups, schools, other groups and individuals in the planning, delivery and assessment of events and attractions.

## **8. Background reading/external references**

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- 8.1 Report to Finance and Resources Committee on 10 October 2022 (B Agenda);
- 8.2 Amendment by Councillor Day on Edinburgh's Christmas to the City of Edinburgh Council on [27 October 2022](#);
- 8.3 Report to Governance, Risk and Best Value Committee on [22 November 2022](#); and
- 8.4 Report to Finance and Resources Committee on [26 January 2023](#).

## **9. Appendices**

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- 9.1 Appendix 1 – Edinburgh's Christmas and Edinburgh's Hogmanay Key Performance Indicators 2022/23

KPI REF	KPI	BASELINE TARGET		ACHIEVED		COMMENT
		EC	EH	EC	EH	
1	<b>Delivery of Key Principles</b>					
	Number of local businesses trading at events (Lot 1 only)	65%		58%*		58.4% of stall holders across all sites were registered to a <u>Scottish business</u> . We have requested further breakdown from Market Operator. This year's Market element was delivered by a third-party operator, with stall holders already confirmed
	Number of local artists/creatives employed (Lot 2 only)		50%		65%	over three day festival
	Number of free/low priced attractions (Lot 1)	33%		see comment		4 Ross Bandstand events over the first 2 weekends were free community events West Gardens Illuminations including Winter Windows and Nativity Scene provided free attractions Santa Land "kiddie rides" were deliberately low priced with rides from £3 Mid-week discounts were offered to database members
	Number of free/low priced attractions (Lot 2)		not requested		see comment	First Footin Music Trail and Sprogmanay family programme were both free open access
	Provision of alcohol free areas (Lot 1 only)	100%		100%		Santa Stories and Christmas Tree Maze were in an alcohol free zone. Santa Land overall experience and George St Ice Rink were designed to enable participation in alcohol free areas
2	<b>Provision of Management Information</b>					
	Timely submission of budgets and other management reports	Monthly submission of reports		see comment		not enough time for this year however, weekly online meetings did take place
3	<b>Stakeholder Engagement</b>					
	Stakeholder consultation sessions – 1 consultation session and 1 follow-up per event site	100%		100%		UAL engaged with: Cockburn Association and Forestry Commission to hear their concerns in advance, during build/event (onsite)and post-event EPSG - Waverley Station, Waverley Mall, Malones Bar Mound Precinct - NGS, Scottish Cafe WPSG - CEC Bereavement Services/St Cuthberts George St - Essential Edinburgh / George St Association Edinburgh Castle - HES Funding Partners - EventScotland, Creative Scotland, Scottish Government, Essential Edinburgh Charity Partners and Community Groups EPOG Members All Blue Light Services All relevant CEC Departments Various city visitor attractions and theatres 2,367 Access Passes booked by residents/businesses
	Notification of events/closures to all immediate properties in immediate vicinity	100%		100%		Letter Drop to all residents within arena (929 delivered), also available from Box Office on George St A digital briefing was delivered, via Essential Edinburgh, to all businesses located within the 'live' arena footprint and on adjacent street Direct communication was made with hospitality providers within and adjacent to the arena to ensure their customers were able to access their properties Dedicated Box Office telephone line was in operation to answer any direct questions or requests
4	<b>Delivery of Core Events</b>					
	Nativity Scene and Carol Concert (Lot 1 only)	100%		100%		Nativity Scene designed and installed in WPSG, Carol Concert delivered in partnership with Churches Together
	Switch on ceremony for Christmas lights (Lot 1 only)	100%		alternative		not delivered and UAL feel no longer appropriate. Free/Community events took place in WPSG Ross Bandstand over the first two weekends encouraging visitors into the city centre
	Number of event sites outwith immediate city centre		3		0	not delivered this year due to timescales and budget
	Delivery of a programme based on light installations, live music and fireworks/a key midnight moment with a focus on using local artists, talent and creatives (Lot 2 only)		100%		100%	31st - Street Party Sound & Light Show with Midnigh Moment and Hourly Countdown displays 1st - First Footin Music Trail showcasing local talent in existing city venues and hosterlies
	Delivery of a minimum 3-day festival (Lot 2 only)		100%		100%	29 December - 1 January
5	<b>Customer Satisfaction</b>					
	% of attendees expressing satisfaction with events attended	90%		TBC		waiting on post-event survey results
	% of customer complaints resolved satisfactorily	95%		TBC		waiting on post-event survey results