



| | |
|---------------------------|---|
| Report to: | Development Committee |
| Subject: | Animation Beyond City Centre Christmas 2013 |
| Date: | 3 December 2013 |
| Reporting Officer: | John McGrillen, Director of Development, ext 3470 |
| Contact Officers: | Shirley McCay, Head of Economic Initiatives & International Development, ext 3459 |

| 1 | Relevant Background Information |
|----------|---|
| 1.1 | At the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 15 th November 2013 a proposal was passed to support an enhanced Christmas In Belfast campaign. Members approved the following: to provide £150K towards and Animation programme to include the outlying areas and the arterial routes; £50K for additional advertising and public relations for a pre-Christmas campaign and £75K towards advertising and post-Christmas activities for January to March 2014. |
| 1.2 | The key purpose of the campaign is to help drive footfall to retailers which have been struggling with falling numbers and sales over the last year and in recent months due to a variety of causes. Animation was a successful element used last year as part of the Backin' Belfast campaign according to the evaluations carried out as it bolstered the existing offering in the City Centre and added to the atmosphere and ambience of the City Centre. The animation programme offered additional reasons for shoppers to choose Belfast, encouraging longer dwell times and added overall to enjoyable and positive leisure time experiences. |
| 1.3 | Members agreed that the animation programme for 2013 should extend beyond the City Centre and complement activity taking place elsewhere as part of Christmas programmes. This report is seeking Members agreement on how animation beyond the City Centre should be carried out including agreed locations for inclusion, method of deployment or organisation of activities and linkages to existing activity. Members should note that a procurement exercise has been completed for the engagement of an events management company to co-ordinate an animation programme in the City and that provision has been made to include the programming of animation beyond the City Centre. |

| 2 | Key Issues |
|-----|---|
| 2.1 | <p>Animation is a wide-ranging term, but in this context, refers to the programming of activity in streets or public spaces, (largely outdoor, but can also be indoor) using artists and performers to create vibrancy and atmosphere. As part of our work under Backin' Belfast last year, a range of performers were used including street circus acts; roaming costumed characters; children's activities, such as face painting, balloon modelling, arts and crafts, musicians and bands, petting zoos, urban sports such as skateboarding, BMX biking, free-running and urban art.</p> |
| 2.2 | <p>Following a procurement exercise, Smallworld has been appointed by Council to deliver an animation programme for Belfast as part of an enhanced Christmas in Belfast campaign. Their contract covers both the City Centre and locations beyond the City Centre to be confirmed to them upon appointment. The animation programme is designed to attract people to existing retail areas to help increase potential purchasing from retailers and associated businesses.</p> |
| 2.3 | <p>Within the City Centre the animation programme will commence from 1st December and continue on Saturday and Sundays for the following 3 weekends between 12 and 5/6pm. Smallworld's proposal centres around Christmas themed weekends with a wide variety of entertainers and participative children's activity. It may be appropriate to programme any animation of this type for Saturdays only beyond the City Centre.</p> |
| 2.4 | <p>Following Council's decision on animation, a number of Members have approached officers identifying locations and methods of delivery for use in areas beyond the city centre. In order to ensure an equitable approach and consistency across Belfast and to guide officers in carrying out this work, Members' views are now sought through this report on how animation beyond the city centre should be deployed and on precise locations to be used.</p> |
| 2.5 | <p><u>Options for consideration</u></p> <p>a) Enhance existing Christmas activity planned by trader groups and programme activity in other retail cluster areas not covered by this.</p> <p>Members are reminded that through the Council's retail plan a range of trader/retail groups are able to apply to Council for resources to support local activity in marketing or delivery of special events for their neighbourhoods. Presently Council supports 12 trader groups across Belfast with some new groups forming also; there is a difference in the capacity of groups to deliver and spend funding available and not all groups access the funding options at the same time or undertake the same time of activity.</p> <p>Some areas have already plans in place for delivery of Christmas events to include animation and support local retailers attract additional trade. Appendix 1 includes an overview of those areas in receipt of Council support that have confirmed they already have planned some Christmas activity. Members should note that some of the planned activity will have passed by Committee date and others are occurring inside 4 days of Committee date.</p> |

| | |
|--|---|
| | <p>It is possible for Council to add in additional animation to planned events where time permits and to programme animation in other retail cluster areas where none exists at present. Council would focus on the existing retail cluster locations identified under the Retail support plan supplemented by other areas should Members wish to specify at Committee.</p> <p>b) Allocate funding available to appropriate competent third party agencies in each area of City for animation purposes.</p> <p>Officers have been approached by some Members in support of a request from the West Belfast Traders Association suggesting the monies for West be used to support the provision of an ice rink, which Féile would wish to manage and operate in Falls Park. Other Members have suggested that a similar facility be provided at Woodvale.</p> <p>Legal Services has advised that due to the potential for a large number of claims, events of this nature should only proceed if they are being facilitated by a competent third party, with public liability insurance which fully indemnifies the Council and an acceptable event management plan is in place.</p> <p>It should also be noted that events of this nature would in normal circumstances require the approval of the Parks and Leisure Committee, however, this would not be possible in the timescale available.</p> <p>It may, therefore, be more appropriate for Council to agree, where acceptable, to provide proportionate funding to relevant third parties for animation purposes and contract with them to deliver in accordance with a letter of offer. Given the extremely limited timescale Council would need to be satisfied that the monies could also be spent on animation pre-Christmas 2013. As indicated above, there would need to be safeguards and checks built in over public liability insurance as required.</p> <p>c) Apportionment of Funding</p> <p>Members may wish to advise on the appropriate split between local areas i.e. that used for distribution of the Local Investment Fund monies (pro rata split across 5 areas) or for Intervention monies (equal split across 5 areas).</p> <p>Given the contracted timelines animation will have to be delivered between 6th December and 22nd December 2013. Members' views are sought on the most appropriate option.</p> |
|--|---|

| | |
|----------|--|
| 3 | Resource Implications |
| 3.1 | A budget of 150K was allocated for animation. 20K of this is for management purposes leaving a budget of 65K for animation beyond the City Centre. |

| | |
|----------|--|
| 4 | Equality and Good Relations Considerations |
| 4.1 | There are no Equality and Good Relations Considerations attached to this report. |

| | |
|----------|--|
| 5 | Recommendations |
| 5.1 | Members agree the preferred option to deliver animation beyond the City Centre. |
| 5.2 | Members are asked to advise on the most appropriate model for the allocation of funds. |

| | |
|----------|--|
| 6 | Decision Tracking |
| 6.1 | Timeline: Evaluation report will be brought back to Committee in due course. Reporting Officer: Shirley McCay, Head of Economic Initiatives & International Development |

| | |
|--|---------------------------|
| 7 | Documents Attached |
| Appendix 1 – Planned Christmas activity from Council supported retail groups | |