



Subject:	St Patrick's Day Celebrations in Belfast – future perspective report from Féile an Phobail
Date:	10 January 2018
Reporting Officer:	Donal Durkan, Director of Development
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Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>
Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in? Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	
1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues
1.1	The purpose of the report is to update Members on work undertaken by Féile an Phobail to explore the potential of a more joined-up, city-wide offering on St Patrick's Day that would attract local and international tourists.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Consider the key findings of the work undertaken by Féile an Phobail to explore the potential of a more joined-up, city-wide offering on St Patrick's Day that would attract local and international touristsAdvise how they wish to take forward the recommendations in the context of the wider

	review of Festivals and Events that is currently underway.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	Members will be aware that, at the April 2016 meeting of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee, approval was given to provide financial support to a number of local organisations in order to explore how some local Festivals and Events could be developed and enhanced in order to attract additional visitors and spend.
3.2	Féile an Phobail led on the work on St Patrick's Day while Orangefest explored how the Orangefest event could be developed to incorporate a wider programme of events and to promote the event and the city's broader tourism offer.
3.3	At the September 2017 meeting of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee, Members asked that the report on St Patrick's Day be brought back to the Committee for information and consideration. A presentation on the emerging findings from the draft report was made to the October 2017 meeting of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee. At that meeting, Members raised a number of issues regarding the report content and the engagement process. It was therefore agreed that the final report would be brought back to a future meeting of the Committee.
3.4	An Executive Summary of the report is attached as Appendix 1. A full copy of the report can be made available to Members if required.
3.5	The report identifies the alignment with some key strategic documents from a range of local government and government partners. These include The Belfast Agenda and the Integrated Tourism Strategy. Its content was informed by a range of engagement and consultation events including 1-2-1 interviews, a community survey and a business survey.
3.6	A series of benchmarks were identified and comparator research was undertaken to consider the organisational structure, tourism impact and cultural experience associated with the event in each of the five benchmark cities and towns. The comparator cities ranged from those with a global profile (New York, Chicago) to more local examples such as Birmingham and Downpatrick. These benchmarks collectively illustrate a significant economic return from their programming. Many are multi-day events, thereby maximising visitor spend. The report identifies a number of strategic priorities for future planning around St Patrick's Day events in Belfast, arising from the analysis. These are:
3.7	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop a reputation as a market-leading provider of an innovative and inclusive, community-led St Patrick's Day Festival. This involves expanding on the current offer

	<p>to develop an event and a range of products that are capable of attracting significant numbers of local and international visitors and maximising the economic impact</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Delivery of high quality, community-led events feeding into a unique and unrivalled celebration of St Patrick’s Day in Belfast City Centre. This focuses on increasing support for locally-based celebration events which can feed into and support the main event in the City Centre 3. Provide a robust and highly effective management, partnership and governance structure to implement the ambitious festival plans. This suggests that, given the potential scale of the event, a collaborative planning and delivery structure will be required, involving representation from a range of tourism partners, community-based organisations, statutory partners and private sector representatives 4. Deploy a bespoke, innovative and culturally acceptable integrated marketing and communications strategy to match the event’s high ambitions. Like all major events, this suggests that the proposed scale of activity needs to be supported by an effective marketing and communications plan in order to maximise its impact and the potential economic return.
3.8	<p>This event concept is shaped by four underlying principles. These are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community-led: the principle is that the event should be rooted in the community – therefore benefitting local residents – but with the commitment to showcasing the key activities in the City Centre • Commitment and integrity: again, this points to the focus on a community-led product • Respectful and collaborative: the event should complement cultural offering across Belfast and internationally • Quality: the event needs to be world class, similar to other Belfast-based events.
3.9	<p>The report identifies opportunities for audience development through a series of activities in the fields of sport, heritage, food, music and dance, art and drama and concerts and events.</p>
3.10	<p>In terms of governance and management, the report proposes the establishment of an overarching Steering Group comprising key public and private sector partners. The Steering Group would be supported by a series of working groups. The report proposes that the delivery of the main event would be commissioned to a third party organisation.</p>
3.11	<p>In summary, the report identifies the potential to re-position and enhance St Patrick’s Day celebrations in the City. Its key findings include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunity for further development of the current City Centre event, focusing more on indigenous product including music, dance, sport and art

- Need to address ongoing issues of anti-social behaviour associated with the current event, with the potential to engage some of the young people currently involved in anti-social behaviour in the event itself. The report identifies the fact that there are a number of “hot-spots” where the anti-social behaviour is most visible and suggest that an enhanced and re-focused event could help address some of these issues
- Need to widen the event beyond the City Centre – but ensuring linkages between local events and the City Centre event. The report reflects comments from local communities about their interest in celebrating St Patrick’s Day within their local area. However, it is recognised that, in order to maximise the economic impact of the event and attract external audiences, a flagship City Centre event is required
- Need to invest resources in the event in order to maximise economic return. Not all of the benchmarks spent significant amounts on their event. However, the report notes that many cities were successful in leveraging investment from the private sector and other statutory partners. It concludes that, in some cases, this meant that the main event always took place on a weekend day in order to maximise opportunities for spend
- Opportunity to expand the event, focusing on a range of activities including sport, arts and music. The report notes that, while there is usually one main event in each city, many of the locations programme activity of a weekend or even a week in order to maximise impact and promote engagement
- Need for partnership approach to maximise investment and impact: based on models from other cities – and based on approaches to successful events and activities in Belfast – the report proposes the need for a partnership structure to increase available budgets and to ensure effective planning and delivery.

3.12

The budget requirement for an event of this nature has not been detailed in the report. There is an assumption that the Council would need to at least retain the current level of investment through the main event (£140,000 budget) and the St Patrick’s Day grant activity (£30,000) and there would also be a need for additional investment for other programme elements including youth outreach programmes, dance and music events, arts and drama events and marketing support. Potential funding sources have not been identified but it is expected that these would have to come from a number of statutory partners, and possibly from the private sector as well. The budget allocated in the benchmark cities ranges significantly from £70,000 in Birmingham to more than €1million in Dublin.

3.13

Members will be aware that, at present, the main St Patrick’s Day event is organised by the Council’s City Events Team. This year, the event will comprise a parade that will start and finish at Writers’ Square after traversing City Hall, followed by a concert that will run until

3.14	<p>5pm. In addition to the main event, the Good Relations Unit administers a small grants scheme, allocating grants of up to £1,000 towards local events to celebrate St Patrick's Day. The total budget allocated to these events is £30,000.</p> <p>Members will also be aware that a review of Festivals and Events is currently underway. This review will consider the current level of investment in Festivals and Events and the alignment with key drivers, including the Belfast Agenda. An update on work to date was presented to the November meeting of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee and the final report will be presented to the Committee in February 2018. This report will take account of existing Festivals and Events activity including St Patrick's Day and will consider how the Council can invest its resources to ensure optimal return from such activities. Its recommendations will shape Council investment from the 2019/20 financial year onwards.</p> <p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>The current St Patrick's Day event is delivered by the City Events Unit at a cost of £140,000. This funding is approved as part of the Council's annual events programme delivered by the City Events Unit. The Good Relations Unit provides grants of up to £1,000 towards local events to celebrate St Patrick's Day. The total budget allocated to these events is £30,000.</p> <p><u>Equality and Good Relations Considerations</u></p> <p>No specific equality or good relations implications associated with this report.</p>
3.16	
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	Appendix 1: Executive summary of the report on St Patrick's Day Celebrations in Belfast.