



Title of Report:	Council Led Christmas Switch-Ons across the Borough in 2023
Committee Report Submitted To:	The Leisure & Development Committee
Date of Meeting:	20 June 2023
For Decision or For Information	For Decision

Linkage to Council Strategy (2021-25)	
Strategic Theme	Prosperity, Health & Wellbeing & Cohesive Community
Outcome	
Lead Officer	Tourism Events Manager Head of Tourism and Recreation

Budgetary Considerations	
Cost of Proposal	£96,000 (£60k ringfenced for the 4 legacy towns) Plus £15,000 budget for Festive Fund.
Included in Current Year Estimates	YES
Capital/Revenue	Revenue
Code	
Staffing Costs	n/a

Legal Considerations	
Input of Legal Services Required	YES/NO
Legal Opinion Obtained	YES/NO

Screening Requirements	Required for new or revised Policies, Plans, Strategies or Service Delivery Proposals.		
Section 75 Screening	Screening Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
	EQIA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
Rural Needs Assessment (RNA)	Screening Completed	Yes/No	Date:
	RNA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA)	Screening Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
	DPIA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:

1.0 Purpose of Report

The Purpose of this report is to present options for the delivery of pre- Christmas activities by the Councils Tourism and Recreation Events Team.

2.0 Background

At the Leisure and Development Committee meeting held on 21 February 2023, Council Officers presented options for the Council managed Tourism Events Programme. This included options for seasonal Christmas lights switch-ons. The recommendation from this report is detailed below:

'In relation to Christmas events; keep the 4 main towns as they are but relook at the format of the smaller events, reducing the target costs from the £5.5k/6k to £3.5k which would allow Council to increase the number of towns that host an event and the cost remains the same'.

2.1 Previous Arrangement

Since 2016 the Council agreed to provide Christmas festivities at the following settlements:

- Ballycastle
- Ballymoney
- Coleraine
- Dungiven
- Garvagh
- Kilrea
- Limavady
- Portrush
- Portstewart

This was based on each of the towns having a population in excess of 2500 people with the exception of Kilrea and Garvagh, which Elected Members chose to add as part of the recommendation. 2021 Settlement Figures have yet to be released through NISRA.

In addition to Council led activities, a small grants programme known as the Festive Fund Grant is administered for applications from community groups up to a maximum of £250 (total budget £15,000).

3.0 Options for Christmas 2023

3.1 4 Legacy Towns

At the February 2023 Leisure and Development Committee Meeting, Elected Members requested that the format for the towns of Ballycastle, Ballymoney, Limavady and Coleraine remains as per 2022.

The estimated budget to deliver on the above four towns is £60,000.

3.2 Smaller Settlements

Option 1

Based on the suggestion by Elected Members to spend £3,500 per smaller settlement, and a budget of approx. £36,000, 10 settlements could be included.

10 settlements (in addition to the 4 legacy towns), based on population size, 2011 census.

- Portstewart
- Portrush
- Dungiven
- Ballykelly
- Kilrea
- Greysteel
- Cloughmills
- Bushmills
- Castlerock
- Cushendall

£3,500 per small event x 10	=	£35,000
£15,000 per legacy town x 4	=	£60,000
£15,000 budget for Festive Fund	=	£15,000
		Total £110,000

Officers have evaluated what can be delivered in these settlements for a budget of £3,500 and believe that the quality of the experience will be of a very low level and that customer satisfaction will be severely compromised.

Councils capacity to deliver on 14 settlements in the lead up to Christmas, and directly after Halloween events, would also be a major factor both in terms of timings, costs and availability of staff including technical support.

Officers have estimated that the minimum expenditure required for the delivery of small settlement Christmas events, to a reasonable quality, is £5,500 per settlement.

Therefore based upon the perceived compromised experience and resource requirement, officers do not believe this is a viable option.

Option 2

Based on the Officers calculation of a need for a minimum budget of £5,500 per event for small settlements, then 6 small settlements can be accommodated within the budgets and resources. The below lists the most populated settlements in the Borough outside of the legacy towns of Coleraine, Ballycastle, Limavady and Ballymoney.

6 settlements (in addition to the 4 legacy towns), based on ranking of the most populated settlements (2011 census).

- Portstewart
- Portrush
- Dungiven
- Ballykelly
- Kilrea
- Greysteel

Minimum of £5,500 per small event x 6	=	£33,000
£15,000 per legacy town x 4	=	£60,000
£15,000 budget for Festive Fund	=	£15,000
		£108,000
Total		£108,000

Option 3

As per the recommendation of the February 2023 Leisure and Development Committee Meeting, that the format for the towns of Ballycastle, Ballymoney, Limavady and Coleraine remains as per 2022.

The estimated budget to deliver on the above four towns is £60,000. These events would be delivered by Council's Tourism Events team.

Develop new criteria (in conjunction with Council's Funding Unit) to extend the existing Festive Fund Grant to a two-tier funding programme, as follows:

Fund A

Settlements with an excess of 1,000 residents (Band G NISRA population settlements) can apply up to a maximum of £2,500 grant (maximum grant budget allocation £32,500).

Fund B

All other settlements, as defined by NISRA can apply up to a maximum of £750 grant (maximum grant budget allocation £18,500).

NB: £15,000 currently exists within the T&R budget for the Festive Fund Grant which would be incorporated into this option.

4.0 Summary

	Number of Settlements	Remarks	Budget per small event	Budget for 4 Legacy Towns	Festive Fund Grant	Total
Option 1	4+10	Ranking based on settlement population size	£3,500	£60,000	£15,000	£110,000
Option 2	4+6	Ranking based on settlement population size	£5,500	£60,000	£15,000	£108,000
Option 3	4 n/a	Grant Scheme	<u>Fund A</u> £2,500 per grant <u>Fund B</u> £750 per grant	£60,000	n/a	£111,000

5.0 Recommendation

It is recommended that the Leisure and Development Committee considers the Options detailed in this Report for the delivery of Council-led Christmas Switch-On events.

This will be based on the previous Council decision whereby the 4 Legacy Towns of Coleraine, Ballycastle, Limavady and Ballymoney are as before, and one of the other Options 1-3.