

**Manchester City Council
Report for Information**

Report to: Communities and Equalities Scrutiny – 7 November 2019

Subject: 2019 City Centre Festive Delivery Programme

Report of: The Strategic Director (Neighbourhoods)

Summary

The purpose of this report is to provide the Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committee with an update on the 2019 City Centre Festive Delivery Programme.

Recommendation

The Committee is requested to note the report.

Wards Affected: All

Manchester Strategy outcomes	Summary of how this report aligns to the OMS
A thriving and sustainable city: supporting a diverse and distinctive economy that creates jobs and opportunities	The Christmas offer has a considerable impact on the city's economic growth, creating job opportunities and bringing investment.
A highly skilled city: world class and home grown talent sustaining the city's economic success	The Christmas strategy supports the Council's Priority of economic growth. The markets continue to be a huge draw to the city, helping to attract people from beyond the city and supporting the Manchester economy.
A progressive and equitable city: making a positive contribution by unlocking the potential of our communities	The Christmas offer has an important role to play in seeking to ensure that the city develops and grows in a way that promotes an inclusive economy and an inclusive society.
A liveable and low carbon city: a destination of choice to live, visit, work	The Festive programme has environmental policies in place that build on the commitments made at Greater Manchester and city level to work to reduce carbon reductions and to become carbon neutral by 2038. The Christmas campaign encourages people to adapt low carbon practices and use public transport.
A connected city: world class infrastructure and connectivity to drive growth	The Christmas offer and campaign seeks to highlight the infrastructure and connectivity of the city to encourage visits, both other the Christmas period and in the future.

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Background documents (available for public inspection):

None

1.0 Context

- 1.1 Christmas is a key period in the City of Manchester's calendar and has evolved considerably over the past 20 years. The Christmas activity and installations create a positive impression and welcoming atmosphere enhancing the reputation of the City whilst driving economic growth.
- 1.2 The City Council's investment has to date served to position and profile Manchester as a major European City destination for the festive period, ensuring that the City provides an appropriate civic landscape that supports the retail, hospitality and cultural offer to deliver significant economic benefits whilst showcasing the City to local and International audiences. The Christmas experience across Europe continues to be a major factor in the economic activity of a City; Manchester has the potential to set the benchmark that other Cities aspire to and ultimately deliver a world-leading Christmas experience.
- 1.3 The 2019 City Centre Festive Offer has been strategically designed to maximise and improve the coordination of delivery and the commercial capabilities that arise from them. The primary issue has been the refurbishment of the Town Hall and subsequent loss of event space at Albert Square, which has had an impact on a number of the delivery elements of the festive programme offer. An update on each of the work streams has been outlined as part of this report.

2.0 Introduction

- 2.1 The 2019 Festive Manchester season will be launched on Friday 8th November with the opening of the award winning Christmas Markets, which is one of the largest in the UK, with nearly 350 stalls and chalets spanning 10 distinctive market sites across the City Centre attracting shoppers and visitors from all over the UK and beyond with an estimated boost to the economy of £40m. The Manchester Christmas Market Launch will also mark the opening of the City Centre Ice Village at Cathedral Gardens (Ice Rink, Ice Cavern, Ice Tiki Bar and Santa's Grotto).
- 2.2 Manchester's spectacular Christmas Light Switch on show is scheduled to take place at the new location of Deansgate / Victoria Street on Thursday 14th November. The Christmas Light Switch on show is free and un-ticketed and historically attracts in the region of 15,000 attendees, comprising primarily of families, adult groups and students. The festive season will be drawn to a close with a City Centre New Year fireworks display. This event is free and un-ticketed and is also attended by an audience of 15,000.
- 2.3 The communications strategy for 2019 is to create an engaging, multi-channel campaign to position Manchester as a family friendly city and promote Manchester's Christmas offer to Manchester and Greater Manchester residents and those that live up to two hours outside the City. The 2019 Christmas campaign will run as a standalone campaign for the third year, rather than a partnership campaign with CityCo, the Business Improvement District, TfGM and Marketing Manchester. Marketing Manchester, however,

will promote the Christmas offer via their channels and drive engagement from further afield. This approach has worked well for the last two years and has allowed greater focus on Council events and activities, directing people to manchester.gov.uk as the call to action.

2.4 The Christmas campaign takes on the form of a three phase campaign:

- Phase one - A campaign to promote the Switch On event.
- Phase two - A campaign to promote the main Christmas activity.
- Phase three - A campaign to promote the New Year's Eve firework event.

In addition, a short animation is being created for use on social media and digital channels.

2.5 The campaign objectives are to:

- Showcase Manchester's Christmas offer.
- Promote the City as a family-friendly destination.
- Encourage visits to the City Centre.
- Encourage attendance at key events and communicate the new locations (Switch-On, New Year and Piccadilly Gardens).
- Drive footfall and spend at Manchester Christmas Markets.
- Increase footfall and visitor numbers by attracting new visitors to the city, driving repeat visitors and increase the frequency of repeat visits.
- Promote the new Ice Village attraction (including: markets; ice cavern. and Tiki Bar attractions; ice rink and Santa's Grotto) and generate ticket sales.
- Drive traffic to www.manchester.gov.uk/Christmas to plan a visit.

3.0 Christmas Markets

3.1 The Town Hall redevelopment works and the loss of trading on Brazennose Street since activity was decommissioned in 2018 have resulted in a significantly reduced market offer. A strategy for the delivery of the Christmas Market offer has been carefully considered to reduce the financial pressure and the wider impact on the economy during the festive period. There was little apparent opportunity to make further substantial (above inflation) increases to rents from traders given the increases to date and the competition from both Liverpool and Birmingham.

3.2 The reduction of space due to the Town Hall redevelopment works has led to a reconfiguration of the Albert Square Christmas Market event space which will be the last year of operating on site until the refurbishment is complete. Closing and using the space on the road in front of Heron House has created more public space for ease of movement and improved customer experience around the market on the Square. This includes a four metre walk way on the inside of the National Barrier Asset running from the corner of John Dalton Street down Princess Street to the crossing at Clarence Street.

3.3 The specialist markets team continually look to refresh the trading opportunities each year allowing for new and exciting products from local

businesses such as Yard and Coop from the Northern Quarter and Lancashire based Lanx as well as new catering offers to include Chicken and Waffles, Bunzels and a New York sandwich deli. Losing some of the larger bars and food stalls has allowed the programme to have a more localised, specialised, varied offer and has created more open space on Albert Square. In conjunction with the Purple Tuesday campaign the market offer is creating a step change improvement in the awareness of the value of our disabled customers by gaining the commitment from our traders on Albert Square to open an hour earlier every other Tuesday starting from 12th November 2019. This extra hour will be advertised as part of the Purple Tuesday campaign and links in with a wider programme of delivery at Cathedral Gardens. The introduction of a 'priority table' at Cathedral Gardens and on New Cathedral Street and widened access to allow for greater movement in between market stalls has been designed into the delivery model.

- 3.4 The availability and size of space in the City Centre continues to be a challenge to host such events. Piccadilly Gardens was identified as the only viable location to displace some of the market offer loss from Albert Square. The introduction of a new market offer combined with a location to host some of the new Christmas Lighting features will enable the acceleration of a strong Christmas proposition creating a new festive destination and delivery model at Piccadilly Gardens that partially negates the loss from Albert Square. This delivery model will ensure a coordinated high profile event on site over a two month period, the increased footfall and heightened security 24/7 during the market operation is anticipated to result in a positive impact on the current social challenges that exist at Piccadilly Gardens. The extension of the market offer into Piccadilly Gardens has also allowed the programme to support the Manchester Youth Market Project which will see the introduction of six youth traders operating on a weekly basis. The young people will receive practical mentoring and management support during their operation with the objective to support them into a sustainable position to trade full time with the Specialist Markets Team.
- 3.5 With the help of CityCo, Manchester Markets have enlisted more local businesses to support the Loo scheme. To help service Albert Square both the Slug and Lettuce and Dutton's have agreed to be part of the scheme in 2019. This added to the agreements already in place with McDonalds, Marks and Spencer's and The Football Museum means the programme will have coverage across the length of the Christmas Markets. The new site in Piccadilly is serviced by a public toilet at the bus station, positive discussions with Debenhams are also taking place to add them to the loo scheme.
- 3.6 For the second year running the Manchester Christmas Markets will be running a no single use plastics policy. Traders have to prove that they have a sustainable environmental policy with regards to their utensils, packaging and waste disposal. Practical discussions with food waste projects such as 8th plate are also taking place to minimise the amount of unused produce being sent to landfill at the end of each trading day. This year, due to public feedback, there will be no animal fur based products on the Christmas Markets. This includes the banning of trading in previously allowed ethically

sourced fur and bi-products. The Festive programme will once again raise vital funds for the Big Change Campaign with cash collectors on site and coordinated bucket collections.

4.0 Family Focused Festive Attractions

- 4.1 The appeal for family focused festive attractions is evident from the recorded 100,000+ participating visits to the Ice Village attractions in 2018. The Ice Village 2019 programme will once again be hosted at Cathedral Gardens and will comprise of an Ice Rink, Ice Cavern, Ice Tiki Bar, Santa's Grotto and Manchester Market stalls. Hamilton Ice Sculptors will return to the site to operate the Ice Cavern and Ice Tiki Bar operations. Following a competitive procurement process, Arena (a global company with experience of large scale events) have been appointed as the new ice rink operators on site. Arena has committed to make their operations carbon negative (certification will be provided at the end of the project), they have engaged in a programme of planting trees as part of their carbon offsetting and following the footsteps of the Christmas Markets have committed to not use any single use plastic during their programme which will include the build and derig of their event. Furthermore, Arena will provide opportunities for work experience and development for Manchester residents, particularly homeless people and those not in education, employment or training. Their focus is on long term career development for their employees and opportunities to work at their other events around the UK and they have a clear strategy to target people for these opportunities.
- 4.2 The 2019 Ice Village will have an improved offering with a focus on attracting families with a quality and consistent offer. The Ice Village attractions will be bigger and better this year with an increased size to the ice cavern to accommodate more sculptures, the ice rink will also have a roof this year to encourage skating in all weather conditions. A programme of free family entertainment on site will also be delivered throughout the programme which includes a free to use 'selfie' producing campervan and entertainment including music artists, magicians and robo-tronics.
- 4.3 The family zone has been designed with accessibility for all in mind and initiatives offering free and discounted skating opportunities for Manchester's priority groups have been embedded into the programme. As part of the Purple Tuesday Campaign specific free skate sessions for participants with additional needs and free skate hire for carers throughout the programme have been included. Tailored sessions for parent and toddler and adapted autistic sessions as well as private usage for under privileged groups will also be offered. Targeted discounted sessions for military, NHS and emergency services have also been catered for as part of the event delivery programme.

5.0 Christmas Lighting Scheme

- 5.1 Over the past three decades Manchester's festive lighting offer has centred around three core elements: a large scale iconic Santa installation, lighting

installed in trees and temporary lighting features suspended from lighting columns and cross-street catenaries.

- 5.2 Manchester's City Centre has undergone significant change since the scheme was last tendered in 2010 and has been impacted by building development, Metrolink's second city crossing, the evolution of new City Centre areas and critically during the festive period, the expansion of the locations of the Christmas Markets and other associated festive activities.
- 5.3 The 2019 tender for a new lighting scheme offered the opportunity to review other leading European Cities and take into account the current and future Cityscape, creating a festive lighting strategy for Manchester that enhances the visitor experience, promoting a safe lit environment, increasing the dwell time of visitors in the City and in turn increasing spend in the local economy. The tender sought to consolidate the lighting offer, focusing on the delivery of a high quality, design led offer that utilises strategic locations in the City Centre to provide connection between the Christmas market sites and the main pedestrianised thoroughways.
- 5.4 The contract to design and install the core scheme of 92 lighting column mounts, 15 cross street catenaries and LED string lighting in 126 trees has been awarded to Blachere Illumination UK with prioritised installation areas on Deansgate through to Victoria Street/Cathedral Gardens and Market Street through to Piccadilly Gardens with connecting routes of Peter Street, John Dalton Street, King Street, St Ann's Street, St Mary's Gate, Cateaton Street and Cathedral Yard.
- 5.5 The core scheme encompasses the following environmental benefits:
 - Manchester will become the 1st city in the U.K to use a scheme predominantly made from biodegradable motifs with 75% of the product made from biodegradable elements.
 - The decorations will be made from organically sourced raw materials and recycled aluminum. The structure of the decorations is made of a revolutionary biodegradable material that is organically sourced, certified as GMO-free and made from sugar cane.
 - The use of energy saving LED technologies which last ten times longer and use a tenth of the electricity. 36km/22 miles of LED lighting has been installed in the 126 trees - equating to around 360,000 individual LEDs.
- 5.6 Separate to this core scheme, MK Illumination UK have been awarded the contract to design and supply eleven new ground level, large scale festive features - including a new ground level Santa and a 12m Christmas Tree - which will be positioned in Piccadilly Gardens, St Peter's Square, St Ann's Square and at Manchester Cathedral.
- 5.7 An additional lighting installation (provided by the inaugural Lightopia Festival - taking place in Heaton Park from November 22nd to December 31st) will augment the festive offer in Piccadilly Gardens.

6.0 Christmas Light Switch On and New Years Eve Celebrations

- 6.1 The redevelopment of the Town Hall means that Albert Square is not available to host the Christmas light switch on and New Year's Eve celebration events. The area of Deansgate / Victoria Street in the shadow of Manchester Cathedral has been identified as the only viable City Centre alternative that can deliver the current Albert Square event model to accommodate the 15,000+ attendees to each of the events.
- 6.2 The 2019 Switch On will take place on the evening of Thursday 14th November with a stage based show from 19:30 to 20:30 followed by a ten minute firework finale. Hosted by Hits Radio Breakfast's Fleur East, Greg and James, performers include Becky Hill, HVRY, Four of Diamonds, the Dance Academy and stage cast members of Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, SIX, Gypsy and Dr Seuss' How The Grinch Stole Christmas.

7.0 Conclusion

- 7.1 A number of improvements have been made to the 2019 Festive Programme which include a new Christmas lighting scheme, improved customer experience, enhanced family offer and wider variety of trading choices; all of which will attract additional footfall to the City and in turn boost the economy. The impact of loss of event space on Albert Square has been partially mitigated by the introduction of a new festive event space at Piccadilly Gardens and allows the opportunity to pilot the delivery model on site for future years.
- 7.2 The loss of Albert Square and the pressure of limited public space in the City will result in significant changes to the 2020 Festive Deliver Programme Coordination, exploratory work is currently being conducted to determine options.