

**City of Inverness Area Committee**

Minutes of the meeting of the **Events and Festivals Working Group** held in the Second Floor Committee Room, Inverness Town House, on Friday, 23 February 2024 at 10am.

**Highland Council:**

Mr I Brown  
Mrs J Hendry  
Mrs K MacLean

**Officials in Attendance:**

Mr D Haas, Senior Community Development Manager, Inverness & South  
Ms A MacNeill, Senior Public Relations Officer (remote)  
Ms F MacBain, Senior Committee Officer

**Also in Attendance:**

Ms K Raite, Inverness Events Manager  
Ms M Laws, Inverness Bid (remote)

**Mrs J Hendry in the Chair**

**1. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were intimated for Mr R MacKintosh and Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair.

**2. Exclusion of the Public**

Members **RESOLVED** that, under Section 50(A) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, the public be excluded from the meeting during discussion of the following items on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 6 and 9 of Part 1 of Schedule 7A of the Act.,

**3. Declarations of Interest**

There were none.

**4. Minutes of Previous Meeting**

There had been circulated and were **NOTED** the minutes of the previous meeting held on 18 January 2024.

**5. City Area Community Events Programme 23/24**

The Inverness Events Manager and the Senior Community Development Manager presented the plans for the Community Events Programme for the period up until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024 and beyond, including the links being made with other City Centre stakeholders, as follows:

**Highland Games Update**

- the site plan was circulated and explained, including entry and exit points for the public and for emergencies;
- capacity issues were summarised, including the possible use of a big top (the outcome of the grant application for which would be known at the end of March);
- traders and tenders;
- the website;
- tickets were due to go live for sale on 23 February 2024 at 5pm. Tickets would also be available on the day, as long as not sold out online, (although it was intended a limited number of tickets would be kept back for on the day sales);
- the evening Ceilidh Event;
- entertainment throughout the day, and costs;
- corporate hospitality would cost £750 for a table of ten;
- papers were circulated to Members with details of the sponsorship presentation. Potential sponsors were due to be contacted by the end of March 2024 and ideas for potential sponsors were sought;
- a Highland Games Committee meeting was scheduled for 11 March 2024; and
- agreement was sought and provided for the following additional proposals - a whisky cocktail bar, inclusion of pipe band and clans in the opening ceremony, and the purchase of card machines for CGF events, as it was more economical than hiring them.

During discussion, the following issues were considered:

- the Inverness Events Manager was congratulated following the extension of her contract for a further year, and thanked for her work to date;
- discussion took place on the technicalities and challenges of a hosting a concert on the Friday evening, which would be planned to be at least cost-neutral to the CGF, and to the possibility of attracting a celebrity to attend the Games. The link with local culture for the grant application for the big top was emphasised;
- consideration was given to the additional infrastructure and security required for a significantly larger than anticipated crowd. It was hoped that early ticket sales would give an indication of predicted sales numbers;
- information was provided on early publicity that had been undertaken;
- an application to the Guinness Book of Records for the world's largest ceilidh was still possible but was pending the outcome of the grant application for the big top;
- the sale of Games merchandise was considered, but would require investment in stock, infrastructure to store and sell the stock, and administration. Further consideration would be given to running a pilot to find out how profitable it could be;
- agreement was sought and provided that alternative options for the printing of the Games programme, including the provision of sponsorship in kind, would be explored. Contact details for the printers used by the Council through the Scottish Government print framework could be obtained from Corporate Communications; and
- the colour run would not be able to go ahead in 2024 due to infrastructure work taking place around the site.

Members:

- i. **NOTED** the updates; and

- ii. **AGREED** the actions detailed during discussion, and that the City Area Manager and Events Manager would give the Provost, Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair, a separate briefing as she had been unable to join the meeting due to technical difficulties.

### **Other Events**

**Red Hot Highland Fling** - preliminary work was being undertaken, including feedback and learning points from the previous event.

**Bonfire Night** – discussions were underway with Firework Scotland.

**Christmas Lights Switch On** - The Senior Community Development Manager referred to public expectation for a traditional event outside the Town House, but the relatively high costs to provide this were summarised and, given the current budget situation, it was unlikely a comprehensive event of this kind could be provided that would fulfil expectations. Alternative possibilities were suggested and considered, including the involvement of Inverness BID businesses, and Community Councils. It was pointed out that many towns across the UK did not do Christmas Light Switch Ons. Attention was drawn to the Christmas lights which had been used at Belfield Park in previous years and whether these could be reused, possibly incorporated with a small Christmas market. The Senior Community Development Manager asked Margaret Laws to contact the CGF admin staff with a view to BID representatives being invited to the Christmas market meeting that was scheduled. It was pointed out that Christmas markets could impact negatively on existing traders. A request was made for consideration to be given to reinstating the light-up reindeer on Castle Street, but there were some challenges around electrical safety.

Members **AGREED** further consideration be given to the issues raised during discussion, as detailed, in particular the option of presenting local communities through community councils and Inverness BID with the opportunity to get involved with the festive lights switch on.

## **6. Budget – Update – 2023/24**

Further information on confirmed costs for the Highland Games would be available for the next meeting, as many were not yet finalised. The current budget situation was summarised.

Some costs from 2023-24 were one-off, for example the development of the website. Assurance was sought that access to website and social media usernames and passwords were logged with the Council's ICT. It was explained that this was managed through Adder.

The Events Manager left the meeting briefing while the Senior Community Development Manager provided Members with a summary of the costs of the Event Manager position and how this function had been formally procured.

Members:

- i. **NOTED** the information provided;
- ii. **AGREED** the Senior Community Development Manager would present the significant one-off event costs separately for the Inverness City and Area Committee, and that the staff costs would be shown separately to

- the cost of the Events Manager, taking necessary steps to ensure commercial confidentiality was respected; and
- iii. **AGREED** the Events Manager would ensure Adder provided all ICT usernames and passwords to the City Area Manager for lodging them with the Council's ICT and Corporate Communications departments, as appropriate.

## **7. Date of Next Meeting**

Members **NOTED** that the date of the next meeting would be Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> April 2024 at 10am at Council Headquarters, to facilitate the proper use of MS Teams for those connecting remotely.

## **8. Additional Business**

**Events and Festivals Annual Report** - it was **AGREED** that as the minutes and budget details from the Working Group were provided to the City of Inverness and Area Committee for scrutiny, there was no need to provide a separate annual report, at this time. This was in the context of one off reports being presented should any unforeseen risks be forthcoming such as was action in respect of the charging for entry to the Red Hot Highland Fling.

The meeting ended at 12.05pm