

<b>Title of Report:</b>  <b>Christmas Switch On Date change</b>	<b>Officer Presenting: Head of Culture</b>  <b>Author: Festival and Events Manager, Marketing Manager</b>
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## **1 Purpose of Report/Recommendations**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update members on the planned Christmas programme for Christmas 2019 and to seek approval for the changing of date for the annual Christmas Switch On event in the city.

## **2 Background**

- 2.1 Derry City and Strabane's Christmas programming will begin in 2019 with the Craft fair weekend on 23-24 November and continue through to 20th December 2019 focusing on weekends throughout this period. The Christmas Marketing Campaign will begin in early October.
- 2.2 The proposed Christmas programme is designed to develop a unique offering drawing on the district's rich built and cultural heritage through working in partnership with council departments and district wide businesses and cultural providers.
- 2.3 Programming is focused on bringing communities together, creating the space for shared inclusive celebration. Quality programming and a well-developed bespoke local offering with a strong marketing campaign of extensive reach aim to maximise the economic opportunities of the period.

## **3 Key Issues**

- 3.1 It is proposed for the 2019 Christmas activity that the traditional day for the Christmas Switch On event be changed from a Thursday to a Sunday (24<sup>th</sup> November). This is in order to encourage more shoppers and visitors to the city centre over the weekend. Council officers have been working closely with City Centre Initiative on developing this idea and a survey of their members has been undertaken to gauge their views on this change which had a resounding favorable response with the retail sector in the city.

3.2 The Switch On date being proposed will also coincide with the last day of the annual craft fair which in 2018 saw over 3,500 visitors come into the city centre over that weekend. It is hoped that by having the two events coincide with one another there would be a mutual benefit to each other and that a stronger programming offer would attract more visitors to the city. The Strabane Christmas Switch on will continue to be held on a Saturday (23<sup>rd</sup> November).

#### **4 Financial, Equality, Legal, HR, Improvement, Rural Needs and other Implications**

4.1 The annual Christmas Switch On Budget in the city is £25,000, this will remain the same in 2019. The date change has no impact on the budget.

#### **5 Recommendations**

5.1 It is recommended that members approve proposed date change arrangements as set out above.