

Notice of:	Deputy Leader of the Council (Place and Tourism)
Decision Number:	PH16/2020
Relevant Officer:	Alan Cavill, Director of Communication and Regeneration
Relevant Cabinet Member:	Councillor Gillian Campbell, Deputy Leader (Place and Tourism)
Date of Decision:	19 February 2020

SWITCH-ON AND SLIMEFEST EVENTS 2020-2022

1.0 Purpose of the report:

- 1.1 To agree the award of services for the Switch-On and SLIMEFEST events for 2020, 2021 and 2022 to Nickelodeon UK Limited.

2.0 Recommendation(s):

- 2.1 To treat this direct award as a dispensation from standard Contract Procedure Rules (CPR) because of the specialist nature of the type of services required for these events.
- 2.2 To agree a three-year deal with Nickelodeon UK Limited for the provision of the annual Switch-On weekend events, six SLIMEFEST shows and associated TV coverage.

3.0 Reasons for recommendation(s):

- 3.1 These are specialised events which require production of broadcast quality.

Nickelodeon UK Limited has a proven track record in producing such events using its long-established international brands (Nickelodeon and MTV) that are capable of attracting large-scale media and public interest, and also generating associated TV coverage and programming that promotes Blackpool as a family destination to a UK-wide audience.

A direct award also ensures that costs are contained within the Budget plan for the service.

- 3.2a Is the recommendation contrary to a plan or strategy adopted or approved by the Council?

No

- 3.2b Is the recommendation in accordance with the Council's approved

budget?

Yes

3.3 Other alternative options to be considered:

To find an alternative media partner capable of producing high-quality shows that enable the Council to achieve its associated income targets as well as generating the same level of TV coverage and programming that promotes the destination to a UK-wide audience.

To undertake a tender exercise which would not guarantee that the contract would be awarded to a media partner would could deliver the Council's objectives. The risk management issues of this approach are outlined in paragraphs 10.1-10.3 below.

4.0 Council Priority:

4.1 The relevant Council Priority is:

'The Economy: Maximising growth and opportunity across Blackpool'.

5.0 Background Information

5.1 Through its tourism arm, VisitBlackpool, the Council has worked with Nickelodeon UK Ltd and its parent company, Viacom, for four years. Over the past three years, there has been a formal agreement in place for Viacom to produce the annual Switch-On event at the start of the Illuminations season and six ticketed SLIMEFEST events during October half term.

5.2 This partnership agreement comes with a wrap-around offer incorporating TV advertising, social media and PR that ensures that Blackpool is extensively marketed as a family destination across the Nickelodeon channels throughout the summer and autumn period. In addition, the SLIMEFEST events provide a 45-minute programme which is broadcast on Nick channels. In future years, it is proposed that this will also be broadcast on Channel 5, giving significantly greater exposure to Blackpool.

5.3 Over the three previous years, this agreement has been extremely successful. Through the association with the MTV brand, the Switch-On event attracts more than 100,000 applications for tickets each year and the quality of the show has enabled VisitBlackpool to introduce a paid-for "Golden Circle" which derives an income to offset against the costs of producing the Switch-On event.

5.4 The six SLIMEFEST shows, which are staged at Pleasure Beach, have sold out within days of going on sale in each of the three years, attracting an audience from throughout the UK and providing a significant boost to the resort's visitor economy. The resultant programme on Nick channels is consistently the most watched children's show.

5.5 Does the information submitted include any exempt information? No

5.4 **List of Appendices:**

None.

6.0 **Legal considerations:**

6.1 This paper seeks a dispensation from the standard CPR arrangements. It is officers' view that a direct award is applicable in this case because of the specialist nature of the shows and associated TV production. This is referenced in Clause 10 (1) (b) of the PSC Regulations 2015 which states that there is specific exclusion if the production of the material is for audiovisual media services.

6.2 Partnering with world-leading media companies such as MTV and Nickelodeon gives Blackpool an international profile and provides the resort with an invaluable broadcast presence among its core family audience across the UK.

7.0 **Human Resources considerations:**

7.1 None

8.0 **Equalities considerations:**

8.1 None

9.0 **Financial considerations:**

9.1 The Switch-On weekend and SLIMEFEST shows are a part of the VisitBlackpool major events programme and the costs and income are contained within the Budget plan for the service.

9.2 Officers will continue to monitor the income and expenditure, and the contract is subject to an annual review at the end of each cycle of events.

10.0 **Risk management considerations:**

10.1 The Council must engage with a broadcast provider to deliver Switch-On and SLIMEFEST as this delivers the best impact and return for these events. Reducing the profile and audience reach of either event will have a damaging and reputational effect on Blackpool's tourism economy.

10.2 Previous experience of dealing with other event partners shows that there is limited ability to guarantee TV coverage of Blackpool to a national audience; hence, the risk of challenge is low.

10.3 The reason the Council is making this a direct award is referenced in Clause 10 (1) (b) of the PSC Regulations 2015 which states that there is specific exclusion if the production of the material is for audiovisual media services.

11.0 Ethical considerations:

11.1 None.

12.0 Internal/ External Consultation undertaken:

12.1 None.

13.0 Background papers:

13.1 None.

14.0 Key decision information:

14.1 Is this a key decision? No

14.2 If so, Forward Plan reference number:

14.3 If a key decision, is the decision required in less than five days? No

14.4 If **yes**, please describe the reason for urgency:

15.0 Call-in information:

15.1 Are there any grounds for urgency, which would cause this decision to be exempt from the call-in process? No

15.2 If **yes**, please give reason:

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16.0 Scrutiny Committee Chairman (where appropriate):

Date informed: N/A Date approved: N/A

17.0 Declarations of interest (if applicable):

17.1 None.

18.0 Executive decision:

18.1 The Deputy Leader agreed the recommendations as outlined above namely:

1. To treat this direct award as a dispensation from standard Contract Procedure Rules (CPR) because of the specialist nature of the type of services required for these events.
2. To agree a three-year deal with Nickelodeon UK Limited for the provision of the annual Switch-On weekend events, six SLIMEFEST shows and associated TV coverage.

18.2 Date of Decision:

19 February 2020

19.0 Reason(s) for decision:

These are specialised events which require production of broadcast quality.

Nickelodeon UK Limited has a proven track record in producing such events using its long-established international brands (Nickelodeon and MTV) that are capable of attracting large-scale media and public interest, and also generating associated TV coverage and programming that promotes Blackpool as a family destination to a UK-wide audience.

A direct award also ensures that costs are contained within the Budget plan for the service.

19.1 Date Decision published:

19 February 2020

20.0 Executive Members in attendance:

20.1

21.0 Call-in:

21.1

22.0 Notes:

22.1