

Title of meeting: Cabinet Member for Culture and City Development

Date of meeting: 20 March 2020

Subject: Great South Run Contract

Report by: Director of Culture, Leisure and Regulatory Services

Wards affected: All

Key decision: No

Full Council decision: No

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 To outline to the Cabinet Member the proposal for new contract between the Council and Nova International following the completion of the current contract to deliver the Great South Run after the 2020 event.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That officers are authorised to enter into negotiations with Nova International to continue to hold the Great South Run in Portsmouth with a new contract in order to retain this iconic event in the city.**

3. Background

- 3.1 The Great South Run started life in Southampton in 1990 as the Diet Coke Great South run (as it was known) attracting 2,500 entries before moving to Portsmouth 12 months later where it will have been held for the past 30 years after the delivery of the 2020 event. The fast flat route has now become an international gold standard where, with the support of prevailing winds in the right direction it has given thousands of people the opportunity to achieve a personal best time as well as fundamentally encouraging participation in mass physical activity.
- 3.2 This 10 mile event attracts a wide range of participants from the international athletics elite to the charity fundraisers with this mid distance event supporting runners as they progress from the 10km routes up to the half marathon. As a renowned European IAAF Gold Label Road Race the event attracts some of the most successful professional runners with world class athletes such as Sonia O'Sullivan, Paula Radcliffe and Mo Farah to name but a few.
- 3.3 The event is however primarily structured as a mass participation event where it has regularly achieved its capacity of around 25,000 participants and the necessary

infrastructure is now firmly established to both provide the maximum enjoyment for participants as well as minimal disruption to the city on this closed road course.

- 3.4 The Council's role in supporting the delivery of the event has changed significantly since it first took place in Portsmouth in 1991. At the outset all applications were paper based and were processed by PCC staff. The event overall has benefited tremendously from the introduction of new technologies over the years and the impact for participants has been a far more efficient application and registration system.
- 3.5 The event has also continued to maintain and develop a wider range of shorter distance participatory events which take place along sections of the longer event course the Saturday before the Great South Run. These currently consist of a series of 5k, junior (2.5k), mini (1.5k) and since 2018 a dog race for speedy dogs and their owners. This expansion of the events using the overarching infrastructure and much of the scenic flat course has been aimed at encouraging those who have been intimidated by the 10 mile distance of the main event by offering a more manageable option for those new to running or getting back into training after some time off so linking further to the Council's priorities around health and well being.
- 3.6 As well as the core events over the weekend of the Great South Run, Portsmouth also hosts a Great Run Local event on a weekly basis on a Sunday morning in the north of the city. Supported by trained volunteers these events encourage active participation over either a 2k and 5k course which is timed with progress being monitored through a unique mobile app for all participants. The very active volunteer team in Portsmouth has supported in excess of 25,000 participants in activity since the event commenced in 2015 with 944 people participating in January 2020 alone despite the poor weather again illustrating a commitment to providing opportunities to help the Council meet the health and wellbeing priorities.
- 3.7 Traditionally the large-scale Great South Run event has been successful in securing live TV coverage which it has had since 2008. Whilst originally on Channel 4 the event has been broadcast on Channel 5 in recent years. With the event occurring often in beautiful autumn sunshine this has provided a unique opportunity to showcase the city and all the key seafront and heritage assets to an international television audience.
- 3.8 In 2013 Nova International commissioned a repeat piece of research on the Great South Run following on from their 2008 research which, whilst slightly dated still provides some indication of the greater value of the event to the city. Some of the core statistics illustrate:
- Growth of the Total Economic Impact of the event from £933,000 in 2008 to £3.3 million in 2013
 - Growth in accommodation needs with 57% of those needing accommodation in 2013 staying in Portsmouth
 - 54% of all runners were raising money for charitable causes

We would very much hope to be able to repeat this research at least one further time should a new contract be agreed to enable a comparison to be made to these earlier figures as we are confident the overall value of the event has grown significantly.

- 3.9 Nova International Limited occupies the position of the UK's largest mass participation running event provider. The group has executed a growth strategy by expanding running events into new cities and extending the breadth of events offered. As such the stability of the Nova group has grown significantly since PCC first entered into a contract with them.
- 3.10 Nova International Limited is the event management arm of Nova Marketing Limited. The company was originally set up in 1988 and Brendan Foster remains on the board of all key Nova companies. They stage a portfolio of 'Great' Run, Swim and SwimRun events across the UK. The company have previously had a range of sponsorship deals with companies such as BUPA and Simply Health to support their run programme with separate deals to support their swim activities.
- 3.11 Since 2013, Nova International has remained focused on its core business of staging running events with new events and events in new geographical locations being launched. However the core of the Great North Run and the Great South Run are still fundamental to their successful offer and it is interesting to note that some of the range of other runs they developed out of the post 2012 Olympic peak of activities have not remained on their calendar.
- 3.12 Whilst some cities have developed a series of larger capacity events over a number of different dates the consolidation of our events over one weekend seems to work well for Portsmouth in both maximising participation whilst being sensitive to potential business disruption to organisations adjacent to the course. The role of the Great Run Local also then supports the desire to get more people active on a more regular basis and dovetails well with the Park Run offers which occur on Saturdays.
- 3.13 We are aware that participation in endurance events in on the up and running is by far the most popular activity with an estimated 800,000+ running events held in the UK every year. The London Marathon, the UK's flagship event, regularly received entries from up to 300,000 for the 40,000 places on the start line. As a result we have also seen the participation run market growing in Portsmouth and it now includes fun/beginning runs, (Park Run, Run Local offered by Nova International Limited), endurance/mud runs (Pretty Muddy), and unique runs (Santa Fun Run, Colour runs).
- 3.14 All elements of the Great Run offer have a significant dependence and opportunity for volunteering. Great Run Local can only take place due to the dedication and support of trained volunteers who give up time on a weekly basis to support the Hilsea event. Additionally the main events over the October weekend also have a significant role for volunteers. The 2019 event was supported by just under 350 volunteers throughout the course in a wide range of roles, which we anticipate will continue going forward.

4. Reasons for recommendations

- 4.1 During 2019 officers worked with Procurement services to undertake a strategic review of the value of the contract to allow some element of comparison with similar scale events in Newcastle, Birmingham and Manchester. It became apparent through this process that different cities take a different approach with their contract awards with some undertaking a competitive tender process whilst others do a direct award.
- 4.2 Officers believe that whilst the cost of the event to the Council is substantial that there is some ability to negotiate to reduce the current fee level to acknowledge a number of factors. Portsmouth does represent Nova International's third most valuable city, in respect of the total income generated from ticket sales and from marketing behind Newcastle and Manchester respectively. It is also noted that PCC's spend per head per participant is second lowest to Newcastle only across all their events.
- 4.3 We anticipate through a review of operations and Nova's work we can reduce the current costs of the contract to the Council, which would be strengthened, with a longer-term contract. We are seeking authority to negotiate a 7+3 year deal as we believe this will put us in a stronger position and enable PCC to take a medium term view on how this decision can impact and make a positive contribution to the city's priorities around health & wellbeing.
- 4.4 We are also aware that the overall value of the TV sports coverage will change through the period of this proposed new contract. More significant sports events are moving to a pay-to-view and streaming option and therefore we do not anticipate that the current live TV coverage to exist in the same way within 3 - 5 years due to the changing nature of sports broadcasting.

5. Integrated impact assessment

- 5.1 An Integrated Impact Assessment is attached.

6. Legal implications

- 6.1 It is unclear from the report what the "value" of the contract opportunity is for the purposes of providing advice in terms of required process (in line with the Council's contract procedure rules and the Public Contract Regulations 2015). Once further information is obtained - legal advice can be provided as to viable routes to market and engagement with Nova.
- 6.2 In the event that a decision is made to directly award the new contract, the rationale for taking such a course of action must be recorded in a waiver.
- 6.3 In addition, consideration will have to be given as to whether any licences will be required for rights over land, and that steps are taken to implement a suitable traffic management plan.

- 6.4 The Highways PFI contract and team will need to be engaged to ensure any liaison procedure is invoked to allow for any on boarded contractor to liaise with Ensign re delivery of Service specification as necessary.

7. Director of Finance's comments

- 7.1 As discussed within this report at paragraph 4.3, there is an expectation that the contract payment to Nova International will reduce. This saving will remain in the Events budget, providing financial support to other initiatives in the City.

.....
Signed by:
Stephen Baily
Director of Culture, Leisure and Regulatory Services

Appendices:

Appendix 1: Integrated Impact Assessment

Background list of documents: Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972

The following documents disclose facts or matters, which have been relied upon to a material extent by the author in preparing this report:

Title of document	Location
BUPA Great South Run 2013-2017	BUPA Great South Run 2013 - 2017 Report

The recommendation(s) set out above were approved/ approved as amended/ deferred/ rejected by on

.....
Signed by:
Cabinet Member for Culture and City Development