

**Adults, Leisure and Culture
Select Committee**

Review of Festivals



March 2007

Adults, Leisure and Culture Select Committee
Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
Municipal Buildings
Church Road
Stockton-on-Tees
TS18 1LD

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SELECT COMMITTEE – MEMBERSHIP

Councillor Fletcher (Chair)
Councillor Smith (Vice-Chair)

Councillor Cherrett
Councillor Dixon
Councillor Faulks
Councillor Frankland
Councillor Miss Inman
Councillor Laing
Councillor Lynch
Councillor Mrs Norton
Councillor Perry
Councillor Rix
Councillor Womphrey

Diocesan Representatives:
Mr A Maxwell
One Vacancy

Parent Governor Representatives:
(when considering education matters)
Mr P Beach
Mr R Cash

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Committee thank the following contributors to this review.

Mr R Kench, Head of Arts and Culture, SBC
Ms S Burgess, Town Centre Manager
Ms S MacNab, Senior Finance Technician
Mr J McCann, Head of Direct Services
Mr C Watson, Markets and Town Centre Management Officer
Mr M Robinson, Executive Director, Arts Council England (North East)
Mr J Maloney, Festival Director, BIFF
Mrs O Maloney, Artistic Director, BIFF
Alderman Mrs M Taylor MBE, Chair of BIFF
Stockton Market Traders
Stockton Borough Council's Disability Advisory Group

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Foreword

Every summer our Borough is enlivened by two international festivals – very different, but both celebrating arts and the diversity of our world family.

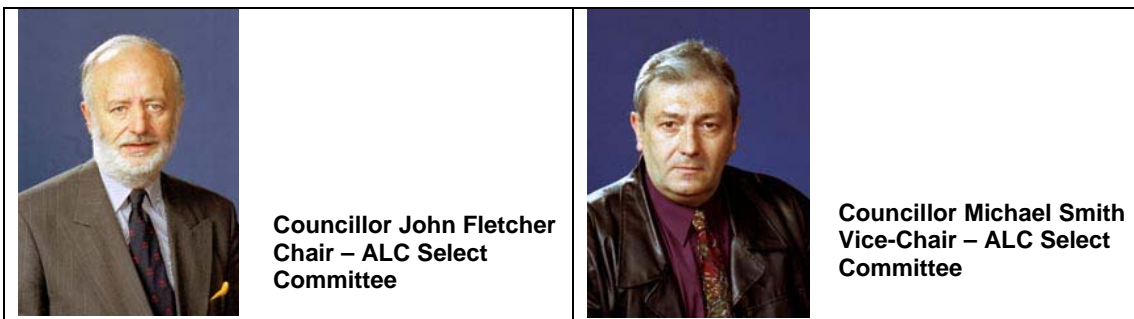
Billingham International Folklore Festival depends on an army of volunteers, supported by Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council and external sponsors and grant-makers. Stockton International Riverside Festival is wholly the Council's responsibility, with help from external bodies. In view of the tremendous amount of time and money dedicated to these two festivals, it is only right that we scrutinise the Riverside Festival and the Council's contribution to the Folklore Festival.

The Council's expenditure on both festivals is under discretionary powers. This Committee has not taken a view on the festivals' overall cost to the Council, competing for scarce resources against other demands, but I hope that this Report will help to inform Members when making future decisions.

We were sorry that the Scrutiny Officer who started this work, was prevented by sick leave from continuing it. Inevitably, this has resulted in revisions to our programme and procedures – perhaps these gave us an inkling of how often organisers of festivals have to revise their best-laid plans! Lessons learnt from all this about scrutiny processes will be reported to the Executive Scrutiny Committee.

In commending this Report to all Members and the recommendations to Cabinet, I would like to thank all Members, Officers and other participants who contributed, especially Graham Birtle, who, with help from Judith Trainer, achieved the near-impossible in writing this Report by the original target date.

John Fletcher
Chairman of Adults, Leisure & Culture Select Committee
28th March 2007



Original Brief

Which of our strategic corporate objectives does this topic address?

Healthier Communities and Adults: Extend the range and quality of opportunities for people to experience culture and leisure

Children and Young people: Enjoy and achieve: Increase the range of accessible culture/leisure and sporting activities available for children and young people

Economic Regeneration and Transport: Revitalise the Borough's town centres to develop a sense of pride in the wider community

What are the main issues?

Providing direction on the balance between innovative & avant-garde acts and those that will have broad-based mass appeal

What is the impact on and interaction with all users of the Town Centre (market traders, bus and taxi operators, town centre visitors)

Value for money issues – to include full audit of finances provided to BIFF by SBC.

Council's contribution to all partnerships (BIFF, SIRF sub contractors) – are partnership objectives being met? Are there ways in which the Council could help partners meet their objectives in a more effective manner

The Thematic Select Committee's overall AIM in doing this work is:

To maximise the potential capacity of all partnerships involved in delivery of festivals

The main OBJECTIVES are:

To suggest updates needed to SBC festival policy

To learn lesson in partnership working generally (BIFF, contractors)

To eliminate difficulties experienced previously in delivery of festivals

The possible OUTPUTS (changes in service delivery) are:

To improve the process and relationships between the agencies involved

The desirable OUTCOMES (benefits to the community) are:

Better festival experience for all attenders

Better Value for Money and greater accountability

Increased involvement /participation from the local communities

Improved impact on image

What specific value can scrutiny add to this topic?

Fresh look at the two major festivals

Whom will the panel be trying to influence as part of their work?

Billingham International Folklore Festival (BIFF) Committee, partner organisations, Cabinet, Council, Conseil International des Organisations de Festivals de Folklore et d'Arts Traditionnels (COIFF), Home Office

What secondary/existing information do we need? (include here background information, existing reports, updated reports, legislation, central government documents, etc.)

SBC Festival Policy, Regional Cultural Strategy, Tees Valley Cultural Strategy, Cabinet Report - SIRF Review), Information gathered by SBC from SIRF 2006 & BIFF, Arts Council of Northern England report on BIFF, SBC Audit Reports, MORI results, Viewpoint Panel results, Rocket Science feedback after events

What primary/new evidence/information do we need?

Written & oral evidence from: BIFF Committee, SBC Head of Arts & Culture & Arts Manager, SBC Officers involved in troubleshooting (Head of Direct Services), Further evidence from market traders, bus operators and taxi providers
Comparative work – other festivals, feedback from sub-contractors

Who can provide us with further relevant evidence? (Cabinet Member/portfolio holder, officer, service user, general public, expert witness, etc.)

Head of Arts & Culture / Arts Manager – General outline of SBC festival policy, information relating to SIRF

Cabinet Member – Information relating to SBC Policy on festivals & festival partnerships

Corporate Director – Strategic direction of the Council in relation to provision of cultural services

Head of Direct Services – Information relating to problems encountered during previous festivals

BIFF Committee - BIFF Committee – Information relating to running of BIFF, partnership arrangements with the Council and financial accounts

Town Centre Manager – To discuss the impact of the festival on the running of the Town Centre

Markets Manager - To discuss the impact of the festival on market trading

Arts Council of England North East – To discuss the regional approach to provision of cultural services and guidance on festival policy

Market Traders, Bus & Taxi Providers – Town centre usage

How will we monitor progress and measure the success of the review?

Project planning
Monitoring report

1.0 Executive Summary

- 1.1 SIRF (Stockton International Riverside Festival), as an increasingly identifiable brand, is able to attract companies to premiere works of street theatre, dance, music, and comedy with the confidence that they tend to receive a good reception when launching new and innovative material.
- 1.2 In contrast, Billingham International Folklore Festival (BIFF) is the largest traditional international dance and music festival in the UK presenting a variety of world class traditional cultures to a British audience.
- 1.3 Although SIRF appears to attract most attention the Committee believe the continuation of BIFF is an important element for Billingham and the district as a whole and wishes to see it develop. The Committee therefore feels that increased links to SIRF can only benefit BIFF and may provide renewed impetus and funding opportunities into such a long-standing and well developed festival.
- 1.4 During SIRF a number of market traders in Stockton town centre experience problems due to the displacement of market stalls and evidence given to the Committee suggested that SIRF coincides with best trading period for market stall holders. The Committee was keen to get a better understanding of the views of market traders about SIRF so a questionnaire was developed to ascertain their opinions. The results can be found at appendix 1.
- 1.5 Bus routes are affected and must change to accommodate road closures. This is further exacerbated by the closure of Stockton High Street which operates as a bus interchange in the absence of a bus station. The diversion of buses away from the High Street can confuse passengers trying to find their bus.
- 1.6 Community engagement is a major feature of both international festivals as the festivals offer a celebration of diversity and foster improved understanding between communities of different national backgrounds.
- 1.7 SIRF achieves a 98 per cent satisfaction rating and of the 71 per cent who had attended previous years festivals 60 per cent have visited every or most years. 56 per cent of festival visitors when asked stated there was nothing they disliked about the festival.
- 1.8 Inclement weather presents a lot of problems for outdoor events. Both SIRF and BIFF were affected in 2006.
- 1.9 SIRF continues to grow with the added inclusion of local participants. 2006 saw the highest number of active participants for the Carnival and Parade representing every postcode in the district.

- 1.10 BIFF recognises the opportunities to develop the festival with the active involvement of local people. The Committee was therefore interested to learn more about the initiatives that exist as well as those being considered as part of the development of the festival.
- 1.11 The Committee supports the initiatives and hard work of officers that is attempting to increase the interest of media outlets outside the Tees Valley thereby increasing the awareness and raising the profile of SIRF.



2.0 Introduction

- 2.1 Stockton's International Riverside Festival (SIRF) was launched in 1987 and this year will celebrate its 20th anniversary.
- 2.2 Held over a 5 – 7 day period culminating on the first weekend in August it creates the opportunity to watch or participate in high quality performing arts from around the world.
- 2.3 All SIRF programme events are free and are concentrated in the centre of Stockton, primarily in the High Street, Parish Gardens, Trinity Grounds, Riverside and Church Road Plaza.
- 2.4 The core aims of the Festival include:
 - Establishing a sense of pride in the area;
 - Creating a positive image of the Tees Valley; and
 - Utilising the Festival as a driver for regeneration.
- 2.5 Overall satisfaction for the Festival has risen each year (2004 – 90%; 2005 – 92%; 2006 – 98%) with the Town Hall stage providing the shows with the highest positive rating (42.4%).
- 2.6 Following the introduction of a parade in 2005 participation of local people in the Festival (carnival and parade) has increased 167% since 2003 (738 participants in 2006).
- 2.7 Greater links are now being considered between SIRF and Billingham International Folklore Festival (BIFF), two nationally recognised outdoor events presenting dance, music and theatre from overseas artists and communities.
- 2.8 BIFF has run for 42 years having formed in 1965 by a partnership between Billingham Urban District Council and voluntary organisations in Billingham.
- 2.9 In its time BIFF has played host to over 15,000 international artists from 88 countries and is attended by approximately 10,000 paying customers to events whilst approximately 30,000 people watch the Festival parades and fireworks.
- 2.10 BIFF is an International Council of Organisations of Folklore Festivals and Folk Art (CIOFF) event which means that:
 - The Festival has to run annually for at least 8 days;
 - The Festival has to feature at least 5 international groups from at least 3 continents;
 - The groups invited to the Festival have to perform their traditional songs, music and dances in authentic, elaborate or stylised form; and
 - Any deviations from the above rules would lead to a festival losing its CIOFF status.
- 2.11 The main concerts during the 8 day Festival are held in either the Forum Theatre (7 concerts) or the Town Centre Arena (9 concerts) whilst a number of other events also take place. These include a children's club, a youth dance workshop, and adult dance course as well as fringe events that provide voluntary and community organisations access to the international groups.



3.0 Evidence/Findings

Acts – innovative & avant-garde vs popular & mass appeal

SIRF

- 3.1 SIRF, as an increasingly identifiable brand, is able to attract companies to premiere works of street theatre, dance, music, and comedy with the confidence that they tend to receive a good reception when launching new and innovative material.
- 3.2 The commissioning and production of new work is welcomed within the artistic establishment with, for example, the Arts Council of England providing new and additional funding to facilitate the development of original and contemporary works.
- 3.3 Although public awareness of acts appearing at SIRF may be limited the appeal to the public is not. SIRF enjoys good attendance levels across the full range of event sites and times and satisfaction levels reached record levels in 2006 with 98 per cent of survey respondents stating they were satisfied (or better).
- 3.4 The international aspect of SIRF continues to grow especially with opportunities afforded by a cultural exchange project with Beijing which it is expected will continue to develop up to the Olympic Games in 2008.
- 3.5 The introduction of the Fringe has allowed the development of the SIRF programme to achieve a mix of contemporary bands, classic tributes, and emerging talent. This has proved popular with the Fringe music stage being voted the second favourite event of SIRF for two consecutive years.

BIFF

- 3.6 In contrast, BIFF is the largest traditional international dance and music festival in the UK presenting a variety of world class traditional cultures to a British audience.
- 3.7 BIFF, having started in 1965, later became one of the eight founder members of CIOFF (International Council of Organisations of Folklore Festivals and Folk Art) which requires BIFF to operate under the rules and guidelines of CIOFF. This includes:
 - The Festival has to run annually for at least 8 days
 - The Festival has to feature at least 5 international groups from 3 continents
 - The groups invited to the Festival have to perform their traditional songs, music and dances in authentic, elaborate or stylised form
 - Any deviations from the above rules will lead to a Festival losing its CIOFF status
- 3.8 With a recognised and renowned Festival and after 42 years BIFF still attracts an audience of 10,000 people paying for events and approximately 30,000 people coming to watch the free parades and fireworks.
- 3.9 The Committee learned that the average number of concerts attended by visitors to BIFF has increased 28 per cent in the past six years with people stating their main reasons for attending was to experience the world cultures and enjoy the dances from the participants to the Festival.

- 3.10 All the respondents to a BIFF survey stated that they would come back to the Festival in 2007 whilst half expressed a desire to see British Traditional Dance represented at the Festival and have a British Night.
- 3.11 Although BIFF has operated since 1965 the public awareness of what constitutes folklore within this festival may not be fully appreciated. A dictionary definition describes folklore as the traditional beliefs etc of a community; the study of these. The Committee therefore feel that the greater promotion of dancing within BIFF helps to improve audience figures and reduce misunderstanding of what the festival hopes to achieve.
- 3.12 The Committee believe the continuation of BIFF is an important element for Billingham and the district as a whole and wishes to see it develop. The Committee therefore feels that increased links to SIRF can only benefit BIFF and may provide renewed impetus and funding opportunities into such a long-standing and well developed festival. **It is recommended that BIFF management team and Stockton Council's arts management team develop mutual working arrangements similar to that enjoyed by the Technical, Health & Safety and Support Services Group and, where possible, linked and complementary programming to advance both international festivals.**

Impact of SIRF and BIFF on the town centres

- 3.13 The Committee was keen to learn the effect of festivals on the variety of users of the town centres such as visitors/shoppers, market traders and bus and taxi operators. SIRF and BIFF have different issues which are highlighted below.

SIRF

Market Traders

- 3.14 During SIRF a number of market traders in Stockton town centre experience problems due to the displacement of market stalls and evidence given to the Committee suggested that SIRF coincides with best trading period for market stall holders.
- 3.15 The area north of the Town Hall is affected by SIRF which impacts on 35 traders on 72 stall spaces. Stalls are charged at £18.50/day, revenue that is lost to Stockton Council if traders are unable to stand whilst traders also lose income as affected traders are unable to be relocated due to insufficient space in the High Street.
- 3.16 Another possible solution to address the issue of displaced traders was a recommendation from Markets Forum that the market not be held during SIRF and no charge be made to market traders thereby allowing the whole of the High Street to be available to performances. This recommendation was rejected by Stockton Council's Corporate Management Team as it was felt that not holding the markets would not be in the best interest of the town.
- 3.17 The Committee support the Corporate Management Team's decision not to cancel Stockton Market during SIRF but suggest the following recommendations in order to improve relationships with market traders and assist people shopping at the market. **The Committee recommend that:**

- **Market traders be given written notice as far in advance as possible stating whether their pitch would be affected and if they would need to be moved or suspended.**
 - **Notices should be displayed (on an earlier market day when possible) informing people shopping at the market whether their regular stall(s) would be standing or relocated on that market day.**
- 3.18 The Committee was still keen to get a better understanding of the views of market traders about SIRF so a questionnaire was developed to ascertain their opinions. The results can be found at appendix 1.
- 3.19 Members of the Committee who surveyed market traders were told a number of times that rent had been charged even though they were unable to stand when SIRF was on. This issue was raised with SBC Markets Officers who stated that no charge would have been made as SBC Markets policy does not allow for charges to be made to traders displaced by SIRF. A request for this policy suggested that it does not appear to be available in a written format. **The Committee therefore recommend that a written policy be developed and communicated to market traders operating in Stockton to clarify the non-payment of charges due to displacement and an inability to be relocated.**
- 3.20 The questionnaire included a question to determine whether market traders' customers commented about SIRF and if so whether the comments were positive and negative. A majority of customers did comment and provided a higher proportion of negative comments. This may be accounted for by a different demographic profile of people attending SIRF than those visiting the High Street to purchase items from the market.
- 3.21 The MORI 2006 survey asked residents their satisfaction of SIRF events and town centre markets. Irrespective of age, location, disability and ethnicity SIRF events outscored markets in all satisfaction categories by between 28 per cent and 71 per cent.

BIFF

- 3.22 Market traders in Billingham are unaffected by the events organised for BIFF.

Transportation Issues

SIRF

- 3.23 Following the production of a festival programme a schedule of road and car park closures are agreed following discussion with the emergency services and public transport operators.
- 3.24 Websites have become ubiquitous for the dissemination of information and the SIRF website is no exception. In order to help visitors to SIRF **it is recommended that the festival website carries relevant travel information, including telephone numbers, to aid the use of public transport to and from SIRF.**
- 3.25 Bus routes are affected and must change to accommodate road closures. This is further exacerbated by the closure of Stockton High Street which operates as a bus interchange in the absence of a bus station. The diversion

of buses away from the High Street can confuse passengers trying to find their bus.

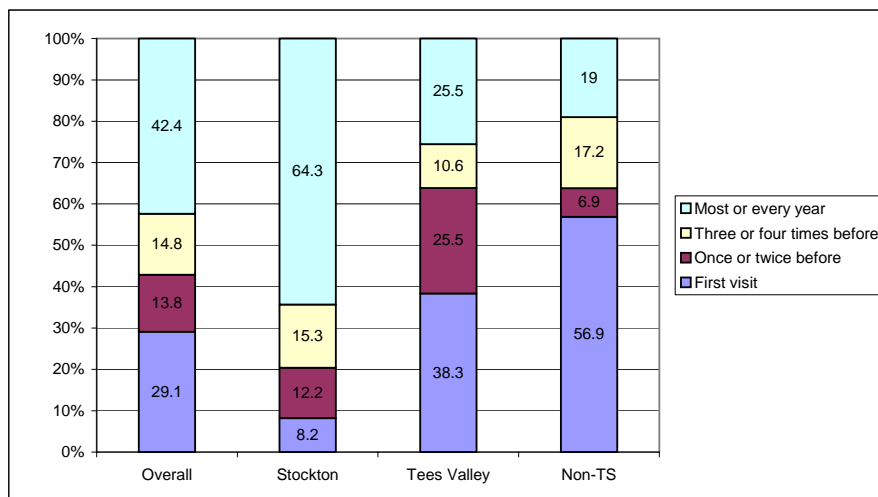
- 3.26 A further criticism from bus operators is that the schedule of road closures is not always followed. This causes confusion amongst drivers told of a diversionary route only to find their normal route available whilst passengers use the temporary stops on the diversionary route.
- 3.27 **The Committee recommend that SBC engineers and bus operators work together to ensure that both the public and bus crews are advised of diversions during SIRF events and the Carnival parade by providing clear advance publicity and site notices on the days affected.**
- 3.28 The Committee also learned that car park closures are not always properly managed. The preparation of the Riverside site requires the closure of the southern end of Riverside car park. However, it is a regular occurrence for the whole car park to be closed due to road closure.
- 3.29 In addition, car parks should be returned for use in a clean, unobstructed condition. There are, however, occasions when the dismantling work has overrun or parts of staging have been left in the car park. This limits the proper use of the car park and has lead to complaints from customers of the car parks.
- 3.30 The resolution of problems is sometimes hampered by an inability to contact the festival promoter and the lack of administrative back up to take and pass on complaints and messages.

BIFF

- 3.31 BIFF does not suffer from the same restrictions that apply to SIRF. The only requirement for traffic management comes from a procession of performers to Billingham town centre during the opening and closing ceremonies. The procession is managed by police officers with no need for formal traffic orders.

Visitors/shoppers

SIRF



- 3.32 As can be seen from the above diagram, SIRF benefits from repeat attendances of visitors which shows the continuing success of the festival. Overall, more than two thirds of people attending SIRF have done so before a figure almost reached by people from Stockton Borough who have attended most or every year.
- 3.33 Greater consideration is being given to people attending who have any form of disability to improve their experience of the festival. The Committee was keen to hear from disabled people or agencies acting on their behalf to learn how things could be improved.
- 3.34 If a disabled person is able attend then he or she faces a number of challenges depending on the basis of their disability. The Committee wrote to the representatives who form a Disability Advisory Group for Stockton Council to liaise/consult with. A number of issues were raised with the Committee (see page 22).

BIFF

- 3.35 BIFF is able to attract 30,000 people to attend its parades and fireworks. As with SIRF the popularity of BIFF means that a good proportion of the audience tend to return in subsequent years.
- 3.36 The Committee was presented with information from BIFF survey 2006 which provided the following information:
- BIFF is able to attract audiences from all parts of the UK and more than half of the audience were found to have travelled from outside the Stockton and wider Tees Valley area;
 - Particular concentration has been placed on attracting a younger audience to the festival as concern has been raised about the ageing population attending BIFF;
 - BIFF has been successful in attracting new people to attend the festival. In the last 10 years 43 per cent of the audience were new to BIFF compared to 21 per cent in the previous 10 years.
- 3.37 As mentioned above, a level of concern has been raised as to the need to attract a newer audience to BIFF and part of that work has included the involvement of young people. In addition, the provision of free events heightens awareness and interest in the festival. The Committee was interested to learn of the free afternoon concert that was staged which exceeded all expectations of visitor numbers to the festival irrespective of where they had come from. The festival was in danger of turning away over 400 people who did not have seats in the Festival Arena. This resulted, however in the provision of additional seating and opening areas to allow areas of the audience to stand and watch the performances.
- 3.38 The reasons given for attending the festival were, in order of popularity, dance; world culture; music; and songs.

Value for Money

(See also appendix 2)

SIRF

- 3.39 SIRF operates with a budget of £400,000 with over half provided by Stockton Borough Council. A quarter of the budget comes from Arts Council England (North East) with the remainder made up of other grants and sponsorship.

BIFF

- 3.40 Billingham festival operates on an annual budget of approx. £140,000-£150,000 receiving 60% of its budget as a grant from Stockton Borough Council.
- 3.41 The remainder of the funding comes from Arts Council England (North East), Festival Sponsors, like ConocoPhillips, Boyes, Huntsman, Devereux, etc., festival tickets and merchandize sales and fundraising through festival Patrons, Friends of the Festival and Members of BIFF Ltd.
- 3.42 Occasionally BIFF gets additional grants from other organizations, like One NorthEast and Tees Valley Partnership.
- 3.43 Stockton Council is a major financial contributor to BIFF and has direct financial responsibility for SIRF. As such, and in view of the time required for organising festival programmes and making commitments to performers, adequate notice needs to be given to festival organisers. **It is recommended that any future decisions on substantial changes in financial support to either festival be timely in order to allow successful implementation.**

Partnerships

- 3.44 The major partner that Stockton Council deals with is Arts Council England (North East). Mr Robinson (Executive Director) addressed the Committee when Members were advised that festivals were a key part of the partnership and that SIRF was integral to their work. It was vital in the Tees Valley, and played a significant role regionally and nationally. The Arts Council invested significantly in SIRF and BIFF as a result.
- 3.45 The Arts Council's budgets were being reviewed but it was the intention to continue to support SIRF and BIFF. It was noted that Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council also invested in the festivals (see above section).
- 3.46 SIRF helped the Arts Council to:
- Increase numbers/participation in artistic events
 - Develop creative economy
 - Develop vibrant communities
 - Internationalism
 - Celebrate Cultural diversity
 - Develop arts activity for children and young people

- 3.47 The Arts Council also supported the community carnival. Street art, which was still a relatively small aspect, had grown, for which SIRF had played a valued part. Policies were now being developed as a result.
- 3.48 It was their vision to have street art play a part in the 2012 Olympics and for there to be national focus rather than just centralised to London.
- 3.49 The Arts Council acknowledged that there was still work to be done but they wished to keep the momentum going.
- 3.50 Members queried how the Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) links could be improved and were advised that festivals have always attracted diversity and a carnival officer who could also assist regarding diversity issues was due to start in March 2007.
- 3.51 Community engagement is a major feature of both international festivals as the festivals offer a celebration of diversity and foster improved understanding between communities of different national backgrounds. **The Committee recommend that further work be undertaken to increase awareness of, and involvement in, the festivals by people from resident ethnic minority communities. This should include the exploration of contacting different groups including overseas students at our universities and colleges including Queen's Campus, Durham University.**
- 3.52 Mr Robinson observed that it was necessary to determine the value/worth of art work as it was relatively expensive and time-consuming to undertake international work and develop relationships with other countries. However, the Arts Council had prioritised international work. SIRF was therefore seen as a good example of international involvement and collaboration, and benefited from being sustained, rooted, wanted and needed in the Borough.
- 3.53 The Arts Council also supported BIFF although the Arts Council encourage the development rather than the heritage of arts and therefore encouraged the support of new and emerging acts.

Better festival experience for all attendees

SIRF

- 3.54 SIRF already achieves a 98 per cent satisfaction rating and of the 71 per cent who had attended previous years festivals 60 per cent have visited every or most years.
- 3.55 56 per cent of festival visitors when asked stated that there was nothing they disliked about the festival. The largest criticism was reserved for the Riverside Fringe but still only 4 per cent disliked this element. It was not the festival but other concerns that people raised that spoiled the whole experience. Other factors included fighting, drunks and yobs. This may require greater presence or involvement from police and community warden patrols during the festival to resolve this issue.
- 3.56 Following the Committee's approach to a newly formed Disability Advisory Group it found that disabled people form a particular constituency most likely

to have some negative experiences to the festival and its events. Mr Robinson of the Arts Council when asked advised that he was not aware of specific research about street art and disability, however it was something the Arts Council would be investigating.

- 3.57 The success of SIRF also brings with it other problems. Representation from BlindVoice UK in Stockton informed the Committee about the reduced safety felt by people with visual impairment when the High Street is very busy. There is also an increase in street furniture which is an additional burden for blind people.
- 3.58 Mr Kench observed that there were some problems for the disabled in certain areas used by SIRF, some of which were impossible to avoid as SIRF was provided in an urban area where fixed objects such as kerbs and roads had to be negotiated. However other facilities had been included as a result of feedback received from SIRF attendees. Fixed seating had been introduced which aided the disabled, even though fixed seating went against the purpose of street art. Where there were large areas of unmade surfaces, caterpillar roll was also used to aid accessibility. Mr Kench advised that a wheelchair user had navigated all the areas used by SIRF enabling the team to provide the best aid they could to wheelchair users.
- 3.59 The Committee felt that greater assistance should be given to people with disability who visit the festivals in order to provide them the best possible experience. Information about events should include whether they are wheelchair accessible, signed for people with hearing loss, or provide audio description for people with visual impairment. **It is recommended that all publicity material and information leaflets contain details of suitability of events for people with disability as well as identifying location of toilet facilities for disabled people.**
- 3.60 The Disability Advisory Group formed by Stockton Council to engage directly with people affected by various forms of disability so as to improve services they receive can provide valuable information. **The Committee recommend that the Disability Advisory Group become a consultee when considering aspects of the festivals.**

BIFF

- 3.61 Inclement weather presents a lot of problems for outdoor concerts. If the weather is doubtful, it does affect ticket sales, as people do not want to risk a cancellation. Each time a concert is transferred indoors (Forum Theatre) the decision has to be made 1 hour in advance, which involves additional costs for Forum theatre staff.
- 3.62 In 2006, only the Opening ceremony had to be transfer and the Opening Parade was cancelled. This created a 60 minutes delay, as all the participants, who were supposed to march from Bede College to Billingham Town Centre, had to be transported by buses.
- 3.63 This year, for the first time the opposite problem was encountered – it was too hot to perform on stage for longer than 10 minutes, due to the stage getting too hot.

- 3.64 A solution to the weather problems put forward by BIFF's management team is to have a roof over the stage and the seating area, which would cost about £30,000. That would make the festival conditions ideal for both audience and performers and would eliminate the risk of any concert cancellations.
- 3.65 **It is recommended that BIFF give consideration to contingency planning and alternative plans should the weather or other circumstances prevent performances.**

Increased involvement / participation from local communities

SIRF

- 3.66 SIRF continues to grow with the added inclusion of local participants when, in 2002 a priority was set to put the community back at the heart of the festival. 2006 saw the highest number of active participants for the Carnival and Parade representing every postcode in the district.
- 3.67 A Carnival Club has also been established following the partnership arrangements between Oaktree Primary School and SPARK children's arts centre. This has provided an opportunity for young people to be involved who are not members of other organised groups.
- 3.68 The Carnival has the reputation of being high quality and artistically and visually outstanding. It is devised and directed by a professional carnival arts company and requires participants to commit themselves to a demanding and structured workshop programme. The introduction of the Parade in 2004 gave groups the opportunity to choose the way that they got involved, expressing their own ideas and themes, often supported by local artists. The 'floats' from specific communities or agencies develop and promote positive identities and encourage pride and can be a year round activity contributing to social cohesion, local pride, community and individual capacity building.
- 3.69 The Committee therefore support the community aims for SIRF 2007 which include:
- Involving 1,000 people, reflecting the diverse cultures of Stockton.
 - Providing training and learning opportunities in carnival arts skills for local artists to continue a high standard of production and performance in carnival and celebratory arts in Stockton Borough and meet the increased demand.
 - Strengthening the performance elements of the Carnival
 - Building on the successful cultural exchange with Beijing
 - Creating a carnival that is distinctive, rooted in local culture and celebrates the diverse communities of Stockton.
- 3.70 As already highlighted in this report the Committee is keen to see the increased involvement of the BME communities in Stockton Borough especially as the festival is predicated on its internationalism.

BIFF

- 3.71 BIFF recognises the opportunities to develop the festival with the active involvement of local people. The Committee was therefore interested to learn

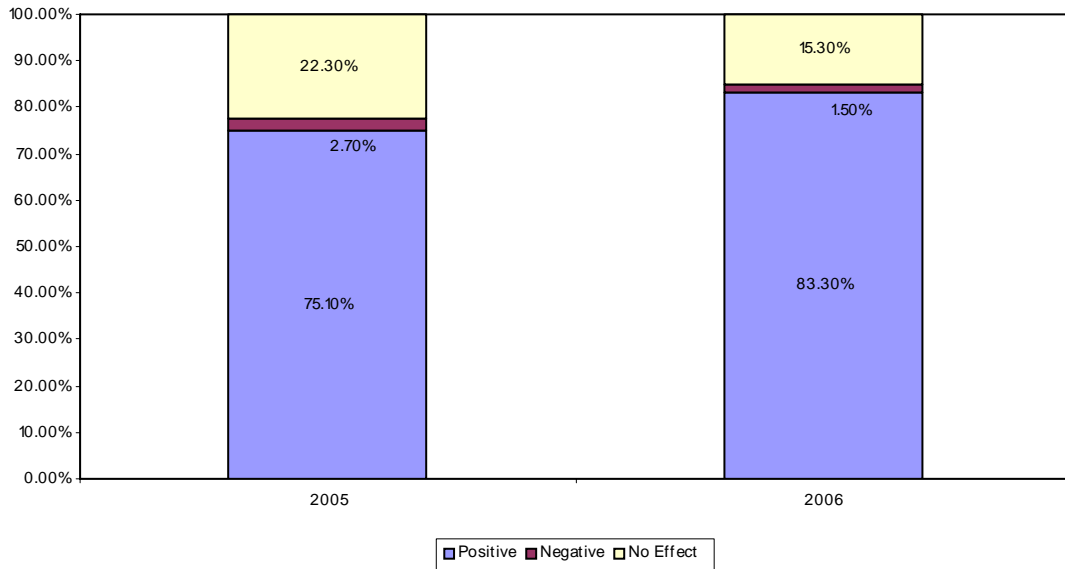
more about the initiatives that exist as well as those being considered as part of the development of the festival.

- 3.72 The integral part of the Billingham Festival each year is the Festival Children's Club. Each morning over 100 children aged 4-15 attend the Club where during each 2-hour session they join the International dancers to learn the dances and games from their countries.
- 3.73 Each child taking part in the Festival Children's Club receives "THE PASSPORT TO THE WORLD", which encourages the children to learn more about each country represented in the Festival. Each page of the Passport contains questions on the country, such as where the International Group comes from, the language spoken in the Country, and what is the capital city. It also contains space for children to collect autographs.
- 3.74 An International Youth Dance Workshop was introduced 3 years ago and has proved to be extremely popular with advanced dance students and beginners age 7-14, who travel from all over the North East to take part.
- 3.75 An Adult Dance Course attracts dance teachers and students from all over the UK and abroad to spend a week in Billingham learning dances from all over the World. It is now hoped to attract international participation to the Adult Dance Course by placing an advert in the International CIOFF Calendar, which is distributed to over 90 countries.
- 3.76 BIFF also run a lot of fringe events before and during the Festival, arranging for the International Groups to go to voluntary and community organisations, for example Old People Homes, Hospitals and Community Centres in deprived areas of the region.
- 3.77 BIFF has a marketing strategy that contains a number of product development recommendations that the Committee are interested in seeing be developed. This includes:
- Developing an education programme in partnership with the Education Authorities - working towards accreditation of the Adult Dance Course and International Youth Dance Workshop; holding events for children in local school on a year round basis and continuing with the "World of Cultural Diversity" Project.
 - Participation in Bede College's 'Enrichment Programme' - establishing a "Focus Group" from the students of Bede College and in involving them in Festival organisation, which was already started in 2006 with 8 students of Bede College taking part.
 - Building a year round programme of dance and music courses - featuring both international and British cultures.

Improved impact on image

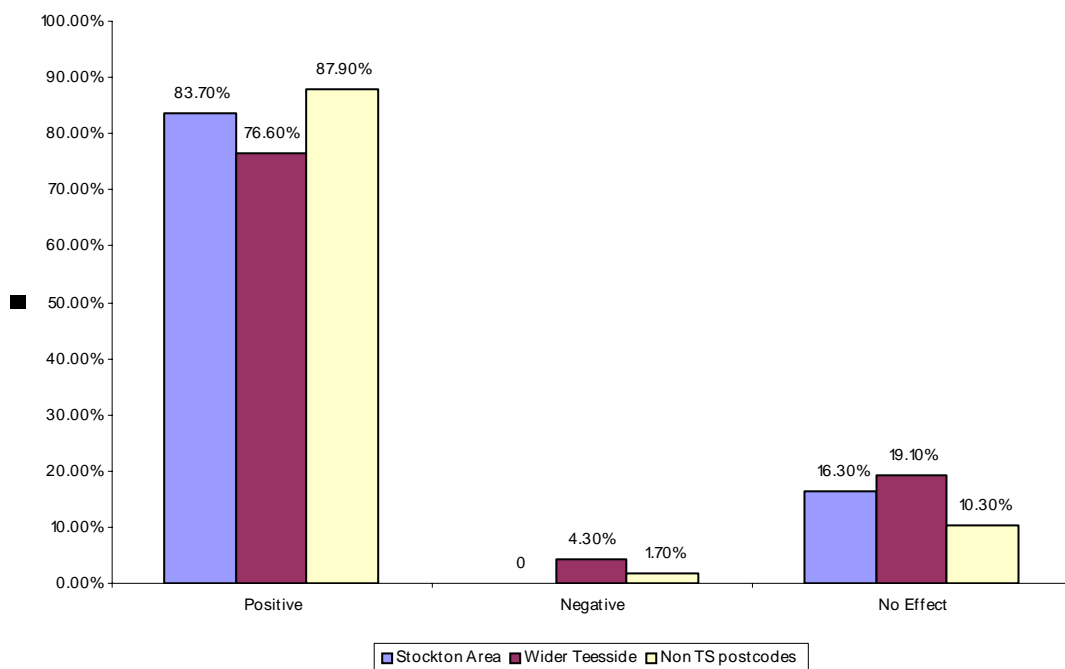
SIRF

Does Festival Change View of Stockton



3.78 As can be seen from the above graph SIRF's positive effect on the way people view Stockton has grown whilst the negative views have reduced. Such views are irrespective of where visitors to SIRF are from as is shown by the following graph.

Impact of Festival View on Stockton



- 3.79 To broaden the awareness and appeal of SIRF has seen the development of the SIRF web site as a source of programme information reaching in 2006 150,000 visitors, averaging 1159 hits per day. Downloadable programmes and other information resulted in a data transfer of 2703MB from sirf.co.uk. The website was the 'main source of information' for 13.8% of the non-TS visitors.
- 3.80 The Committee was interested to learn of the new partnership with Gazette Media which delivered over £30,000 worth of coverage, in print and on-line, including the highly effective Herald & Post 'wrap' which was delivered to every household from Sedgefield to Staithes. The Gazette as 'main source of information' increased by 5% on 2005. This and the relationship with the Trinity Mirror Group, is likely to reap greater rewards as it evolves. The Committee supports the initiatives and hard work of officers that is attempting to increase the interest of media outlets outside the Tees Valley thereby increasing the awareness and raising the profile of SIRF.

BIFF

- 3.81 Evidence from BIFF management team informed the Committee that as the festival attracts an audience from all parts of the UK this area is only a small element of a much wider potential audience. In order to overcome this limitation the management team has stated that ideally, a prime time television advert 1 or 2 months prior to the festival should generate a good response.
- 3.82 Due to a limited advertising and marketing budget it is unlikely that such an advert is likely to be developed. The Committee is therefore interested in learning more of the effectiveness that a public relations consultant suggested in BIFF's Promotion Plan to plan and deliver a PR programme to achieve high profile media coverage in the run up to the festival.
- 3.83 Closer working relationships with SIRF might also benefit BIFF to explore shared opportunities to raise public awareness especially utilising all contacts within media outlets.

Other Issues

- 3.84 Stockton Town Hall is used by performers and others during SIRF to change costumes, rehearse lines, coordinate technical changes as well as eat and relax during breaks in performances. This raised an issue regarding the condition of the Town Hall whilst SIRF was operating.
- 3.85 The Committee heard from Stockton Council's Property Department as well as the Head of Arts and Culture in order to understand what had occurred. The Committee is aware of the difficulty to maintain the Town Hall at its usual high standard of cleanliness and repair during the very busy period that SIRF creates. **It is recommended that, where practicable, Town Hall contents be protected before rooms are used for SIRF.**
- 3.86 The Committee feel that an inspection and hand-over period is necessary following the conclusion of SIRF to allow an assessment of necessary work to

be determined to ensure the Town Hall returns to its usual standard. It is not the intention of the Committee to single out SIRF as any other user lowering the standard of cleanliness or repair of the Town Hall should be held responsible for returning the building to an acceptable standard at the conclusion of their use.





4.0 Conclusion

- 4.1 The Committee was pleased to have had an opportunity to focus on such important cultural activities within Stockton and Billingham. It recognises the professional approach taken to both festivals each with their own distinct style and remit.
- 4.2 The longevity of both festivals is testament not only to the effort of staging the events but also the interest they generate bringing visitors to the borough on almost an annual basis as was determined in surveys that have been conducted.
- 4.3 Stockton Borough can rightfully be pleased to be at the forefront of street festival entertainment in the region and as much capital that can be made of this fact should be raised. As SIRF has developed it has shown that the international element of the festival not only brings some of the best acts to Stockton's streets but is now being invited to participate in global events elsewhere.
- 4.4 A number of issues were raised during the Committee's investigation which it has gone some way to resolve. In particular the Committee hopes to see BIFF strengthened with increased links made to SIRF and the relationship with market traders and SIRF improved.
- 4.5 It will always prove difficult to scrutinise the festivals as the timeliness of such investigation is unlikely to effect change immediately because as one festival ends the planning for the following year is already underway. It is therefore hoped that what improvements have been suggested in this report can be acted upon at a conveniently early time in the life cycle of the festivals.



5.0 Recommendations

The Committee believe the continuation of BIFF is an important element for Billingham and the district as a whole and wishes to see it develop. The Committee therefore feels that increased links to SIRF can only benefit BIFF and may provide renewed impetus and funding opportunities into such a long-standing and well developed festival. **It is recommended that BIFF management team and Stockton Council's art's management team develop mutual working arrangements similar to that enjoyed by the Technical, Health & Safety and Support Services Group and, where possible, linked and complementary programming to advance both international festivals.** (page 16; para 3.12)

The Committee support the Corporate Management Team's decision not to cancel Stockton Market during SIRF but suggest the following recommendations in order to improve relationships with market traders and assist people shopping at the market. **The Committee recommend that:**

- **Market traders be sent individual written notice to their home or trading address as far in advance as possible stating whether their pitch would be affected and if they would need to be moved or suspended.**
- **Notices should be displayed (on an earlier market day when possible) informing people shopping at the market whether their regular stall(s) would be standing or relocated on that market day.**

(Page 17; para 3.17)

Members of the Committee who surveyed market traders were told a number of times that rent had been charged even though they were unable to stand when SIRF was on. Further investigation found that if market traders had in fact been charged then this is contrary to SBC Markets policy which does not allow for charges to be made to traders displaced by SIRF. A request for this policy suggested that it does not appear to be available in a written format. **The Committee therefore recommend that a written policy be developed and communicated to market traders operating in Stockton to clarify the non-payment of charges due to displacement and an inability to be relocated.** (Page 17; para 3.19)

Websites have become ubiquitous for the dissemination of information and the SIRF website is no exception. In order to help visitors to SIRF **it is recommended that the festival website carries relevant travel information, including telephone numbers, to aid the use of public transport to and from SIRF.** (Page 17; para 3.24)

The Committee recommend that SBC engineers and bus operators work together to ensure that both the public and bus crews are advised of diversions during SIRF events and the Carnival parade by providing clear advance publicity and site notices on the days affected. (Page 18; para 3.26)

Stockton Council is a major financial contributor to BIFF and has direct financial responsibility for SIRF. As such, and in view of the time required for organising festival programmes and making commitments to performers, adequate notice needs to be given to festival organisers. **It is recommended that any future decisions on substantial changes in financial support to either festival be timely in order to allow successful implementation.** (Page 20; para 3.43)

Community engagement is a major feature of both international festivals as the festivals offer a celebration of diversity and foster improved understanding between communities of different national backgrounds. **The Committee recommend that further work be undertaken to increase awareness of, and involvement in, the festivals by people from resident ethnic minority communities. This should include the exploration of contacting different groups including overseas students at our universities and colleges including Queen's Campus, Durham University.** (Page 21; para 3.51)

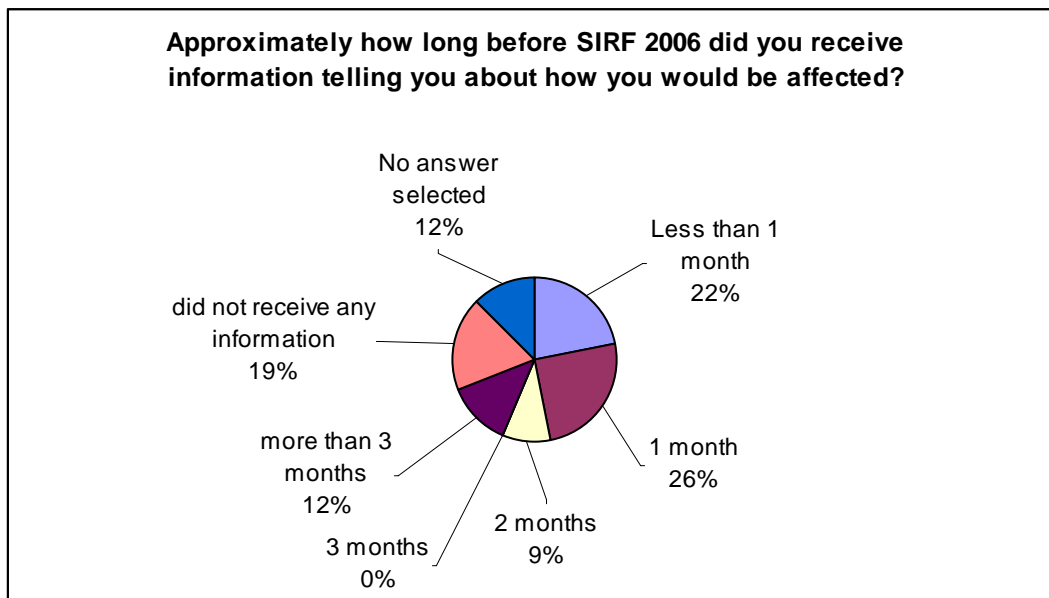
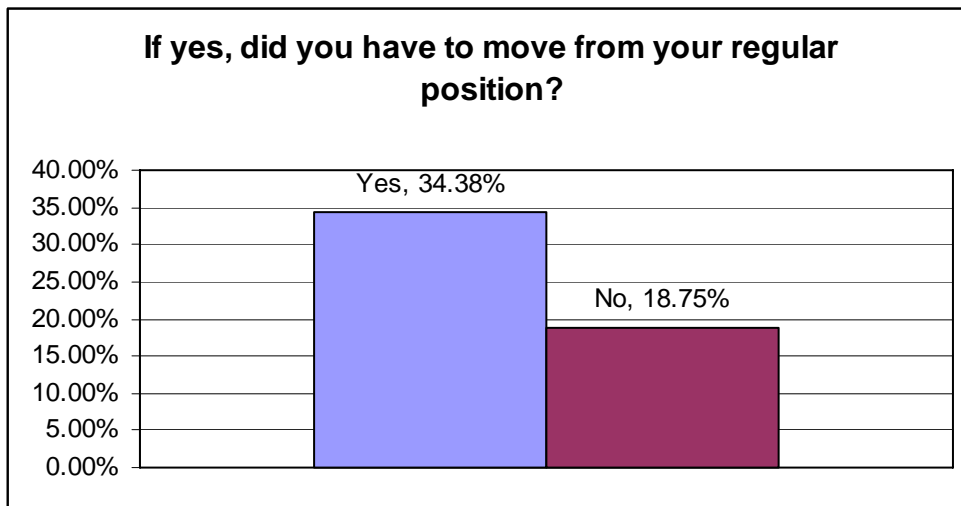
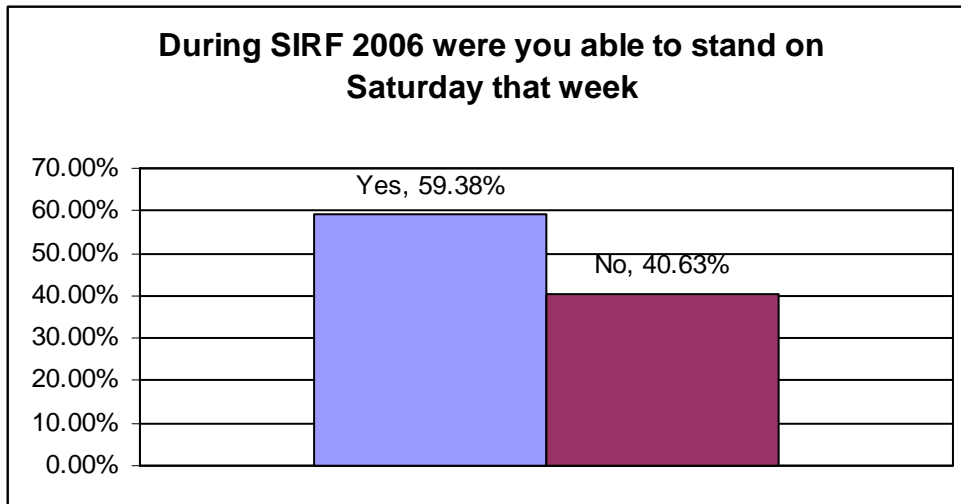
Greater assistance should be given to people with disability who visit the festivals in order to provide them the best possible experience. Events should state whether they are wheelchair accessible, signed for people with hearing loss, audio description for people with visual impairment. **It is recommended that all publicity material and information leaflets contain details of suitability of events for people with disability as well as identifying location of toilet facilities for disabled people.** (Page 22; para 3.59)

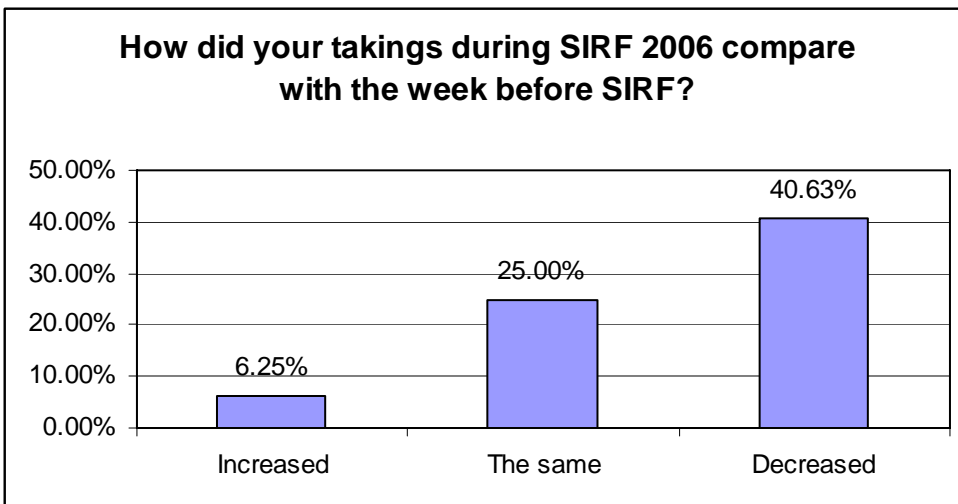
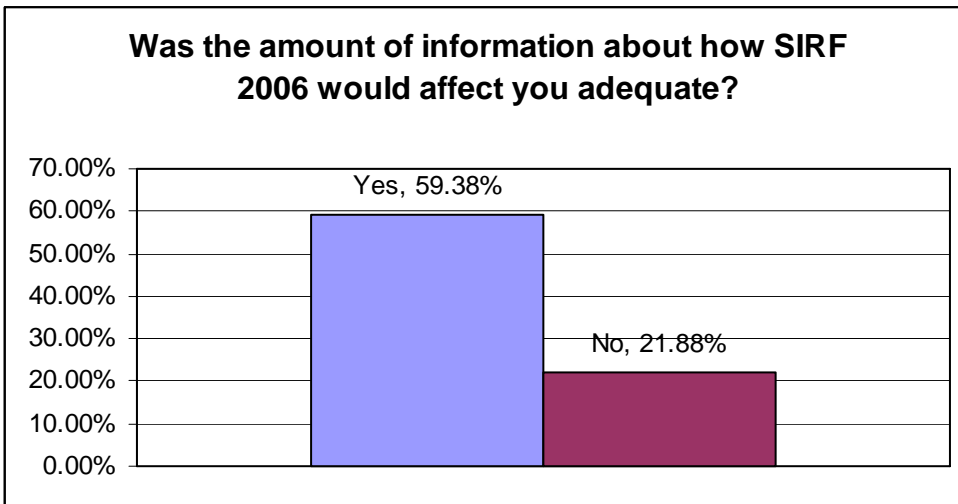
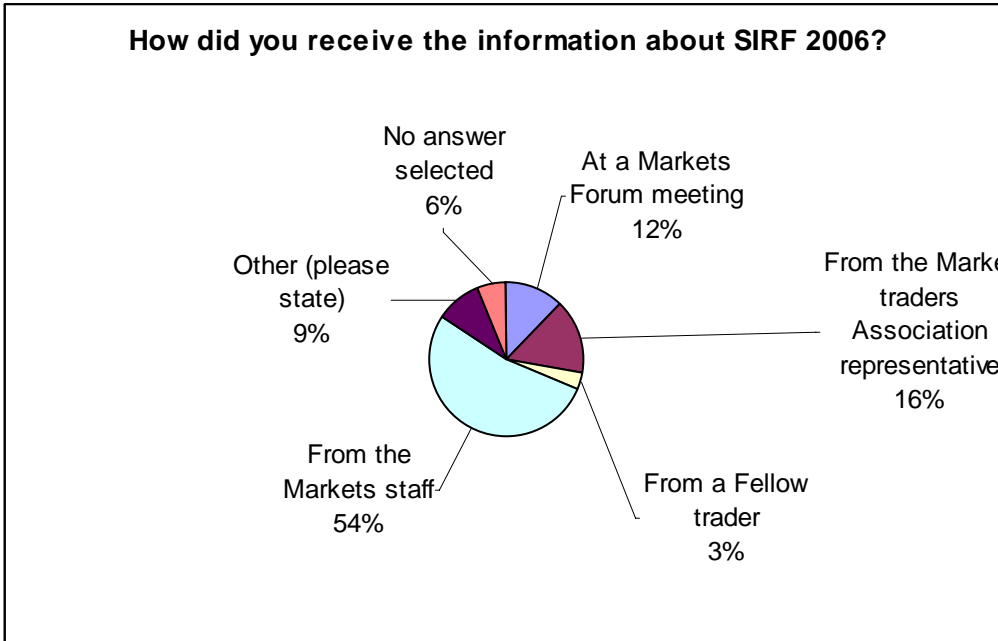
A Disability Advisory Group has been formed by Stockton Council to engage directly with people affected by various forms of disability so as to improve services they receive. **The Committee recommend that the Disability Advisory Group become a consultee when considering aspects of the festivals.** (Page 22; para 3.60)

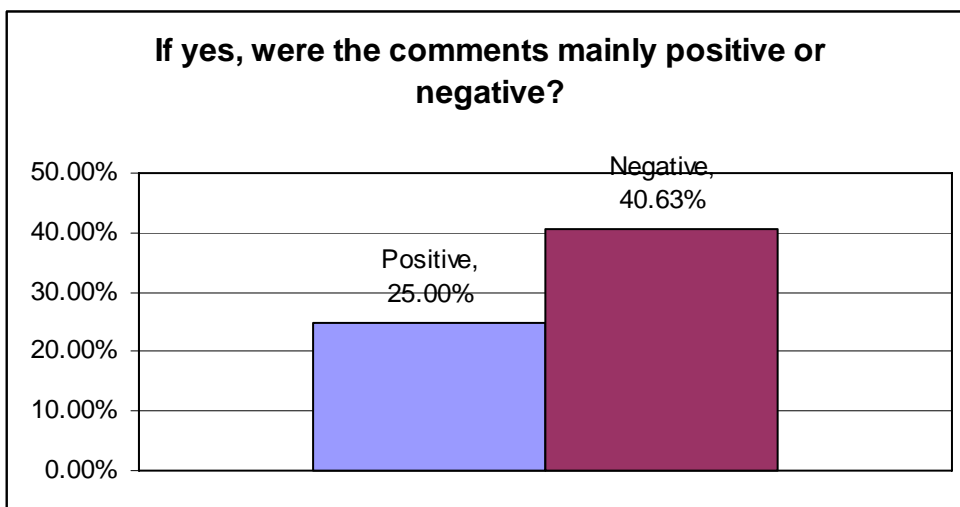
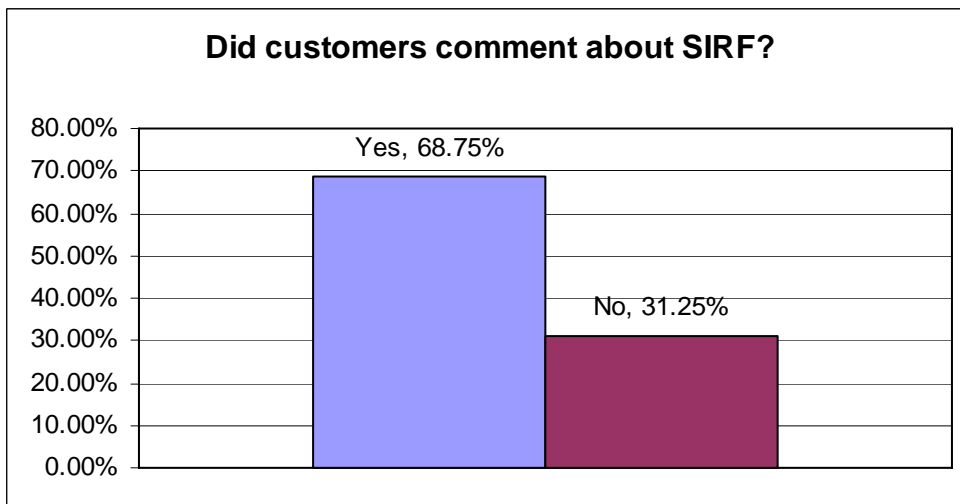
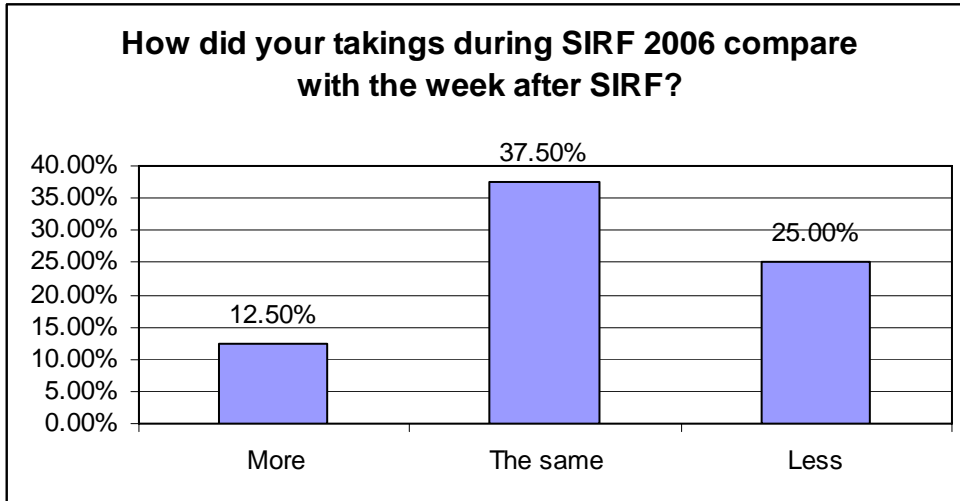
It is recommended that BIFF give consideration to contingency planning and alternative plans should the weather or other circumstances prevent performances. (Page 23; para 3.65)

The Committee is aware of the difficulty to maintain the Town Hall at its usual high standard of cleanliness and repair during the very busy period that SIRF creates. **It is recommended that, where practicable, Town Hall contents be protected before rooms are used for SIRF.** (Page 26; para 3.85)

APPENDIX 1

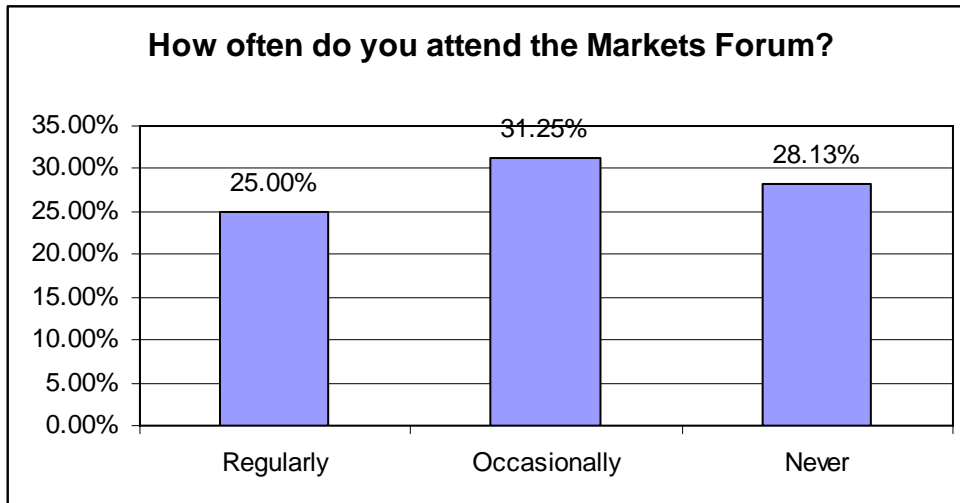






Do you have any further comments or suggestions to make about SIRF?

Response 1) No, I enjoy kids in the High Street
Response 2) Stalls shouldn't have to be moved. officers are helpful. Wrong that they should lose money. Wages paid.
Response 3) Compensation needed like free rent weeks. A months free rent. Market Staff are good, better than other markets
Response 4) More notice of move required not on market day. Have parade on Sunday.
Response 5) Nuisance, Affected their livelihood. Stalls were surrounded by onlookers. Fire eater was awful, Colin Watson had to be called. SIRF should commit more. Only last two years that stall pitch was lost.
Response 6) SIRF is good for the town but it needs to be built around the market
Response 7) Do not agree with moving stalls. Want more consultation.
Response 8) None
Response 9) Very noisy
Response 10) Why not have parade on a Sunday
Response 11) No
Response 12) Bad. Moving of pitch is not good
Response 13) SIRF is not on 'Riverside', should not displace the market
Response 14) Wrong that livelihood of 52 week traders affected. Please don't do main events on market day. No selling takes place during parade because people watch it. Farmers market and fun fair take trade from market. Free rent for SIRF day?. Money could be better spent elsewhere.
Response 15) Castlegate don't allow any SIRF events nearby. Not enough space in front of Boot's so the crowds were behind the stalls. Kids/noise. Why can't displaced stalls go in Dovecot Street?. Saturday parade is at 12.00 noon then crowds disappear. If it were at 2.00 or 3.00pm it would keep customers in town longer. Market Traders 52 weeks per year - SIRF callers don't buy - too much devoted to SIRF, not enough to Market Traders. Boots Manager/Security Guard said that last year Stockton was a ghost town except for market days. Priority is given to Farmers Market and SIRF by the Council.
Response 16) North side of Market is ok but other affected.
Response 17) No
Response 18) A bit noisy near the stage, couldn't hear customers. People coming to SIRF don't buy cards. Wish SIRF wasn't in town centre where market has been held for years. Wants to get on Promotions Committee to find out how money is spent. SBC should do something about empty shops.
Response 19) Customers cannot find stalls that are moved.
Response 20) Shouldn't be held on market. Should compensate for drop in takings or reduce rent for day
Response 21) No good for business. Too many people-just going to SIRF
Response 22) First year he was moved, trading was very poor. Customers could not find time
Response 23) SIRF is a waste of time. If it is called the Riverside Festival, why is it not on the riverside?. SIRF do what they like. Already have ARC, Globe stands empty. Compensation 2006 for the first time, SBC did not believe accountants figures so made small offer.
Response 24) [C]oncentrate on filling shops not interfering with the market. Evening GAZETTER publicity on Stockton was inaccurate. Started as a Markets Fair but SBC and SIRF are now trying to take over the High Street. People who go to the market are distracted from shopping because of the events. It never used to take over the High Street. We need decent shops in the High Street.
Response 25) Should be other than market day. Traders have to earn a living.
Response 26) Loss of earnings which could be a lot mid season.
Response 27) Have SIRF somewhere else to go e.g the riverside?. SIRF does not do any good, it interferes with a successful market.
Response 28) Find a way of running SIRF without displacing as many stalls. Asset to town - brings in fresh faces. Some from all over the country - won't come back every week. Way of getting them to look on town more favourably.
Response 29) Stage should be further from Stall (West side of Town Hall).
Response 30) Traders have to accept as annual and people have to be displaced - if cannot trade, take the day off.
Response 31) People attracted to SIRF don't bring trade to High Street shops or market. Don't spent money, they come for free shows.



Other comments about the Markets Forum

Response 1) Once, No invitation. Timing of meeting is bad
Response 2) Too little notice
Response 3) 5.15 is too early
Response 4) Would like more notice
Response 5) When notice is given
Response 6) Bad timing, too little notice
Response 7) Too little notice and bad time for meeting
Response 8) Too little notice and bad time for meeting
Response 9) Same day notice which is too little notice
Response 10) Told on the same day. About last meeting. Confusing letter it appeared to be only about loss of takings during SIRF
Response 11) Notified same day as the last meeting
Response 12) Silly times like 5.45pm
Response 13) Used to go. Retired - 50 years on the market. Has never met Sue Burgess
Response 14) Meets when stalls are being dismantled - 'deliberate'. No point as everything is decided beforehand
Response 15) 5.30pm would be a better time.
Response 16) Parks at S Bank, difficulty to get back in time.
Response 17) Not invited and bad timing at 5.15pm

APPENDIX 2

FINANCES OF STOCKTON INTERNATIONAL RIVERSIDE FESTIVAL & BILLINGHAM INTERNATIONAL FOLKLORE FESTIVAL

Report to Stockton-on-Tees BC Adults, Leisure & Culture Select Committee

1. Introduction

Cllr Terry Laing & I were tasked as a small group of the Committee to look at and report on the finances of the two festivals. The following represents a summary of our conclusions. As Members will gather from the papers circulated at the Committee meeting on 14-2-07, we have had to seek many clarifications. If anyone would like further information about these or how we arrived at our conclusions, we shall be pleased to assist.

2. Glossary

In this report:

BIFF is Billingham International Folklore Festival

SIRF is Stockton International Riverside Festival

BIFF 2006 is the BIFF held in the summer of 2006

SIRF 2006 is the SIRF held in the summer of 2006

2006-07 is the year ended 31st March 2007

and similarly for other years

BIFF Ltd is Billingham International Folklore Festival Ltd

TMA is Tees Music Alliance Ltd

3. BIFF

BIFF is run by BIFF Ltd, a registered company limited by guarantee and a registered charity.

We examined the audited accounts of BIFF Ltd for 2003-04 to 2006-07 published on the Charity Commission website. We were also provided with the figures in the Council's books for BIFF 2004 to 2006. Only BIFF 2004 and 2005 covered the same period.

From BIFF 2004 onwards, SBC receives the relevant grant from Arts Council NE and includes it in the funding passed on to BIFF Ltd.

Work done by SBC departments is recharged to BIFF Ltd and offset against the grant to the company. The exception was BIFF 2005, for which Service Stockton incurred total costs of £34,481.50, £29,000 was offset against grant, leaving £5481.50 borne by Service Stockton's budget (and consequently not appearing in the 2005-06 accounts of BIFF Ltd or SBC's figures for expenditure on festivals).

It is clear from BIFF Ltd's accounts that it had no substantial assets or reserves as at each 31st March. The finance of each BIFF is dependent on that year's income.

BIFF Ltd's income from sponsorship (other than grants from public-sector bodies) fell for BIFF 2004 & 2005 compared with BIFF 2003 & 2004.

As everyone is aware, the viability of BIFF is heavily dependent on the sterling efforts of a host of volunteers.

BIFF Ltd's accounts have been summarised by Cllr Laing (to follow) [not included in this print].

Entries in SBC's books are summarised as follows:

	BIFF 2004	BIFF 2005	BIFF 2006
Grants from SBC to BIFF	92,817	93,959	94,900
Less external funders' grants via SBC	<u>14,588</u>	<u>14,914</u>	<u>15,334</u>
Net cost of BIFF to SBC	78,229	79,045	79,566
+ cost to Service Stockton		<u>5,481</u>	
Total net cost of BIFF to SBC	<u>78,229</u>	<u>85,526</u>	<u>79,566</u>

4. SIRF

The most recent information supplied by Mr Alan Lee in CESC Financial is appended [not included in this print].

We have established that the following items, although included in SBC's budgets and accounting records as part of SIRF, are not part of SIRF and should be left out of account in assessing the cost of SIRF to the Council:

- o "Use of balances £34,000" in SIRF 2005 & 2006 budgets and "Music Weekend" £5000 in actual figures for SIRF 2004 & 2005 – these all relate to an event other than SIRF.
- o Grants of £10,000 each year to "Tees Music Alliance" in SIRF 2006 & 2007 budgets and actual figure for SIRF 2006 – these are a revenue support base, matched by the Arts Council, for TMA, to enable it to operate a programme of music and other arts activities in the *Green Dragon Studios*, *Georgian Theatre* and *Calvin House*, throughout the year.

The SIRF Fringe for SIRF 2005 onwards has been run by TMA, registered under the Industrial & Provident Societies Acts, a not-for-profit organization. SBC's contributions have been £15,000 for SIRF 2005 and £20,000 for SIRF 2006; £20,000 is budgeted for SIRF 2007. Mr Reuben Kench writes, "The support to TMA for the Fringe Festival is provided on the basis of an annually agreed programme and budget, and effectively monitored by the TMA Director's supply of information to the SIRF Management Group."

After excluding non-SIRF items, the figures may be summarised as:

	SIRF 2004		SIRF 2005		SIRF 2006		SIRF 2007
	Budget	Actual	Budget	Actual	Budget	Actual*	Budget
Cost	441,687	505,767	447,825	637,620	454,281	448,661	468,717
External Funds	159,000	198,956	134,000	327,850	118,726	131,726	116,319
Cost to SBC	<u>282,687</u>	<u>306,811</u>	<u>313,825</u>	<u>309,770</u>	<u>335,555</u>	<u>316,935</u>	<u>352,398</u>

* provisional until the accounts are closed at the end of April

At full Council on 28th February 2007 £60,000 p.a. for 2007-08 to 2009-10 was voted to SIRF out of "headroom", on the understanding that this was "likely" to bring in external grants of £127,000 over the three years. Committee had previously been advised by Mr Kench that this represented the continuation of expenditure levels in recent years. The Corporate Director of Resources (Mrs Julie Danks) has advised

me that this £60,000 will now be “mainstreamed” in SBC budgets for 2008-09 onwards. This £60,000 is included in the appended SIRF 2007 budget; we are checking whether the SIRF 2007 portion of the “likely” grants is also in the SIRF 2007 budget.

Mr Kench stated recently in the *Evening Gazette* that for every £1 spent by SBC on SIRF another £1 was added by the EU and trusts. While this is borne out by the figures for SIRF 2005, the proportion borne by SBC was much higher in SIRF 2006 and is budgeted similarly for SIRF 2007. Mr Kench writes,

“For the purpose of illustration, I described ‘cash spent on SIRF’, this would exclude the officer time such as my own which would nevertheless form part of the total budget for internal control purposes. Taking the cash budget for 2005, in round terms;

SBC spent	350,000
Grant income came from –	
ACE	110,000
EU (Clipa/ferryman)	230,000
EU (ERDF to Fringe)	20,000
Lottery A4A (Fringe)	15,000
Sponsorship (excluding Fringe)	<u>13,000</u>
Total	388,000”

These SIRF 2005 figures do not correspond with the grants shown in SBC’s books (please see above). He explains,

“first not all the grants attracted as a result of our investment are paid to and spent by the Council, those attracted by the fringe do not appear and some of the commissioning costs are routed via event international and the Eunetstar commissioning consortium, secondly 2006 was a relatively lean year and we are optimistic that 2007 and 2008 will be closer to the 2005 outcome, third and perhaps most important, the intention of the newspaper article was to demonstrate the desirability of the event and the 'pound for pound' claim was a general indicator rather than an absolute measure.”

Councillor John Fletcher
Chairman of Adults, Leisure & Culture Select Committee
6th March 2007