

**STOCKTON-ON-TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**CABINET RECOMMENDATIONS**

**PROFORMA**

Cabinet Meeting .....17th December 2009

1. Title of Item/Report

Stockton International Riverside Festival 2009

2. Record of the Decision

Cabinet considered a report that provided feedback from and reflected on the successes of the 2009 Festival. A short promotional DVD, showing highlights from the festival, was played at the meeting.

Members noted the results of survey undertaken following the Festival.

- › Overall visitor satisfaction was 92.1% compared with 96.2% in 2008.
- › 77.9% of visitors said the Festival has a positive effect on Stockton's image
- › 1,094 participants and 54 groups participated in the Community Carnival, with every ward in the borough represented.
- › 17 new groups and 13 diverse groups were involved.
- › SIRF and Fringe combined presented more than 240 performances to estimated audiences of over 180,000 people
- › Mean spend per capita £35.72 compared with £41.70 in 2008.

Brief details of the Programme were provided including those attractions that had been most popular.

Particular reference was made to the Carnival and issues surrounding it. The scale of the Carnival brought its own challenges in terms of duration of road closure required to take participants safely across Yarm Lane onto Trinity Green. The Council appreciated the inconvenience that this caused and made every effort to minimise the disruption to traffic and buses. On balance, it was considered that the benefits to participants and spectators justified the disruption, and Cabinet supported the continued growth of the Carnival. However, further analysis of routes and strategies to minimise public transport delays was required. The multi partner group, with representation from a range of Council services along with bus operators, emergency services and other stakeholders, had begun to look in detail at issues arising from SIRF 09, and the ways in which arrangements could be improved.

The Carnival had attracted many compliments and it was rewarding to receive positive comments from national arts policy makers. It was suggested that the Carnival could be in a position to represent the North East in the Cultural Olympiad celebrations 2012

The decision to take more responsibility for the key elements of the Festival within the Council rather than outsource to external organisations proved very successful. Whilst artistic direction was still contracted out, the Arts Development Manager/ Festival Co-ordinator was responsible for confirming and authorising all programme, and for procurement of services and spend for the Festival.

SIRF had long been supported by a number of Council departments such as PR, traffic management, cleansing, health and safety, risk management and insurance. This year we made additional demands on Council services, in particular Legal Services for contracts, Financial Services and Town Centre Management. It was considered that the Services involved felt a real sense of ownership and pride in managing the complexities of presenting a successful SIRF.

Members were reminded that for the past two years SIRF had been participating in a pilot project to improve the accessibility of the festival to disabled audiences. The Council worked with disability arts campaigner and service provider, Attitude is Everything, as part of their Disability Access Audit and Toolkit partnership project with the Independent Street Arts Network (ISAN) and part funded by Arts Council England. The findings from the audit were used to produce a SIRF Disability Access Action Plan 2009 – 2013 and included as a case study in the national Access Toolkit. A mystery shopper from Attitude is Everything gave the festival a glowing report and members present at the meeting provided very positive comments in this area.

Members noted that the Festival had operated within very tight financial controls and was delivered on budget.

The VIP area shared between SIRF and the Fringe worked well and demonstrated cohesion between the Festivals. For an event of this size and reputation, the hospitality was modest and designed to enable SIRF and Fringe to attract sponsors and create a positive impression of the Town amongst key opinion formers. Whilst the hospitality was a great success overall, it did attract some criticism. Consideration would be given to the nature of this provision in the future, particularly in relation to

the wider economic climate.

It was explained that in response to ongoing financial pressures officers were exploring the potential for charging for part or all of the Festival, though at a level which would not prevent disadvantaged communities from enjoying the event. In addition there were ongoing pressures on spaces in the town, between the needs of SIRF and those of the other users and functions of the town centre.

Cabinet agreed that 2009, 22nd Stockton International Riverside Festival and 19th Stockton Riverside Fringe had been extremely successful, continuing high visitor satisfaction ratings, positive impact on Stockton's image and significant economic benefits for the town. SIRF 09 delivered more of the organisation in house, brought together more Council services, achieved new heights in disabled access and presented arguably the best ever finale

RESOLVED that:-

1. the success and feedback of this year's Festival be noted.
2. the principal of continued growth of the Carnival , and the exploration of strategies to limit disruptions to traffic that arise from the procession be supported.

3. Reasons for the Decision

To celebrate the successes and improvements of this Festival and support the event's future development

4. Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None

5. Declared (Cabinet Member) Conflicts of Interest

None

6. Details of any Dispensations

Not applicable

7. Date and Time by which Call In must be executed

Not later than Midnight on Tuesday, 29th December 2009

Proper Officer  
21 December 2009