

CABINET ITEM COVERING SHEET PROFORMA

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

17TH DECEMBER, 2009

REPORT OF CORPORATE MANAGEMENT TEAM

CABINET DECISION

Leader of the Council, Councillor Lupton
Arts, Leisure & Culture - Lead Cabinet Member, Councillor Mrs Womphrey

STOCKTON INTERNATIONAL RIVERSIDE FESTIVAL 2009

1. Summary

2009 was the 22nd Stockton International Riverside Festival and 19th Stockton Riverside Fringe and another extremely successful year, continuing high visitor satisfaction ratings, positive impact on Stockton's image and significant economic benefits for the town. In 2009 we 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

2. Recommendations

1. To note the success and feedback of this year's Festival
2. To support the principal of continued growth of the Carnival, and explore strategies to limit disruptions to traffic that arise from the procession.

3. Reasons for the Recommendations/Decision(s)

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

4. Members Interests

Members (including co-opted Members with voting rights) should consider whether they have a personal interest in the item as defined in the Council's code of conduct (**paragraph 8**) and, if so, declare the existence and nature of that interest in accordance with paragraph 9 of the code.

Where a Member regards him/herself as having a personal interest in the item, he/she must then consider whether that interest is one which a member of the public, with knowledge of the relevant facts, would reasonably regard as so significant that it is likely to prejudice the Member's judgement of the public interest (**paragraphs 10 and 11 of the code of conduct**).

A Member with a prejudicial interest in any matter must withdraw from the room where the meeting considering the business is being held –

- In a case where the Member is attending a meeting (including a meeting of a select committee) but only for the purpose of making representations, answering questions or giving evidence, provided the public are also allowed to attend the meeting for the same purpose whether under statutory right or otherwise, immediately after making representations, answering questions or giving evidence as the case may be;
- In any other case, whenever it becomes apparent that the business is being considered at the meeting;

And must not exercise executive functions in relation to the matter and not seek improperly to influence the decision about the matter (**paragraph 12 of the Code**).

Further to the above, it should be noted that any Member attending a meeting of Cabinet, Select Committee etc; whether or not they are a Member of the Cabinet or Select Committee concerned, must declare any personal interest which they have in the business being considered at the meeting (unless the interest arises solely from the Member's membership of, or position of control or management on any other body to which the Member was appointed or nominated by the Council, or on any other body exercising functions of a public nature, when the interest only needs to be declared if and when the Member speaks on the matter), and if their interest is prejudicial, they must also leave the meeting room, subject to and in accordance with the provisions referred to above.

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SUMMARY

2009 was the 22nd Stockton International Riverside Festival and 19th Stockton Riverside Fringe and another extremely successful year, continuing high visitor satisfaction ratings, positive impact on Stockton's image and significant economic benefits for the town. In 2009 we 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

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To note the success and feedback of this year's Festival
2. To support the principal of continued growth of the Carnival, and explore strategies to limit disruptions to traffic that arise from the procession.

DETAIL

1. 2009 was the 22nd Stockton International Riverside Festival and 19th Stockton Riverside Fringe and another extremely successful year, 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
2. It was a challenging year for SIRF with fewer resources to programme, promote and present the event and significant changes to the way that the Festival was managed and delivered.
3. For the last few years SIRF has benefited from substantial grants from external organisations but this year has had to rely largely on funds from SBC and Arts Council England. The lack of external funding opportunities and poor sterling/euro exchange rate gave us less funding in real terms and less buying power. We slightly reduced the duration and scale of the Festival whilst maintaining the quality of the programme. In order to sustain SIRF's unique commissioning role despite the weakened pound, we commissioned more UK work.

4. The annual SIRF Visitor Survey, conducted by Norma Wilburn Associates (NWA), captured 1,391 names, postcodes, and contact information. Following the Festival, a cross-section of 444 people was selected and completed a detailed, structured telephone or online survey. We now have this detailed data for six consecutive years, captured in the same way, allowing increasingly robust trend analysis.
5. All statistics quoted in this report are taken from the NWA survey unless otherwise stated
 - > 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.
6. On the whole, SIRF 2009 was well planned and executed. As in previous years, the various internal and external partners collaborated to create an experience for the visitor that was unified and coherent.

SIRF Programme

7. The format for 2009 was the same as in recent years, with a concentration of shows and walkabouts in the High Street, a second cluster on Trinity Green, including the culmination of the ever expanding Community Carnival and the Festival Finale, small scale entertainments in Parish Gardens and the Fringe on the Riverside and in the Georgian Theatre. The Festival main programme began on the Thursday, the Fringe ran from Friday to Sunday, the Carnival took place at midday on Saturday and the Festival culminated with a spectacular finale on the Sunday night.
8. SIRF 09 presented a typically rich and diverse programme with everyone having their favourite part. However, visitor feedback and anecdotal evidence tells us that the most popular highlights were:
9. ***Deabru Beltzak*** is a company who has its roots in the culture of Spain's Basque Country. The performers excited audiences, weaving through the crowd on the High Street with an exciting late night show of dance, fire and percussion.
10. ***Teatro Gestual de Chile***, modern day clowns with a wicked and slightly irreverent sense of humour, entertained and involved family audiences in mocking the absurdities of modern life. This was their first visit to the UK.
11. ***Guixot de 8***, a company from Spain, created a very popular playground on Trinity Green of games made from recycled objects which was enjoyed by children, young people and adults. Some games were simply built, others complex, all giving scrap objects a new lease of life.

12. ***SIRF Community Carnival***
Since the endorsement in 2002 of the strategic objective to 'put the community back at the heart of the Festival and grow the Community Carnival' the Carnival has grown year on year. This year it achieved the continued growth in scale and quality, creating impact and charm with spectacular large models, high quality music and dance and high quality colourful costumes. The Carnival finished for the first time with a staged performance by participating groups on Trinity Green.
13. Continued growth in numbers of participants does not necessarily increase the cost of the parade, except for the relatively small costs of stewarding and technical support. However, it will be a challenge to sustain the growth in the scale and quality of costumes, props and choreography, which have been funded by grants from other bodies.
14. The scale of the Carnival brings its own challenges in terms of duration of road closure required to take participants safely across Yarm Lane onto Trinity Green. We appreciate the inconvenience that this causes and make every effort to minimise the disruption to traffic and buses. On balance, we feel the benefits to participants and spectators justifies the disruption, and we are seeking support from Cabinet to continue growing the Carnival. However, further analysis of routes and strategies to minimise public transport delays is required. The multi partner group, with representation from a range of Council services along with bus operators, emergency services and other stakeholders, has begun to look in detail at issues arising from SIRF 09, and the ways in which we can improve arrangements for the future.
15. The Carnival has attracted many compliments and it is rewarding to receive positive comments from national arts policy makers. Our aspiration is to position the Carnival to represent the North East in the Cultural Olympiad celebrations 2012
16. ***Stockton Riverside Fringe***
This year showed the real stature of the Fringe as a significant festival, showcasing the best of our local musicians performing alongside the headline bands and also a great comedy and Georgian Theatre programme. The strong relationship between SIRF and the Fringe helped us achieve a critical mass of activity and multi-choice for audiences at all times during the Festivals
17. ***SIRF Finale***
The Finale, "Trinity", was specially commissioned for SIRF and inspired by local history and memories. Trinity Church ruin was the centrepiece for the most astonishing and beautiful show of images, music and fireworks. Trinity Green was crammed with visitors and many of the comments we received described it as the best finale ever.
18. ***What didn't work so well:***
The programme included several commissions and premieres, including the world premiere of Parklife, which was part of the VIP evening programme. The performance showed a great deal of promise and showcased many local groups but the work was underdeveloped and demonstrated the challenges and risks of commissioning and premiering new work. However, Parklife did attract a great deal of media attention including an article in the Guardian Guide and was very popular with local residents who enjoyed participating in

the varied workshops and activities during the week leading up to the final performance.

Management and Delivery

19. 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.
20. Frank Wilson remained Artistic Director, though in a much reduced role; researching, selecting and recommending the Festival programme; negotiating provisional contractual arrangements with companies.
21. A Technical Production Manager was contracted for SIRF 09, reporting directly to SBC. All procurement was carried out in accordance with SBC policies and procedures and no expenditure took place without direct authorisation by the Arts Development Manager.
22. The Arts Development Team administered all contracting, financial transactions and artist liaison. We received several thanks from artists for the care and efficiency of the Festival organisation.
23. SIRF has 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. We believe the Services involved felt a real sense of ownership and pride in managing the complexities of presenting a successful SIRF.

Marketing and Communications

24. Bringing the Marketing in house was extremely successful locally and had many positive outcomes. We made some progress on regional and national media coverage but this area needs further work. The marketing section of Performance and Business Services managed the campaign very well despite being at capacity on occasions in managing the volume of work for SIRF in addition to its other workload. We had two young members of staff supporting the campaign who were particularly valuable in keeping the website up to date and setting up and maintaining Facebook and Flickr groups.

Disability Access

25. For the past two years SIRF has been participating in a pilot project to improve the accessibility of the festival to disabled audiences. We 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.

26. A “mystery shopper” from Attitude is Everything visited the Festival and gave us a glowing report for our services:

“When I approached SIRF Central I was greeted by polite and friendly staff. I asked about the sign language interpreter and she immediately identified herself. Another member of staff showed me the large print and Braille brochures and offered me a copy of either. I was also informed that all SIRF staff around town have radios and will contact SIRF Central for any help needed, and if anyone approaches the staff about needing the interpreter, she will go and see them.”

Attitude is Everything’s Chief Executive stated:

“Other festivals and street arts events could learn a great deal from SIRF”

Finances

27. This year’s Festival operated within very tight financial controls and was delivered on budget.

VIP and hospitality

28. 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 will be given about the nature of this provision in the future, particularly in relation to the wider economic climate.

Future considerations

29. In response to ongoing financial pressures officers are 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 are ongoing pressures on spaces in the town, between the needs of SIRF and those of the other users and functions of the town centre.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

RISK ASSESSMENT

Specific items within this report are on the Service Group Risk Register and appropriate control measures are in place. The event is identified as low risk with the total score of 6

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY IMPLICATIONS

Continued development and promotion of festivals and events will increase the profile of the Borough locally, regionally and nationally, as well as providing opportunities for families, children and young people from our communities to experience and participate in the arts.

The promotion of diverse cultural opportunities will contribute towards the creation of vibrant and successful Town Centres

EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT

An Equalities Impact Assessment has been completed with a score of 80

SIRF is an inclusive festival which brings people together for shared enjoyment, experiences and participation in Stockton's public spaces.

CONSULTATION INCLUDING WARD/COUNCILLORS

SIRF is underpinned by robust and wide consultation with Council Members, Council services, partners, stakeholders, businesses, resident and community groups,

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