

CABINET ITEM COVERING SHEET PROFORMA

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

12th July 2017

**REPORT OF SENIOR
MANAGEMENT TEAM**

CABINET DECISION

Cabinet Member for Arts, Culture & Leisure – Councillor Norma Wilburn

Billingham Event Infrastructure and Billingham International Folk Festival

1. Summary

This report highlights the challenges faced in the staging of the Billingham International Folk Festival (BIFF) that arise from changing legislation and best practice. The report also outlines the impacts on BIFF that are likely to arise from the changing use of the former Campus School sports block and sets out possible courses of action.

2. Recommendations

1. Cabinet approves the use of up to £25,000 of Council resources to enable the short term measures to facilitate BIFF this year.
2. Cabinet endorse the proposed further work to explore and define costs for longer term solutions to the infrastructure challenges faced by BIFF and similar events in Billingham

3. Reasons for the Recommendation(s)/Decision(s)

To allow Cabinet to confirm its support for short term measures and endorse the proposed further work, which will be the subject of a further report.

4. Members' Interests

Members (including co-opted Members) should consider whether they have a personal interest in any item, as defined in **paragraphs 9 and 11** of the Council's code of conduct and, if so, declare the existence and nature of that interest in accordance with and/or taking account of **paragraphs 12 - 17** of the code.

Where a Member regards him/herself as having a personal interest, as described in **paragraph 16** of the code, in any business of the Council he/she must then, **in accordance with paragraph 18** of the code, 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 and the business:-

- affects the members financial position or the financial position of a person or body described in **paragraph 17** of the code, or

- relates to the determining of any approval, consent, licence, permission or registration in relation to the member or any person or body described in **paragraph 17** of the code.

A Member with a personal interest, as described in **paragraph 18** of the code, may attend the meeting but must not take part in the consideration and voting upon the relevant item of business. However, a member with such an interest may make representations, answer questions or give evidence relating to that business before the business is considered or voted on, provided the public are also allowed to attend the meeting for the same purpose whether under a statutory right or otherwise (**paragraph 19** of the code)

Members may participate in any discussion and vote on a matter in which they have an interest, as described in **paragraph 18** of the code, where that interest relates to functions of the Council detailed in **paragraph 20** of the code.

Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

It is a criminal offence for a member to participate in any discussion or vote on a matter in which he/she has a disclosable pecuniary interest (and where an appropriate dispensation has not been granted) **paragraph 21** of the code.

Members are required to comply with any procedural rule adopted by the Council which requires a member to leave the meeting room whilst the meeting is discussing a matter in which that member has a disclosable pecuniary interest (**paragraph 22** of the code)

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SUMMARY

This report highlights the challenges faced in the staging of the Billingham International Folk Festival (BIFF) that arise from changing legislation and best practice. The report also outlines the impacts on BIFF that are likely to arise from the changing use of the former Campus School sports block and sets out possible courses of action.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Cabinet approves the use of up to £25,000 of Council resources to enable the short term measures to facilitate BIFF this year.
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DETAIL

1. Billingham International Folk Festival, BIFF, has been staged every year for over 50 years. It has a significant international reputation and considerable value as an example of how global cultural forms were revealed and celebrated in an era without global digital communications.
2. Stockton Council provides BIFF with an annual grant of £60,000, in addition to which BIFF have successfully secured Arts Council England (ACE) grants at varying levels. In this year's Festival BIFF will present a newly commissioned show designed for the Forum ice arena, Peacock Lake. BIFF have been awarded a grant by ACE for Peacock Lake. It represents a positive development in the format of the Festival overall.
3. BIFF is one of the founder members of the global network of folkloric festivals, known as Conseil International des Organisations de Festivals de Folklore et d'arts traditionnels, CIOFF. The framework within which BIFF presents performers from around the world is set out by CIOFF and has remained largely unchanged for many years. These rules require the host Festival to accommodate and feed a large number of performers (up to 300) for a period of two weeks or more. The visiting groups include children and adults.
4. When BIFF began, performers and their accompanying teachers or family members were provided with food and accommodation by local people, staying in their homes and being hosted by local families. Contemporary concerns about safety and safeguarding issues mean that the hosting of visitors in local people's homes is no longer practicable or desirable.

5. In recent years BIFF has used a variety of school buildings and temporary structures to house their artists, most recently utilising the former Campus School sports block on Marsh House Avenue, Billingham. Stockton Council has provided considerable practical and financial assistance, in addition to its grant to the Festival, to make it possible for BIFF to house the artists, feed them, and allow space for rehearsal. The Council has also continued to support the staging of the public performances and educational activities.
6. As part of the Council's 'Let's Share' strategy, approval has been given to the transfer of the Campus Sports Block to Onsite, on behalf of a range of tenant/users. This very positive development will result in more people using the building more of the time, creating facilities that would not otherwise be available, in particular for the Velocity Trampoline and Gymnastics Club. However, the alterations required to the building to accommodate Velocity and others reduces the space in which BIFF can house artists for this and future year's festivals. The reduction of space will displace approximately 100 artists.
7. It should be noted that, even with full use of the sports block in question, BIFF has required additional space for feeding the artists and for the significant rehearsals essential to the production of the Festival. In previous years this additional space has been created through the installation of a marquee and other temporary structures. These structures have been located on the tarmac and grassed areas to the rear of the school and arranged in such a way as to minimise noise nuisance for adjacent residential streets.
8. Stockton Council owns the land in question but permission to use it would normally be subject to various restrictions. The access route to the site is also subject to a weight restriction. There have been concerns in the past about security and stewarding, and also some complaints from nearby residents about noise. Future event plans would need to address such issues, however, in general these have been surmountable or modest.
9. Changes to the extent and layout of school facilities in future may necessitate revised layouts for the temporary facilities, but in principle it seems likely that such facilities could be created annually on an ongoing basis, from a physical and spatial point of view.
10. The BIFF organisers have estimated the additional costs for temporary infrastructure in 2017 to be approximately £25,000.
11. The tents, cabins and generators that could be used to solve the accommodation needs this year may not represent the optimum solution in terms of cost, noise, comfort and suitability, for the longer term. Furthermore structures and layouts that are allowable as a one-off response may not be acceptable as a planned, repeated solution. Also, the demands of the event may change.
12. In order to determine whether or not there are better solutions for future years and to establish a likely cost of infrastructure to facilitate BIFF, we propose work is undertaken to explore the options and outline the costs, advantages and disadvantages of any that are practicable.
13. Options assessed will not be limited to the Marsh House Avenue site, although at this stage no other space has been identified that is sufficient in scale and close enough to the Town Centre performance areas.
14. Cabinet are asked to support the options appraisal process and provide input where appropriate. Ward Councillors will also be consulted.
15. A further report setting out the options and cost implications will then be prepared for a future Cabinet discussion in order that Cabinet can choose whether to make any resource allocation at that point.

COMMUNITY IMPACT IMPLICATIONS

There are no community impact implications arising from the consideration of options for the future infrastructure needs of BIFF.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The additional resource required to support the BIFF organisers and allow them to accommodate their performers in 2017 is expected to be in the region of £25,000. The future infrastructure costs per annum may be higher depending on which option is supported.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Permissions, licenses, land ownership and legal agreements will be considered as part of the option appraisal process. There are no legal implications arising from the offer of further financial support to BIFF per se.

RISK ASSESSMENT

Consideration of potential future infrastructure needs for Billingham International Folk Festival is categorised as low to medium risk. Existing management systems and daily routine activities are sufficient to control and reduce risk.

COUNCIL PLAN POLICY PRINCIPLES AND PRIORITIES

BIFF and other events celebrate diversity, bring communities together and attract visitors and so contribute to a range of Council priorities, in particular **'Developing strong and healthy communities'** and **'Creating economic prosperity'**. However, the assessment of options for future event infrastructure in Billingham does not in itself impact on Council Plan priorities.

CORPORATE PARENTING IMPLICATIONS

There are no Corporate Parenting implications arising from this report.

CONSULTATION INCLUDING WARD/COUNCILLORS

The Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Arts, Culture & Leisure will be consulted as part of the options appraisal process, as will Billingham Ward Councillors.

Name of Contact Officer: Reuben Kench
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Email Address:

Education related? No

Background Papers none

Ward(s) and Ward Councillors: Billingham Wards

Property

This work arises from the Asset Management Plan and will involve Land and Property officers.