

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

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**REPORT OF CORPORATE
MANAGEMENT TEAM**

CABINET DECISION

Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Health, Leisure and Culture

2021 EVENT SUMMARY AND 2022 MEMORIAL LIGHTING CALENDAR

SUMMARY

The COVID pandemic has continued to impact the delivery of the Council's outdoor events programme in 2021 and to present uncertainty and challenges for events scheduled for 2022. This report provides a brief overview of the event related activity that has been delivered in 2021 and on the work of our Independent Safety Advisory Group (ISAG). The report also provides the suggested calendar for memorial lighting during 2022.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To note the success of events delivered during 2021
2. To approve the memorial lighting calendar for 2022

DETAIL

1. Following the first national lockdown in March 2020 and the subsequent introduction of the Government's Tier System, a second national lockdown and a 4-step roadmap to recovery was set out in the Spring of 2021. This has been another difficult year in terms of event planning and delivery.
2. Notwithstanding the ongoing challenges of Covid, it is encouraging that some smaller scale events, which have been delivered in a Covid Secure way, were possible at the start of the 2021/22 event season.
3. Unfortunately, the timing of the 4-step road map, together with the impact of the 'pingdemic' in the late summer months, meant that our Spring/Summer large scale programme had to be stood down for a second year.
4. As we move to our 2021 Autumn/Winter programme, we are more optimistic about event delivery. We are continuing to monitor the local and national picture in terms of infection control and we are working closely with Public Health colleagues. Several of our popular events have already taken place over recent months including Halloween, Fireworks and Remembrance Sunday celebrations. Visitor numbers have been high and indicate that the appetite for outdoor events has not waned, despite nervousness amongst some communities about the ongoing threat of COVID.

5. In addition to our own Council event programme, we have supported external event organisers across the Borough as they began to re-instate their own events programmes. Significant time and resources have been made available to assist and help organisers navigate their way through Government restrictions and the opening up of outdoor event work. Annual events such as Friends of Ropner Park Autumn Food Fair, Thornaby Show, BIFF, Ingleby Barwick Funday and Yarm Fair have all be delivered successfully in 2021.
6. The Council has also supported the implementation of two exciting new events in the Borough during 2021. An Orienteering Sprint Race was delivered by Cleveland Orienteering Club and was held in the Teesdale area. Also, a new music event 'Thornafest' was staged in Thornaby. Both events were originally scheduled for 2020, however were postponed due to the national lockdown.
7. It should be highlighted that the recovery of outdoor event work continues to be slow and not without challenge. Stockton Events programme is extensive, and it involves large numbers of staff, suppliers and partners and takes many months to plan and deliver. The ongoing uncertainties associated with Covid are making event planning particularly precarious and like many other sectors we are experiencing difficulties procuring services, professional staff and essential supplies.
8. Events are a good example of the joined-up work of the Council. Although the Events Service leads the coordination and planning of events, the demands on Enforcement, Traffic Management, Legal and Communications teams are substantial and their contribution is critical to the success of our events. All of these services have had to deal with the changes and uncertainty arising from the pandemic.
9. Assessing 'risk' is a fundamental part of event planning, however the additional overlay of Covid and an ever-moving set of parameters in which outdoor event work is permitted, places additional pressure in terms of event planning. Constant assessment of the covid situation (locally and nationally) in an event delivery context is difficult. It requires a collective corporate management response, with agile decision making to ensure reputational and public health risks are balanced
10. As we return to outdoor event delivery in 2021, we have retained some digital elements of our Event Programme. These included SIRF International work, Stockton & Darlington Railway (S&DR) Specialist Markets, and Armed Forces. Whilst some of the digital work has been delivered out of necessity, due to timescales for outdoor event work to start, some element such as SIRF have been specifically programmed following the success of 2020.
11. Other successful events delivered in 2021 included Chic Vintique, S&DR 195th anniversary celebrations, BIFF, Festival of Light and Colour.

SIRF and sector development

12. SIRF is an Arts Council England (ACE) National Portfolio Organisation (NPO), funded to present high quality work and provide strategic support to the street arts sector. SIRF has a strong reputation for consistently supporting its artists and this support has been vital over the past 18 months, as the impact of Covid had a huge and far-reaching impact on artists, groups and the wider Culture Sector.
13. In 2020, the Council in agreement with ACE, implemented a financial support package for SIRF artists who effectively lost their income streams as the Country was placed in lockdown. Reflecting contractual commitments and the preparation artists had already invested in, approximately £102,000 of grant payments were issued to SIRF artists in 2020.

14. Despite these payments to artists, the cancellation of SIRF 2020, resulted in a substantial underspend on the SIRF budget. Following negotiations with ACE to avoid a clawback of any unspent grant, £236,000 was carried forward from 2020 into 2021 budgets. An element of this carry-forward budget was used to support Sector Development and Environment projects linked to our festival, and the remainder has been earmarked to commission a new large-scale commission for SIRF 2022. The large-scale commission will look to test a new way of working that enables mass participation and engagement with communities and collaboration with an international company.
15. In addition, a commission to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Tees Barrage that had been planned for 2020 was postponed in 2020 and 2021. The budget for that commission includes £50,000 from the Canals and Rivers Trust, which has been carried forward. This is now expected to be delivered at SIRF 2022
16. Following the Government's announcement of a 4-step roadmap to recovery in Spring this year, the Council took the decision to plan to deliver SIRF 21. This was a calculated risk, as it was acknowledged that the size and scale of the SIRF would make it impossible to limit numbers/implement if any covid restrictions remained. This meant that SIRF could only go ahead if key dates on the road map were achieved and ultimately all restrictions for outdoor event work were lifted before our event date. Of course, progression through the roadmap relied on several targets being met, including vaccination rates and a reduction in new infections and hospital admissions.
17. It should be highlighted that due to the ongoing uncertainties about international travel in relation to Covid, the Council decided all international work would be delivered in a digital format for SIRF 21.
18. As such, the SIRF 21 programme comprised live performances by local, regional and national artists and groups, supported by an international digital element. The outdoor programme consisted of 45 groups, delivering over 100 shows.
19. The Council's Event Service worked closely with Public Health colleagues monitoring progress of the roadmap and assessing information and key data and at both a national and local/regional context. As each step of the roadmap, we reassessed planning/risk for SIRF delivery and consulted with CMT, ISAG and emergency service partners.
20. Unfortunately, despite step 1 to 3 being achieved on time and with little impact on event planning, the rising infection rates in the Borough in late June/early July were a real concern. At the time the Government announced a four-week extension of step 4 to allow for vaccination rates to be increased, it was becoming clear that infection control, and impact on emergency services at a local and regional level posed a risk to event delivery/safety.
21. Ultimately, the Council made the difficult decision to cancel SIRF two weeks ahead of the event date. When we took the decision to cancel, local infection rates were at 827 cases per 100,000 and rising, compared to 351 per 100,000 nationally. The decision wasn't solely related to infection control, equally important was the consideration of the support services who are integral to events. Colleagues in the NHS locally were reporting pressure on ambulance services and paramedics. Fire and Police capacity was also being reduced by the so-called pingdemic, and those Council services essential to public safety and road closures, amongst others, were vulnerable.
22. Although cancelling SIRF for a second consecutive year was very disappointing, it should be noted that a great deal of SIRF work has still been delivered and business plan objectives met. This includes our SIRF digital programme, talent and sector development aims, environmental initiatives and participation and engagement projects.

23. SIRF 2021 digital programme included work of the highest quality from Australia, German, Spain and USA with 2 special Stockton based commissions.

The digital programme and engagement received:

Total Facebook reach across 22 posts: **84,870**

Total Twitter reach across 20 posts: **43,873**

24. In addition, our digital programme included an international showcase in partnership with XTRAX. The showcase had 130 national and international delegates. Delegates represented 19 different countries with 29 companies showcasing work and 22 exceptional keynote speakers. The showcase accessed innovative digital technologies which enabled real time presentations and conversations that allowed over 1000 messages across artists and 500 new connections made.
25. In partnership with ARC and funding from TVCA, we are delivering a long term Talent Development programme as part of 'The Class of 2020' This initiative is to ensure we support the growth of the cultural sector in the Tees Valley. The work involves an 'Outdoor Arts' specific training programme with exceptional professionals delivering masterclasses and training. The work engages with 60 emerging cultural, arts and production professionals. This programme provides a real commissioning experience for the participants, resulting in 3 new works from the group as part of the SIRF 2022 artistic programme.
26. In 2021 we introduced an Environmental Training programme aimed at artist/festival deliverers in partnership with Julie's Bicycle. Julie's Bicycle is a pioneering not-for-profit organisation mobilising the arts and culture to take action on the climate and ecological crisis. The programme benefited all independent festivals and outdoor arts providers in the Tees Valley along with 25 artists and companies. The work enabled the delegates to implement real and tangible changes to the environmental impacts of delivering their work.
27. Participation and engagement work is an integral part of the festival delivery. We engage with over 1,000 residents from across the Borough as part of our Community Carnival. We have remained in contact with those schools and communities involved in the Carnival and as part of our extended SIRF delivery this year we have invited these groups to take part in a new Lantern Reindeer Parade.
28. As part of our work with young people, we were able to exceed our targets for the national Arts Award accreditation scheme. By the end of 2021/22 a phenomenal 368 local children will have achieved the Arts Awards through our programme.

Other Event Delivery 2021/22

29. The Council's specialist markets programme was reinstated from April this year. These market style events are relatively easily to deliver in Covid-secure way and as such we have delivered two; Chic Vintique and a Stockton & Darlington Railway Market. Attendance figures have been consistently good with traders at Chic Vintique reporting their highest profits to date.
30. The return of our popular Halloween Fright Night event in 2021 was a sell-out with over 3,000 tickets sold. The event in Preston Park covers two sessions, one specifically designed content for earlier years (under 5yrs) and a later session for older children (over 11yrs) which has a greater level of interaction from 'spooky' performers and 'scare' moments. Tickets for the younger session were sold out in under a week with demand

remaining high for all time slots. This event is supported by a 'park and ride' service which covers Thornaby, Ingleby Barwick, Yarm, Stockton and Billingham. Take up of the park and ride for 2021 was recorded at 66% (2,100), with remaining 34% (1,112) of ticket holders opting to walk to the venue

31. We received a fantastic response from audiences with several emails and social media responses, including; *“Was amazing, the kids loved it so did we. well done to all so planned out travel there and back was spot on massive thanks. I'll be booking again well worth the money. The staff did a fab job.”* Jan, from Thornaby
32. Stockton's Fireworks event took place on Sunday 7th November and was the Council's first large scale event since December 2019. In anticipated of high visitor numbers, extra safety measures were implemented, including extended traffic management arrangements, increased Police presence. To reduce pedestrian congestion and conflict with buses at the end of the firework display, we also took the decision not to include a large-scale fairground on the High Street.
33. Reflecting the impact that the pandemic has had on the event sector, a company contracted to install our Hostile Vehicle Mitigation (HVM) were unable to fulfil their contract and our Community Services team had to step in to cover that work. Events are likely to continue to be vulnerable to the late withdrawal of suppliers.
34. Irrespective of the challenges we had faced, visitor numbers at the Fireworks were very high. An estimated 40,000 people we attracted to the event, dispersed across the Riverside, High Street, and beyond.
35. Planning work is ongoing to support and deliver the growing number of Remembrance Sunday Events across the Borough. These events are being supported by the Event Production Team and ISAG. We are also providing financial support.
36. Stockton Sparkles is the remaining major event in the calendar for 2021. The event runs for a period of weeks in the lead up to Christmas, commencing with the light switch-on in late November. It should be noted that the majority of the Sparkles programme can only be delivered if national covid guidance remains unchanged.
37. 'Santa on Wheels' was a response to the restrictions in place in December 2020, but it was hugely popular on the streets and on social media. The Facebook post announcing the 2020 routes was the Council's second biggest post of that year, reaching 117,000 people and attracting more than 1,000 comments. A trailer video featuring a short interview with Santa Claus was viewed nearly 40,000 times. In all, posts about the 'Santa on Wheels' event were viewed more than 500,000 times across the Council's social media platforms and prompted an overwhelmingly positive response from members of the public. Santa on Wheels will return this winter.

Stockton's Independent Safety Advisory Group (ISAG)

38. Stockton's Independent Safety Advisory Group (ISAG) was inactive during lockdown as all events were cancelled. It was reinstated in April 2021, in preparation for the 2021/22 event season. One of the main priorities for the group this year was to help event organisers understand and navigate their way through the Government's recovery roadmap in relation to event work.
39. ISAG representatives reassessed and redefined a practical set of COVID-secure Event Management criteria which was aligned to the new Government timescales for its roadmap. The attendance of Public Health colleagues at ISAG continued throughout 2021 and as well

assessing event proposals in line with outbreak control measures, they have continued to provide practical advice and guidance in relation to Covid/Public safety measures.

40. In relation to specific event safety, ISAG have worked closely with a number of Event Organisers across the Borough in the planning and delivery of their events. Dedicated support and resources have been delivered to Billingham Town Council, Thornaby Town Council, Billingham International Folk Festival, and Friends of Ropner Park.
41. ISAG has continued to work closely with the Showmen's Guild who are the event applicant for Yarm Fair. The Guild worked hard to accommodate the impact of new space restrictions to ensure crowd and traffic flow and presented a well run event. In relation to the 'Ridings' element of the Fair, the proposal from Yarm Town Council to use a steam traction engine in the closed-road event space, alongside the crowds, was not approved by ISAG and the Council did not authorise use of its land for that purpose. The tradition of proclaiming the ancient right of the Fair, at different points around the High Street, was still performed.
42. The use of Council owned land for events organised by other bodies, such as the Big Kid's Circus use of Trinity Green, can create challenges as the Council retains the landowner's liability. Work has begun on systems and protocols that will provide greater clarity and protection for all parties in the future. However, the reprioritisation of work because of COVID, and subsequent work to redesign events for rapidly changing conditions, has delayed work on the revised framework for third party events on Council land.

Memorial lighting calendar 2022

43. The use of coloured lights in Stockton Town centre and on selected buildings and structures continues to provide the Council with an opportunity to acknowledge and support a range of good causes and important anniversaries. This memorial lighting programme is very popular and generates significant social media activity. The 2021 memorial lighting calendar has been delivered uninterrupted by COVID and has been a welcomed sign that we are slowly moving ahead in terms of the pandemic.
44. This report invites Cabinet to agree the programme for 2022, as listed in **Appendix A**. The list incorporates campaigns that might encompass a range of individually narrow issues/interests. The dates nominated in each case are those which are believed to be the subject of a meaningful campaign by others, such that when the lights are switched on the general public may have some understanding of the significance of the event/colour.
45. Where a campaign lasts for a period of days or weeks, the normal procedure will be to mark the start of that campaign by turning our lights on for the first day/night. However, where a campaign promoter wishes to use an alternative day within the period to align with specific activity designed to raise the profile of the campaign, we may change the date on which we turn our lights on to fit with the organisers' promotions. The calendar listed at Appendix A therefore includes suggested dates for each event and may be subject to minor changes.

COMMUNITY IMPACT IMPLICATIONS

46. The events programme is diverse and designed to reflect the interests of different communities. Every effort is made to make our events physically and financially accessible, they are presented in public spaces and are almost always free to watch or participate in.
47. Many of our events are specifically designed, in whole or in part, to raise awareness of the needs or characteristics of specific groups, including those with protected characteristics.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

48. There are no financial implications arising from this report.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

49. There are no legal implications arising from this report.

RISK ASSESSMENT

50. All events presented by the Council or approved for Council land are subject to a full risk assessment.

COUNCIL PLAN POLICY PRINCIPLES AND PRIORITIES

51. The events programme and memorial lighting contributes to a number of Council Plan priorities, including the economic objectives and those relating to community cohesion and wellbeing. In particular, our events are crucial to our ambition to create a place that is clean, vibrant and attractive.

52. Within the 'Our Places' section of the Council Plan, there is a Priority to 'Develop and adapt our events programme across the Borough to respond to the pandemic and inspire confidence about our futures.' This report illustrates the ways in which we are delivering on this priority.

CORPORATE PARENTING IMPLICATIONS

53. Many opportunities to participate in or enjoy our events are targeted at our looked after children.

CONSULTATION INCLUDING WARD/COUNCILLORS

54. There is frequent consultation with Councillors over events before, during and after the events are staged. There has been no consultation with Councillors in relation to this report as its primary function is to report on the outcome of events already staged.

55. There has been consultation with the Cabinet portfolio holder for Health, Culture & Leisure in the development of the draft memorial lighting calendar.

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Education related? No

Background Papers

Ward(s) and Ward Councillors:

Property

APPENDIX A

DRAFT MEMORIAL LIGHTING SCHEME 2022/23

DATE	EVENT	LIGHTING COLOUR	CAMPAIGNS
Thursday 27 January	Holocaust Memorial Day	Purple	National
Tuesday 1 February	LGBT+ History Month	Multi	Catch All
Friday 4 February	World Cancer Day	Orange	Catch All
Monday 21 February	Fairtrade Fortnight	Blue-Green	National
Tuesday 8 March	International Women's Day	White/Purple/ Green	National
Wednesday 23 March	National Day of Reflection	Yellow	National/ Time Limited
Saturday 26 March	Earth Hour (8.30pm-9.30pm)	Switched off	National
Saturday 2 April	Autism Acceptance Day	Gold	SBC Autism Friendly Town Centre
Saturday 23 April	St George's Day	Red/White	Saint Day
Monday 16 May	National Dementia Action Week	Purple	National SBC Awareness campaign
Wednesday 1 June	National Volunteering Week	Red/Purple	National
Thursday 2 June	The Queen's Platinum Jubilee (Lighting of Beacons)	TBC	National
TBC - June	National Carers Week	Blue	National
Saturday 25 June	Armed Forces Day	Red/White/ Blue	National
Sunday 4 September	World Sexual Health Awareness Day	Orange/Blue	Catch All
Thursday 29 September	World Heart Day	Red	National
Saturday 1 October	Stoptober (Stop Smoking Campaign)	Red	National
Sunday 9 October	Baby Loss Awareness Week	Pink/Blue	Catch All

Monday 10 October	World Mental Health Day	Purple	Catch All
Friday 21 October	Show Racism the Red Card	Red	National SBC Campaign
Friday 11 November	Remembrance Day	Red	National
Monday 14 November	World Diabetes Day	Blue	National
Friday 25 November	International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women	Orange	Catch All
TBC	Child Sexual Exploitation Awareness Day	Purple	National