

APPENDIX A

STOCKTON BOROUGH COUNCIL INDEPENDENT SAFETY ADVISORY GROUP

DE-BRIEF REPORT 2021/22

OVERVIEW 2021/22

The Covid pandemic has significantly interrupted outdoor event work for the past 18 months and after a full year of no outdoor events in 2020, Stockton's ISAG has been reinstated from April 2021. Much of the group's work, especially in the early part of the year, has been focussed on supporting event organisers by reviewing and assessing national guidance and providing practical advice as the event sector starts to recover Building on ISAG's COVID-secure Event Management criteria and safeguarding processes, which are designed to help event organisers understand what is permissible under government guidance, the group has reviewed this documentation and aligned it to the new 4-step road map which the Government implemented in Spring 2021

ISAG note that recovery has been challenging for event organisers, not only in terms of event planning within a covid context, but on a more practical note as they try to re-establish and procure the services of artists, performers, traders, suppliers, technical staff etc. all of whom are also in a recovery phase.

ISAG has needed to be flexible in its support to event organisers and have supported key decisions in terms of calculating risk, introducing covid measures to help with outbreak control and even standing down events. Although a large proportion of Spring/Summer events did not take place, the 2021 autumn/winter programme was busy and included large scale events including Yarm Fair, Fireworks, Christmas Events, all of which were reviewed by the group.

Covid aside, ISAG have continued to work with event organisers in terms of their event safety plans and arrangements. The group has picked up its work in relation to Yarm Fair and the challenges of delivering a largescale fair in a busy built-up High Street. Although progress continues to be made, further work is required in relation to traffic impact/risk.

In addition, specific attention has been given to 'Remembrance Sunday' events this year and the draw on resources as more towns/communities want to run their own Remembrance Sunday events. The Group has also reviewed two new events for 2021, an Orienteering Sprint Race led by Cleveland Orienteering Klub and a new large scale music event 'Thornafest' which was staged in Thornaby.

Further to the above, this report details the work of the group and highlights specific areas of note/developments regarding event management/safety systems. ISAG have made a number of recommendations to the Local Authority to improve public safety/health and safety arrangements for events on Council land.

EVENTS REVIEWED BY ISAG 2021/22

The number of events reviewed by ISAG has remained consistent since 2015, however the Covid pandemic has significantly interrupted outdoor event work and as such, ISAG have only reviewed 26 event safety plans in 2021.

The implementation of the Government's 4-step recovery roadmap meant that a significant number of spring/summer events could not be delivered due to covid restrictions being in place. Some smaller scale events, such as specialist markets, were delivered in the earlier steps of the roadmap, as these types of events could be delivered in a covid secure. However, of the 26 event safety plans that ISAG reviewed in 2021, most of these events were delivered in the Autumn/Winter, when all Covid restrictions were lifted.

The table below shows the ratio of SBC/Other event management plans that have been submitted for review to the group. Despite the reduction in overall plans for the year, the ratio between SBC and other events has remained fairly constant.

2015		2016		2017		2018		2019		2020		2021	
SBC	24	SBC	22	SBC	26	SBC	27	SBC	19	n/a	SBC	10	
Other	23	Other	28	Other	28	Other	29	Other	32	n/a	Other	16	
Total	47	Total	50	Total	54	Total	56	Total	51	n/a	Total	26	

Following ISAG’s assurance of the 26 event safety plans, only one event was not delivered, and this was as a direct impact of Covid. Unfortunately, the Council’s signature event, Stockton International Riverside Festival was cancelled two weeks ahead of the scheduled event date. Despite a ‘favourable’ national picture in terms of infection control, intelligence from Public Health colleagues reported soaring infection rates at a local level. In addition, the resilience of key staff in terms of the ‘pingdemic’ and the impact/pressure on emergency service due to the rising numbers were all factors which ultimately meant SIRF had to be cancelled. ISAG were consulted and fully supported the Council’s decision in this regard.

MEETINGS

ISAG met on 8 separate occasions during 2021, between May – November. These meetings were all held on Microsoft Teams, and ran to time. An additional meeting was required to review Yarm Fair safety plans, as a full quorum was not achievable on the published date.

It is the practice of Stockton’s ISAG to ensure all event organisers are given the opportunity to attend meetings and present their plans. Despite ISAG meetings moving on-line, event organisers were still able to attend and discuss their plans effectively.

Meeting times have been extended to two hours.

Following consultation with ISAG members and event organisers, meetings will continue to be run digitally as opposed to face to face, cutting down on travel time and expenses.

MEMBERSHIP & ATTENDANCE

There have been several changes to ISAG membership since 2019, including new representatives for Fire, Highways and Public Health.

Core Members

Carl Marshall	– Independent, Chairman
Tara Connor	– SBC, Secretariat
Becky Nelson	- SBC, Administration
Simon Milner	– SBC, Highways & Network Safety Representative
Raymond Sullivan	– SBC, Building Representative
Stephen Donaghy	– SBC, Environmental Health
Polly Edwards	– SBC, Licensing
Insp Jon Willoughby	– Cleveland Police
David Preston	– Cleveland Fire Brigade
Tracy Scott	– NEAS

Non-Core Members

Tim Shurmer	– Emergency Planning Unit
Rachel McKnight	- Public Health

ISAG attendance has been good throughout 2021, despite the additional covid challenges and pressures ISAG members are dealing with in their substantive roles/organisations. The consistent attendance from emergency services colleagues, together with Emergency Planning and Public Health representation has been essential for the group to provide practical advice and guidance in relation to Covid/Public safety measures.

It is acknowledged that significant time and resources are needed attending meetings and reviewing health and safety documentation and the continued commitment of the individual members is noted and appreciated, particularly given the change in workload pressures through the pandemic.

To further strengthen the group, ISAG have recommended that the Council consider recruiting a water safety expert/representative to assist with water based events and a second independent chairperson to add resilience.

EVENT APPLICATIONS, INFORMATION AND SUPPORT

Deadlines:

Of the 26 Event Management Plans (EMPs) that were submitted to ISAG, 11 were received within agreed timescales, which is 45%. Although this is a drop from 2019, where 59% of EMPs were received on time, ISAG note and acknowledge the difficulties that event organisers are experiencing trying to reinstate their events and collate safety plans in line with covid/government/guideline

Of the 15 EMPs that were submitted past the deadline in 2021, approx. half were submitted between 2 days – 1 week after the scheduled date.

Knowledge Hub:

The Knowledge Hub online resource is used to share information between members and continues to work well. It is particularly useful for large scale events which have high volumes of documentation. Membership to the group is by invite only and is restricted to core members and non-core members.

Outbreak Control and Covid Support

ISAG have worked closely with Stockton Council Teams, including Public Health professionals assessing risks and interpreting government guidance in relation to outdoor event work. In 2021, the group have provided practical advice to event organisers as they try to reinstate their events, and covid risk/mitigation measures have been proportionately integrated into many safety plans, providing confidence to artists, suppliers, staff and members of the public.

Areas of support include:

- Public Health representative on ISAG
- Set of COVID-secure Event Management criteria and safeguarding processes designed to support event delivery. These criteria have been regularly updated and aligned at each stage of the Government's 4 step roadmap.
- Support with calculating risk and assessing proportionate levels of mitigation
- Updates of local, regional and national vaccination rates, new infections and hospital admissions to help event organisers make informed decisions.
- Identified any patterns/trends in numbers of Covid cases following event delivery.
- Support and advice in relation to delivering positive communication/event delivery
- Facilitate access to LFT and PCR testing where required.

Incident Management and Counter-Terrorism Awareness/Measures

ISAG continues to request evidence of incident planning arrangements, CT awareness training and threat risk assessment processes from event organisers in relation to their event planning/safety systems.

Although identified as a key action in the 2019/20 report, 'Prevent' training for event organisers has not yet been delivered due to the impact of Covid/ recovery of events. This action will be rescheduled for 2022/23 event season.

ISAG notes that the threat level during 202/21 was lowered to substantial but has since been reinstated to 'substantial' in the later part of the year. Counter Terrorism/Risk continues to be a standard agenda item for ISAG.

Support to External Event Organisers

ISAG note the continued practical support given to external event organisers from the Council's Events, Enforcement, Highways, Building Control, Environment, Media and Comms Teams. This support is vital in terms of effective planning and delivery of their events.

Organisations include:

- Age UK
- BELP – Billingham Carnival
- Big Kids Circus
- BIFF
- Billingham Town Council
- Butterwick Hospice
- Cleveland Orienteering Klub
- Friends of Ropner Park
- Ingleby Barwick Community Partnership
- Tees Rowing Club
- Showmen's Guild
- Thornaby Town Council
- Yarm Town Council

IMPROVEMENT AREAS/EVENT SAFETY

ISAG highlights 3 areas of work to note during 2021, namely **Yarm Fair**, **Remembrance Sunday Events** (across the Borough) and **Stockton Fireworks Display**.

Yarm Fair

Building on previous work to review safety arrangements/parameters in siting largescale events in Yarm High Street, the ISAG Chair acknowledges the continued positive relationship between the Showman's Guild, Council and ISAG in the staging of Yarm Fair. ISAG were encouraged to see that fairground rides were positioned in line with the new restrictions/parameters detailed in the Event Space Assessment, which ensured effective crowd flow and emergency evacuation routes. In addition, the Officer's Traffic Group (OTG) reported that access to bus stops which had previously been compromised when Yarm Fair was sited but non-operational, were unhindered this year and Highways Teams confirmed that overall visibility from side roads, pedestrian crossings etc., was adequate and maintained.

Despite this progress, there continues to be specific challenges associated with traffic impact. At the time of writing this report, a formal debrief meeting has not been undertaken, however

ISAG are aware, that the road closures and associated traffic management necessary for the arrival and safe operation of the fair requires a significant amount of planning and is having a wide impact on residents and other road users.

- 1. ISAG suggest further work in relation to traffic impact/management is undertaken by the Council, including the management of the hard and soft closure arrangements and ongoing risk of pedestrian and vehicle conflict, suitability of diversionary routes and clearway and displacement of hackney carriages and private hire vehicles and all on-street parking provision (including disabled bays) which is lost, resulting in migration of parking to adjacent residential areas.**

In addition, ISAG note that there wasn't a co-ordinated safety approach to the Ridings element, which is linked to Yarm Fair but organised by Yarm Town Council. Health and safety plans for Yarm Fair did not include arrangements for the Ridings, and details of proposals for the Ridings element were presented very late to ISAG. Unfortunately, Yarm Town Council's proposal to use a steam traction engine in the closed-road event space did not comply with the Event Space Assessment, which is clear that no vehicle movement is permitted within a live event. Subsequently, ISAG could not support this request and the Council did not authorise use of its land for that purpose.

- 2. ISAG recommends that Council Officers highlight this issue at the formal debrief meeting and that a more co-ordinated approach is developed for the Ridings and the Fair elements and, this should be led by the Showmen's Guild as the lead applicant.**

Remembrance Service Events – Across the Borough

A Task and Finish group was set up to help support the reinstatement of Remembrance Sunday events in 2021, of which there are 12 that take place across the Borough. The Task group, comprising of representatives from ISAG, Events, Enforcement, Highways and Police teams were asked to work with event organisers to review and add capacity to their safety arrangements, specifically in relation to traffic management and crowd control. Support included arranging of road closures, TM companies, signage and covering some costs associated with safety staff. In addition, the Council's Events and Enforcement teams, together with Police colleagues provided on the ground support to 4 of the larger scale events.

ISAG noted and highlighted that the number and scale of Remembrance Sunday Events continues to grow. Significant resources including staffing, equipment and financial support are being provided to help run these events at a local and Borough level. In terms of event planning, ISAG want to take a pragmatic and proportionate approach with event organisers and to date only 4 out of the 12 Remembrance Sunday events submit a formal event safety plan for review. ISAG agree that the smaller, less complicated events (i.e. those without road closures/limited attendance) do not need to be presented to ISAG, however the groups should still aim to connect with these event organisers on an annual basis. ISAG do note however, that the Remembrance Sunday event which takes place in Wolviston, has high attendance numbers and specific traffic challenges. Although this event is supported by the Police the event organisers do not submit an event safety plan.

- 3. ISAG advise that the Council works with the event organiser with a view to helping document their safety arrangements into a proper plan.**

Stockton Fireworks Display

Although the full event de-brief has not yet taken place, initial feedback has indicated that attendance numbers at the Fireworks event were very high, circa 40,000 visitors located on

the Riverside and surrounding areas. ISAG were encouraged to note that the Park and Ride service operated by Arriva, was extremely well used and alleviated pressures on parking in the Town Centre and surrounding areas. Despite operational issues in terms of return journeys and visitors having to wait around, ISAG support the use of Park and Ride.

4. ISAG would encourage the Council to look at expanding its Park and Ride facility for future events.

ISAG supported the Council’s decision not to host a largescale fair event in the High Street this year, which facilitated better crowd flow and more effective management of dwell times. Also reducing the amount of anti-social behaviour issues. The location of 4 small juvenile rides located on the Northern Plaza, were incorrectly positioned, too close to the carriage way and ISAG are aware that a short-term emergency closure of the high street was required. Further discussion with ISAG members is requested once the formal debrief is carried out.

In addition, ISAG became aware of an independent fairground operator on a private car park in West Row very late in the day. The fairground operator was working in isolation to the Council, however, ISAG representatives did try to liaise with them. ISAG is aware of traffic and crowd issues in relation to this Fair and a small but contained number of anti-social behaviour issues

Although assured by ISAG, the 2021 traffic management arrangements in the High Street, which were trialled at this year’s event, did not eradicate all risk and could be strengthened.

5. ISAG advice to the Council is that a full high street closure is implemented for the Firework Event if it is staged in its current format and location.

COMPLAINTS/COMMENTS

ISAG were made aware of one complaint in 2021/22 which related to Health & Safety, specifically sound levels/monitoring practices at the Council’s Community Sing-a-long Event. which forms part of Stockton Sparkles. The complaint was not upheld, as investigation evidenced that the Council was working within the correct noise standards.

It is noted that there were several emails received from animal rights groups and individuals who were opposed to the use of live reindeers as part of the Council’s Christmas Programme. From ISAG perspective, the group were satisfied that the Council’s checks and balances and animal welfare arrangements were in place.

ISAG IMPROVEMENT PLANS

Progress against the ISAG Improvement Plan has been limited during 2021/22 as the group have focussed on Covid and support event organisers reinstate their events. A number of actions have rolled over to 2022/23 and are included in the table below.

IMPROVEMENT ACTIONS	DATE	COMMENTS
Review ‘trigger’ criteria for submitting event safety plans to ISAG	March 22	
Continue to review Group Membership, including a water safety expert/rep	April 22	

'Prevent' Training – Counter Terrorism Legislation	June 22	Explore digital and face to face training and roll out to all event organisers
Appoint a second independent chairman to add resilience to Group	May 22	
Review Remembrance Sunday Events across the Borough/Capacity and Support	Sept 22	
Research other Safety Advisory Groups, with a view to strengthening working practices and building networks	March 23	Chair & Secretariat to lead
Develop a series of event workshop sessions for External Event Organisers	March 23	
Explore possible links with Canals and River Trust with regards to any events taking place on the River	March 23	

2022/23 ISAG MEETING DATES

- Tuesday 26th April
- Tuesday 17th May
- Tuesday 14th June
- Tuesday 19th July
- Tuesday 23rd August
- Tuesday 13th September
- Tuesday 11th October
- Tuesday 15th November

Event Organisers will be contacted in January 2022, informing them of their allocated ISAG date and deadlines for submitting event applications. Organisers are reminded of the purpose/role of ISAG and given further information about the type of information that the group expect to receive.

Carl Marshall
Stockton Independent Safety Advisory Group Chair