

**STOCKTON BOROUGH COUNCIL
INDEPENDENT SAFETY ADVISORY GROUP**

DE-BRIEF REPORT 2022/23

OVERVIEW 2022/23

Stockton Borough Council has fully reinstated its annual events programme following a two-year interruption due to the pandemic. As such, ISAG has reviewed a full programme of event safety plans, with the majority for events being delivered on Council land and a small number on privately owned land and on the River Tees.

ISAG have observed that the appetite for outdoor events remains popular which is demonstrated by the number of event safety plans which have been submitted for review and from visitor numbers reported by event organisers. This upward trend of audience figures is across a wide range of events and locations and, whilst this is generally positive, ISAG are aware that for some event organisers this has been challenging to manage their event delivery.

In addition to the annual programme of events, there has been a significant number of ad-hoc events and celebrations held this year to mark the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. ISAG have reviewed safety plans for community led Jubilee picnic type events across the Borough, as well as overseeing and commenting on the Council's safety arrangements for resident street parties and other activities.

Whilst it positive to see such a strong return to outdoor events across the Borough, event delivery/safety planning has not been without its challenge in 2022. Over 50% of event safety plans were submitted late, with event organisers saying that their planning times had slipped. ISAG have also seen a decline in the standard of event health and safety plans, particularly from community event organisers, with some event plans missing key information to allow ISAG to effectively assure systems and documentation.

This set of circumstances has added pressure to ISAG's already busy workload, with individual representatives having to reassess updated safety plans on more than once occasion and within very tight timescales.

One of ISAG's key recommendations is that community event organisers are offered support to develop their knowledge and expertise in event planning/plans to strengthen their events and associated safe systems of work.

ISAG also acknowledge that recovery has also been challenging for suppliers and traders who are involved in outdoor event work, as they also reinstate their businesses following Covid. ISAG have provided guidance and advice and, where appropriate, practical support.

Further to the above, and highlighted below, are some specific areas of note in relation to the ISAGs work in 2022.23

Jubilee Events –

A joint Jubilee Consultation Group was set up early in 2022, which included members of ISAG, Council Officers and Emergency Services. The appetite for Jubilee events and activities from residents and community groups was extensive and ranged from street parties, beacon lighting events to mid-scale community picnics/fayres and largescale events.

ISAG noted that the Jubilee Consultation Group developed a robust and appropriate range of support and safety arrangements to help residents, community groups and other event organisers to hold their events and activities in safe manner. This included practical support for road closures, which ISAG felt was proportionate, ranging from low-risk closures, for those events in taking place in quiet cul-de-sac locations, to the delivery of full traffic management arrangements for the bigger street parties that required multiple road closures and diversional routes to be installed.

ISAG reviewed event safety plans for four community picnic/celebratory events and although all plans were duly assured, in many cases the quality of event safety plans were below an acceptable standard and Council Officers had to offer direct assistance to strengthen health and safety arrangements.

Overall, ISAG acknowledged that the volumes of activities across the Borough over the four-day bank holiday was extensive and significant resources were provided by the Council.

Yarm Fair -

ISAG continues to work closely with the Showmen's Guild in relation to their safety arrangements for Yarm Fair. ISAG have provided regular updates to the Council's Event Board and as part of the annual ISAG Debrief Reports. ISAG acknowledges the positive input from the Showmens Guild which has seen several safety improvements being implemented in recent years. Work is ongoing as the location of a large-scale Fair operating in a busy High Street remains difficult. Yarm Fair has significant challenges in terms of space, infrastructure, crowds, traffic management as well as the impact on residents and businesses. This is a high-risk event and safety arrangements must be continually reviewed and scrutinised to ensure health and safety standards/public safety.

Specifically for 2022, ISAG supported additional traffic management safety measures which were designed to further mitigate risk against pedestrian/vehicle conflict at the south end of the high street. The introduction of traffic control signals and pedestrian crossing aimed to help with crowd movement and safety in this location which remains a risk area. Temporary cameras were used to record the effectiveness of these new arrangements and findings will be discussed at the full debrief which is schedule in January. The relocation of fair concessions in this area was also welcomed to enhance crowd flow/movement. In addition, ISAG have advised the Showmen's Guild that their Incident Management Processes and overall safety officer management need further review and improvement. ISAG remains committed to work with the event organiser and the Council to further strengthen plans for future years

Remembrance Events -

ISAG continues to support 'Remembrance Day' events across the Borough and note the joined-up approach by the Police and Council teams, including Events, Enforcement and Highways. These events are very well attended, with audience numbers growing each year. ISAG noted and highlighted the continued financial support and resources provided by the Council to help run these events at a local and Borough level.

Whilst many of the event organisers who deliver Remembrance Day events submit event safety plans, there a few events being delivered where safety plans and documentation is not in place. ISAG believe a pragmatic and proportionate approach is appropriate, however ISAG note that the smaller events are growing in scale and audience numbers and as such may require safety plans. ISAG recommends that the Council reconnects with these event organisers and provides support and advice in this regard.

The ISAG Group has also reviewed two new events for 2022, The Big Paddle Water Festival, delivered by SUP adventures and Thornaby Fireworks which was a ticket event staged in Thornaby Cricket Club.

Further to the above and highlighted below are some specific areas of work that ISAG have delivered in 2022/23

Environmental Health -

ISAG acknowledges and thanks the Council's Environmental Health Services who have provided additional support this year in relation to hot food concessions on event sites. The impact of Covid has meant that some Local Authorities have inspection back logs and as a result, some hot food traders are operating without a current or valid food hygiene rating scheme certificate.

In response, several onsite inspections have been carried out to help event organisers ensure that their traders have robust food safety management systems and that they do not pose a risk to public health. In some cases, inspections have found that operating systems were below an acceptable standard and traders were asked to leave event sites. ISAG note that Stockton Borough Council runs a series of Food Safety training courses which are accessible for community event organisers and traders. ISAG will continue to highlight this training at schedule review meetings.

Friends of Ropner Park Events -

ISAG representatives have provided specific support to the Friends of Ropner Park (FORP), who reinstated their Spring Festival and Eid Festival in 2022. In previous years these events have been modest in size and scale and event safety planning has been adequate. FORP reported very high visitor numbers at their Spring Festival earlier in the year, which was unexpected and which they found challenging in terms of managing crowds safely. The increase in audience numbers also caused considerable traffic congestion and parking issues in the surrounding areas, which required emergency assistance from Council's Enforcement Services to deal with the situation. ISAG noted that several complaints were received by residents in this regard.

Following the increase in visitor numbers and impact on the Highway at the Spring Festival, ISAG advised FORP to relook and increase their event safety arrangements for their second event. Areas of concern included crowd movement, access, parking and traffic management arrangements. ISAG acknowledged that FORP are a volunteer group who have limited capacity and knowledge to run large scale events and as such requested that the Council support event safety in the short term.

Visitor number for the Eid Festival were similar to the Spring Festival and despite changes to event planning, including support from the Council's Enforcement and Highways teams, there were still traffic management issues. ISAG are aware that Ropner Park is limited as an event site, particularly regarding its access and parking capacities and the Council should carefully consider large scale events in this location

In addition, ISAG have advised FORP that they may want to consider sourcing an experience event professional to help with their future event planning and capacity.

EVENTS REVIEWED BY ISAG 2022/23

The number of event safety plans reviewed by ISAG for 2022 was 43, which is a 18% reduction from 2019 (last full event season - pre covid). The reduction in event plans submitted is due to several Council run events being stood down/one off delivery in 2019. These include Great City Games, Great 10k participation run, Duathlon, Stockton Stages and Fireworks. ISAG also noted that some external events organisers have not reinstate their events/requests to access Council land since Covid.

The table below shows the ratio of events delivered by SBC/Other event organisers, which despite the reduction in overall safety plans for this year, remains consistent in so far as the ratio between external and Council led events.

Events	Ratio of Event Safety Plans for Review											
	2016	%	2017	%	2018	%	2019	%	*2020	*2021	2022	%
SBC	22	44	26	48	27	48	19	37	n/a	10	18	42
Other	28	56	28	51	29	51	32	63	n/a	16	25	58
Total	50		54		56		51		n/a	26	43	

*2020 and 2021 – event programme was impacted by Covid

Of the 43 event safety plans ISAG assured in 2022, three events were not delivered. Billingham Carnival and Garden Show was cancelled the day before the advertised date, due to the sad passing of Her Majesty the Queen. This was a difficult decision for the event organiser as the full infrastructure was on site.

In addition, Age UK's Bark in the Park event was cancelled due to high temperatures and the Council's Fire Engine and Vintage Vehicle Rally (second day of trading) was also cancelled due to inclement weather/high winds. ISAG acknowledges that for these two events safety processes were followed correctly and that the Incident Management Plans were activated effectively.

MEETINGS

ISAG met on 9 separate occasions during 2022, between April and November. These meetings were all held on Microsoft Teams and ran to time. An additional focussed meeting was scheduled for Yarm Fair in July, which enabled early discussions between ISAG and the Showmens Guild to review their event safety and planning arrangements for the coming year.

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 in the main continue to operate digitally to help cut down on travel time and expenses.

MEMBERSHIP, ATTENDANCE & TRAINING

ISAG have introduced a Vice Chairman in 2022, to help provide further resilience to the Group dynamic and spread workloads. Unfortunately, ISAG have not progressed with the recruitment of a water safety expert/representative, which remains a priority for the group. This action will be rolled over to 2023.

There have been changes to ISAG membership this year, including new representatives from Cleveland Fire and Rescue and from the Council's Building Control Service. The non-core member from Public Health has now stood down.

ISAG acknowledges and thanks the Emergency Planning Unit/Representative, who organised a SAG training day in 2022, which was delivered by Gentian Events Limited

Members who attended from Stockton's ISAG included Licensing, Building Control and Highways representatives. Feedback was positive, with attendees reporting that the session was helpful and informative, and provided a good insight into the legal implications of SAG, and its purpose.

Core Members

Carl Marshall	– Independent, Chairman
Russell Smith	- Independent, Chairman (Vice)
Tara Connor	– SBC, Secretariat
Kayleigh Dawson/Jon Bethell	- SBC, Administration
Simon Milner	– SBC, Highways & Network Safety Representative
Dawn McQuillan	– SBC, Building Representative
Stephen Donaghy	– SBC, Environmental Health
Polly Edwards	– SBC, Licensing
Insp Jon Willoughby/Matt Reeves	– Cleveland Police
Stephen Graham	– Cleveland Fire Brigade
Tracy Scott	– NEAS

Non-Core Members

Tim Shurmer	– Emergency Planning Unit
-------------	---------------------------

ISAG attendance has been satisfactory in 2022 and the group has managed to be quorate at each meeting. ISAG acknowledges the increased workload pressures of individual members this year, as they balance the reinstatement of their substantive roles/organisations post covid, whilst delivering their ISAG role.

EVENT APPLICATIONS, INFORMATION AND SUPPORT

Deadlines:

Of the 43 event safety plans that were submitted to ISAG, only 20 were received within agreed timescales, which is 46%. This is a 13% drop from 2019. ISAG note and acknowledge the difficulties that event organisers are experiencing trying to reinstate their events and collate safety plans, however late submissions adds significant pressure for ISAG to respond effectively. In addition, late plans can result in access to Council land being withdrawn, as the necessary quality assurance processes cannot be completed.

Of the 23 event safety plans submitted past the deadline, 16 were submitted between 2 days – 1 week after the scheduled date.

Quality of Event Safety Plans

Throughout this report ISAG have highlighted a decline in the quality of event safety plans which have been submitted in 2022. 8 event plans did not have the required level of detail for ISAG to be able to review health and safety arrangements and plans were returned to event organisers. These plans had to be resubmitted and then reassessed by the Group in very short timescales, in some cases final assurance was not confirmed until the week of an event. This is not a sustainable approach and ISAG advises the Council to relook at deadlines for submitted plans and cut off dates for final ISAG assessment.

In addition, ISAG have noted that a growing number of event organisers are not referring to previous comments and advice in relation to their event safety planning. This is problematic as ISAG are highlighting and repeating the same issues each year. This may suggest that event organisers are not understanding the importance of safety issues raised and are simply adjusting their plans.

ISAG Chair has recommended that the Council looks to add some resources to support community event organisers with event planning and collating of effective event safety plans/ documentation.

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.

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. This continues to be a weak area in some of the smaller to mid-size community events event planning and more should be done to support these types of events.

Although identified as a key action, 'Prevent' training for event organisers has not yet been delivered due to the interruption of Covid/ recovery of events. This action will be rescheduled for 2023 and is a priority.

ISAG notes that the threat level during 2022/23 remained constant at 'substantial'. Counter Terrorism/Risk continues to be a standard agenda item for ISAG.

Support to External Event Organisers

ISAG notes the continued practical and financial support given to external event organisers from the Council's Events, Enforcement, Highways, Building Control, Environment, Media and Comms Teams. In addition, support and guidance from external agencies, including the Police, Cleveland Fire Services, NEAS and the Emergency Planning Unit is acknowledged and vital in terms of effective planning and safe delivery of outdoor events.

Organisations supported include:

- Age UK
- BELP – Billingham Carnival
- Billingham Town Council
- Butterwick Hospice
- Cleveland Orienteering Klub
- Friends of Ropner Park
- Ingleby Barwick Community Partnership
- Norton Business Forum
- Tees Rowing Club
- Tees Valley Dragons
- Showmen's Guild
- SUP Adventures
- Thornaby Cricket Club
- Thornaby Town Council
- Yarm Town Council

COMPLAINTS/COMMENTS

ISAG were made aware of 11 complaints in 2022/23.

4 in relation to traffic management issues at Yarm Fair, 3 for the Council's Halloween Spooky Walk regarding customer experience, 3 in relation to the cancellation of the Fire Engine and Vintage Vehicle Show and 1 complaint regarding temporary bus stops at Stockton Sparkles event.

IMPROVEMENT PLANS

Progress against the ISAG Improvement Plan has been limited during 2022/23 as the group have focussed on helping event organisers reinstate their events/strengthen their event planning. A number of actions have rolled over to 2023/24 and are included in the table below.

IMPROVEMENT ACTIONS	DATE	COMMENTS
Review dates for event safety plans to be submitted, ensuring enough time for ISAG comments/updates to be completed	January 23	
Consider introducing a final cut off dates for ISAG assessment.	April 23	
Continue to review Group Membership, including a water safety expert/rep	April 23	
Continue to work with Showmens Guild to improve safety arrangements, including Incident management Processes and safety officer role	Sept 23	
'Prevent' Training – Counter Terrorism Legislation	March 23	Explore digital and face to face training and roll out to all event organisers
Work with event organisers to develop event safety plans for Remembrance Sunday Events	Sept 23	
Research other Safety Advisory Groups, with a view to strengthening working practices and building networks	March 24	Chair & Secretariat to lead
Develop a series of event workshop sessions for External Event Organisers	March 24	
Explore possible links with Canals and River Trust with regards to any events taking place on the River	March 24	

2023/24 ISAG MEETING DATES (subject to change)

Thursday 13th April
 Tuesday 25th April
 Tuesday 16th May
 Tuesday 13th June

Tuesday 18th July
Tuesday 22nd August
Tuesday 12th September
Tuesday 3rd October
Tuesday 10th October
Tuesday 14th November

Event Organisers will be contacted in February 2023, 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.