

**STOCKTON BOROUGH COUNCIL
INDEPENDENT SAFETY ADVISORY GROUP**

DE-BRIEF REPORT 2024/25

OVERVIEW 2024/25

Stockton's Independent Safety Advisory Group (ISAG) have reviewed a full programme of event safety plans in 2024/25, the majority being delivered on Council land and a small number on privately owned land and on the river Tees.

The total number of event plans submitted to the group is consistent with 2023/24 and there remains a wide range of event safety plans for review, including annual community led events and celebrations. The ISAG have also reviewed a limited number of more complex large-scale events and festivals, and are aware that several Council run events are temporarily paused due to major redevelopment of key event spaces.

The standard and quality of events safety plans continues to be a focus for the ISAG and, although there are notable improvements across some event plans, others event safety plans including Yarm Fair, Big Kids Circus and IB Family Fun Weekend have been challenging.

The ISAG have also noted an increase in the number of event safety plans that have not reached full safety assurance this year and whilst this does not mean events are unsafe, there is an increased risk to public safety which the Council need to consider. The ISAG have highlighted this issue to the Council and encouraged continued early conversations with event organiser to help them understand expected safety standards/documentation.

Attendance at scheduled meetings with the event organisers has shown a downward trend from 2023/24, with some meetings operating without all service represented. This matter is included as an improvement action for 2025/26.

The ISAG note that there has been steady progress made against the Improvement Plan, including sharing of information in relation to legislation and good practice guides. The ISAG also note that event training/workshops will start in Spring 2025 and discussions in terms of an accreditation scheme are being considered.

ISAG - FOCUSSED WORK 2024/25

Further to the above and highlighted below are specific areas of work and support that ISAG have delivered in 2024/25.

Yarm Fair:

ISAG continues to prioritise Yarm Fair as a key piece of work due the significant challenges associated with delivery of this event, including space constraints, infrastructure, crowds, traffic management, safety documentation, as well as the impact on residents and businesses.

The Showman's Guild who are the event organisers of Yarm Fair have worked successfully with ISAG and the Council over the past 5 years, and ISAG have previously reported significant improvements in event planning, delivery, and documentation for this event.

Unfortunately, changes to the Showman's Guild safety staff and to their committee structure, has resulted in established event safety arrangements/systems now being questioned by the event organiser. The Showman's Guild have also challenged their responsibility in connection with the Travelling community and the associated Flashings and Ridings, which all occur in conjunction with the Fair. These challenges have contributed to planning delays and, additional pressure place on the ISAG to review multi event plans/documentation outside of agreed timelines. In addition, the ISAG could only 'part assurance' the final event safety plan for Yarm Fair and given the scale and challenges of this event the ISAG have raised this as a risk area.

The ISAG are aware that there were safety issues at the live event which will be reviewed at the technical debrief, planned between the Council and Showman's Guild in February 2025.

Festival of Thrift (FOT):

The ISAG note significant improvements in event planning and safety documentation for the Festival of Thrift event and this follows changes in the FOT's event safety/planning team in 2024/25. The new team have worked closely with ISAG and the Council's Events Service reviewing safety issues raised last year. The working relationship between the new FOT safety team and the ISAG has also improved.

ISAG acknowledge and support the Council's ongoing approach in operating a technical working group, to assist with the delivery of FOT and key areas of safety including traffic management, car parking and crowd management arrangements.

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 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.

EVENTS REVIEWED BY ISAG 2024/25

The number of event safety plans reviewed by ISAG in 2024/25 was 27 and the table below shows the ratio between Council run events and events run by other event organisers, which is consistent with the 2023/24 programme.

The ISAG are aware that several largescale Council events are temporarily paused due to the redevelopment of Stockton riverside and Preston Park Museum locations, and it is likely that the number of Council run event plans will significantly increase from 2026.

For 2024/25, the ISAG have reviewed new events, including Yard Sessions, Environment Fair and Going for Gold and, several events marking the 80th anniversary of the Normandy Landings (D-Day).

Event Plans	Ratio of Event Safety Plans for Review													
	2017	%	2018	%	2019	%	*2020	*2021	2022	%	2023	%	2024	%
SBC	26	48	27	48	19	37	n/a	10	18	42	8	28	7	26
Other	28	51	29	51	32	63	n/a	16	25	58	21	72	20	74
Total	54		56		51		n/a	26	43		29		27	

*2020 and 2021 – event programme impacted by Covid

The ISAG note the following events which were scheduled to be reviewed by the Group but were cancelled during the year, these include the Council’s Halloween Spooky walk, cancelled due redevelopment work at Preston Park, FORP’s Halloween event, cancelled due to resources issues from their team and only one out of three planned Yard Session were delivered.

MEETINGS

Of the 10 ISAG meetings schedule for 2024/25, 9 meetings took place between March 2024 and October 2024. The September 2024 ISAG meeting was cancelled due to event cancellations mentioned above and another event organiser did not have their event plans ready to submit within the scheduled deadline.

All ISAG meetings were held on Microsoft Teams and ran to time. Event organisers are given the opportunity to attend meetings and present their plans and of the 27 event plans submitted 26 events organisers attended and discussed their plans.

As in previous years, a preliminary meeting was held with the event organisers of Yarm Fair to allow early discussions about safety. As mentioned earlier, Yarm Fair remains challenging in terms of its location, scale, and traffic management plans.

MEMBERSHIP, ATTENDANCE & TRAINING

The ISAG’s operating model consists of an Independent Chairman and Vice Chairman, and this arrangement has worked well in 2024/25. All but one of the scheduled meetings have been delivered and led by the Chair or Vice Chair, with one unplanned absence being covered by an Assistant Director from Stockton Council.

ISAG note that here is a planned change of Chairman in 2025/26.

Unfortunately, attendance of core and non-core members of the group has shown a downward trend in 2024/25, with several meetings operating without all service being represented.

ISAG acknowledges the workload pressures of individual members who delivery their ISAG role on top of their own jobs. The incoming Chairman will work closely with individual service reps to ensure that where attendance is not possible, substitutes do attend.

There have not been any changes to the ISAG membership during 2024/25, however there are planned changes in 2025/26 including a Water Safety expert representative, and new Police representatives.

Core Members 2024/25

Carl Marshall	– Independent, Chairman
Russell Smith	– Independent, Chairman (Vice)
Tara Connor	– SBC, Secretariat
James Burrell/Kayleigh Dawson	– 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
Richard Brown	– Cleveland Fire Brigade
Tracy Scott	– NEAS

Non-Core Members

Tim Shurmer	– Emergency Planning Unit
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EVENT APPLICATIONS, INFORMATION AND SUPPORT

Deadlines:

Of the 27 event safety plans that were submitted for review, 19 plans were received within agreed timescales which is 70%, and this is in comparison with 69% in 2023/24.

There remains a small number of event plans (8 No.) that were submitted late to ISAG for review and, 6 No. plans submitted up to 4 days late and 2 No. submitted 7-10 days after the scheduled deadline.

This year there were 16 (59%) event safety plans that were still being reviewed/updated within 5 days of the event date and final assurance was not confirmed until the week of an event. This is an increase for 2023/24, compared to 9 (31%) event safety plans where final assurance was late.

Late plans put pressure on the ISAG to assess information within short timescales and to provide comments/advice. This can impact the time available for event organisers to respond/provide additional information. In these circumstances, there is a risk that full assurance cannot be achieved on event safety arrangements, and this can lead to the Council deciding whether an event can take place without full assurance.

ISAG acknowledges that it is a difficult balance to schedule enough time for plans to be developed enough to be assessed, against allowing enough time for changes to be made and reassessed for ISAG review. The group has recommended that the Council continues to review and revisit submission dates.

Quality of Event Safety Plans

Improving the quality of event plans and safety standards for public outdoor events remains a priority for the ISAG. Individual representatives on the Group continue to support and work closely with event organisers to help them improve their knowledge and understanding of safety legislation and highlight good practice in terms of event planning/management.

The ISAG have previously reported that most event organisers who attend the ISAG do show improvements in their event planning, applying previous comments and advice made by the Group in their subsequent event plans. Whilst this is encouraging, the ISAG are aware that there are a small number of event organisers who regularly attend ISAG but are still not making progress. This year, the ISAG were unable to fully quality assure 6 event plans and whilst this does not mean that an event is unsafe, it does mean that it is running without full assurance from the ISAG. In one case this year, an event plan for a medium scale event on private land was returned to the event organiser without any assessment/review as the safety information submitted was too limited.

The ISAG chair has reported that quality of event planning is a key area of work highlighted by ISAG, and the group recommends that the Council continues to provide clear parameters of safety requirements to access to Council land for event delivery.

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

The 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. Incident planning continues to be challenging for the smaller to mid-size community events organisers and additional support from ISAG is required.

The ISAG notes that the threat level during 2024/25 remained constant at 'substantial'. Counter Terrorism/Risk continues to be a standard agenda item for ISAG.

Support to External Event Organisers

The ISAG notes the continued specialist, 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:

- Big Kids Circus
- Billingham Town Council
- CPAD IB Fund
- Festival of Thrift
- Friends of Ropner Park
- N.E Bars Teesside Ltd (Yard Sessions)
- Showman's Guild
- Tees Rowing Club
- Thornaby Town Council
- Yarm District Lions
- Yarm Town Council

COMPLAINTS/COMMENTS

ISAG were made aware of 3 complaint in 2024/25 all in relation to parking and including events delivered Billingham Synthonia Cricket Club, Yarm Town Council and Daisy Chain.

IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2024/25

There has been steady progress against the 2024/25 Improvement Plan, with a few actions due to be completed by the end of this financial year/event season.

IMPROVEMENT ACTIONS	DATE	COMMENTS
Continue to review Group Membership, including a water safety expert/representative.	April 23	Completed Water Safety Rep to join ISAG in 2025/26
'Prevent' Training – Counter Terrorism Legislation	March 23	Deferred to 2024/25 – see workshop
Research other Safety Advisory Groups, with a view to strengthening working practices and building networks	March 25	Deferred to 2025/26 – new chairman role.
Develop a series of event workshop sessions for External Event Organisers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food Hygiene • Event Management/Safety Plans • Risk • Incident Management • Prevent Training – Counter Terrorism Legislation 	March 25	Event organisers are signposted to national guidance (The Purple Guide), Council's policy and online Act training and guidance. Workshops programme for Spring 2025
Update Council Website and Event Information for Food Hygiene Inspection/Compliance and minimum Food Hygiene Rating Scores	April 2024	Completed Information circulated to all event organisers and Council website reviewed and updated annually
Explore links with Canals and River Trust with regards to any events taking place on the river	March 24	Deferred to 2025/26
Explore an accreditation process for event safety planning.	March 25	Initial discussion with Local Authority Events Advisory Group (LAEOG)
Work with highlighted Event Organisers, where safety plans are not robust	March 25	On going, with support from Council Events Service
ISAG Awareness Training for new representatives	Within 12 months of appointment	Non required

2025/26 ISAG MEETING DATES

Tuesday 15 April
Tuesday 20 May
Tuesday 3 June
Tuesday 24 June
Tuesday 22 July
Tuesday 12 August
Tuesday 9 September
Tuesday 30 September
Tuesday 21 October
Tuesday 25 November

Event Organisers will be contacted in February 2025, 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.