

REPORT TO CABINET

9 FEBRUARY 2026

REPORT OF CORPORATE
MANAGEMENT TEAM

CABINET DECISION

Cabinet Member for Environment, Leisure and Culture – Councillor Cooke

Annual report of the Independent Safety Advisory Group (ISAG) 2025

Summary

The Independent Safety Advisory Group (ISAG) brings together a range of professionals to scrutinise and advise upon event safety processes and systems for outdoor events. The ISAG looks at plans for a wide range of events and festivals in Stockton on Tees, focusing on events of a significant scale or complexity. All events of scale on Stockton Council land are subject to review by the ISAG, and where requested ISAG will review event safety plans which are hosted on private land.

The ISAG does not take decisions on whether an event should go ahead but provides specialist advice and recommendations to landowners, including the Council to enable them to make informed decisions to allow an event or require changes to an event plan. The ISAG provides practical advice and guidance to event organisers and aims to drive up the quality of event plans/safety planning.

The ISAG's independent Chair produces an annual report for information, to highlight significant findings and make recommendations for areas of further work.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)/DECISION(S)

The ISAG Chair's report is presented to Cabinet to allow them to see the level of scrutiny and challenge being brought to bear in relation to events to ensure the public are properly protected. Cabinet are also able to see and comment upon the areas of further work recommended by the ISAG in relation to safety at public events.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Cabinet note the ISAG's annual report 2025/26

DETAIL

1. The ISAG was convened 7 times during 2025 and reviewed 29 event safety plans which is comparable to last year. The majority of plans come from external and community event organisers, who want to host events on Council land, private land and river Tees.

2. The ISAG report highlights changes to the membership of the group during 2025, which includes new representatives for the Police and Fire Services and, a new Water Safety representative. There has been a planned change to the Chairman role following the resignation of outgoing chairman in 2024/25. who together with the deputy chairman lead all the scheduled meetings. It is anticipated that external training will be arranged for all new representatives ahead of the 2026/27 event season.
3. Although all key organisations have a dedicated resource identified to the ISAG, the report does highlight that ISAG attendance remains challenging, with some meeting operating without all services being represented. In addition, one meetings did not happen due to ISAG reps not being available. The ISAG chair has raised this as a risk and included remedial action as part of the improvement plan for 2026/27.
4. A high number of event safety plans continue to be submitted on time (86% 2025, 70% 2024), however the ISAG are still experiencing delays in the overall assurance process. These delays are occurring when event plans are being updated and resubmitted by event organisers very close to events going live. In 2025, 45% (13 no.) of event plans were still be assured within 5 days of the event date, compared to 59% (16 no.). Multiple reviews of event safety plans close to event date puts added pressure on the ISAG reps.
5. The ISAG recognises that it is difficult to balance dates for submitting plans and date for review and response. Further recommendation is made to the Council regarding submission dates.
6. The standard and quality of events safety plans is a key focus for the ISAG. The ISAG have highlighted that 5 no. (17%) event safety plans did not reach full safety assurance this year and whilst this does not mean that an event is unsafe, there is a potential added risk to public safety. The ISAG have highlighted this matter to the Council and continue to encourage event organisers to have early conversations with ISAG.
7. The ISAG have welcomed the introduction of a series of workshops designed to support/upskill local event organisers in key areas of event safety. Facilitated by the Council, ISAG reps have attended the workshops working closely with local event organisers, providing practical advice and guidance on event safety. Safety areas covered included food safety, licensing conditions, use of temporary demountable structures, risk assessments and Incident Management.
8. It is positive to note that most of the event organisers who submit their plans to the ISAG attended at least one of the workshops and overall, 17 local event organisers attended. Feedback showed 95% satisfaction rates and requests for further sessions. Training/guidance workshops are planned for 2026/27.
9. The ISAG continues to deliver focused work for Yarm Fair which has specific safety challenges, including space constraints, large infrastructure, crowd management, traffic management, as well as the impact on residents and businesses. There also continues to be challenges and risk associated with the Travelling Community, who arrive in Yarm High Street when the fair is operational, but are not part of the event organisers safety overlay. The report at Appendix 1, provides detail in this regard.
10. Unfortunately, there was a serious traffic management incident at Yarm Fair which involved a member of the Council's Civic Enforcement Officer being struck by a vehicle at a road closure point. The Officer was unharmed, and the driver was subsequently arrested and charged, however this incident has highlighted the ongoing risk of

pedestrian/vehicle conflict associated with the Fair. The ISAG have requested a review of traffic management systems as part of any future event plans.

11. The ISAG have reported good progress against the Improvement Action plan by the Council, which includes the introduction of event training/workshops as mentioned above, updated information on the Council's website regarding Food Hygiene Inspection/Compliance and Food Hygiene Rating Scores and the recruitment of a Water Safety professional.
12. The ISAG acknowledge the importance and level of support and advice provided by Council and other emergency service stakeholders who are integral to the success of safe outdoor event planning.
13. To assist event organisers in early planning, ISAG meeting dates for 2026 are included in the ISAG Chair's report.
14. The full ISAG Annual Report, including an improvement plan, is attached as Appendix 1.

COMMUNITY IMPACT IMPLICATIONS

The ISAG report review of activity in 2025 will not impact on any communities. Where the future approach to events is altered for safety reasons, including for reasons arising from ISAG advice, the potential impact of those changes on any affected communities will be assessed.

CORPORATE PARENTING IMPLICATIONS

This report does not contain corporate parenting implications.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The ISAG report review of activity in 2025 does not have any financial implications. Where the future approach to events is altered for safety reasons, including for reasons arising from ISAG advice, the potential financial implications of those changes will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

It is the policy of Stockton Borough Council to uphold reasonable standards of public safety at all events in the Borough and to encourage the well-being of all residents and visitors at those public events. The ISAG provides specialist advice to the Local Authority to help it discharge its functions under public event legislation

RISK ASSESSMENT

The Independent Safety Advisory Group is a key part of system that ensures that public events can take place safely and successfully and has robust assurances processes in place to assess and advise on safety risks at outdoor events.

WARDS AFFECTED AND CONSULTATION WITH WARD/COUNCILLORS

Not ward specific. This report does not require any consultation.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Independent Safety Advisory Group (ISAG) Debrief Report 2025/26

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