

**STOCKTON BOROUGH COUNCIL
INDEPENDENT SAFETY ADVISORY GROUP**

DE-BRIEF REPORT 2025/26

OVERVIEW 2025/26

Stockton's Independent Safety Advisory Group (ISAG) have reviewed a full programme of event safety plans in 2025 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 2024/25 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 during 2025, including SIRF, SDR200, Yarm Fair and Festival of Thrift.

Driving the standard and quality of event safety plans and documentation remains a key priority for the ISAG. The group have noted and welcomed the Council's support in this regard by delivering a series of workshops designed to support/upskill local event organisers in key areas of event safety. Several ISAG reps attended the workshops, working closely with local event organisers and providing practical advice and guidance. Feedback from the sessions was very positive and further workshops will be delivered in 2026.

Although there continues to be general improvements regarding event safety plans, some plans remain at an unacceptable standard in demonstrating effective public safety systems and standards for outdoor events. The number of event safety plans which did not achieve full safety assurance in 2025 was 5 no. (17%). This report includes further detail in this regard.

ISAG attendance at scheduled meetings has been challenging for the third consecutive year, with some meetings operating without all service being represented. There has been changes to the ISAG membership and a new chairperson which may have impacted attendance at certain times/meetings. This matter has been raised with the Council's Director of Community Services Environment and Culture, and the Chairman has requested training for new members.

The ISAG note that there has been steady progress made against the Improvement Plan, including 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.

ISAG - FOCUSSED WORK 2025/26

Further to the above and highlighted below are some specific areas of work and support that ISAG have delivered in 2025/26

Yarm Fair

ISAG continues to prioritise Yarm Fair as a key piece of work due the significant challenges and safety issues associated with delivery of this event. Challenges include 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 continue to work closely with ISAG and the Council to review and refine their event safety processes. Whilst this approach is positive, the ISAG have raised concerns about the Showman's Guild late responses to ISAG questions and queries. These delays continue to put a strain on ISAG resources and for 2025, resulted in final assurance for Yarm Fair not been achieved until two days before the live event.

Although safety plans were fully assured there was a serious traffic management incident during Yarm Fair. A member of the Council's Civic Enforcement Officer was struck by a vehicle at a road closure point. The Officer was unharmed, and the driver was subsequently arrested and charged. Remedial actions were put in place; however, this incident has highlighted the ongoing risk of pedestrian/vehicle conflict associated with the traffic management systems for the event. The ISAG are aware that this incident will be discussed as part of the event debrief, and the ISAG have requested a review of traffic management systems as part of any future event plans.

The Showman's Guild continue to challenge their level of responsibility in connection with the Travelling Community and, the associated 'Flashings', which occurs in conjunction with the Fair. The ISAG note that whilst the 'Flashings' happened without any safety issues, they operate in isolation of any formal safety overlay by the Showman's Guild. In addition, there are specific issues with the Travelling Community siting their caravans, vehicles and food concessions on Yarm High Street both within and outside of the event footprint. There is safety risks associated with space constraints and a lack of safety documentation/plans. The ISAG are aware that further discussions are being held with the Showman's Guild (Event Organiser) and the Council (Landowner).

Festival of Thrift (FOT):

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

Safety Plans were submitted on time and fully assured, and the event was delivered successfully.

Remembrance Sunday Events:

The ISAG continues to support 'Remembrance Sunday' events across the Borough and note the joined-up approach by the Police and Council teams, including Events, Enforcement and Highways. However, the ISAG are aware that the number of local Remembrance Sunday events are increasing and that audience numbers are growing each year. This growth is

adding to the safety arrangements and the number of requests for support (financial and human resources) from both the Council and the Police, which is challenging.

The ISAG note that Cleveland Police were unable to support Wolviston Parish Council with their Remembrance Sunday event and associated Traffic Management arrangements. The Council provided a one-off financial resource for 2025.

The ISAG have advised earlier conversations with event organisers in relation to ongoing support for Remembrance Sunday events.

EVENTS REVIEWED BY ISAG 2025/26

The number of event safety plans reviewed by ISAG in 2025/26 was 29 and the table below shows the ratio between Council run events and events run by other event organisers, which is consistent with the 2024/25 programme.

The ISAG are aware that several largescale Council events continue to be paused due to the redevelopment of Stockton Riverside.

For 2025/26, the ISAG have reviewed some new events, including Synthonia Fest and S&DR200 and several events marking the 80th anniversary of the Victory in Europe (VE Day).

Event Plans	Ratio of Event Safety Plans for Review													
	2017	%	2018	%	2019	%	2022	%	2023	%	2024	%	2025	%
SBC	26	48	27	48	19	37	18	42	8	28	7	26	8	26
Other	28	51	29	51	32	63	25	58	21	72	20	74	21	74
Total	54		56		51		43		29		27		29	

*2020 and 2021 – event programme was impacted by Covid

MEETINGS

Of the 10 ISAG meetings schedule for 2025, 7 meetings took place between March 2025 and October 2025. The May was cancelled due to late plans and the September ISAG meeting was cancelled due to ISAG not being quorate. The final scheduled meeting of the year in November was cancelled as there was no further business to be concluded by the group.

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 29 event plans submitted 27 events organisers attended and discussed their plans.

MEMBERSHIP, ATTENDANCE & TRAINING

The ISAG's operating model consists of an Independent Chairman and Vice Chairman who share the chairing role. This approach continues to work well and ensure continuity, resilience and a neutrality in terms of delivery ISAG's role.

Attendance of core and non-core members of the group continues to be challenging, and this trend has continued for three years. Several meetings operating without all services being represented. There has been changes to the ISAG membership and a new chairperson

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

There has been changes to the ISAG membership during 2025/26, and this includes new representatives for the Police and Fire Services. ISAG have also secure a Water Safety expert representative who is a non-core member.

Core Members 2025/26

Ann Workman	Independent, Chairman
Russell Smith	Independent, Chairman (Vice)
Tara Connor	SBC, Secretariat
James Burrell	SBC, Administration
Simon Milner	SBC, Highways & Network Safety Representative
Dawn McQuillan	SBC, Building Representative
Stephen Donaghy	SBC, Environmental Health
Polly Edwards	SBC, Licensing
Tony Cross / Andrew Vickers	Cleveland Police
Kev Tyreman	Cleveland Fire Brigade
Tracy Scott	NEAS
Tim Shurmer	Emergency Planning Unit

Non-Core Members

Chris Gibbens	Water Safety
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EVENT APPLICATIONS, INFORMATION AND SUPPORT

Deadlines:

Of the 29 event safety plans that were submitted for review, 25 plans were received within agreed timescales which is 86% this is an improvement in comparison with 70% in 2024/25.

There remains a small number of event plans (4 no.) that were submitted late to ISAG for review and, 3 no. plans submitted up to 4 days late and 1 no. submitted 7-10 days after the scheduled deadline.

This year there were 13 no. (45%) 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 a slight decrease for 2024/25, compared to 16 no. (59%) event safety plans where final assurance was late.

Late plans put pressure on the ISAG to assess information within very 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 given on event safety arrangements, and this can lead to the Council deciding whether an event can take place without full assurance.

The 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 noted and welcomed the introduction of a series of workshops designed to support/upskill local event organisers in key areas of event safety. Several ISAG reps attended the workshops, working closely with local event organisers and providing practical advice and guidance.

The Council's Health and Safety service was also involved and delivered some focussed sessions on Risk Management. Other safety areas covered at the workshops included Food Safety, Licensing Conditions, use of Temporary Demountable Structures, and Incident Management.

Most of the event organisers who submit their plans to the ISAG attended at least one of the sessions and there were 17 local event organisers in attendance. Feedback shows 95% satisfaction rates. Further training/guidance workshops are planned for 2026/27.

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 number of event safety plans which did not achieve full safety assurance from the ISAG was 5 no. (17%). Non assurance of event safety plans does not automatically mean that an event is unsafe, however it does mean that safety processes for that event have not been demonstrated to the standards applied by the ISAG.

The 5 event plans that were not fully assured all relate to events that are being delivered on private land/River. These include, Siren's Fest, Powerhouse Dragons, BIFF, Synthonia Fest and the Ingleby Barwick Family Fun Day. It should be noted that event organisers who are running events on private land are not mandated to take the advice given by ISAG. The ISAG noted that one event plan 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 2025/26 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, Licensing, 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:

- BIFF
- Billingham Synthonia Cricket Club
- Billingham Town Council
- CPAD IB Fund
- Festival of Thrift
- Friends of Ropner Park
- Showmen’s Guild
- Tees Rowing Club
- Tees Valley Dragons
- Thornaby Town Council
- Yarm District Lions
- Yarm Town Council

COMPLAINTS/COMMENTS

ISAG were made aware of 2 complaint in 2025/26 in relation to parking and noise at Billingham Synthonia Cricket Club and a parking complaint at Siren’s Fest which take place in Ingleby Barwick.

IMPROVEMENT PLANS 2026/27

IMPROVEMENT ACTIONS	DATE	COMMENTS
Research other Safety Advisory Groups, with a view to strengthening working practices and building networks	March 2027	Deferred to 2026/27 – new chairman role
Review membership and attendance of ISAG	June 2026	Chairman to lead

Review impact of Martyn's Law (Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Act 2025	April 2026	
Deliver event workshop sessions for local Event Organisers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Event Management/Safety Plans • Risk • Incident Management • Traffic Management 	May 2026	Two workshops delivered in Event organisers are signposted to national guidance (The Purple Guide), Council's policy and online Act training and guidance Workshops programme for Spring 2026
Explore an accreditation process for event safety planning.	March 2027	Initial discussion with Local Authority Events Advisory Group (LAEOG)
Work with highlighted Event Organisers, where safety plans are not robust.	March 2026	On going, with support from Council Events Service
ISAG Awareness Training for new representatives	Within 12 months of appointment	

2026/27 ISAG MEETING DATES

Event Organisers will be contacted in February 2026, 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.

Tuesday 21 April
 Tuesday 9 June
 Tuesday 30 June
 Tuesday 28 July
 Tuesday 18 August
 Tuesday 15 September
 Tuesday 13 October
 Tuesday 3 November