

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

XXXXXX

**REPORT OF CORPORATE
MANAGEMENT TEAM**

CABINET DECISION

Cabinet Member for Health, Leisure and Culture – Cllr Nelson

2023 EVENT SUMMARY AND 2024 MEMORIAL LIGHTING CALENDAR

SUMMARY

This report provides an overview of the Council's 2023 Events Programme, including community led events and street parties which have been delivered by third parties on Council land. Despite the challenges of unpredictable weather and rising costs of delivery, our biggest event, Stockton International Riverside Festival (SIRF) received very positive feedback in the independent market research, with 90% believing it to be good for promoting the area and a good use of Council resources.

In addition, the report provides the suggested calendar for memorial lighting for 2024.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To note the success of events programme during 2023
2. To approve the memorial lighting calendar for 2024
3. To delegate to the Director of Community Services, Environment and Culture in consultation with the Leader of the Council to make in year amendments or additions to the lighting calendar.

DETAIL

1. The Borough's event programme continues to be popular with visitor numbers and satisfaction levels remaining high over the past year. There has been a good mix of small, medium and large-scale events delivered across the six towns, and new events, such as Siren Fest Emergency Vehicle Show and Festival of Thrift, have been added to the annual programme.
2. The Council's resources continue to be deployed across the Borough to enable local event organisers to deliver their own community focussed events which, although supported, are delivered independently of the Council. Practical support includes specialist advice, access to relevant Council services, and financial support for safety officers, road closures, signage and programming etc., all of which helps communities to manage their own events and celebrations in a safe manner.
3. The delivery of the Council's events programme, including community led events, has not been without its challenges in 2023. Heavy rainfall and frequent high wind levels have resulted in delays, rescheduling and in some case full cancellation of events. Events that

have been impacted include, SIRF, EID, Festival of Thrift, BIFF, Yarm Fair and more recently the Council's Halloween event which was cancelled due to heavy rains and high river levels.

4. The Council is mindful of the ongoing impact of climate change for outdoor event work and is currently reviewing operational delivery and processes in this area. Consideration is being given to restriction on the use of temporary demountable structures and additional assessment of event spaces/ground surfaces. Financial risks, associated with the impact of adverse weather, is also a key consideration for future programming and the design of new event spaces.
5. External event management and safety expertise has continued to be needed in 2023, especially for large scale and complex events. This was exacerbated by a vacancy in a crucial role and the recent appointment of an Event Development and Production Manager will now enable a rebalance of the use of external crew/professionals in 2024, especially at a senior level. The new post holder will drive event design, safety planning, procurement and use of resources, which will all support our future events programme and wider culture ambitions.
6. Internally, there continues to be a joined-up approach across Council teams in the delivery of our events programme and we acknowledge the effort and support provided from service teams including Enforcement, Highways, Legal, Communications, Media, CFYA and Design Services. The effectiveness of this joint working and ability to respond to unexpected challenges has been very evident this year, particularly in relation to the impact of adverse weather and changes to programme and overall delivery.

Large Scale Events

7. Part of our large-scale event programme is temporarily impacted due to the ongoing major redevelopment work on Stockton's riverside and high street locations. The suspension of these events which includes Stockton's Fireworks, Super Car Saturday and Stockton's Cycling Festival has been planned and communicated to Members and our communities.
8. The Council's Events Service is currently working with the Town Team, contributing to the design of the new riverside spaces and planning for the continued use of the existing riverside spaces, with a view to producing a large-scale programme of events in preparation for 2025/26

SIRF

9. SIRF is a long-standing Arts Council England (ACE) National Portfolio Organisation (NPO), funded to present high quality work and support the street arts sector. SIRF 23 is in the first year of a three-year funding agreement with ACE (2023 – 2026) and our festival continues to be highlighted nationally as an exemplar of the development of sustainability in street arts.
10. SIRF has a strong reputation for showcasing international programmers, new commissions and we provide one of the largest and most diverse outdoor street arts festival in the UK. Whilst our ambition is to sustain this reputation and to continue to support artistic development and new work, the wider sector is facing a lack of investment leading to a shortage of ambitious large-scale outdoor street arts shows. This is particularly true of international work, and it is becoming increasingly difficult to find new and exciting shows of the calibre associated with our festival.

11. Whilst the declining capacity within the street arts sector is concerning, this does provide an opportunity for SIRF to assess and reshape its own future delivery and influence the sector. This will be a key piece of work in 2024 and we intend to have early conversations with ACE and other key cultural partners.
12. There continues to be financial challenges associated with inflationary pressures for technical suppliers for SIRF and this, together with rising costs for artists due to high demand and low availability, is a risk area. We will continue to apply for additional funding from ACE which is outside of our 3-year NPO investment, as well as other funding streams including those managed by TVCA, who are one of our main Cultural Partners.

SIRF 2023 – Delivery & Sector Development

13. SIRF 2023 hosted an impressive 41 companies, including 7 international groups and 155 individual performances. Although access to our usual Riverside event space was not possible this year, our programme remained ambitious and we delivered some exceptional moments, with a strong artistic programme and community elements.
14. A theme throughout this report has been the impact of adverse weather on our event programme and delivery of our festival was affected by heavy and sustained rainfall. Poor weather conditions resulted in significant delays and rescheduling of the programme, across all days. Footfall levels dropped to 38,800 visitors compared to previous years, which have ranged between 50,000 – 65,000 visitors.
15. Despite the weather conditions and the resultant cancellation of a number of performances, visitor satisfaction from our independent market research remained positive, with most of the key satisfaction indicators reaching 90% plus. These include:

86% of attendees rating the festival overall as **good or very good** in 2023, compared with 95% in 2022, [94% in 2019] and [90% in 2018]

90% stated that the festival is a **good use of council resources** in 2023, compared with 94% in 2022 [94% in 2019] and [89% in 2018]

90% of attendees stated that the festival is **good for promoting Stockton** as a place to live, work or visit in 2023, compared with 95% in 2022 [93% in 2019] and [92% in 2018].

91% of people stated that coming to the event has a **positive effect on their health** and wellbeing, compare with 92% in 2022.

Lower than usual footfall has impacted economic outputs in 2023. Direct spend per head is reported as £39.27 compared to £47.99 in 2022 and the **total direct economic impact** is **£991,360** compared to £1.73m in 2002.

16. Participation and engagement work is a key theme for SIRF and there are many opportunities for residents, children and community groups to engage in high quality arts experiences. The popular Community Carnival included 750 participants, representing diverse groups across Borough. We had the largest group to date of Tees Valley based artists working with our communities, delivering workshops to create costumes, music and dance pieces for the parade. The Carnival is very popular with our SIRF audience, and this year was no exception with over 5,000 visitors lined along high street to watch the parade.
17. The major events presented by Stockton Council are designed to be accessible to all our communities and as such we continue to develop 'Accessible SIRF'. This year's festival was part of a national pilot for an Audio Description Tool, *The Difference Engine* which is a real time audio description tool. We commissioned 5 new audio description resources to

enhance the experience for our deaf audiences. We intend to deliver and promote this service in subsequent festivals.

18. British Sign Language (BSL) interpretation was added across the festival, including a digital BSL interpreted access film that provided a guide to deaf and disabled visitors to navigate and access our festival. This type of support guide is a new best practice model within the Sector.
19. As part of our sustainable festival plan, we collected 420kg of waste in our 'festival recycling' bins, ensured all our generators were HVO powered (Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil the Renewable Diesel Alternative) and we introduced an Environmental Levy for our traders, following learning from new practice across the Outdoor Arts Sector an Environmental Pledge was developed for all traders to sign up to.
20. We continue our partnership with XTRAX, who deliver SIRF's international showcase which supports and promotes our festival across the Sector. The showcase also provides opportunities for programmers and artists to pitch new ideas and network. Delegates represented 15 countries, with 159 registered delegates. 98% of delegates said the showcase helped them to make new contacts and network with UK and international colleagues. 95% of delegates rated the quality of the content as good or excellent. We also hosted a Without Walls Artistic Directorate conference across 2 days which included networking sessions and discussions which are impacting the outdoor arts sector.

Festival of Thrift

21. We are delighted to be working in partnership with the Festival of Thrift which moved from Kirkleatham, Redcar & Cleveland, to John Whitehead Park, Billingham in 2023.
22. Festival of Thrift is in its 11th Year and is a nationally renowned festival which encourages and celebrates sustainable living. This large-scale festival not only highlights and attracts new visitors to the area, but it is an important part of connecting our community with the Council's ambitious Environmental Sustainability and Carbon Reduction Strategy.
23. Ahead of the planned two-day event in September, the festival team have delivered an extensive community programme of related activities across our towns.
24. The festival could not be delivered over two days as planned due to high winds and the event was cancelled on its second day. Despite this, visitor numbers on the first day were encouraging (estimated at 15,000 across the day) and the team received some excellent customer feedback:

"We had an Absolutely brilliant time, so much to see, pity the Sunday was cancelled because we wanted to do it so much again.: This was our first visit to a Thrift, but it defiantly won't be our last... well done to all the street performers, stall holders and organisers, we live in Billingham, and it was wonderful to see so many people have a great time..."

"Definitely prefer it in Billingham, it felt so spacious even though there were tons of people (which is amazing for the event!) We had a lovely couple of hours and my daughter commented that it was a bit like another festival we go to, with the range of food stalls. You're always going to get naysayers, but honestly, it was lovely to see a once bouncing town doing well again. The town centre stalls were fab, a real focus on thrift."

25. An evaluation report is expected later in the year which will include information on delivery, travel, visitor satisfaction and economic impact. Ahead of the report, early indications in relation to travel and sustainability, show a positive increase in public transport and walking to site, including:

55% came by car in 2023, compared 90% in 2022.
26% walked to site in 2023, compared to 5.5% in 2022.
7.5% came by bus in 2023, compared to 2.5% in 2022.
4% came to Thrift by train in 2023, an option that wasn't available in Kirkleatham.

26. A Park & Ride service was also piloted which operated from Stockton Town Centre to Billingham. The service was popular, with 273 tickets sold and Council teams are working with the Festival of Thrift to expand this service in 2024.

Stockton Sparkles

27. Stockton Sparkles is the remaining large-scale event in the 2023 calendar. The event runs for a period of weeks in the lead up to Christmas, commencing with a spectacular light switch-on event late November, which includes a free Victorian Fair.
28. Our Christmas Market was extremely successful in 2022, with high satisfaction levels from both traders and visitors. Overall direct economic impact for 2022 was £392,686 with a total average spend per head of £34.83. Our 2023 market is over-subscribed for the second year, and we have a reserved list of traders. We are planning to deliver a similar model this year, with 22 traders on Stockton High Street, a music programme, craft workshops and street theatre activities. The Sparkles Lantern Parade will take place on the last day of the Christmas Market and will include school children and community groups.
29. 'Santa on Wheels' returns for the third consecutive year. This event is remains extremely popular with families and communities across the Borough. It is a four-day event, and the Santa Bus route includes all wards.

Other Events in 2023

30. As mentioned earlier in the report, the Halloween Spooky Walk event at Preston Park was one of the events that was severely impacted by inclement weather. Heavy rains and high river levels created unsafe ground conditions and the event could not be delivered safely. This is a popular family event which has had consistently high tickets sales, especially for the early year's slots which tend to sell out in weeks. The re-development works at Preston Park will mean that this event cannot be delivered at this location in 2024 and Officers are currently looking at alternative sites within the Borough.
31. We continue to support over 20 community and local events, and these include a range of well-established events such as BIFF, Thornaby Show, Billingham Carnival and Garden Show, EID Festival, Yarm Fair and for later in the year, Remembrance Sunday events and Christmas focus celebrations. The Council's Events Team have also supported several memorial events, including Battle of Stockton, Centenary of the Stockton-on-Tees Cenotaph and a memorial dedication led by Stockton International Brigade.
32. We have had another bumper year of street party requests and community style big lunch events, in celebration of the Coronation of King Charles III. These community events and celebrations are very important, and the Council has developed a robust and streamlined process to help our communities to deliver, without undue bureaucratic systems and process.
33. 75 streets parties were delivered, which included 54 road closures and we supported 2 community big lunch events, (Yarm and Ropner Park). The Council's own large scale Coronation Big Lunch included a free fair, live streaming of the Coronation ceremony and a

live music programme which was very successful and attracted over 5,000 visitors into Stockton High Street.

34. The Council's Events Team provides technical support and advice for the numerous communities and externally led events, which includes help with production of event safety plans, risk assessments, road closures and food safety. Further training and support from local and community event deliverers will be available for the 2024 event season.
35. Moving into 2024, the Council is committed to retaining its leadership role and further developing Stockton's reputation as a creative and dynamic events Borough. We recognised that a creative arts and events programme has many benefits to both the community and economy, and can attract high levels of satisfaction, improve well-being, increase 'direct' spend in the area and generally promote the Borough as a great place for residents, businesses and visitors alike.

Memorial lighting calendar 2024

36. The use of coloured lights in Stockton Town centre and on selected buildings and structures continues to provide the Council with an opportunity to acknowledge and support a range of good causes and important anniversaries. This memorial lighting programme is very popular and generates significant social media activity. The 2023 memorial lighting calendar has been delivered.
37. This report invites Cabinet to agree the programme for 2024, as listed in **Appendix A**. The list incorporates campaigns that might encompass a range of individually narrow issues/interests. The dates nominated in each case are those which are believed to be the subject of a meaningful campaign by others, such that when the lights are switched on the general public may have some understanding of the significance of the event/colour.
38. Where a campaign lasts for a period of days or weeks, the normal procedure will be to mark the start of that campaign by turning our lights on for the first day/night. However, where a campaign promoter wishes to use an alternative day within the period to align with specific activity designed to raise the profile of the campaign, we may change the date on which we turn our lights on to fit with the organisers' promotions. The calendar listed at Appendix A therefore includes suggested dates for each event and may be subject to minor changes.

COMMUNITY IMPACT IMPLICATIONS

39. The events programme is diverse and designed to reflect the interests of different communities. Every effort is made to make our events physically and financially accessible, they are presented in public spaces and are almost always free to watch or participate in.
40. Many of our events are specifically designed, in whole or in part, to raise awareness of the needs or characteristics of specific groups, including those with protected characteristics.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

41. There are no financial implications arising from this report.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

42. There are no legal implications arising from this report.

RISK ASSESSMENT

43. All events presented by the Council or approved for Council land are subject to a full risk assessment and where appropriate are reviewed by Stockton's Independent Safety Advisory Group.

COUNCIL PLAN POLICY PRINCIPLES AND PRIORITIES

44. The events programme and memorial lighting contributes to a number of Council Plan priorities, including the economic objectives and those relating to community cohesion and wellbeing. Our events are crucial to our ambition to create a place that is clean, vibrant and attractive.

CORPORATE PARENTING IMPLICATIONS

45. Many opportunities to participate in or enjoy our events are targeted at our looked after children. There are very few ticketed events, but tickets for this year's Halloween Spooky Walk were offered to our care leavers.

CONSULTATION INCLUDING WARD/COUNCILLORS

46. There is frequent consultation with Councillors over events before, during and after the events are staged. There has been no consultation with Councillors in relation to this report as its primary function is to report on the outcome of events already staged.
47. There has been consultation with the Cabinet portfolio holder for Health, Culture & Leisure in the development of the draft memorial lighting calendar.

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Education related? No

Background Papers

Ward(s) and Ward Councillors:

Property

APPENDIX A

DRAFT MEMORIAL LIGHTING SCHEME 2024/25

DATE	EVENT	LIGHTING COLOUR	CAMPAIGNS
Saturday 27 January	Holocaust Memorial Day	Purple	National
Thursday 1 February	LGBT+ History Month	Multi	Catch All
Sunday 4 February	World Cancer Day	Orange	Catch All
Friday 8 March	International Women's Day	White/Purple/ Green	National
Saturday 23 March	National Day of Reflection	Yellow	National
Saturday 23 March	Earth Hour (8.30pm-9.30pm)	Switched off	National
Monday 1 st April	Cleveland Scouts 50 th Anniversary	Blue/Yellow	Open Request
Tuesday 2 April	Autism Acceptance Day	Gold	Autism Friendly Town Centre
Sunday 21 April	My Way (London Marathon) Teesside Samaritans	Green	Open Request
Tuesday 23 April	St George's Day	Red/White	Saint Day
Monday 13 May	National Dementia Action Week	Purple	National & SBC Campaign
Saturday 1 June	National Volunteering Week	Red/Purple	National
Monday 10 June	National Carers Week	Blue	National
Tuesday 18 June	National Drowning Prevention Week	Red/White/ Blue	Open Request
Saturday 29 June	Armed Forces Day	Red/White/ Blue	National
Wednesday 4 September	World Sexual Health Awareness Day	Orange/Blue	Catch All
Monday 9 September	Fairtrade Fortnight	Blue/Green	National
Tuesday 1 October	Stoptober (Stop Smoking Campaign)	Red	National
Wednesday 9 October	Baby Loss Awareness Week	Pink/Blue	Catch All
Thursday 10 October	World Mental Health Day	Purple	Catch All
September <i>date TBC</i>	National Recovery Week	Purple	Open Request
October <i>date TBC</i>	National Care Leavers Week	Blue	National & SBC Campaign
October <i>date TBC</i>	Show Racism the Red Card	Red	National & SBC Campaign

Monday 11 November	Remembrance Day	Red	National
Thursday 14 November	World Diabetes Day	Blue	National
Monday 25 November	International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women	Orange	Catch All