

**STOCKTON BOROUGH COUNCIL
INDEPENDENT SAFETY ADVISORY GROUP**

DE-BRIEF REPORT 2023/24

OVERVIEW 2023/24

The 2023/24 event seasons has been busy for Stockton's Independent Safety Advisory Group, who have reviewed a full programme of event safety plans, the majority being delivered on Council land and a small number on privately owned land and on the river Tees.

There have been three new events submitted to the group this year including Ingleby Barwick Fun Run (Ingleby Barwick), Siren Fest (Ingleby Barwick) and Festival of Thrift, (Billingham) which is a largescale and nationally renowned event, attracting high visitor numbers. ISAG have held early conversations with event organiser to help them understand expected safety standards/documentation and to highlight the role of support of the group. This is a model of working that ISAG have found to be effective.

Whilst there has been a drop in the overall number of plans submitted to the group, ISAG note there remains a wide range of event safety plans for review, ranging from annual community led events and celebrations, to more complex large-scale events and festivals. The standard and quality of events safety plans varies considerably, and this can be problematic for ISAG when maintaining consistency of safety standards. This report recommends that the Council continues to support less experienced community event planners, and consideration should be given to event training/workshops and some form of accreditation scheme may be beneficial.

There has been a focus on weather management and incident management planning this year. This is due to extreme rain and windy weather conditions which has affected and interrupted event delivery. Incident Management Plans have been tested, as event organisers have needed to make difficult decision in relation to delays, part and full cancellation of their events. This will continue to be a focus for ISAG when reviewing future event safety plans.

ISAG note that there has been steady progress made against the Improvement Action Plan, including revised timescales for event organisers to submit their event safety plans. Whilst these changes to deadlines have worked well for experienced planners, ISAG note that some less experienced event organisers have struggled and have found it difficult to revise safety plans and documentation in a timely manner. Further information is contained within this report.

Membership for the group has been good this year, and although there has been some movement of individual reps, all key organisations have been represented and group attendance has met requirements.

ISAG - FOCUSED WORK 2023/24

Further to the above and highlighted below are some specific areas of work and support that ISAG have delivered in 2023/24

King's Coronation:

ISAG acknowledges the Council's Street Party application and delivery process as a model of good practice. Whilst formal event safety plans are not submitted for street parties, a report was presented to the group in April 2023, detailing 75 street party across the Borough in residential areas. The report also detailed hot spot areas and traffic management arrangements, including road closures. ISAG representative were able to comment from their own specialised areas of work.

In addition, ISAG reviewed two community led Coronation events and the Council's largescale Big Lunch event in Stockton Town Centre, which attracted over 5,000 visitors.

Festival of Thrift (FOT):

Festival of Thrift is a new largescale festival in Stockton's 2023/24 events programme with high visitor numbers, including new visitors to the area. ISAG acknowledges the Council's approach in setting up a technical support group, to assist with the migration of the festival to John Whitehead Park, Billingham. Several ISAG members were part of this group and provided practical support and advice, from their individual specialist areas including expected safe standard of operation. A preliminary ISAG meeting was held with FOT event production team prior to event safety plans being submitted. The purpose of this meeting was to discuss some of the key safety challenges associated with the event including traffic management, car parking and crowd movement.

Unfortunately, despite this forward planning approach, initial safety plans were not detailed enough and ISAG highlighted several of areas where safety processes needed to be improved. This included inspection and food hygiene processes/documentation, use and management of temporary demountable structures and incident management processes. The latter of these safety arrangements were in fact tested, as forecasted high winds meant that weather and incident management plans were activated, resulting in the second day of the event being cancelled.

It is important to highlight that the working relationships between ISAG and the Festival's sub-contracted event production team was challenging. The event production team felt the scrutiny of the group was excessive and they demonstrated a reluctance to engage with the ISAG process, including providing additional information requests. Although changes were made to event safety plans which enabled ISAG to provide a level of assurance, updates and information were still being provided 3 days before the event. ISAG have highlighted this as high risk and asked for early meeting in 2024 with the team.

Yarm Fair:

ISAG continues to prioritise Yarm Fair as a key piece of work due the significant challenges in terms of space, infrastructure, crowds, traffic management as well as the impact on residents and businesses.

ISAG acknowledge the efforts and improvements made by the Showman's Guild particularly regarding traffic management and site location and management. Improvement have also been made with Incident Management Plans, which were tested this year as the event organisers cancelled their second day of trading due to heavy rain and high river levels. This was managed effectively and in full consultation with the Borough Council.

ISAG note that ongoing work is required to event safety plans and documentation and the group remains committed to work with the event organiser and the Council in this regard.

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.

Environmental Health:

ISAG acknowledges and thanks the Council’s Environmental Health Service for its continued support over the past 3 year in relation to inspections for hot food traders. There has been good progress made in food hygiene inspection rates and, in most cases, traders are now within acceptable inspection timelines and are compliant.

This report highlights a few exceptions to this including SIRF artists and crew catering, which dropped below the acceptable food hygiene standard; and Festival of Thrift and Yarm Fair, where some traders had not received an inspection within the last 3 years. The Council’s Environmental Health Service has provided expert advice and support in these circumstances, enabling traders to make critical amendments to their food safety management systems which in turn has enabled reinspection’s by their home authority to be undertaken.

ISAG acknowledge that Stockton Borough Council continues to run a series of Food Safety training courses which are accessible for community event organisers and traders and ISAG will continue to highlight this training at scheduled review meetings. ISAG has recommend that the Council’s website and event information contains clear information in relation to inspection dates and minimum Food Hygiene Rating Scores.

EVENTS REVIEWED BY ISAG 2023/24

The number of event safety plans reviewed in 2023/24 was 29 and the table below shows the ratio between Council run and other event organisers.

There has been a 32% reduction (14 number) in the overall number of event management plans submitted this year and ISAG have noted the following movement: the Council’s Cycling Festival, Fireworks and Supercar Saturday events are temporarily paused due to the redevelopment of Stockton riverside and its Specialist Market programme came to an end in 2022 and has subsequently been removed from the ISAG meeting schedule. In addition, 6 community led events in Norton were scheduled in 2023/24, however events plans were not submitted, and these events did not happen. The Big Paddle Water Festival which operated in 2022 was also not repeated in 2023. There has also been a reduction in the number of community events celebrating the King’s Coronation, compared to numbers in the previous year, celebrating the Queen’s Jubilee.

Event	Ratio of Event Safety Plans for Review													
	2016	%	2017	%	2018	%	2019	%	*2020	*2021	2022	%	2023	%
SBC	22	44	26	48	27	48	19	37	n/a	10	18	42	8	28
Other	28	56	28	51	29	51	32	63	n/a	16	25	58	21	72
Total	50		54		56		51		n/a	26	43		29	

*2020 and 2021 – event programme was impacted by Covid

Of the 29 event safety plans ISAG assured in 2023, the Council's Carers event was cancelled due to capacity issues and its Halloween Spooky walk was cancelled due to heavy rainfall and high river levels. The unpredictable and severe weather conditions was a constant theme across the year, and ISAG have noted that event organisers for SIRF, Festival of Thrift, Yarm Fair, BIFF and Eid had to activate their weather and incident management plans. Many of these events were re-programmed, delayed and cancelled.

The frequency and impact of severe weather conditions is a consideration for ISAG and as such weather and incident management plans will be a focussed area of work in 2024/25.

MEETINGS

ISAG met on 10 separate occasions during 2023/24, between April and November. These meetings were all held on Microsoft Teams and ran to time. Event organisers are given the opportunity to attend meetings and present their plans and 26 events organisers attended and discussed their plans.

Preliminary meetings were held with 3 event organisers who deliver largescale events, these included SIRF, Festival of Thrift and Yarm Fair. These early meetings allow early discussions about proposed event content and intended safe systems of working, ahead of event management plans being submitted for formal review. In addition, ISAG continue to have a dedicated ISAG meeting for Yarm Fair, which remains challenging in terms of its location and safety planning, particularly regarding traffic management plans.

MEMBERSHIP, ATTENDANCE & TRAINING

ISAG's operating model consists of an Independent Chairman and Vice Chairman, and this has worked well in 2023/24. All scheduled meetings have been delivered and lead by the named Chair/Vice Chair, and meetings have been well attended by core and non-core members of the group. 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 2024.

There have been changes to ISAG membership this year, including new representatives from Cleveland Fire and Rescue.

Core Members

Carl Marshall	– Independent, Chairman
Russell Smith	- Independent, Chairman (Vice)
Tara Connor/James Burrell	– SBC, Secretariat
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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ISAG attendance has been satisfactory in 2023/24 and the group has managed to be quorate at each meeting. ISAG acknowledges the workload pressures of individual members who deliver their ISAG role on top of their own jobs.

EVENT APPLICATIONS, INFORMATION AND SUPPORT

Deadlines:

Of the 29 event safety plans that were submitted for review, 20 plans were received within agreed timescales, which is 69%. This is a 23% improvement from 2022/23.

ISAG note that the new extended deadlines for event safety plans appears to have worked well for experienced planners, who are able to respond very quickly to ISAG comments and requests for further information. This was not the case however for some less experienced event organisers, who have found it difficult to revise safety plans and documentation in a timely manner. This year there were 9 (31%) 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 high risk and puts pressure on ISAG to reassess information within very short timescales. Where late changes cannot be assessed in time, the Council would need to make the decision whether they allow an event to take place without the cover of the ISAG.

ISAG recognises it is difficult to 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 does further work in this regard and revisit submission dates.

Quality of Event Safety Plans

As mentioned earlier in this report, there remains a disparity in the quality of event safety plans submitted for review and this has been an ongoing issue for several years.

ISAG note that where some event planners are improving and refining their safety plans and systems of working, others are not. This was specifically highlighted in ISAGs 2022/23 report,

'there are some event organisers who 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.'

This is a key area of work highlighted by ISAG, and the group recommends that the Council considers a more robust approach to working with these event organisers, providing clear parameters of safety requirements to access to Council land for event delivery. ISAG Chair is willing to support this process and provide time to work with these planners.

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. Incident planning continues to be challenging for the smaller to mid-size community events organisers and additional support from ISAG is required. As referenced earlier in the report, robust incident management systems are also becoming more important in relation to climate conditions and the impact and management of decision-making in this regard.

ISAG notes that the threat level during 2023/24 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:

- Billingham Carnival Committee and BTC
- Billingham International Folklore Festival
- Billingham Town Council
- CPAD IB Fund
- Festival of Thrift
- Friends of Ropner Park
- Ingleby Barwick Community Partnership
- Showmen's Guild
- Tees Rowing Club
- Thornaby Cricket Club
- Thornaby Town Council
- Yarm District Lions
- Yarm Town Council

COMPLAINTS/COMMENTS

ISAG were made aware of 5 complaints in 2023/24.

1 in relation to the lack of sound on the Coronation broadcast at the Kings Coronation Event, another from a resident who wasn't informed of street party in their street for the Kings Coronation, 1 regarding parking restrictions on Yarm High Street during Yarm Fair and a further two resident complaints about parking restrictions for Halloween Spooky Walk.

IMPROVEMENT PLANS 2022/23 & 2023/24

There has been steady progress against the 2022/23 Improvement Plan, with a few actions due to be completed by the end of this financial year/event season. Outstanding actions highlighted below will be rolled over to 2023/24.

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	Completed
Consider introducing a final cut off dates for ISAG assessment.	April 23	Completed
Continue to review Group Membership, including a water safety expert/representative.	April 23	Deferred to 2024
Continue to work with Showmens Guild to improve safety arrangements, including Incident management Processes and safety officer role	Sept 23	Completed
'Prevent' Training – Counter Terrorism Legislation	March 23	Deferred to 2024/25 – see workshop
Work with event organisers to develop event safety plans for Remembrance Sunday Events	Sept 23	completed
Review dates for event safety plans to be submitted, ensuring enough time for ISAG comments/updates to be completed.	January 24	Completed
Research other Safety Advisory Groups, with a view to strengthening working practices and building networks	March 24	Deferred to 2024/25
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 24	On-going in to 2024/25
Update Council Website and Event Information for Food Hygiene Inspection/Compliance and minimum Food Hygiene Rating Scores	April 2024	
Explore possible links with Canals and River Trust with regards to any events taking place on the River	March 24	On-going
Explore an accreditation process for event safety planning.	March 25	
Work with highlighted Event Organisers, where safety plans are not robust	March 25	

2024/25 ISAG MEETING DATES

Tuesday 26 March

Tuesday 23 April

Tuesday 14 May

Tuesday 11 June

Tuesday 16 July

Tuesday 20 August

Tuesday 10 September

Tuesday 1 October

Tuesday 22 October

Event Organisers will be contacted in February 2024, 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.