

3) Task and Finish Group 19 December 2023 – 3pm to 5pm

- To consider the criteria for, enabling, delivering and funding events on Council owned land.
- To consider how the success of events is measured and evaluated.
- To consider if the Council and Destination Management Group has sufficient resources and capacity to deliver the Events Strategy and DMP and what opportunities there are to utilise resources from outside the Council.
- To consider how the Council uses data to inform decision making in relation to events.

Information required

- The criteria for, enabling, delivering and funding events on Council owned land and evidence of how this has been used.

The criteria for enabling events who apply to use our land is fairly broad – a positive impact on the local economy, good for the local community – of value and interest that will benefit our community, good for raising awareness – quality events that show the area at its best. The criteria are currently not at all prohibitive – we don't really say no to events unless they are poorly organised – their initial paperwork is poor and doesn't improve after consultation.

We are not exactly swamped by events companies who want to put events on in this locality at the moment. It is therefore mainly via a process on our Events Application System APPLY4 that links in with the area's Public Safety Advisory Council (PSAG). PSAG's remit is to review all significant event applications in the area from a services coordination and health and safety perspective. It is made up of the blue light services including the coastguard, the harbour authority, Torbay Council's Events Team, the Council's Corporate H&S Manager, Licensing Officers, Highways authority etc. Most events are given the go-ahead unless there are clear issues in their event management plans, their previous poor delivery or their operational practices are unacceptable.

See attached PSAG Terms of reference and also visit [Event safety - Local authority Safety Advisory Group \(hse.gov.uk\)](#)

Following the development of the Events Strategy, a monitoring panel was organised to track the elements of the events strategy that needed to be reviewed, and also to review event applications for the seed funding element of the strategy and any new events. The panel was made up of the Cabinet member and representatives from across the community, with the council's Senior Events Officer and was called Torbay Events Advisory Panel. This has fallen away since the Senior Events Officer has been away from work on long-term sick leave since May, it has been difficult to maintain this level of support. The group wasn't working as well as it should do, mainly because all of the main funding decisions had already been made. However, the group did consider and put together an Events Charter which events organisers sign up to when they go through the application process. Visit [English Riviera Events Charter - Torbay Council](#). The panel's decision-making process in relation to deciding on seed-funding became largely academic as the funding that was ear-marked for seed-funding events was used to part-fund a funding agreement for events with the ER BID Company in line with the Destination Marketing Plan (DMP) and their BID 2 Business Plan.

There was no set direct funding criteria for funding events from the Events, Culture and Heritage (ECH) Fund, it was in-part to support the Events Strategy. However, it was made clear that the funding was revenue funding for event projects and not for capital works. A separate amount was set aside for capital works to improve events spaces but this was later withdrawn

when it became clear the funding source was not available due to sufficient corporate income levels not being realised.

Event funding from ECH Fund was appraised with the Director of Place (as was) in line with the events strategy and the Destination Management Plan (DMP). For instance, Kevin Mowat former Director of Place agreed £100k per year for three years from the ECH Fund to support the ambitions of the ER BID Company's tourism strand that links in with the DMP and the Events Strategy.

Seed funding for a food festival was however set aside, originally as part of the agreement with ER BID and a council procurement process was subsequently undertaken, as per Procurement rules. Unfortunately, the events company concerned subsequently went out of business. A food festival is still a part of the events strategy and something that would fit in with the DMP. When it is looked at again, I would suggest looking at growing it organically with local suppliers rather than via a complex procurement process which didn't achieve what we wanted previously.

Most events on council land are long-standing community events. At present these have been exempted from paying a fee to use the land and considering most of these operate on a really limited financial footing, relying on community donations and income, they would potentially go under if such a charge was implemented. It has been a rule of thumb that we charge new and commercial events the agreed fee (detailed in part 2 of the events strategy) or for larger commercial events, ask for a proposal to use the land that we will agree, or otherwise. This is usually based on usual fees within the events industry (usually £1 or £1.50 per head of attendees) to ensure we're in line with what such an event can stand, and is fair. But we also take direction from members and senior officers for how we treat new events. For instance, members suggested that no land usage charge be applied in the first year for Torbay Pride which is a new community event with potential to grow into a significant visitor event, and is also featured as a development proposition in the events strategy.

For the annual circus there is a licence with an agreed payment structure. For the fair, an offer is made to use Paignton Green and Abbey Meadows on an annual basis. The fee generally rises in line with inflation and is significant to the department's income targets.

- **Details of how the success of events is measured and evaluated.**

For the Airshow this year, an economic and social impact study was undertaken. This is expensive at £9,500+vat each time, but the data is worthwhile collecting and showed a net return of £15.56 for every £1 invested by the council, amongst a lot of other good data about visitors etc.

For most events, success is measured through a mixture of the benefit to the community - economically and socially, whether there were any issues, i.e. if the event didn't supply the requisite number of stewards/security as promised, didn't follow their Event Management Plan, and there were resultant noise issues or issues such as a proliferation of drug use at the event; then it would be reviewed with PSAG and either would not be able to happen again or could happen again (last chance) with a strong change in oversight.

Another success factor is income to the council. The events team has a hefty income target each year and need events that are prepared to pay a suitable fee and a reinstatement bond each time.

Another critical factor is feedback from the hospitality sector and accommodation sector. If there is perceived limited benefit to the local economy we may advise an event organiser to consider investing in an economic (and/or social) impact study, or other mechanism to prove the value of the event locally (we have asked for this for Electric Bay).

Primarily, it is that wider benefit to the community, either socially or economically that is the measure of success, and a judgement is made on these factors.

- **The resources of the Events Team and what other resources could help deliver the Events Strategy and DMP.**

The Culture and Events Team structure chart shows that there are three officers - a senior events officer and two events officers, currently employed to deliver the events service for the council, but this not the complete picture. The Senior Events Officer has been on long-term sick leave since May with the Culture and Events Service Manager, and the remaining officers picking up most of their work, to the detriment of other workload. One of the Events Officers, a very experienced officer, is currently on maternity leave, and a temporary officer with limited experience is covering their absence. The other Events Officer is primarily responsible for Civic events including Remembrance Sunday and Mayoral events, as well as overseeing Torquay Town Market issues, Town Centre income activity, theatre and other commercial poster boards and banner sites, and therefore only has limited capacity to support event development, and support the processing and site visits (sometimes multiple) relating to the 140 event applications received each year (more than 140 each year in 2022/23 and 2023/24).

In terms of staff resources. The events team budget was cut just ahead of the Events, Culture and Heritage Fund being implemented and as such, the Senior Events Officer funding is paid for out of the ECH funding. This post will potentially disappear at the end of March unless more budget funding is set aside.

As such, the team are really stretched and with the additional ask - the running of the English Riviera Airshow being brought back in-house (with significant additional activities added into the mix) - staff are having to do many hours in excess of their contracted hours, unpaid, which is unsustainable. Therefore, additional staff resources need to be added to the team. Also, there has been a deterioration of the level of admin. support service for the wider team (shared with other departments) over the past three years which means that the team has to undertake more work themselves. To put this into perspective, Eastbourne has a very similar number of events and activity in their locality, and they have six full time events staff. This is also similar in Bournemouth, although services and staffing and are currently under review.

The ideal scenario would be to retain a Senior Events Officer post March, and create another full-time Events Officer post, and another part-time Events Officer post, which should be sufficient to undertake the current commitments of the Events Strategy and the DMP. Without any uplift in staffing support, members will need to make a difficult decision about what events and services to keep and what to drop.

In terms of other resources. The lack of capital investment into event sites presents a challenge. An amount of £150,000 was set aside three years ago to support helping Abbey Meadows and Paignton Green become proper events sites rather than open spaces used for events. But this funding was later withdrawn.

Swisco have quoted £45,000 to maintain Paignton Green, Torre Abbey Meadows and the Banjo area of Princess Gardens at the requisite levels, this work should really be part of the cyclical

arrangement but isn't, so the ask of the Events team is this amount, when the team only have an amount of £20,000 available from bonds relating to events this year, and this should really only be for reinstatement works relating to issues caused by the circus or the fair, and so is disputed by these land users. However, a feasibility study to upgrade the sites was quoted for in June 2021 but never delivered due to Swisco's workload and transition from the Council at the time and then the withdrawal of the £150,000 set aside for works. But this could and should be revisited in order to achieve more usable and more robust event spaces. The total cost is unknown until the feasibility study has been undertaken. As things stand, these event spaces are over-used, with only three events and the month-long fair on Abbey Meadows being permitted and this is seen as too much by the team at Swisco. It is a similar story at Paignton Green. There are limited other suitable spaces for events, although the Strand development may support events in due course. There are significant drainage issues at Abbey meadows that need addressing.

Abbey Meadows and Paignton Green would also benefit from better services in terms of water and power supply, also making events less polluting (diesel generators) and more sustainable. This would be costly investment and there is currently no available budget for this work.

In terms of events infrastructure, the team has been working with the English Riviera Events Collective (ERAC) and use funding from the ECH funding to provide infrastructure that a number of events organisers including the council can use to stage events. This includes event radios.

- **Details of the data used to inform decision making in relation to events.**
Information is gathered from event organisers, through our Apply4 system. This largely relates to health and safety issues in relation to the Purple Guide for event management, visit: [The Purple Guide](#) and the council's liability which is paramount. The safety of people attending events comes before all other considerations. And this is also what is discussed as part of PSAG deliberations. Further details can be found in the attached **Guide for Organisers** document.

This information forms part of the weekly discussion that the Events Team has with the Culture and Events Service Manager. It's a matter of discussing any issues and asking pertinent questions. The service manager will take the discussion (mainly about new events) to the Divisional Director or Members if required.

As discussed previously, new events and events with potential issues will be discussed at PSAG. And event organisers are often invited in to present their plans.

For all events, but mainly those that are commercial events, and we don't have that many as yet, we will be interested in numbers attending, income to the council, and ahead of a second year, attendee demographics. We are also interested in impact locally on the hospitality and accommodation sectors. With the Food Festival procurement there were a whole raft of other questions that were asked as part of the Procurement process.

Key issues arising

- **What are the criteria for, enabling, delivering and funding events on Council owned land and does this prohibit events that the Council may wish to support taking place and how has this been used to determine which events should go ahead?**
The events strategy is the key document that guides us. In addition to the points already made above... Income is received by the council from events such as Electric Bay, as well as the fair (at

two locations) and the annual circus. There are occasional sports events (mainly pre-pandemic) that have also brought in income and people (triathlon).

So far, there are no events that have applied that I am aware of that any of our criteria has prohibited. Just health and safety issues where an event organiser couldn't demonstrate to our satisfaction that an event would be run safely.

We do not tend to stop events from taking place without good reason, we tend to work with event organisers where we have concerns, and clearly we have the events strategy and DMP to guide us. This may become an issue with available space and capacity in due course but for now it's not. Since the pandemic, we have available space in the calendar where events have not come back, such as on the first May bank holiday weekend where BMAD used to be on Paignton Green for instance. Land restoration costs are an increasing issue that needs factoring in.

- How is the success of events measured and evaluated and does this make a difference to future events?

As above. But also, in most cases for key events, they are reviewed afterwards and successes assessed. There are few that we don't ask to tighten up operations in some way and this will be via mutual discussion regarding future iterations of events. There is only one recent example I can recall where an event was told they couldn't carry on, and this was due to them not fulfilling their agreed obligations in their Event Management Plan – they had limited security and none of the 23 agreed stewards turned up. This put attendees at risk, and also meant that the events team had to step in and help with operations on the day which we weren't prepared for.

- Does the Council and Destination Management Group have sufficient capacity to deliver the Events Strategy and DMP and who else could help deliver this?

I do not believe that the Council has sufficient capacity to deliver the events strategy as detailed above. I cannot comment on behalf of the DMP, but I believe there are limited associated resources attached to it. There are event organisers who can be commissioned to fulfil event delivery but these come at a cost.

There is a difference between the Council fulfilling its obligations in respect of its liability relating to the 140+ events on council land and the council investing or enabling new events in the area.

- How and what data is used to inform decision making in relation to events?

As above.

- Are there other data sources which would provide greater benefits?

Yes – demographic data of attendees is always valuable but difficult when most of our events are open and free to attend. Such studies are also very costly. The next best thing is footfall data tracked through use of mobile phones in various event locations. We are waiting the renewal of a contract that relates to this that is due to start in the new year. More data from the hospitality and business sector would be useful if we can find an easy way for this to be collated.

- What data sources do other local authorities use?

Eastbourne and Bournemouth responses below.

Eastbourne response

Events have always been perceived to be one of the key drivers of tourism to Eastbourne. We have collected data / surveys on an event by event basis, utilising the local university but for wider data we have previously commissioned economic impact surveys which have used a mix of data from the Cambridge model which uses the following data sources.

- Local: audit of accommodation stock, average room and bed occupancy (local survey), number of visits to attractions (local survey), retail footfall from large retail outlets.
- National: Great Britain Tourism Survey, international Passenger survey, Great Britain day visits survey, census of employment, census of population, annual survey of hours and earnings, annual business inquiry.
- Other data is obtained from the Hospitality Association and ward councillors.
- The events that we operate have been running for many years, however when new event ideas are suggested we are required to present a business case and budget. Which requires many approvals (main approvals CEO, CFO, Leader and portfolio holder) In recent years the key questions are will it break even and will it have a positive impact on the local economy.
- Some of our event sites are restricted due to historical land ownership agreements, others are restricted due to neighbouring residential dwellings.
- We generally accept all types of events, however we ensure there is a mix and not too many of the same type.

Bournemouth response

- For major events like the Air Festival, we commission in alternative years an economic impact assessment.
- For Christmas events we will get feedback from businesses who invest in those Christmas events and we can use visitor insights to look at footfall demographics and catchment.
- There is no specific policy on which events we encourage or don't although we would also check against the fit to the Councils Corporate Priorities. We would often look at the type of event in relation to environmental impacts to local community including noise traffic audience profile and audience behaviour as well as frequency of events in that area.
- We have cultural and tourism strategies that encourage events festivals that help support the economy and support vibrant communities.