

Spotlight Review on English Riviera Airshow – Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Board

Report to Cabinet on 15 August 2023.

Background

1. The Overview and Scrutiny Board, at its meeting held on 8 August 2023, undertook a spotlight review into the future of the English Riviera Airshow and examined the background report and supporting documents (full details of which can be found at <https://www.torbay.gov.uk/DemocraticServices/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=218&MId=25482&Ver=4>):
 - English Riviera Airshow Evaluation 2023 Final Report;
 - English Riviera Airshow Evaluation Report;
 - Riviera Airshow 2024: Learning points and suggestions for future Air Shows;
 - Map of Airshow 2023 Event Space; and
 - Overview and Scrutiny English Riviera Show Survey with Community Partnership Summary Results.

2. The Board heard evidence from the following:
 - English Riviera Business Improvement District ERBID Company (Carolyn Custerson);
 - the Business Forum (a statement was read out by Sally Cope on behalf of Steve Reynolds);
 - Torquay Chamber of Trade and Commerce (Susie Colley);
 - Paignton Chamber of Trade and Commerce (Sally Cope);
 - Brixham Town Council (Brixham Town Councillor Michael Roseveare);
 - Paignton Town and Preston Community Partnership (Alan Whytock); and
 - Airshow Working Party Members (Councillors Carter and Jackie Thomas).

3. All representatives were fully in support of the continuance of the English Riviera Airshow and recognised the importance to the local economy as well as the social value and health and wellbeing benefits to local residents as well as visitors. They felt that there were merits in expanding the offer of the Airshow and considering catering and other arrangements on satellite sites across the Bay to maximise income and opportunities. There was a commitment from the English Riviera Business Improvement District

(ERTBID) Company and Paignton Town and Preston Community Partnership to work together with the Council and any further provider to utilise their expertise and experience to help the Airshow grow and become financially sustainable.

4. However, the representative from the Torquay Chamber of Trade and Commerce had concerns over the future funding of the event, especially in light of the cost of living crisis and felt that more investment could be made on other smaller all year round local events to help attract people to Torbay.
5. The Board acknowledged that the English Riviera Airshow was a key flagship event for Torbay raising over £15 per £1 invested consultants commissioned by the Council and ERBID have assessed, but with rising costs alternative ways for delivering the Airshow was needed. They considered how other air shows were delivered as well as options for delivering the Airshow differently e.g. 1 day event rather than a 2 day event, expanding it to a 3 day event starting on the Friday evening with music or other attractions being delivered as part of a larger experience, live casting the broadcast so people could know what was happening at other locations across Torbay etc.
6. The Cabinet Member for Place Services and Economic Growth – Councillor Chris Lewis, the Leader of the Council – Councillor David Thomas and the Divisional Director of Economy, Environment and Infrastructure – Lisa Tuck attended the meeting to listen to the discussion and responded to questions. The recommendations from the Spotlight Review would be presented to the Cabinet meeting on 15 August 2023 for the Cabinet to make a final decision on the future of the Airshow.
7. The Board considered the following four options with their associated considerations as set out in the submitted report as well as the evidence and discussions heard at the meeting:
 - Option 1: Torbay Council continues to own and deliver the English Riviera Airshow.
 - Option 2: Facilitate the provision of the Air Show by another organisation (e.g. not for profit).
 - Option 3: Removing the Airshow from the Council's delivery plans and redirecting financial support into other (new) events or attractions across the Torbay event calendar.
 - Option 4: Remove the Airshow from the Council's delivery plans with no plans to redirect funding.
8. The Board recognised the value of the English Riviera Airshow as a key flagship event for Torbay and agreed that it should continue and be developed further to encourage people to stay at the event village longer, with more local stalls, attractions and family friendly offers. They wanted to ensure that any future Airshow delivered value for money and was managed in an effective and business like way working with our partners, communities, business and voluntary sector to deliver a world class event which attracts visitors to stay in Torbay longer.

9. The Board formed the following recommendation to the Cabinet. On being put to the vote, the motion was declared carried unanimously.
10. That the Cabinet be recommended that:
 1. Torbay Council should own and deliver the English Riviera Airshow in 2024 and a business case be developed to support this.
 2. the organisation and promotion of the Airshow should start now, working closely with the English Riviera Business Improvement District (ERBID) Company and other groups, utilising professional expertise and experience;
 3. the event should seek to include more of the community and voluntary sector, with private sector involvement and proactively seek sponsorship and commercialisation whilst keeping as much income within the Bay as possible;
 4. the event to become more than just an Airshow, with the flying displays being part of a whole series of attractions from the Friday evening through to the Sunday evening;
 5. the organisers to recognise the variability of the weather generates value in a 2 day event, but more needs to be done to ensure repeat attendance over both days and recognise the social benefits; and
 6. a strong grip needs to be kept on the finances, with the external funding received determining the format of the event. Torbay Council to match fund the event subject to a maximum contribution and to look to substantially reduce its financial contribution year on year with a view to it becoming self-financing.