

REPORT TITLE: FESTIVALS AND EVENTS PROGRAMMING POLICY

28 NOVEMBER 2023

REPORT OF CABINET MEMBER: Cllr Lucille Thompson, Cabinet Member for

Business and Culture

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WARD(S): ALL

PURPOSE

Winchester district attracts many festivals and events at various locations throughout the year. These can be organised by local groups to national organisations; all bring an opportunity to experience and participate in cultural, sporting and community activities.

To help enable Winchester district to develop and strengthen its offer, a review of the council's approach to supporting this sector is being undertaken. This report covers three aspects:

- a refreshed approach to enhance engagement between organisers and the council to better enable programming as well as supporting the permissions and approvals processes required for staging an event.
- the terms and conditions for those wishing to hire council land.
- the approach to co-ordinating the programme of festivals and events across the district.

The benefits of strengthening the council's co-ordinated and coherent approach to supporting and developing the festivals and events offer across the district will better enable organisers to engage with the council. It will also raise awareness, maximise the opportunities to the district's residents and visitors, positively influence the economic impact, and drive visitor numbers.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the committee are asked to comment upon:

1. The refreshed approach to engagement between organisers and the council,
2. The approach to improve cost recovery in respect of changes to terms and conditions for the hire of council land, and
3. The potential and practicalities in adopting an overarching curated programme of festivals and events across the district.

1 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 1.1 Several teams across the council play a role in enabling festivals and events to take place. No additional resources are required regarding the review and subsequent proposals outlined in this report. The review has considered how best current roles and responsibilities are shared.
- 1.2 Consideration has been given to the role and responsibilities of Visitor Information Centre (VIC) Assistants. The council has recently employed, on a trial basis, a VIC assistant who in addition to the typical VIC responsibilities, will be the first point of contact for organisers. This will enhance engagement between the council and organisers and assist in its co-ordination.
- 1.3 The promotion and marketing of the district's events is delivered by the Tourism Marketing and Development team. Also, within this team is the Culture and Creative Sector Development Officer responsible for the support and development of the cultural and creative sectors across the district. This includes the development of the Cultural Strategy as well as co-ordinating the annual festival and events programme via the delivery of Festivals in Winchester Group meetings, in partnership with the BID.
- 1.4 The enforcement of regulatory requirements relating to the delivery of festivals and events falls predominantly within the Public Protection team. This includes licensing, road closures, environmental health and delivery of the safety advisory group (SAG). The planning team may also be engaged, depending on the nature of the festival or event. Hire of council land/property sits with several teams including Estates, Open Spaces and Parking.
- 1.5 Income is generated from the hire of council land. The review of hiring terms and conditions will focus on greater cost recovery, including post event land restoration, whilst remaining viable for organisers.

2 SUPPORTING INFORMATION:

2.1 Context

2.2 It is broadly acknowledged that festivals and events improve the quality of life of a local population. They provide occasions for expressing collective belonging to a group or a place, creating opportunities for drawing on shared histories, cultural practices and ideals.

2.3 The significance of the benefits of festivals and events is recognised by the council and from extensive stakeholder engagement it is emerging as a priority theme in the development of the Winchester District Cultural Strategy.

2.4 The number and range of festivals has grown extensively over the last ten years from seven to 30, plus many community events. The spread across the district is demonstrated in the map.



2.5 A Festivals in Winchester brand was developed by the council in 2011 which underpins the marketing and promotion undertaken by the council through Visit Winchester. A Festivals in Winchester Group is facilitated by the council in partnership with the BID. The group meets quarterly with around 10 to 15 organisers attending each meeting to discuss common themes and challenges.

2.6 **Refreshed approach to engagement**

2.7 The proposed refreshed approach has been informed by feedback from organisers and via the Festivals in Winchester Group meetings as well as research on approaches adopted by other local authorities across Hampshire. It removes the onus on the organiser to navigate the process across multiple teams and makes the provision for a more co-ordinated process, as outlined below.

2.8 To simplify and make clearer the process, the adoption of a “one stop shop” is proposed, comprising of:

a) **A single point of contact in the council,**

An ‘event coordination/triage’ element has been added to the role of Visitor Information Assistant escalating to the appropriate teams and ensuring all obligations are being met.

b) **A more user-friendly webpage,**

The refreshed webpage ensures all external festival and event organisers have all the information in one, easy to access place including the role of the Safety Advisory Group and the safety implications of larger scale events.

c) **A digitalised festival and event notification form,**

All organisers will be requested to complete this new step, hosted in My Council Services, which will expedite the process and enable officers to create a comprehensive picture of festivals and events across the district, whilst providing better support and advice to organisers.

d) **A revised step-by-step guide for first time event organisers,**

This guide enables those that do not have a lot of experience of planning events, or those that would like to set up a community event as a complete beginner, access to a more detailed, step-by-step guidance. Please refer to background documents.

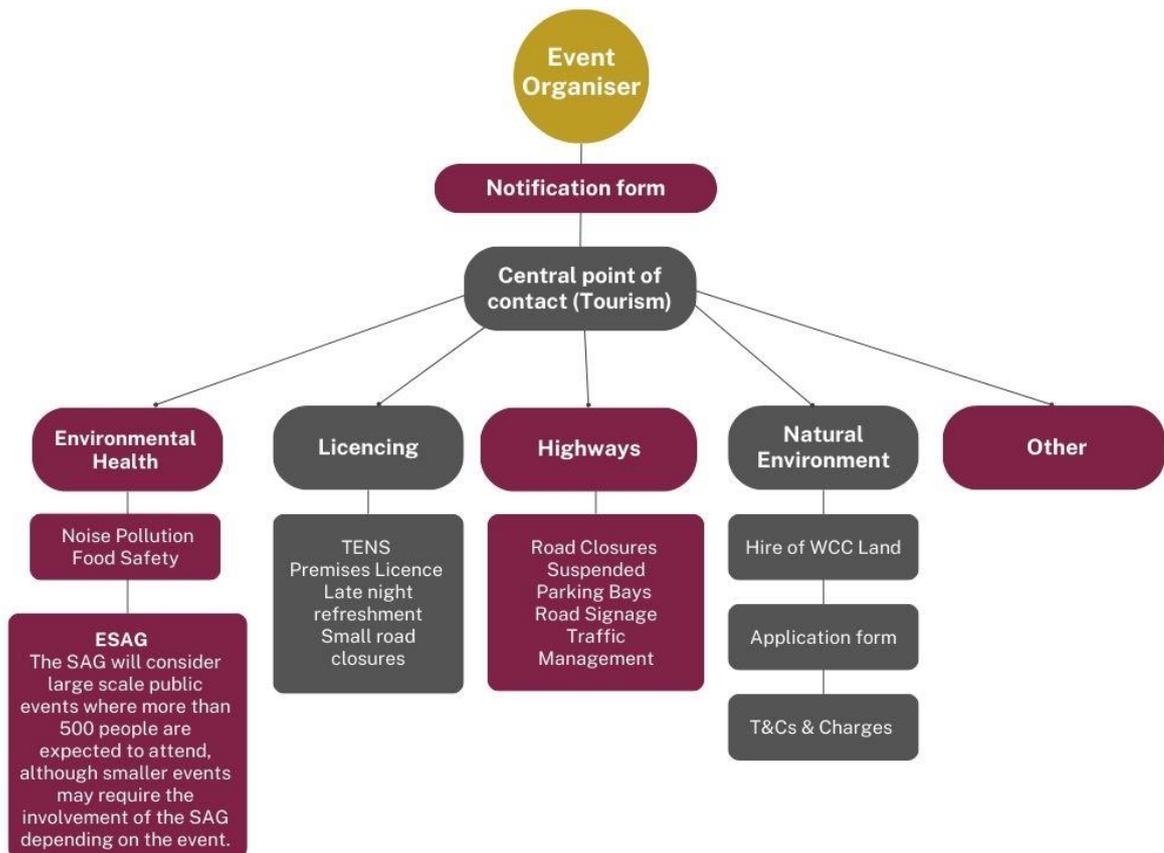
e) **A revised detailed event management guidance toolkit.**

A guide with detailed advice which should be considered by larger event organisers has also been developed. This will be available as a download from the main events webpage. Please refer to background documents.

2.9 Some of the above has already been enacted, as outlined below, whilst others are being developed. These improvements will:

- a) Enable communities and residents to become proactive festival and event organisers,
- b) Better support smaller organisations to offer more diverse festivals and events, and
- c) Support veteran event organisers by making the processes clearer from the outset.

2.10 Revised process



2.11 Hiring council land/property terms and conditions (for festivals and events)

2.12 An initial review of council’s hiring terms and conditions has been undertaken focussing on the council’s green spaces, especially North Walls, where most large-scale festivals and events on council land occur. This review will be continued to:

- a) achieve an improved consistency in approach,
 - b) improve alignment with council priorities,
 - c) maximise the opportunities offered by festivals and events.
- 2.13 The learnings from this review will inform and achieve consistency across the terms and conditions for the hire of council land/property including, for example, Kings Walk, St Maurice's Covert, and council car parks.
- 2.14 This review will continue to be overseen by the Service Lead: Economy and Tourism and will include officers from relevant teams including Tourism, Culture, Open Spaces, Finance, Estates, Parking Services, Legal etc. Residents local to these spaces will also be engaged where appropriate.
- 2.15 Other landowners and organisers delivering festivals and events elsewhere across the district would be encouraged to adopt these terms and conditions via a code of conduct, as outlined in 2.26.
- 2.16 Following this initial review, this paper outlines some of the following areas for further review:
- a) Fees and Charges, and
 - b) Programming.
- 2.17 Fees and Charges
- 2.18 Charges for hiring green spaces for events operate on a sliding scale, tiered based on the type of event (commercial, community, charity) and on capacity (larger events get charged more), see background documents.
- 2.19 The review aims to improve achieve greater cost recovery as well as consistency, particularly in relation to charging. Some approaches to ensure full, or near to full, cost recovery are outlined below:

Consideration	Options	Possible Implications
<p>Charge charities Land Hire fees</p>	<p>Operate a sliding scale - considerations for profit making (inc. fundraising) / economic impact / size and scale of event</p> <p>Offer a concession rate at an agreed percentage reduction</p>	<p>Could make it unsustainable for smaller festivals if all charities get charged full rate. Enables cost recovery for council.</p>
<p>Other / Additional charges to be included in hire terms and conditions.</p>	<p>Option to charge for activity we wish to discourage and to mitigate impact, such as: use of generators, taking vehicles on to green spaces.</p> <p>Options for the application of fees to the organiser where the council incurs costs relating to set-up and take down and restoration of land. Or requirement that the organiser undertakes the work at their cost.</p> <p>Charge fees for litter collection, ground maintenance, tree trimming, bridge / road reinforcements etc.</p>	<p>Increases costs for organisers which may become a barrier for some. Allows the council to recover costs and 'enforce' preferences.</p>
<p>Offer a differential pricing structure – to support more activity off peak and smooth/ spread demand.</p> <p>Adopt an additional sliding scale on land hire</p>	<p>Option to offer cheaper fees on weekdays, more expensive on weekends, even more on Bank Holidays etc.</p> <p>Set a peak season period for a set number of months between April to October – perhaps June/ July / August</p>	<p>Offers organisers the option to 'choose' a cheaper alternative. Likely to increase income from larger (Bank Holiday) festivals.</p>
<p>Review the approach adopted by the council for the use of its land for filming purposes</p>	<p>Undertake a review of charging adopted by other local authorities and local stakeholders.</p> <p>Consider the application of premium charges, based on</p>	<p>May put off some producers who have become accustomed to existing fees and charges.</p>

Consideration	Options	Possible Implications
	<p>period of hire (weekends) as well as type of application premium for international and high exposure filming requests.</p> <p>Ensure pricing policy achieves greater cost recovery to include lost revenue i.e. hire of car parks.</p>	
<p>Charging for all TPCA road closures, both profit making and not for profits/charities.</p>	<p>Option to offer a charitable concessions rate at an agreed percentage reduction.</p> <p>There is still a cost implication for admin / officer time / print and lamination for charitable applications.</p> <p>Other local authorities charge a concessionary rate for charitable applications.</p>	<p>May put-off some small organisers but does allow the council to cover some costs.</p>

2.20 The review of fees and charges for the hire of council land is ongoing and will include further benchmarking with other local authorities as well as seeking opportunities for greater cost recovery where appropriate. The 2024/2025 fees and charges will reflect the outcome of this review.

2.21 Programming

2.22 It is proposed that a policy should be adopted that addresses the quality and quantity of events hiring council land. The approach needs to consider the type, frequency and diversity of festivals and events and their alignment with council priorities regarding sustainability, culture, economy and tourism etc. The table below set out options to consider in this regard.

Consideration	Options	Possible Implications
<p>Maintain existing annual large-scale events at North Walls</p> <p>Most of these are cyclical (happening every year)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cheese & Chilli (Local) • Sausage & Cider / Ibiza Orchestra (National) • Foodies (National) • Hat Fair (Local) • Bonfire/fireworks 	<p>Allow more considered on a case-by-case basis.</p> <p>Set number of fixed events plus an agreed number on a rolling annual basis.</p>	<p><u>Positive</u> Secures venue for festivals which have been in Winchester for years.</p> <p><u>Negative</u> Limits or prevents opportunity (space) to accommodate any new festivals. Lacks variety. Breeds familiarity and repeat visitors rather than attracting new audiences.</p>
<p>Increase number of events a year</p>	<p>Additional dates are identified as available for hire.</p> <p>A set additional number on unspecified dates/times are allowed on request but following review of impact with other bookings. Additional bookings would need to take into consideration the type and nature of the event including the impact on local residents.</p> <p>Be prescriptive in the format of additional events to minimise impact on environment and residents – scale, type, hours etc.</p>	<p><u>Positive:</u> Allows the option to grow festival offer. Increase diversity without having to turn away festivals which have been in Winchester for years.</p> <p><u>Negative:</u> More disruptive for residents. Possible negative impact on the environment - risk damaging relationship with Wildlife Trust.</p>
<p>No events</p>	<p>No longer use North Walls for any events</p>	<p><u>Positive</u> Reduces council costs: no officer time liaising with event organisers, prepping land / trees / grass / bridges / water</p>

Consideration	Options	Possible Implications
		<p>supply etc before and after event.</p> <p>Protects biodiversity, sports pitches and SSSI.</p> <p>Less disruptive to residents.</p> <p>Opportunity to build relationships with landowners - potentially increase the geographic spread across the district - but district harder to plan travel wise.</p> <p><u>Negative</u></p> <p>Reduces council income: no hire fees.</p> <p>Removes multiple large events from Winchester's event calendar - nationals will go elsewhere, local will have to scale down / find alternatives.</p>
<p>Use additional / other council land</p>	<p>Make organisers more aware of Oram's Arbour and Abbey Gardens.</p> <p>Encourage smaller events to use these spaces, giving consideration to the alcohol free zone.</p> <p>Better advertise the availability of hard-standing spaces such as car parks and Busket Yard.</p>	<p><u>Positive</u></p> <p>Allows the option to grow festival offer.</p> <p>Smaller space for smaller / local / grass roots events or bespoke offers.</p> <p>May attract / enable a different 'type' of events.</p> <p><u>Negative</u></p> <p>More disruptive for residents, and potentially more to consider from a traffic management point of view.</p> <p>Oram's Arbour not flat - accessibility issues, but a natural 'amphitheatre'.</p> <p>Anything changes to use at Orams Arbour would</p>

Consideration	Options	Possible Implications
		be undertaken in consultation with residents. Abbey Gardens cannot be closed off for ticketing but has been used successfully for smaller events.
Promote a curated events calendar aligning with council priorities. Sustainability Sectors – art / cultural / food / Inclusivity and diversity	Agreed prioritisation and decision-making with regards to number and frequency of events: National vs Local 'Type' of event – day / weekend / stalls & entertainment / duration Priority sectors	<u>Positive</u> A transparent and fair way to apply for and allocate hire of spaces. Possible panel for considering events. <u>Negative</u> Will require pro-active management and review – staff resources.

- 2.23 The proposed policy, to be developed in 2024, potentially as an action emerging from the cultural strategy, will allow officers to make informed, justified decisions, based on a collective ambition. Feedback from the policy committee on the key elements in prioritising and selecting events to take place on council land is welcomed and are outlined below:
- a) Diversity
 - b) Local verse national
 - c) Priority for certain events. E.g. civic events, and displacement of others
 - d) Economic & environmental impact

2.24 **Overarching programming and curation of festivals and events across the district.**

- 2.25 Beyond managing what happens on council land, the council has limited control on what happens on other public and private land across the district. This is for several reasons:

- a) Consideration cannot be given to the wider context of festivals and events as part of this decision-making process appertaining to road closures and Temporary Event Notices. The council has a statutory obligation to consider and subsequently approve these unless there are safety concerns,
- b) The Safety Advisory Group (SAG) do not have the power to stop a festival or event taking place. It would work with the event organiser to ensure the event was safe, rather than prevent it going ahead,
- c) Whilst the SAG does not have powers collectively, the organisations represented, such as the police and the fire authority do. As does the council, through licencing conditions (where a licence is are required) or through the application of pre-existing legislative requirements,
- d) Parish / county councils may have their own policies and have no obligation to adopt those of Winchester City Council, and
- e) There is no onus on the landowner or organiser to engage with the council if the festival or event is less than 500 people, doesn't include licensable activity and doesn't restrict access to a highway.

2.26 If the required and necessary approvals are obtained by the organiser, the council has no legal power to stop an event. However, in order to engage and encourage other landowners and organisers delivering festivals and events to consider and align with the council's approach and influence desired behaviours (beyond those required by legislation) and programming, it is proposed to develop and seek to adopt a 'Code of Conduct'. This could be developed in partnership with landowners and present a reasonable set of expectations that all would endeavour to achieve.

2.27 A code of conduct symbol would be adopted and used by the council when advertising festivals and events. Whilst all festivals and events would be promoted, it would be limited for those who do not meet the 'Code of Conduct'.

2.28 Nonetheless, there is an ambition to support a festivals and events programme with content that is diverse and geographically spread across the district. There is also a desire to:

- a) help festivals and events be financially viable, environmentally sustainable, and develop successfully,
- b) drive cultural placemaking through animating new and under-used places across the district with an offer that is year-round and supports the night-time economy,
- c) be innovative and sustainable, by producing new work and testing new ideas and approaches within a clear sense of future direction, and

- d) strengthen the local and wider connections of business, cultural and academic partnerships and networks.

2.29 The cultural strategy consultation process has already highlighted festivals and events as a potential priority area. These aims and ambitions along with the principles which underpin the hire of council land will be explored in further detail with stakeholders engaged in collaboratively developing the emerging cultural strategy. This will provide the platform to demonstrate the council's intentions and ambitions in this regard.

2.30 The consultation process has also highlighted the opportunity to better empower communities to make events happen in their local area, along with a greater diversity in the type of events happening and increased publicity for events too.

2.31 **Next steps**

2.32 It is proposed the review continues and the considerations outlined in this paper, along with feedback from the committee, inform the further work required. This will be undertaken within the scope of the Cultural Strategy, for adoption in 2024.

3 **OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED**

3.1 Do nothing. This was rejected in response to the feedback from organisers and the emerging priorities within the cultural strategy.

3.2 Undertake a partial or selective review. This was rejected as it does not provide an efficient and effective way of reviewing all the aspect associated with hiring of council land for event. In particular

- a) Only review the fees and charges. This was rejected as it does not address the issues of number types and impact of events. This neither provides a clear and transparent policy under which the council hires out its land, nor the benefits it is seeking.
- b) Only review the terms and condition for hire. This was rejected as this could lead to not including specific conditions in support of a prioritising and selection policy.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:-

Previous Committee Reports:-

None

Other Background Documents:-

[Event Planning toolkit, 2023 edition, second revision](#)

[Event Management Guidance, 2023 edition, second revision](#)

[Land and property asset register](#)

[Fees and charges, 2022/2023](#)

APPENDICES:

None