

PUBLIC EVENTS SAFETY ADVISORY GROUP (PESAG) REVIEW GROUP

4 December 2014

PRESENT – Councillors Cossins, Culley, Harman, L Hughes and Long.

APOLOGIES – Councillors Bladwin, Carson, Donoghue, Lawton, Richmond and Wright.

OFFICERS – Steve Petch, Place Strategy Officer, Barry Pearson, Environmental Health Manager, Ken Major, Traffic Manager, Marion Ogle, Events and Programming Manager, Patrick Montgomery, Licensing Officer and Karen Graves, Democratic Officer.

OUTSIDE REPRESENTATIVES – Christopher Hockaday, County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Services and Paul Emmerson, Durham Constabulary.

Purpose of the Meeting – To consider the individual roles of the members of the Public Events Safety Advisory Group as outlined in the Protocol circulated to the Group.

The Chair, Councillor Long, advised all attendees why Place Scrutiny Committee was undertaking a review of PESAG, current financial constraints of the Council, how community involvement for PESAG could be encouraged and health and safety considerations.

Points Discussed and Considered –

The various roles of the members of the Darlington PESAG were defined for Members with the limitations on all of those Groups as detailed within the Protocol. Members thereupon heard individual roles and responsibilities of the Group members as follows :-

Events and Programming Manager

- The Events and Programming Manager stated that there was a lot of people in attendance with a vast amount of knowledge and that it was helpful to have a discussion around the role of PESAG for big events such as The Torch Relay. In relation to smaller events, organisations approached the Events Team as, in many cases, the Council owned the land. All organisations were advised that the information was available on the Council's web site although many queries were in seeking advice on how to complete the relevant forms;
- Concerns were expressed by the Environmental Health Manager that the Events Team were drawn into many applications as organisations were unclear or unable to accept their responsibility for the event planning process and had an expectation that management support would be provided. The Team although experienced in writing event plans for Council events could not take on the health and safety role unless they managing the whole event on behalf of the Council. A Darlington Football Club event in the Market Square was given as an example where the Events and Programming Manager managed an event and a

member of the Football Club shadowed to gain experience and take control of future events;

- Following a question, the Group were advised that nobody in the Council could take on the role of Health and Safety Advisor to an event organiser. The Events Team had experience of delivering events and could provide general guidance and identify suppliers of stewards, fencing, staging etc. They could sign-post community groups and event organisers to sources of published information on the planning for delivery of a safe event and give examples of previous successful events. Any specialist Health and Safety advice that an event organiser required should be sourced from an experienced and qualified consultant;
- Group were also advised that there was information in the form of templates available on the Council's website regarding the writing of Event Plans and written risk assessments. To assist organisers to write risk assessments a list of the most common hazards and appropriate management controls had also been published;
- The Environmental Health Manager explained that he was aware of community groups that had no experience of organising events utilising the guidance published by PESAG and applying the knowledge, experience and skills of its members to produce a very personal events plan that demonstrated understanding of the process to deliver a safe event; and
- It was suggested that, as some Community Groups found it difficult to follow guidance, perhaps information sessions in relation to health and safety issues may be needed.

Traffic Manager

- The Traffic Manager advised the Group that he was responsible for the Highway and any event organiser should have contacted the Highways Department, through PESAG, to discuss possible road closures and impacts on the highway of holding an event;
- It was stated that many events posed no risks although there could be minimal congestion, access and egress issues;
- Events were also held on the highway itself, the 10k run being an example, which posed its own set of issues;
- Again the Group were advised that events on not on Council land such as the Festival of Thrift, meant that organisers had to undertake their own traffic management although advice could be sought from the Council's Traffic Manager;
- It was stated that contact from organisations was minimal as most of the information came through PESAG, ;

- Group were advised that there were two types of road closure, one through the Town Police Clauses Act, which was free, and the other through the Road Traffic Act which was also used for road works. Only one road closure was allowed per twelve month period otherwise permission had to be sought from the Secretary of State. During 2012 street parties were done under the Road Traffic Act with individuals having to find their own road closure signs at a cost of around £70 each;
- Group were informed that some organisations were not aware that Public Liability Insurance was required and without PESAG intervention some would not consider paying for traffic management, traffic signage or insurance;
- It was also stated that many events occur on a week-end and that early discussions had often resulted in organisations locating to another area that has no effect on movement of traffic;
- It was also stated that Park and Ride for large events was an issue with organisers being encouraged to source use of car parks at Darlington College or the Rugby Club when holding events with 5000+ attendees. Consideration also had to be given to providing drop-off points for taxis and buses. Consideration had to be given to parking provision in fields or on park areas but there was the risk of damaged land and effect of mud on roads causing hazards to other traffic;
- Members were advised that the Northern Echo Arena already had established travel management plans although there were still problems with people walking along the A66 at the Elton John Concert in 2008 and future events would have to provide more adequate pedestrian signage; and
- Group were advised that to deliver a one night entertainment event on at the Northern Echo Arena would mean an investment of approximately £1m to pay for a star performer, promotion, ticket sales, security, stage, traffic management etc. with no guarantee of making a profit

Licensing Officer

- Group were advised that the Northern Echo Arena and Council parks and open spaces are already licensed for most types of events. However many other outdoor spaces e.g. Darlington Rugby Club, are not licensed. The Arena Premises Licence had been written to allow a limited number of non-sporting events and the South Park had no alcohol licence which would cost a lot of money if required;
- Once an application is received the Licensing Team check to see if the relevant licences are in place, not many applications require an alcohol licence;
- It was also stated that Street Traders can and do attend some events. Some are traders/pedlars who attend events unannounced and, for example, sell glow sticks or balloons; typically they will possess a Pedlars Licence. Street Traders at community events occasionally need a Street Trading Consent but often the goods being sold contribute to a charity and therefore a Street Charity Collection permit is sufficient. As many as possibly 70 per cent of all applications did not

require the Licensing Officer to pursue the issue of a licence, as none are required.

- Following a question Members were advised that an individual with a table on High Row would be classed as a Highway Obstruction and would be dealt with by Highways Department;
- Group were also informed that pavement cafes have to be licensed as they are creating extra floor space for the café, obstructions could occur, there may be Health and Safety Issues and DAD were usually consulted; and
- Police assistance would always be requested if someone was required to move and/or relocate to a more suitable place. A person was not classed as an obstruction, however, a person with a table or some form of structure was seen as an obstruction on the highway and they were advised of several identified areas where they could relocate.

Durham Constabulary

- Group were advised that the role of the Police was to advise on public safety and disorder;
- Many events were small, well-established events that did not cause problems; larger events such as the 10K run were seen as official events with a Community Police presence. The most problematic event for the Police used to be the Fireworks Spectacular held in the South Park.
- Members were made aware that the Police cannot always support community events and that stewarding and traffic management was the responsibility of the event organiser. Steward marshalling required no training although for larger events such as music concerts specialist training was required to ensure Stewards recognised signs of trouble and reacted accordingly;
- It was also stated that all Darlington events were well run and the Police were aware when they were being held. Occasionally police would attend but Organisers were aware that Officers would be relocated if a major incident occurred;
- A Boxing Event at the Dolphin Centre could result in extra Police presence in the Town Centre, dependant on who was fighting. Police generally liaise with other Police Authorities to determine if any problems could occur, dependant on the fighters involved; and
- It was also stressed that all members of PESAG knew of each other's existence and where to signpost event organisers for information/advice. If the relevant contact was not available there was always an alternative who could fulfil the role as legislation was adhered to.

County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Services

- Group were advised that the Fire Authority had two roles in relation to PESAG, legislative and operational and the Authority was normally only interested in indoor events or events being held in a large marquee and mainly checked for a suitable means of escape in the event of an incident;
- Reference was made to the Lumiere event held annually in Durham where Officers need to think of certain eventualities such as 'What would happen if the Cathedral was on fire?', in this example a fire engine is located nearby;
- The Fire Officer advised the Group that there were many events which required no Fire authority involvement or contribution as Durham Cathedral had its own escape plans as did the Northern Echo Arena;
- It was however stressed that Fire Risk Assessments had to be undertaken for indoor events and that there was a template on the Fire Authority's web site. Although the Fire Authority could not legally write the Assessment it could advise as much as possible;
- The Fire Authority often found little problems associated with large events and as firework displays were outside there was little input from the Fire Authority;
- It was stressed that if a member of the public held an event in a marquee on their own land they would be liable if there was a fire;
- All relevant information relating to events was available on the Fire Authority's web site although the public were largely unaware of its existence;
- If an event was accessed by the purchase of a ticket then the Fire Authority had more chance of being made aware of it although it was generally up to the event organiser to inform the appropriate Authorities;
- Overcrowding and blocked or lost fire escapes raised concerns for the Fire Authority and it was stressed that PESAG alone could not stop the event, it was only an advisory body and could signpost to relevant contacts;
- PESAG did not remove risks – it made event organisers aware of the risks of holding an event;
- It was also stated that lessons were learnt from the Dreamscape tragedy and as the inflatable was not on fire the Coroner's inquest had determined that the incident was nothing to do with the Fire Authority; and
- Following a question the Group were advised that suppliers were liable for inflatables as they were the contractor and should have a plan and advise what they are providing for you.

IT WAS AGREED – (a) That the thanks of the Group be extended to Officers of the Council and Christopher Hockaday, County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Services and Paul Emmerson, Durham Constabulary for their valuable input into the meeting.

(b) That the Democratic Officer make the necessary arrangements for the next meeting of the PESAG Review Group to which community groups are to be invited.