

Minority report from Councillor Dennis Parsons

I fully endorse the Events STG report and commend it to O&S and to Cabinet, but with one exception. That relates to what I regard as a democracy deficit in the process for determining event applications where no licence is necessary.

Where an event falls within planning or licensing provisions, there is a legal requirement for the Council to consult residents. But the practice is for the vast majority of cases to be dealt with by officers under delegated authority. However, members retain a right to call in cases to be decided in committee – by members.

The gap in the system relates to land use agreement events where neither planning nor licensing are involved and so there is no obligation to consult. The STG report argues that the Events Consultative Group process is sufficient to deal with such cases. I strongly dissent from that view because it does not address my concern that that still leaves the ultimate decision in the hands of officers. There is no provision for call in to a member decision. Members can seek to influence the officer decision which, to me, stands democracy on its head with elected members, with a mandate to represent their residents' interests, subordinated to unelected officers.

There is a related issue in that it has been the practice in the past for officers to allow events where alcohol is available to take place under the licence that the Council has granted for itself. We were told that this was now discontinued for all but community events. My democracy deficit argument applies here too. Even community events can cause distress to neighbouring residents but only in an extremely small number of cases. But the decision rests with officers and not with elected members.

My recommendations are:

- 1. that officers be required to come up with a mechanism for events which do not fall within Planning or Licensing, to have the option in exceptional cases to be decided by members; and**
- 2. that only community events should be allowed to operate under the Council's alcohol licence but that members should be made aware of such cases and should have the right to call in for member decision as in recommendation 1.**