



SCRUTINY TASK GROUP REPORT

OCTOBER 2012

EVENT SUBMISSIONS

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The '2010-2015 Corporate Strategy: 2011-12 action plan' includes the objective 'Arts and culture are used to strengthen communities, strengthen the economy and enhance and protect our environment'.
- 1.2 At the Council meeting on 24 February 2012 a number of individuals and organisations expressed their unease at a 'major' event being proposed in Cheltenham.
- 1.3 The Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted that there was no robust process in place to safeguard communities and the town's reputation from possible adverse impacts of 'major' events which did not form part of the Cheltenham Festivals programme. It was apparent that event organisers were able to submit separate applications with little or no opportunity for member or public overview.
- 1.4 The committee requested a task group develop an 'event submission form' and establish a set of criteria for early identification of 'major' events (with timescales) and develop a process by which such 'major' events would be considered by all representatives appropriate for the event being proposed.
- 1.5 This report sets out the findings and recommendations arising from the scrutiny review by the scrutiny task group.

2. MEMBERSHIP AND TERMS OF REFERENCE

2.1 Membership of the task group:-

- Councillor Penny Hall (Chair)
- Councillor Nigel Britter
- Councillor Diane Hibbert
- Councillor Anne Regan
- Councillor Diggory Seacome
- Councillor Klara Sudbury (new to the group in June 2012)
- Councillor Lloyd Surgenor (retired in May 2012)

2.2 Terms of reference

- To understand the requirement for organisers of events, which do not form part of the Cheltenham Festivals programme and which are likely to or will impact more broadly on the environment of Cheltenham, to prepare for an 'event submission'
- To recommend ways that this process could be improved to include criteria for the identification of a 'major' event and timescales
- To apply the process retrospectively to assess its effectiveness

As a consequence of discussions at the first meeting of the task group and an Officer suggestion that a safety advisory group should be established to consider events in the borough, the following item was added to the ToR;

- A long term ambition for the review is to establish a Cheltenham based 'safety advisory group'.

3. WHAT DID WE DO?

3.1 The task group met on 4 occasions and spoke to a range of people involved with events in the council:-

- Trevor Gladding, Community Protection Team Leader
- Louis Krog, Business Support & Licensing Team Leader
- Owen Parry, Integrated Transport & Parking Manager
- Adam Reynolds, Green Space Development Manager
- Jeremy Williamson, Managing Director (Cheltenham Development Task Force)
- Grahame Lewis, Executive Director and sponsor of the task group

Officers were asked about their individual and/or service area role in relation to event applications at present and assisted members in the development of draft documents which would support new arrangements which it was hoped would result in a more effective and transparent process for event organisers, officers, councillors and member of the public.

3.2 Research into the event submission process at other authorities was undertaken.

3.3 Officers were tasked with speaking to representatives from partner agencies on behalf of the task group;

- Gloucestershire Police Authority
- Gloucestershire Fire & Rescue
- Gloucestershire Ambulance Service
- Gloucestershire County Council or Highways

(At the time of writing this report, this consultation had not been completed but officers will make the appropriate contact with these agencies before the report goes to Cabinet so that their responses can be included).

- 3.4 Members expressed thanks to members of the public who had welcomed this piece of work by scrutiny and those who had submitted information regarding the management of events at other authorities.
- 3.5 Members would like to thank all of the officers who attended meetings and contributed to the review and also thank those officers who provided support to the work of the group.

4. OUR FINDINGS

- 4.1 Cheltenham Borough Council has a legislative responsibility in respect of licensing public events and as such has a democratic public accountability. The Licensing Act 2003 has meant many smaller events can take place through applying for a Temporary Events Notice although larger events still require licensing. Applications are normally administered by officers in accordance with the statutory provisions but will be referred to a licensing sub-committee if relevant objections are received from statutory responsible authorities or interested parties.
- 4.2 Public and community events may be 'one-off' and may take place in venues such as local parks and gardens. There is at present a 'parks events application form' which requires special event organisers to submit detailed information about their event in the form of an event plan, risk assessments, public liability insurance and where necessary, signpost event organisers to other Council departments or statutory bodies such as the police or licensing. Once these elements of the event application have been checked off then the council will enter into a Land Use Agreement with the organiser consenting to the use of green space subject to detailed conditions including the restoration of damage to Council land or property caused by the event. A land hire fee is also applied and legal fee where a bespoke agreement is required.
- 4.3 Environmental Health Services are consulted when either a licensing or park event application form is received which identifies event activities that could result in noise or the potential cause of public nuisance.
- 4.4 Submissions under the legislation covering temporary events which have an impact on the streetscape and highways are dealt with by the Integrated Transport and Parking Manager and his team and applications received are generally part of an event being held in one or more designated area (parks, gardens and event venues). Interactions with event organisers are about enabling temporary events such as a parade or road closure and there is liaison between the highways authority, the police, event organisers and other key partners at all times.
- 4.5 A number of other authorities, including Gloucester City Council, had established Safety Advisory Groups, also known as Operational Management Groups or Events Advisory Groups as a tool in planning the safety of community events and other similar public mass gatherings and were recognised as good practice. A number of these groups were able to make recommendations to the relevant decision making Committee or Officer. This is the link to the relevant pages on

the Gloucester City Council website: [Gloucester City - organising an event](#)

5. WHAT OPTIONS DID WE CONSIDER?

5.1 Take no action

Members felt that to take no action was not an acceptable option. All Members could recount instances whereby event applications had been received and approved by the Council unbeknownst to ward councillors until constituents had voiced concerns following receipt of marketing material for said event. Such instances had disconcerted councillors and members of the public.

5.2 Adopt the event submission form and guidance notes

The event submission form would negate the need for separate applications (though subsequent applications would be required for particular aspects of an event). On receipt of an event submission form all relevant officers, councillors and partner agencies would be aware of a proposed event within the Borough. The guidance notes were developed to guide event organisers through the process and it is envisaged that this would be used to create an electronic version on the council's website. Whilst this option was considered to be an improvement to the current process, members had residual concerns that 'major' events should be discussed collectively to address any concerns and minimise any adverse impacts.

5.3 Adopt the event submission form and guidance notes and establish an Events Consultative Group (ECG)

This option was the preferred option of members of the task group who were of the opinion that this approach would be beneficial to all concerned (event organisers, officers, councillors, partner agencies and local communities). The reason for setting up this group was that it could for the first time look at a whole event and its impact on the town. From that position it would be appropriate for the group to form an overall opinion and for this to be taken into account moving forward.

Protocols were drafted based on those produced by other authorities and proposed core membership would comprise of senior officers (or their representatives) drawn from;

Cheltenham Borough Council

- Licensing department
- Parks department
- Environmental Health
- Building Control
- Health & Safety
- Transport

And other agencies depending on the nature of the event

- Gloucestershire Constabulary
- Gloucestershire Ambulance Service
- Gloucestershire Fire & Safety

Along with

- The Licence holder and/or event organiser and
- Ward councillors

Officers from service areas within the council could not support the protocols which they deemed to be an unnecessary duplication of processes already in operation. The officers were tasked with drafting a Terms of Reference which was subsequently amended by a Principal Solicitor for the council, resulting in a group similar in nature to a group at Tewkesbury Borough Council. Whilst members approved the revised Terms of Reference, a number of members voiced concerns that the group had lost all ability to influence decisions as a result of being unable to make any recommendations.

6. CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 It is considered by the members of the Event Submission scrutiny task group that the appropriate option for the council is the adoption of the event submission form and guidance notes and that an Events Consultative Group be established.
- 6.2 Members are satisfied that the achieved ToR and guidance notes will go some way to raising awareness of events and timely liaison with event organisers.
- 6.3 A particular concern of the task group is that through the loss of the protocols, roles and responsibilities for the ECG are no longer defined. Members concluded that these needed to be clearly defined and that this matter should be taken forward as part of recommendation 2.
- 6.4 Members feel strongly that this process could be enhanced by having an ECG with more 'teeth' and influence.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 The Events Submission scrutiny task group therefore recommends that Cabinet;
- 1. Adopts the event submission form and guidance note**
 - 2. Establish an Events Consultative Group and adopt the Terms of Reference**
 - 3. Consider following the example set by other authorities and enable the Events Consultative Group to make representations to the relevant decision making Committee or relevant officers within the Council's approved Scheme of Delegation.**

8. PROGRESSING THE SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 Assuming that the recommendations are accepted the task group suggests that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, in 12 months, review;

- How often the form has been used;
- Evidence that there has been improved public confidence in the council's transparency in relation to the consideration of proposed events;
- Councillors satisfaction that they are being made more aware of proposed events impacting their ward at an early stage;
- Feedback that Officer's recognise the benefits of the process.

9. APPENDICES

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| Appendix 1 | - | Events Consultative Group – Terms of Reference |
| Appendix 2 | - | Event submission form |
| Appendix 3 | - | Events submission guidance and flowchart |