



Scrutiny Panel

Item
12

21 October 2014

Report of	Head of Community Services	Author	Cassandra Clements ☎ 282918
Title	Review of Events of Castle Park		
Wards affected	Castle (indirect affect on all wards)		

The Panel is invited to review the Council's Policy on Events in Castle Park

1. Action required

- 1.1 The Panel is asked to consider and comment on the Council's Policy on Events in Castle Park

2. Reason for scrutiny

- 2.1 The panel have asked to understand the decision to withdraw the venue hire for the I AM Music Festival. And further to understand the strategy behind event planning and management for events within the Caste Park.

3. Background information

3.1 The 'I Am Music' Group and Festival

The 'I Am Music' group's event summary stated:

"The lamMusic Festival is a ticketed one day music festival held in Lower Castle Park, featuring local bands and artists during the day and some more higher profile well known performers during the evening.

The lamMusic Festival is largely about getting the community actively involved through performing at the event, volunteering and of course watching the event. As a community organisation, we are interested in bringing people together and raising awareness on issues that affect our community and people we work with - so 5% of every ticket sale goes to our nominated charity BeatBullying."

The festival was linked with 'Beat Bullying' and 'Only Cowards Carry' for its charitable support. There were three main members of the group that attended meeting with the Safety Advisory Group consistently through the process. They made it clear that this festival was for young people, families and with a clear anti-bullying and anti-knife crime message.

4. Safety Advisory Group (SAG) input

- 4.1.1 SAGs are usually, but not exclusively, co-ordinated by a local authority (LA) and made up of representatives from the LA, emergency services and other relevant bodies. They meet at regular intervals, or when necessary, to review event applications and advise on public safety.

SAG's do not have legal powers or responsibilities and are not empowered to approve or prohibit events from taking place. They provide independent advice to event organisers, who retain the legal responsibility for ensuring a safe event. (Individual representatives of organisations forming the SAG may have powers to require event organisers to comply with their legal obligations.)

The SAG advise event organisers of the outcome of their assessment of the event application. If any relevant subject has not been considered, eg fire or health and safety, it is made clear to the organiser at the same time.

It can be difficult to strike the right balance in deciding which events should be considered by a SAG. The guiding principle is that events presenting a significant public safety risk (whether in terms of numbers of people attending, or the nature of the event and/or the challenge of the environment) should be considered. However, small events like village fetes, where large numbers are not expected and/or the event is routine in relation to the activity normally carried out, need not go to a SAG.

4.1.2 The I Am Music Group had been working with Castle Park Staff and given a list of documents required in order to agree such a booking with the Park. A member of the Castle Park team sits on the SAG and due to the size of the event raised it as an agenda item.

The group first attended the SAG on 11th December 2013 and presented their first draft, the following points were raised with them:

- Police to liaise with the Safety Officer outside of the meeting regarding the plan
- a more detailed occupancy capacity calculation was required
- CBC to send the Safety Officer a copy of Colchester's Emergency Plan
- Sight of the Traffic Management Plan is required

The groups attended again on 13th March 2014. They presented an event management plan and a number of concerns were raised with them regarding:

- A light and unspecific Medical Plan
- inappropriate drop off points and the affect on the wider road network
- drug use – drugs policy was inconsistent and no appropriate searching or disposal facilities
- timings for the event were doubted
- the use of the Upper slopes and how crowd control would be managed
- the lack of a 'missing children' policy

4.1.3 The group then attended the SAG on 19th June 2014. Most of the above points had been covered or worked on, and further points arose due to the event changing shape:

- drug use was still an issue
- evacuation procedures had changed as the Upper slopes were no longer going to be used in the same way
- names of acts playing still needed passing to Police
- confirmation of ticket sales were asked for but not available

4.1.4 Local officers from Essex Police until this point had been working with the group outside of the meeting to help them progress their actions. Shortly after this SAG the Tactical Policing Team for Essex Police liaised with local officers due to the size of the event. They called a meeting with the organisers on 9th July 2014 due to the lack of confidence in the event plan that was currently circulating. The Community Zone Group Manager was invited to this meeting to represent the CBC & SAG.

This meeting was held in Colchester Police Station and lasted approximately 4 hours. The whole plan was spoken about in depth. The Police gave an indicative Policing cost of over £20k but said that this was likely to change given that the event plan clearly was not complete. Some points were completed at the meeting; however a 26 point action plan was drawn up as a result of that meeting (see Appendix One). The Head of Service at this point was told as it became clear that there was a problem with the organisation of this large event.

It is prudent at this stage to point out that at each meeting the event structure changed a little thus raising more questions.

It is also fair to state that all agencies were giving unprecedented amounts of time to the organisers of this group to help get the event on track. Everyone believed that this would be a great event for Colchester and so worked hard to give as much input as possible.

- 4.1.5** Shortly after this meeting the Police stated they were not confident in the plan and how light it was on real detail. It was agreed to call an extraordinary SAG on Friday 18th July 2014 so that the organisers could answer all points and would have access to all relevant agencies. We agreed that at the SAG meeting a decision would be taken on the future of the event.

The 18th July 2014 SAG went ahead and two thirds of the points previously raised had been completed.

To mitigate the majority of the local Highway issues Colchester Borough Council agreed to undertake this piece of work free and Essex Highways agreed to give emergency authorisation for us to do this. The organisers still needed to follow the usual procedures as they could not give, at the meeting, a plan on what was needed on the highway.

The Police stated that at this point for them to feel this was a safe event they would have to provide substantial Policing resource and a quote was given on over £30,000. However, the Acting Superintendant stated that she had managed to negotiate with her Gold Commander to absorb the majority of the resource implications and had got the bill down to just under £11,000. The organisers were given until the end of the day to get the information requested circulated and until the end of Tuesday 22nd to pay the policing bill. The SAG agreed that without these points in place the event could not go ahead. This meeting lasted 4 ½ hours. Again the Head of Service was briefed following this meeting.

- 4.1.6** On Monday 21st the organisers requested an emergency meeting with Essex Police and this was accommodated at the Tactical Policing HQ in Boreham at 18.00hrs that evening. Again, the Community Zone Group Manager was invited to represent the CBC & SAG.

This meeting was attended by 2 of the organisers and their Father. Essentially they wanted to meet as they said they could not afford to pay the Police bill as they had spent all the money raised so far. We took this opportunity to reiterate points that had not been covered off yet. Particularly that the insurance information provided needed more clarification. This meeting lasted 2 ½ hrs. Following this meeting the Head of Operational Services was briefed as the Head of Community Services was now on annual leave.

- 4.1.7** On Tuesday 22nd July, the Police called one of the organisers into the local station to provide hard copies of the insurance documentation. This was because the scanned copy sent clearly had parts covered up. This finally arrived after 15.00pm that day and ended with the Police having to get confirmation direct from the Insurers on the status of the policy. The Insurance company were unable to answer immediately and took over 2hrs to come back to Essex Police to state that the event was covered.

At this point we had the two major issues covered and good progress on most others.

During Wednesday 23rd July more progress was made on the Highway issues, the Ambulance issues and a number of the remaining points. However during this day we started to see press releases of bands pulling out. The Head of Service was updated during the day.

4.2 The decision to withdraw the event

On Thursday 24th July the Community Zones Group Manager was contacted by Essex Police to state that they had received intelligence on a number of major issues and were requesting the organisers meet them urgently. The organisers were not available until 16.30pm that day as they were in Bury St Edmonds securing a loan from a Community Bank.

At that meeting it was clear that the Police, either directly or via the Safety Officer for the event, had received information that put the event back into an unsafe position. All these points are covered below:

- 1) *no evidence of security / safety fencing secured*: the Security Officer stated that the original quote he had obtained from the company quoted in the event plan had not been followed up. Organisers stated that this was booked but could not give evidence of this. This in turn meant that the stage could not be assembled.
- 2) *no evidence of emergency lighting secured*: the Security Officer stated that the original quote he had obtained from the company quoted in the event plan had not been followed up. Organisers stated that this was booked but could not give evidence of this.
- 3) *no evidence of toilets being booked*: the Security Officer called the company stated in the event plan who said they had not made a booking with them. At the meeting they stated that they were using a different company as they forgot to follow this up, but could not provide evidence of this
- 4) *security firm stating they had not been paid*: the Safety Officer received a call that day stating they had only been paid 50% and would not turn up unless their bill was paid. The organisers stated that this was the contract they had with them but no evidence could be given to corroborate this.
- 5) *'Silk Road' had become funders*: this would significantly change the 'Threat Assessment' of the event that Essex Police undertake. The organisers were asked to clarify this arrangement to which they stated there was no financial commitment from 'Silk Road' to the event; this was contrary to the intelligence received by Essex Police.
- 6) *'Silk Road' had 3000 tickets to give away free*: the Safety Officer was made aware of this. The organisers were asked to clarify this arrangement to which they stated that they had only given Silk Road 100 tickets. Essex Police spoke to the Designated Premises Supervisor at this Licensed premises who confirmed they had 3000 tickets available.
- 7) *No amnesty bins were secured*: the safety Officer received a call from the charity Only Cowards Carry to say that they could not hold the booking for amnesty bins any longer as they had not been contacted at all about it. Therefore no provision was available which undermined the Drugs Policy.
- 8) *No ability to give an accurate figure of ticket sales*: at the meeting they could not tell us how many had been sold, nor how many had been printed.
- 9) *The Park and Ride transport was not sufficient*: the Safety Officer had secured two double decker buses but this was not followed up in time. Therefore one minibus and one coach had been ordered but it would take a considerable amount of time to move the amount of people likely to use the operation.
- 10) *No automated ticket software in place*: the Safety Officer advised that whilst software had been sourced, he was told that they could work it so would not use it.

- 11) *Sound check due on 25/07/14*: this could not take place due to the stage not being able to go up.
- 12) *Three acts pulled out sure to non-payment*: the organisers stated this was not due to payment issues but that the music company had not followed their contract. No evidence was available to substantiate this.
- 13) *No back up PA system*: no evidence was available that should there be a failure that alternatives are in place. This would be the main way of communicating any issues to the crowd.

It was after 2 hours of discussion that the Police stated that this would not be a safe event from a crime and disorder perspective.

Given this decision from the police the Community Zones Group Manager then called the Head of Operational Services and briefed him on the situation. A recommendation to withdraw the venue was made and this was agreed. This was later further agreed by the Chief Operating Officer for Colchester Borough Council. This decision was followed up in writing to the CEO of I Am Music group (see Appendix 2).

4.3 Lessons learned and summary actions

All partners in the Safety Advisory Group have had time to reflect on this event and a number of thoughts and actions have been agreed:

- to ensure that all SAG's work in a consistent way across Essex, with written recommendations and consequences clearly detailed
- a central database to record organiser details hiring CBC venues to be created for the ability to share any intelligence
- for Castle Park venue hire, to directly influence the appropriate size of an event dependant on experience of the organisers
- for the SAG to call upon the Tactical Policing Team if it feels an event warrants their attention
- For SAG's to receive training from Essex Police to help advise future events
- For the SAG to compile a Guide for Organisers on how to put on safe events, to include templates, tips and links to helpful organisations

4.4 Other large scale events in Castle Park

Castle Park is a fantastic venue with a licence to hold up to 9999 people at one event.

Other large scale and successful events are:

- King Cole's Kittens Firework Display
- Party In the Park (Abba, Queen)
- Colchester Cricket Festival
- Colchester Food & Drink Festival
- Oyster Feast
- Colchester Carnival
- Colchester Free Festival
- Race For Life

These events are mostly annual and have proven successful in attracting visitors to our Park. These events help us achieve the objectives set out in the Events Policy for Castle Park (covered in section 7 of this report).

The above list is a mix of both commercial and charity events with the former helping the Council achieve its income target for Castle Park.

4.5 Castle Park Events Policy and Conditions of Hire

4.5.1 The Castle park Events Policy is in place to provide a clear framework for the consideration, programming and operation of a variety of events in parks and open space to enable a wide range of sporting, recreational, cultural, social and educational opportunities, which enhance the quality of life and address the priorities for action set out in the Council's Strategic Plan (see appendix three).

It gives clear objectives to provide outcomes based on the Council's Strategic Plan and further 5 categories in which events may fall into.

It further gives clear direction on events permitted in the park, exclusions and how the programme is managed.

4.5.2 The Conditions of Hire document clearly states what is expected from Hirers and the Council's obligations to Hirers.

In the case of the 'I Am Music' festival, the decision to withdraw the venue was taken in accordance with section 4.2.

4.6 Summary

This report sought to clarify the circumstances relating to the 'I Am Music' Festival. The lessons learnt and subsequent actions seek to fill gaps uncovered by this event's journey. The panel should be reassured further that the actions taken are supported by a multi-agency partnership through the Safety Advisory Group and so each agency can learn and grow from this process.

This report further looked to highlight the policy and conditions at the forefront of the event booking process. Any changes to these must be proportionate and should not as a result exclude organisers from booking with the Council in the future.

5. Strategic Plan references

5.1 This report links to the [Strategic Plan 2012-15](#) priority area – **Leading our Communities**.

6. Consultation

Consultation with the Safety Advisory Group representatives has taken place throughout this period as well as regarding this report. Further, The Portfolio Holder and Senior Managers have been consulted with.

7. Publicity considerations

This situation was covered significantly by the local and county press, and therefore is likely to be of interest due to the content and detail in this report.

8. Financial implications

There are no financial implications identified.

9. Equality, Diversity and Human Rights implications

The Equality Impact Assessment for Castle Park will be provided in advance of the meeting.

10. Community Safety implications

Community safety implications were integral to the decision taken within this report. No further implications have been identified.

11. Health and Safety implications

Community safety implications were integral to the decision taken within this report. No further implications have been identified.

12. Risk Management implications

Risk implications were again a crucial part of this process and the debriefing and have been covered in section 4.3 of this report.

Background Papers

Appendix 1 – Action Plan

Appendix 2 – Decision Letter

Appendix 3 – Events Policy

Appendix 4 – Conditions of Hire