

# RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO POLICY & FINANCE COMMITTEE

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Agenda Item No.

meeting date: TUESDAY 29 MARCH 2011  
title: REVIEW OF EVENT SAFETY ADVISORY GROUP  
submitted by: CHIEF EXECUTIVE  
principal author: JAMES RUSSELL, HEAD OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

## 1 PURPOSE

1.1 To report recent events and review the work of the Council's 'Event Safety Advisory Group' and review the Council's 'Safer Events Policy' for use within the Borough.

1.2 Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities

- Council Ambitions – to help make peoples' lives safer and healthier.
- Community Objectives – Ribble Valley will be an area with exceptional environment and quality of life for all; sustained by vital and vibrant market towns and villages acting as thriving service centres meeting the needs of residents, businesses and visitors; and to protect and enhance the existing environmental quality of our area;
- Corporate Priorities – Provide quality services efficiently & effectively.
- Other Considerations – the review of the workings of the Event Safety Advisory Group is important to ensure understanding of the important work undertaken by this group and the joined up multi agency approach to dealing with large outdoor events and ensuring their effective control within the Borough.

## 2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Following the introduction of the Licensing Act 2003 and the transfer of licensing responsibility to the Council in November 2005, a number of significant events took place during the summer of 2006, which highlighted the need for a multi agency approach to be established to deal with these events in a consistent and uniform way.

2.2 In addition, the police also expressed their concerns regarding inconsistency with dealing with events and the proliferation and growth of events, including several Sunday markets being held along the A59 corridor, the lack of effective traffic management and associated risk of 'high speed' traffic accidents.

2.3 Following the success of the multi agency approach dealing with the organisation and operation of the Royal Lancashire Agricultural Show (RLAS) whilst it was held in Ribble Valley, it was decided to adopt, formalise and update the process to deal with the trend of 'a growing number of large events' being held within the Borough.

2.4 A Safer Events Policy was subsequently prepared, including being circulated to all parties concerned (including event organisers) and was considered and adopted by this Committee in June 2007 and reviewed in 2008 after 12 months. As a result, the Event Safety Advisory Group was established as a simple and co-ordinated 'single point of contact' (SPOC) for event organisers to work with.

2.5 During the past 5 years a significant number of events have subsequently been identified which take place within the Borough and have necessitated the rolling out of the Council's Safer Events policy. Last year, some 80 significant outdoor events took place over a period of 100 days. Of these, only 20 receive a visit, normally when new or where there is a history of concerns. Most events are complementary of the considerable support and guidance received.

### 3 ISSUES

3.1 Since the Policy was adopted, the Event Safety Advisory Group (ESAG) has been working hard advising, supporting and working with event organisers in a consistent manner, with the purpose of achieving the Council's aim of 'safe, considerate and successful' events, particularly ensuring 'public safety' of those attending/participating whilst moderating the impact of the activities on local communities.

3.2 Unfortunately, during this time, there have been a few 'highly public' challenges and criticisms of the approach and work of the Event Safety Advisory Group, potentially fuelled by the 'Young Report - Common Sense Common Safety' and the critical media/public perception of 'Health & Safety' requirements being prohibitive and not being applied in a proportionate manner 'to risk'. Also, there have been several allegations of officers threatening to prohibit events, which is 'refuted'. When analysed, local examples were often unfounded being based on misinterpretation or miss-information. However, a formal complaint was heard in November last year, when the panel recommended that;

- The Chief Executive present a report to this Committee of the review of duties of ESAG and procedures, roles and powers of the Councils officers and its representatives;

3.3 In response, a detailed review was undertaken immediately by the Chief Executive, Director of Development Services, Legal Services Manager, Environmental Health Manager and the Council's Emergency Planning Officer as 'Chair' of ESAG, which recognised and concluded the following;

- That ESAG has broadly been successful and has an important and ongoing role to co-ordinate multi-agency response and resources to deal with large events;
- That ESAG is there to provide 'advice & guidance' to ensure events take place successfully and safely. It is clear that there is a perception that 'at times' ESAG has been seen as potentially 'intimidating, overzealous and threatening' to event organisers and volunteers;
- That the event organisers remain ultimately responsible for event planning, and health & safety including public safety;
- That the local Authority (environmental health) is the enforcing authority for work activities where the main activity includes cultural, entertainment or sporting activities;
- That the local authority has a duty to enforce the relevant statutory provisions to ensure the health, safety and welfare of employees, members of the public and any other person affected by a work activity. This includes outdoor public events including the erection and dismantling of any structures and equipment used in the event.

3.4 However, 'not to be complacent' and 'to seek continuous improvement'. It is recognised that some improvements are needed and can be made to improve the operation, perception and reputation of both ESAG, and by association the Council, by encouraging a better understanding by all parties of what is required and how to achieve it. The following recommendations are therefore suggested:

- Remind everyone the main role of ESAG is to work with event organisers to ensure events take place safely and ensure public protection;
- Produce general information sheet to provide to each event organiser to explain process and purpose

To aid this : -

- To introduce a standard 'event evaluation' sheet to assess each event consistently and establish key facts; size of event, which legislation applicable, key dates, lead agency (may not be RVBC but police, highways), evaluate 'associated risk' etc;
- Reduce reliance upon external consultant and involve the Council's Corporate Health & Safety Advisor;
- Be mindful to avoid becoming too involved as event organisers remain ultimately responsible for event planning, health & safety including public safety must remain with event organiser;
- Ensure the approach by ESAG is positive and encouraging where possible with the emphasis on advisory and supportive roles;
- Ensure that all agencies involved in ESAG take responsibility for decisions and associated communication.

3.5 Since the review, two documents have been published, namely the Governments 'Young Report' and a general framework recommended by the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH) in their report 'Safety Advisory Groups and Event Planning' 'Supporting the environmental health contribution' which indicate that the model, role and operation of ESAG is generally in line with the recommended approaches.

## 4 RISK ASSESSMENT

4.1 The approval of this report may have the following implications

- Resources – None. (It is anticipated that the adoption of these recommendations will improve the efficiency of dealing with future events);
- Technical, Environmental and Legal – there are considered to be no technical, environmental or legal implications.
- Political and Reputation – The implementation of these recommendations should improve inter agency working and understanding and thereby achieve a more transparent and consistent approach when dealing with large scale events within the Borough and ensure greater confidence and understanding of the workings of ESAG by members.

## 5 RECOMMENDED THAT COMMITTEE

5.1 Note the report.

5.2 Approve the recommendations for implementation as set out in paragraph 3.4.

## CHIEF EXECUTIVE

For further information please ask for James Russell, 01200 414466 or Chris Shuttleworth on 414510.

## BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. 'Common Sense Common Safety' – Report by Lord Young of Graffham – 'Wide review of the operation of Health & Safety Laws and the growth of the compensation culture'.
2. CIEH Safety Advisory Groups and Event Planning – 'Supporting the environmental health contribution'

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