

Management of Events in West Suffolk

Report No:	OAS/WS/20/001	
Report to and date:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee	9 January 2019
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Joanna Rayner Cabinet Member for Leisure, Culture and Community Hubs Tel: 01284 750366 Email: joanna.rayner@westsuffolk.gov.uk	
Lead officer:	Damien Parker Leisure and Cultural Services Manager Tel: 01284 757090 Email: Damien.parker@westsuffolk.gov.uk	

Decisions Plan: N/A

Wards impacted: All Wards

Recommendations: **Having considered this report and appendices setting out how events are managed in West Suffolk's parks and open spaces the Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to:**

- 1. Note the number and scale of events held in West Suffolk parks each year and the low number of complaints received compared with the public support for them;**
- 2. Note the terms and conditions and relevant legal frameworks placed on event organisers and the Council's arrangements for enforcement; and**

**Recommendations
Continued:**

- 3. Make recommendations to the Portfolio Holder for Leisure, Culture and Community Hubs to ensure the continuation of these events and that the terms and conditions remain fit for purpose.**

1. Scope of the Report

Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee have requested a report on the Management of Events in West Suffolk's Parks and Public Open Spaces covering:

- Number/type of Events held per year
- Terms and Conditions Placed on Event Organisers
- Legal Frameworks and Conditions (national)
- How does the Council ensure Event Organisers comply with the conditions placed on them, and how is this then enforced

2. Background

- 2.1 West Suffolk Council's parks and public open spaces host a range of outdoor events and activities each year. Around 130 events have been held this year, some of which are held over several days, the combined visitor numbers associated with these events are in the region of 42,000 people (figure excludes the Christmas fayre). **Appendix A** provides a list of events that have taken place in 2019. These events are diverse in nature and as the owner of the land on which these activities take place the Council has a duty of care to ensure that they are appropriately managed.
- 2.2 Most of the events which take place in our parks, excluding the Christmas Fayre, are now organised by third parties (private/charitable organisations). To ensure that that the Council meets its duty of care responsibilities we have developed an online application process which all event organisers are required to complete.
Link: <https://www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/leisure/venuesandopenspacesforhire.cfm>
The current terms and conditions of hire are included in the Council's web page and are included as **Appendix B**. Whilst the Council has a duty of care (as set out in the terms and conditions) the arrangement means that balance of risk to deliver the events rests with the third-party organiser.
- 2.3 The managerial Health and Safety process and protocols in place for event management has been reviewed and evolved over the years in line with best practice and national guidance. The Council has a dedicated section in its Health and Safety Policy devoted to event safety, see below link:
https://www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/Council/Policies_Strategies_and_Plans/upload/Health-and-Safety-Policy-Annex-R-Event-Safety-Guide-2019.pdf
- 2.4 Because of its town centre location, the Abbey Gardens is a popular Council owned outdoor event venue. The Abbey Gardens is a scheduled monument site and has residential dwellings in and around it. In November 2011 St Edmundsbury Borough Council formally adopted an Operational Procedure for Events in the Council's Parks, including specific conditions for the Abbey Gardens. The specific condition for the Abbey Gardens included:
- music finishes by 10:30pm
 - the total duration of amplified music played at a evening concert should be no longer than 3.5 hours over one evening (excluding intervals), with a much shorter period for sound checks

- evening concert programmes¹ should not be held on more than three separate occasions each year;
- Within any one programme of events, amplified concerts should not take place on more than three consecutive nights;
- There should be no significant noise after 11pm and before 7am, including overnight dismantling of stages and generators.

2.5 These conditions were imposed to reflect the fact that residents now live in the gardens and that the number of requests for outdoor events were on the increase. The conditions reflected what had happened in previous years (by convention) with little complaint.

3. How does the Council ensure Event Organisers comply with the conditions placed on them, and how is this then enforced?

3.1 The number of complaints about events in the Council's Parks and Public Open Spaces remains low; please refer to **Appendix C**

3.2 The degree to which the Council monitors events is determined by the scale of the event and the activities it contains. The details of the proposed event must be set out in the applicants' event plan. The plan is scrutinised by the Council's Event Officer before authority is granted for the event to take place.

3.3 Prior to authority being granted to hold an event in one of our sites the Events Officer will check on the various issues required in the event plan such as:

- Whether the event includes activities which require a specific licence (e.g. music, alcohol) and if so that the appropriate licence is in place or likely to be in granted prior to the event.
- That appropriate risk assessments are in place for the activities proposed at the event.
- That appropriate insurances are in place.
- That the appropriate certifications are in place for specific items of equipment (e.g. equipment such as lifting equipment, bouncy castle, etc).
- That the timings are appropriate.
- That the possible impacts on neighbouring residents has been considered and where appropriate mitigation measures have been considered.

3.4 Prior to events taking place a site visit is conducted to ensure that the site is fit for purpose. Dependent on the scale and type of the event the Parks team will inspect an event site prior to its opening to check that what is stated in the events plan reflects what has been installed and that there are no obvious issues of concern.

3.5 For events on West Suffolk's land attracting an audience or participants of 300 plus or where fireworks, animals or vehicle movements are involved the parks service notifies the Suffolk's Safety Advisory Group (Suffolk SAG) of the

¹ For the purposes of this procedure, a "concert programme" would constitute one single booking of the Abbey Gardens by an event organiser. This could be for one single concert or a series of concerts over more than one day (advertised collectively). For instance, a season of outdoor concerts as part of the Bury Festival would count as one programme.

forthcoming event. Suffolk SAG is co-ordinated by Suffolk County Council and made up of representatives from the Suffolk local authorities, emergency services and other relevant bodies. They meet at regular intervals, or when necessary, to review event applications. They will, where necessary, provide public safety advice and feedback on applications.

- 3.6 For the larger events the Parks team will have a staff presence on site to monitor compliance against the organisers event plan and to safeguard the Council's assets. Issues such as noise nuisance will be addressed by the environmental health team if complaints of that nature are received.
- 3.7 Following an event, a member of the Parks team will complete a duty of care report which records compliance against the event plan and whether there are any measures which could be taken to improve any future event of that nature.
- 3.8 If an event has caused significant issues of concern, then the Council may choose to impose an additional charge (in the case of damage to our property) and/or not permit future events requested by the event organiser or place more stringent conditions on future events to help mitigate the issues of concern.

4. Financial

- 4.1 The fees and charges levied by the Council for events in Parks and Open Spaces are benchmarked and reviewed annually. The current charges are available online via the following link:
<https://www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/leisure/upload/2019-Charges-and-Fees-Document-v7.pdf>
- 4.2 The income generated from events in parks and open spaces is in the region of £55,000 per annum. Even after this and other income is considered, the net cost of providing West Suffolk's parks and open spaces (including play facilities, tree's and other infrastructure) is in the region of £2.4 million per annum.

5. Alternative Options

- 5.1 **Cease hosting events** - There is no statutory requirements/dictate that this council should accommodate events in its parks and open spaces. However, this may reduce public enjoyment of our open spaces and result in a loss of income to the Council.
- 5.2 **Impose further restrictions or monitoring activity on event's** – This could limit opportunities for communities to enjoy outdoor events and or income to the Council.

6. Legal Compliance

- 6.1 There are numerous considerations which landowners need to be aware of when hosting public events on their sites, these can be summarised into three main areas:
 - HSE Guidance on running events safely

- Ensuring that where necessary licencing requirements are complied with.
- Public welfare and environmental protection

Through a combination of the Council's event application process, SAG reviews and onsite monitoring each of the above elements is considered.

6.3 **Equalities**

Public Order Act 1986 – In permitting events on its land the rights of the individual to freedom of expression must be balanced against the duty of the state to act proportionately in the interests of public safety, to prevent disorder and crime, and to protect the rights of others.

6.4 **Crime and Disorder**

The Police are informed via the Suffolk's Safety Advisory Group (Suffolk SAG) of events with an anticipated audience of 300+.

7. **Appendices**

- 7.1 **Appendix A** - Provides a list of events that took place in 2019.
Appendix B - The current terms and conditions of hire.
Appendix C - The number of complaints about events in the Council's Parks and Public Open Spaces (last three years)

8. **Background documents**

- 8.1 [Report C229 - Cabinet - Operational Procedure for Events in the Councils Parks - 23 November 2011](#)

[West Suffolk Health and Safety Policy for Events](#)