

WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE

8 SEPTEMBER 2020

Title:

Adopting a consistent approach on events during the Covid-19 pandemic

Portfolio Holders: Cllr Nick Palmer, Portfolio Holder for Operational and Enforcement Services
Cllr Liz Townsend, Portfolio Holder for Economic Development, Leisure and Dunsfold Park
Cllr Anne-Marie Rosoman, Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Safety

Head of Service: Richard Homewood, Head of Environmental and Regulatory Services

Key decision: No

Access: Public

1. Purpose and summary

1.1 To seek approval of the proposed approach for dealing with events in Waverley during the Covid-19 pandemic in order to minimise the risks of spread of infection and outbreaks in the borough.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 It is recommended that the following approach be adopted with respect to events in Waverley during the Covid-19 pandemic.
- a. That gatherings of up to 30 people be permitted in accordance with the current Government guidelines.
 - b. That gatherings of more than 30 people are only permitted if they;
 - i. are in line with the requirements of The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (England) (No. 2) Regulations 2020, which include a risk assessment demonstrating that the organiser has taken all reasonable measures to limit the risk of transmission of the coronavirus and following sector specific guidance;
 - ii have satisfactory arrangements for complying with track and trace requirements; and,
 - iii have satisfactorily complied with and signed off the Surrey checklist (see attached checklist version 4 developed by SCC Public Health), which is under regular review.
 - c. That where an event proposal is not considered to meet the requirements of The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions)

(England) (No. 2) Regulations 2020, it will be referred to Surrey County Council's Director of Public Health to consider whether the event would pose serious and imminent threat to health relating to coronavirus transmission.

- d. That in view of the likely difficulties in implementing infection mitigation and prevention measures at certain types of event that these would not generally be supported whilst the current restrictions are in place and the Covid-19 pandemic exists. Such events include bonfires, firework displays and beer festivals.
- e. That because of the rapidly changing backdrop to the pandemic and frequent changes to the legislation and guidance relating to it, the Head of Environmental and Regulatory Services be given delegated authority to amend the approach to events after consultation with the Leader, Deputy Leader and relevant Portfolio Holders.

3. Reason for the recommendation

- 3.1 Against a national backdrop of concerns about a second spike in Covid-19 infections and media reports showing that social distancing and other Covid-19 precautionary measures are not always being observed, local authorities are reporting increasing numbers of approaches from businesses and organisations wishing to hold public 'events' or 'activities' in support of the local economic recovery or community well being. The type of event ranges from street markets to bonfire celebrations, beer festivals etc.
- 3.2 There is increasing concern amongst councils and partner agencies in the Surrey Local Resilience Forum (LRF) that if these 'events' go ahead then there is a significant risk that measures put in place to ensure social distancing and other precautionary measures by the organisers may not be followed (given the evidence from activities that have already occurred elsewhere). As a consequence and in order to try to adopt a common approach across Surrey the Safety Advisory Group (SAG) Chairs have been meeting to develop a proposed policy which has been reported through the LRF Strategic Coordinating Group (SCG), which is attended by a senior officer from all of Surrey's councils.
- 3.3 It is recognised that there is a delicate balance between the desire to promote economic recovery and a 'return to normality' and the need to try to avoid a second spike or local outbreaks. Local authorities will doubtless be criticised whichever route they take. Is being criticised for not allowing activities preferable to being criticised or worse for allowing a second spike or local lockdown?
- 3.4 Whilst the SAG Chair's recommendation was for authorities to adopt a policy of not allowing any events on land under their control (with an acceptance that their may be exceptional circumstances where this was not appropriate and option 2 would apply), such a blanket ban was not considered appropriate or proportionate to the risks, given the relatively low levels of new cases in Waverley and the fact that some smaller events had taken place and had been well managed in terms of social distancing, sanitising and other infection control measures.
- 3.5 Option 2 was to allow events in accordance with the current Government laws and guidance put in place to control the risk of the transmission of Covid-19.

- 3.6 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (England) (No. 2) Regulations 2020 currently restrict gatherings being organised by certain organisations to no more than 30 people unless the gathering is in line with the conditions of The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (England) (No. 2) Regulations 2020, which require a risk assessment, and organiser to have taken all reasonable measures to limit the risk of transmission of the coronavirus taking into account the risk assessment carried out and following sector specific guidance. Further sector advice is available at www.gov.uk/coronavirus and on the Events Industry Forum website at <https://www.eventsindustryforum.co.uk/>
- 3.7 In order to assist event organisers and ensure they cover all aspects within their risk assessments and event management plans, the Surrey Local Resilience Forum has produced a checklist (see checklist version 4 developed by SCC Public Health at Annex A), which is under regular review. The intention would be to provide this to event organisers so that they can check their plans against this and sign it off as part of their application / proposal for an event. Compliance with the track and trace requirements is particularly important as the final line of defence in containing outbreaks.
- 3.8 Where the risk assessment and management plans for a proposed event are considered not to meet the necessary requirements of the Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (England) (No. 2) Regulations 2020, the proposal would be referred to the Surrey County Council Director of Public Health who has powers under The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (England) (No. 3) Regulations 2020 to issue a direction to prohibit an event going ahead if she considers it poses a significant risk of spread of infection. (Such a direction was recently issued in a London Borough adjoining Surrey for an event aiming to attract 8,000 – 10,000 people).
- 3.9 Whilst there have been some events in Waverley which have been well managed and strict measures put in place to minimise the risk of infection, there are some potential events where the sheer scale of the event in terms of numbers, the timing of the event or the involvement of alcohol for example, where circumstances would make it unlikely that safe social distancing could be practised despite the best efforts of organisers and attendees. At such events there is a significant risk of transmission, as attendees are likely to be in close contact at some point, whether they are arriving, gathering or dispersing, dancing to loud music or drinking alcohol. Events such as bonfires and firework displays in the dark, or a beer festival lasting several days would be examples of this and may be events that the council would simply rule out during the Covid-19 pandemic due to unacceptable risk.
- 3.10 A draft flow chart illustrating the process for assessing event risk assessments against the checklist is attached as Annexe B.
- 3.11 It is therefore proposed that the following approach be adopted:
- a. That gatherings of up to 30 people be permitted in accordance with the current Government guidelines.
 - b. That gatherings of more than 30 people are only permitted if they;
 - i. are in line with the requirements of The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (England) (No. 2) Regulations 2020, which include a risk

- assessment demonstrating that the organiser has taken all reasonable measures to limit the risk of transmission of the coronavirus and following sector specific guidance;
- ii have satisfactory arrangements for complying with track and trace requirements; and,
 - iii have satisfactorily complied with and signed off the Surrey checklist (see attached checklist version 4 developed by SCC Public Health), which is under regular review.
- c. That where an event proposal is not considered to meet the requirements of The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (England) (No. 2) Regulations 2020, it will be referred to Surrey County Council's Director of Public Health to consider whether the event would pose serious and imminent threat to health relating to coronavirus transmission.
- d. That in view of the likely difficulties in implementing infection mitigation and prevention measures at certain types of event that these would not be supported whilst the current restrictions are in place and the Covid-19 pandemic exists. Such events include bonfire and firework displays and beer festivals.
- e. Because of the rapidly changing backdrop to the pandemic and frequent changes to the legislation and guidance relating to it, it is also recommended that the Head of Environmental and Regulatory Services be given delegated authority to amend the approach to events after consultation with the Leader, Deputy Leader and relevant Portfolio Holders.

4. Relationship to the Corporate Strategy and Service Plan

- 4.1 This proposal responds to the Covid-19 pandemic by putting in place an approach to minimise the risk of spread of infection and protect and support Waverley's communities.

5. Implications of decision

5.1 Resource (Finance, procurement, staffing, IT)

Budget spending plan

- 5.1. There are no direct financial implications but additional staff resources may be required to support this approach to events in Waverley.

5.3 Legal

Legal advice and support may be required throughout the various stages of implementing this approach.

5.4 Equality, diversity and inclusion

In reaching this recommendation the Council has had due regard to its Public Sector Equality Duty and is satisfied that the proposal is a proportionate means of achieving this purpose of minimising the risk of spread of infection.

5.5 Climate emergency declaration

Event organisers will be encouraged to mitigate any impact on the environment by minimising carbon emissions from any catering activities and to use re-useable items wherever possible to reduce waste generation.

6. Consultation and engagement

- 6.1 Officers have been working with colleagues from boroughs and districts across Surrey and with Surrey County Council to try to adopt a consistent approach across the county.
- 6.2 Engagement with Town and Parish Councils has also commenced inviting them to adopt this approach or feed back their views and how this approach aligns with their own plans for managing events on their land.

7. Governance journey

- 7.1 The proposals have been discussed with Portfolio Holders and Executive Members. The proposals have also been shared with Town and Parish Clerks in relation to the application of this approach to land under their control. The proposals have also been shared with the SAG Chairs Group. The Executive are asked to approve this approach to events during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Annexes:

Annexe A – Event Checklist version 4

Annexe B – Event assessment flow chart

Background Papers

There are no background papers, as defined by Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972).

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