

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

|                  |  |              |                                      |
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| TO:              | HOUSING, NEIGHBOURHOODS AND LEISURE COMMITTEE    |              |                                      |
| DATE:            | 26 NOVEMBER 2013                                 | AGENDA ITEM: | 8                                    |
| TITLE:           | READING FESTIVAL 2013                            |              |                                      |
| LEAD COUNCILLOR: | COUNCILLOR PAUL GITTINGS                         | PORTFOLIO:   | CULTURE, SPORT AND CONSUMER SERVICES |
| SERVICE:         | PLANNING, DEVELOPMENT AND REGULATORY SERVICES    | WARDS:       | BOROUGHWIDE                          |
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**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1 This report highlights the many positive outcomes of Reading Festival 2013 which took place from Friday 23 August to Sunday 25 August 2013. It also outlines the measures that can be taken to reduce complaints about noise and traffic in future years.
- 1.2 Reading Festival 2013 was considered a safe and successful event which commenced with a constructive table top exercise on the Monday prior to the event, during which realistic scenarios were used to the benefit of all present. The council chaired an onsite safety team meeting twice a day during the festival where activities held so far as well as emerging issues were reviewed. These helped to maintain safety, reduce crime and disorder and public nuisance at the event.
- 1.3 The good working relationships between council officers, emergency services and Festival Republic resulted in effective management and monitoring systems being implemented which addressed both the known hazards associated with the event and the unknown factors associated with the variation.
- 1.4 Year on year Festival Republic has invested in the infrastructure of the event and provided enhanced levels of staffing across the site. These have a benefit not only to safety but also to the customer experience of the public attending the event. Officers will seek to ensure that these well established management practices are maintained each year.

**2. RECOMMENDED ACTION**

- 2.1 That you acknowledge the continued effective partnership working between council officers, the Emergency Services and Festival Republic to ensure the safety and enjoyment of all who attended the Reading Festival.

2.1 That you endorse the proposal by officers to discuss with the festival organisers the breach of the noise limits and to put adequate measures in place to ensure full compliance in future years as is outlined in paragraph 5.5.2 below.

### 3. POLICY AND REGULATORY CONTEXT

3.1 Reading Festival is the largest organised public event held annually in the town. It involves the council providing a range of functions in line with the Culture and Leisure Strategy. It also enables the council to implement its enforcement policy to ensure compliance with applicable laws so that the event is safe for all to attend.

### 4. MAIN TOPICS

#### 4.1 Food Hygiene and Safety

4.1.1 As in previous years, Festival Republic sponsored the Al Fresco food awards to give the 147 food traders tangible incentives to improve levels of food safety. As a result, the standard of food hygiene was very high, with 70 traders awarded the maximum Food Hygiene Rating of 5. Only three traders were considered unsatisfactory. The winner of the top prize was "51 Worldwide Events" from Staines. They will receive a free pitch at next year's Festival worth approximately £8000.00. The second prize winner will receive 20% discount off the price of their pitch next year and the third prize winner will receive preferential pitch location.

#### 4.2 Touting

4.2.1 Officers used the new powers under the Reading Borough Council Act 2013 to deal with ticket touting. The area immediately around the festival site, the railway station and selected areas of the town centre were designated as no touting zones. Council and Police Officers issued 20 verbal and written warnings and two fined penalty notices (FPNs) to persons who flouted the law. Officers will discuss with the Police the possibility of introducing dispersal orders for the 2014 event.

#### 4.3 Arena expansion

4.3.1 Festival Republic were granted a major variation to the licence to extend the geographical size of the arena by 25% without any increase in number of revellers. This variation resulted in the provision of two additional music stages and an additional entrance into the arena. Officers monitored the altered crowd flows in the arena and did not witness any significant congestion except in one location. It is proposed to widen this location for the 2014 event in order to address the congestion identified.

#### 4.4 Under Age Sales

4.4.1 Trading Standards Officers, assisted by the Police, carried out test purchasing during the festival. One offsite trader who had received a written warning for selling alcohol to the test purchaser in 2012 again failed two test purchases this year. He was issued 2 FPNs. Should an application be received from this trader for the 2014 event, officers will seek to have it refused.

4.4.2 One on-site bar and two on-site supermarkets each failed a test purchase for alcohol. A further on-site supermarket failed a test purchase for cigarettes. All have received written warnings and will be monitored at the 2014 event. Festival Republic also ejected them from the festival site. In addition two off-site retailers failed test purchases for alcohol. Because the Designated Premises Supervisors actually made the

sale to the children, Thames Valley Police are considering further enforcement action against them in accordance with an enforcement protocol agreed with the Council.

#### **4.5 Noise and Other Complaints**

4.5.1 Officers dealt with 66 complaints via the 'hotline'. Half of these related to noise and the rest mainly about traffic and off-site noise, for example boats plying the river.

4.5.2 For the majority of the event there were no problems reported with the music level being monitored. However, during one of the final acts on the Saturday night the low frequency condition 4.18.7 (b) was breached over consecutive 15 minute periods. The results from the off site monitoring were fed directly back to Vanguardia and they acted upon these levels in reducing the 63Hz octave with the intention to reduce off site levels, however; it was felt more could have been done. A meeting with Festival Republic and Vanguardia has taken place to implement measures to ensure such a breach does not occur again. The measures include better integration of the conditions with the noise management plan and the inclusion of low frequency monitoring as part of the sound propagation testing.

#### **4.6 Smokefree Legislation**

4.6.1 The festival organisers did not erect "no smoking" signs in the tents, contrary to one of conditions attached to the event licence. This issue will be raised at the Safety Advisory Group debrief meeting in December 2013 with a view to ensuring full compliance in future.

#### **4.7 After event site clean up**

4.7.1 The clean up of the site which has in the past exceeded the deadline specified in the licence was completed two days ahead of schedule.

#### **4.8 Traffic and Transport**

4.8.1 Transport provision coped with arrivals for the Festival, due in part to warning people of possible disruption, particularly on the road network on Thursday and Friday for arrivals and the Monday for departures. However, with the early bird tickets, coupled with large vehicles still arriving as a part of the final site preparations on the Wednesday, the roads were more congested than usual. Adjustments were made this year to accommodate this extra traffic on the Wednesday and we will continue to refine this approach.

4.8.2 The greatest impact on both the road network and public transport occurs on the Monday due to the high volume of departures within a short period of time. This year departures had the added challenge of the Network Rail works in and around Reading train station. Services to the South of Reading were not stopping at the main railway station, using Reading West instead. This resulted in public transport (bus) links being provided between the main railway station and Reading West, exerting more pressure to an already busy road network.

4.8.3 With the main car parks now at Mapledurham (White) and Kings Meadow (Green) and no visitor parking on the site itself, we have relaxed restrictions around Cow Lane and this year the route was left completely open to through traffic, whereas previously, the road was closed in one direction. As a part of our planning for the next event, our focus of attention will be on the Monday departures to try and balance out the impact, particularly for residents who wish to come into town and use the facilities that Reading has to offer on a Bank Holiday.

## **4.9 Crime and Arrests**

4.9.1 During Reading Festival 2013, Thames Valley Police received a total of 197 reported crimes of which 157 were recorded thefts. There were 52 arrests.

4.9.2 Crime was up a third from last year, but 2012 saw a very low level of offending. Theft from tents and from the person, i.e. pick-pocketing, dominated the crime types. Whilst numbers were up on last year they were still relatively low, especially given the generally good weather. There were no confirmed sex crimes on site this year, although one assault was reported near to the site as the victim was waiting for a taxi.

## **5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS**

5.1 Reading Festival attracts national and international media coverage. The presence of the festival contributes toward the Council's strategic aims to develop and maintain a sustainable economy and to establish Reading as a stimulating and rewarding place to live and visit.

## **6. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION**

6.1 The annual Reading Festival is attended by many local people.

6.2 Each year, event debrief meetings are held with statutory agencies and other members of the Safety Advisory Group involved in the event. A separate debrief takes place with local residents associations.

6.3 In the event that a full licence variation is applied for, a statutory consultation must occur in order to seek the views of interested parties and responsible authorities. This includes South Oxfordshire District Council and Mapledurham Parish Council where part of the festival site (White camp and Car Parks) is located.

## **7. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

7.1 Not relevant to the decision.

## **8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

8.1 The event is licensed in accordance with the Licensing Act 2003.

## **9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 The council recovers its costs associated with Reading Festival. Festival Republic pays a licence fee, pays a rent for using council land and reimburses the council for carrying out enforcement of food, environment protection, fair trading and highways laws. Festival Republic also provides accommodation, mobile radio communication and refreshments for council staff working on site.

9.2 The most recent assessment of the financial benefits to Reading was carried out by Baker Associates and the University of Reading in 2009. The assessment found that total gross spend associated with Reading Festival was over £31 million with more than £16 million of this spent in the Reading area.

## **10. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

10.1 None