

Report to:

AUDIT COMMITTEE

Relevant Officer:

Philp Welsh – Head of Tourism and Communication

Meeting

23 November 2023

INTERNAL AUDIT FOLLOW UP - EVENT MANAGEMENT

1.0 Purpose of the report:

1.1 To consider a progress report on the recommendations made in the internal audit report relating to Event Management issued on the 24 November 2022.

2.0 Recommendation(s):

2.1 To consider the actions being implemented to address the audit recommendations relating to the Event Management audit.

3.0 Reasons for recommendation(s):

3.1 To enable Audit Committee to consider an update and progress report on the audit recommendations.

3.2 Is the recommendation contrary to a plan or strategy adopted or approved by the Council? No

3.3 Is the recommendation in accordance with the Council's approved budget? Yes

4.0 Other alternative options to be considered:

4.1 N/a

5.0 Council priority:

5.1 This audit impacts on the Council's organisational resilience priority.

6.0 Background information

6.1 Within the Visit Blackpool department of the Communications and Regeneration Directorate, there is an Events Team that organises a wide-ranging annual programme of public events. This includes popular and well-regarded events that are major attractions for Blackpool visitors and residents and which bring substantial income into the resort. These include major events such as the Blackpool Air Show, the Illuminations Switch On, the World Fireworks Championship, Ride the Lights and Armed Forces Week.

The VisitBlackpool Events Team consists of an Event Manager and an Event Assistant, reporting to the Head of Tourism and Communications. The delivery of the programme for some of these VisitBlackpool-organised events is contracted out to external organisations, for example, to deliver the Illuminations Switch On event.

The Events Team works with a number of external event organisers of public outside events to provide advice to them and to encourage them to bring events to Blackpool. There is a wide range of public charity and community events where the Events Team also provides advice to event organisers.

In addition, some public events are held on land managed by Estates and also by Leisure and Parks Services and which have separate application processes to those managed by the Visit Blackpool Events Team and to each other.

6.2 The scope and assurance statement of the audit was as follows:

Scope

The scope of the audit included:

- How internal and external co-ordination, procedures and communications are used to manage risks around events and whether arrangements are appropriately documented; and
- Progress made against the actions agreed to address the recommendations made in our previous audit.

Assurance Statement

A number of areas of good practice were identified, for example in relation to attracting and arranging popular events in Blackpool and the operation of the Safety Advisory Group. Therefore, we consider that the controls in place in relation to events management arrangements are currently adequate.

There are a number of areas where improvements can be made to further develop formal event co-ordination, written procedures and communication, and we have therefore made a number of recommendations to strengthen the approach in these areas.

6.3 Does the information submitted include any exempt information? No

7.0 List of Appendices:

7.1 Appendix 3(a): Internal Audit Recommendations and Agreed Actions.

8.0 Financial considerations:

8.1 The controls being implemented will be done so within current budget constraints.

9.0 Legal considerations:

9.1 Risks need to be effectively managed in order to comply with relevant legislation.

10.0 Risk management considerations:

10.1 To enable the Audit Committee to gain assurance that risks are being effectively managed.

11.0 Equalities considerations and the impact of this decision for our children and young People:

11.1 Where equality analysis is appropriate these will have been undertaken whilst making decisions relating to the subject.

12.0 Sustainability, climate change and environmental considerations:

12.1 Any matters relating to sustainability, climate change and environmental considerations will be considered when making decisions relating to the subject.

13.0 Internal/external consultation undertaken:

13.1 The progress report has been prepared in conjunction with the relevant Head of Service and Chief Officer.

14.0 Background papers:

14.1 None.

Appendix 3(a) – Internal Audit Recommendations and Agreed Actions

Recommendation		Priority	Agreed Action	Responsible officer	Target Date	Revised Target Date for outstanding actions	Progress
R1	The Safety Advisory Group's role should be reviewed in relation to forthcoming 'Protect Duty' legislation.	2	<p>Agreed. Preparations have already been undertaken and currently known Protect Duty requirements embedded.</p> <p>The exact date of Protect Duty legislation is as yet unknown, but is anticipated to be in approximately 18 months' time, at which point further adjustments to the Safety Advisory Group's role will be implemented as required.</p>	Director of Communications and Regeneration	Initial work - completed. Further adjustments to be made as required when the full requirements of the Protect Duty are known.		<p>Protect Duty legislation has not yet come into effect. The Bill is still in its draft stages and even after it becomes an Act of Parliament it will be some time before it passes into accepted law.</p> <p>In the meantime, the Safety Advisory Group and a wider group of businesses that provide attractions receive regular briefings from the police.</p> <p>We have also carried out a live exercise using the principles we believe will come from the new Protect Duty. This exercise involved many local businesses, the local college and key public sector partners</p>

Appendix 3(a) – Internal Audit Recommendations and Agreed Actions

Recommendation		Priority	Agreed Action	Responsible officer	Target Date	Revised Target Date for outstanding actions	Progress
R2	Additional potential mechanisms for event co-ordination across the Council should be considered.	2	Agreed. The Director of Communications and Regeneration is comfortable with the mechanisms in place for Council organised events. However it is accepted that Protect Duty legislation will require the Council to provide additional advice and support to 3 rd party events. Consideration will therefore be given to how additional resource might be achieved to accommodate this, when the extent of the Protect Duty legislation is known.	Director of Communications and Regeneration	The exact date of Protect Duty legislation is as yet unknown, but is anticipated to be in approximately 18 months' time.		<p>VisitBlackpool has worked with the Emergency Planning team and the Centre for the Protection of National Infrastructure (CPNI) on Operation Rosette 2. This is an extended hostile vehicle mitigation scheme involving the national barrier asset, designed to create a more robust and safer event space [in terms of audience protection] on the Tower Festival Headland for the next five years</p> <p>We are also going out to procurement for event-specific stewards with crowd safety training a mandatory requirement</p>

Appendix 3(a) – Internal Audit Recommendations and Agreed Actions

Recommendation		Priority	Agreed Action	Responsible officer	Target Date	Revised Target Date for outstanding actions	Progress
R3	Consideration should be given to introducing a Council wide event charging policy for consistency and to provide potential additional funding.	2	Agreed. A 3 rd party pricing policy will be discussed by the end of 2022 to try and achieve consistency of approach to event charging going forward.	Director of Communications and Regeneration, Head of Property and Asset Management, Head of Community and Wellbeing Services, Head of Tourism and Communications	31 st December 2022		VisitBlackpool have aligned their rental fees for the headland with the Blackpool Council Estates rental fees.
R4	A Council wide events policy and written procedure should be developed and updated as needed to support a consistent approach to managing events risks, clarify responsibilities and support communication.	2	To be reviewed as part of the Protect Duty legislation requirements work to ensure that clear advice is available, and consistently applied.	Director of Communications and Regeneration	The exact date of Protect Duty legislation is as yet unknown, but is anticipated to be in approximately 18 months' time.		See progress notes on R1

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Recommendation		Priority	Agreed Action	Responsible officer	Target Date	Revised Target Date for outstanding actions	Progress
R5	A written understanding with the BID should be developed specifying relative responsibilities, communications and access mechanisms in relation to events in areas covered by the BID.	2	Agreed. Work has commenced on this and will be formalised by the end of February 2023.	Events Manager	28 th February 2023	March 31, 2024	VisitBlackpool have worked with the BID to produce an event application process that is consistent with the application used for events on the Tower Festival Headland. To make further progress, an agreement needs to be in place (between Blackpool Council and the BID) to enable the BID to authorise the use of Council-owned land and charge/sub-let accordingly.
R6	Consideration should be given to whether anything further can be done to ensure timeliness of event notification.	2	Agreed. Reminders regarding the timeliness of event notifications will be issued to event organisers.	Events Manager	31 st March 2023		Reminders will be sent in January along with the new rates, tramway permit application and headland access details.

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R7	Responsibilities should be clarified in relation to verifying that there is adequate insurance in place in relation to all events.	2	The responsibility for appropriate insurance for 3 rd party events lies with the event organiser. The Safety Advisory Group will be used to ensure that the organisers understand this responsibility, and that evidence of insurance is provided when requested.	Safety Advisory Group	31 st March 2023		Already implemented for VisitBlackpool authorised events
R8	Any additional events training requirements within the Council and with key partners, such as in relation to crowd safety, should be reviewed and considered.	2	Agreed. The Events Manger will review available training.	Events Manager	28 th February 2023		VisitBlackpool have partnered with other local authority event managers in Lancashire and formed a county-wide group. Combined training is sourced from the Home Office and the Emergency Planning College via this group. Courses are tailored to meet the specific needs of Local Authority event planners

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Recommendation		Priority	Agreed Action	Responsible officer	Target Date	Revised Target Date for outstanding actions	Progress
R9	A Council wide approach to event site visits and sign off processes should be developed and incorporated within an overall events policy and written procedure.	2	Agreed. The Events Manager will discuss an appropriate approach with the Head of Property and Asset Management.	Events Manager, Head of Property and Asset Management	28 th February 2023	March 31, 2024	Discussions with the Council's Estates team ongoing, but not yet concluded
R10	Any additional potential feedback mechanisms from Council services, partners and event organisers to share learning from events held should be considered.	3	Agreed. Retrospective feedback obtained via the Safety Advisory Group will be recorded and retained to assist with lessons learned.	Safety Advisory Group	31 st March 2023		Feedback/debriefing of events is now an agenda item on Safety Advisory Group meetings.