

Licensing Committee

Tuesday, 24th January, 2023

PRESENT: Councillor J Gibson in the Chair

Councillors R Downes, L Farley, B Flynn,
A Forsaith, S Hamilton, J Illingworth,
L Martin, A Smart and I Wilson

38 Appeals Against Refusal of Inspection of Documents

There were no appeals against the refusal of inspection of documents.

39 Exempt Information - Possible Exclusion of the Press and Public

The agenda did not contain any information which required the press and public to be excluded from the meeting. However, Members were advised that if they were to discuss any information which is not currently in the public domain, then at that point, the Committee would be required to resolve to enter private session. Paragraph 2 of the report "Leeds Festival 2022" set out what that information could be and Recommendation b) of the report set out the reasons why the public/press may be excluded from the meeting. (Minute 44 refers).

40 Late Items

No formal late items of business were added to the agenda, however the Committee was in receipt of supplementary information relating to agenda item 7 "Leeds Festival 2022" which contained submissions relating to traffic management and public health. The documentation had also been published to the Council's website. (Minute 44 refers).

41 Declaration of Interests

No declarations were made.

42 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Buckley, Councillor Garthwaite and Councillor Richards.

43 Minutes

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the previous meeting held 29th November 2022 be agreed as a correct record.

44 Leeds Festival 2022

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Officer, Elections and Regulatory, which provided an introduction to a de-brief on the Leeds Festival 2022 held in the grounds of Bramham Park over the Bank Holiday weekend, August 2022. Representatives of the event operator, Festival Republic Limited, and partners from the Safety Advisory Group were invited to provide the Committee with feedback on the 2022 Festival.

The Licensing Officer introduced the report and noted receipt of the supplementary information provided in respect of traffic management and public health matters.

Mr Melvin Benn, Managing Director, Jeanie Leach and Lucy Kinsella of Festival Republic Limited attended the meeting. Mr Benn addressed the Committee, providing information on the 2022 Festival and any proposals for change for the 2023 Festival in respect of the following issues:

Fire Safety – Fire safety across the event site had been increased including additional appliances and water tanks. There had been some concern of the impact of the Netflix documentary “Woodstock 99” which had been shown during the summer and the possibility of copycat actions at the Leeds Festival. An increase in fires from 17 in 2021 to 79 in 2022 was noted. Campfires would not be permitted in 2023 on environmental grounds as part of the Festival’s Green Charter and it was felt that this move would be supported by attendees.

Safeguarding and Welfare – The “Look out for each other” campaign would continue for 2023. Brook, Festival Angels, Salvation Army, Narcotics Anonymous, Safe Gigs for Women and Forward Leeds were on site during 2022 to provide safeguarding and welfare support to attendees and Members were provided with an overview of the principal reasons attendees sought support. ‘Safe Hubs’ had been established in the campsite areas to provide support to attendees and co-ordinate any reports back to Festival HQ.

Challenge 25 would replace Challenge 21 in 2023.

Ask4Angela was rolled out and monitored for effectiveness.

Spiking had been a concern pre-event. Test kits had been available for attendees to purchase. However, there was little uptake and only a small number had been sent for analysis. One test showed the potential for spiking.

Traffic Management had showed a significant improvement in 2022, the new East Leeds Orbital Road and the new A64 eastbound closure system was successful and will be used for 2023. AA road signage and No.7 bus access will be reviewed. There is also the prospect of a closure at Kiddall Lane on safety grounds.

Public Transport – The Taxi and Private Hire pick-up/drop-off (PUDO) in the Red Gate area included 3 ‘pens’ designated for Private Hire PUDO. Mr Benn gave an undertaking to improve signage and lighting in the area, to provide variable message signage leading from the arena, and to commence earlier consultation with the Taxi and Private Hire Licensing Section for the 2023 Festival. First Bus successfully supplied shuttle buses from Leeds Train Station to the site, and an additional shuttle bus from Wetherby had been implemented.

Noise Nuisance – Acoustics had been reviewed in 2022 including re-orientation of the Main Stage west.

Public Safety – The covert security measures in place for 2022 were successful but would be enhanced for 2023.

Salvage and Cleansing – The salvage operation took place on Monday after the Festival had closed and showed an improved outcome with 69% of items retrieved being salvaged. The number of attendees who registered for the salvage offer had increased to 700, and another 100 people registered on the Monday itself. The Eco Campsite was successful and the “Leave No Trace” campaign had garnered good feedback and it was felt that this would expand. Zero waste went to landfill.

Medical issues – A new CQC Registered provider had been contracted for 2022, there had been a last minute change of the medical co-ordinator and unfortunately on-site X-ray provision had not been achieved. A different provider has been contracted for 2023 and there was confidence that on-site X-ray would be provided. Overall, reported medical issues were very similar to the 2021 event, but the number of patients seen was lower. Members were provided with an overview of the reasons attendees sought assistance.

The Committee then moved to ask questions, and in discussions, the following issues were considered:

Spiking Tests – The tests were available to purchase at £1.00 each at “cost price”, under 100 tests had been sold. The tests had been secured just prior to the Festival, for 2023, their availability will be communicated earlier. There was no plan to provide the tests free of charge, although this had been considered, however the operator felt that this would not lead to increased take-up, another factor being when should a test be taken. It was noted that the on-site test provided 97% accuracy for the presence of GHB and any substance in the system other than alcohol.

Private Hire (PH) PUDO arrangements – Mr Benn confirmed that that Festival Republic had not received reports of PH Drivers leaving their vehicles on the roads to the site causing congestion and entering the site to tout for business.

Eco Friendly campsite – It was confirmed that the eco camp was less than a 2% proportion of the 2022 campsite. This had been provided to meet demand and it was anticipated that demand would grow and be accommodated. Seen good levels of growth at other festivals. There was no evidence gathered on whether eco campers had used public or private transport to the event and no incentives such as reduced ticket prices for eco campers had been offered or were envisaged.

Personal safety – One Member commented on reports received that some attendees had felt unsafe at the event and was interested to know how the operator would work with attendees to make it better. Members noted the response that the operator’s social media team engaged with attendees using

various social media channels to interact with them about their experiences at the Festival. Talks were also held in schools, and gleaned information from the Festival Angels and security teams on site during the Festival. All agencies on site provided feedback to the operator along with Campsite Assistants employed by the operator.

Medical provision – Mr Benn explained that his intention to reduce pressure on the NHS would be achieved in 2023 with on-site X-ray provision which would reduce the numbers of transfers to hospital care. First Aid provision on site dealt with 1445 people in 2022 compared with 1729 in 2021. The operator worked closely with Yorkshire Ambulance Service and Leeds City Council and if it was identified, then increased provision would be in place. On-site provision included equipment and supplies to the standard of an Accident and Emergency department.

Security on-site – It was confirmed that sufficient security arrangements were in place during the Festival weekend. Mr Benn acknowledged that the stewards were notable by their absence when he walked the site, that he had plans to address this for future, and to improve the quality and public engagement. It was stated that the pandemic had impacted on the security industry.

Stewards – Although the stewards on site were not SIA registered, they were trained and provided by stewarding companies. No volunteer stewards provided public safety duties however, some had been provided by the cricket club to deal with traffic management. Stewards were supplemented by other additional support, such as Festival Angels. The operator used “Mystery shoppers” to ask stewards whether they understood their role, but these were not festival goers.

Under 18 attendees – The operator estimated that approximately 20% of attendees were 16/17 years old. This was based on the take-up of the over 18s wristbands. In 2021 wristbands were introduced for 16/17 year olds but these were quickly discarded by the wearer. It was acknowledged that a 16/17 wristband could identify the wearer as being more vulnerable than older attendees. There was no way to accurately calculate the ages of attendees from the on-line purchase of tickets. Discussions identified that 20% of an 80,000 audience amounted to 16,000 under 18 attendees, if the proportion was nearer 50% then it was important to recognise this as it could inform provision to meet that groups needs on site. Mr Benn gave an undertaking to address a system to more accurately collect the numbers of under 18's on site.

Leave No Trace campaign – Comments on the salvage and recycling operations were noted, particularly that the capacity to remove items from the site was limited by time and the number of salvage volunteers. In response, Mr Benn highlighted that the “No Music on a Dead Planet” message was included in all communications/social media about the Festival to promote the Leave No Trace campaign. Communication was the principal tool to encourage thoughtful waste disposal and “Green Messengers” were also

employed on site to discuss and encourage better waste disposal. The operator was receptive to further discussions on ideas to increase awareness or to review existing arrangements to identify where change could bring improvements. Members noted a suggestion to establish a working group of the Committee to consider the environmental impact of the Festival.

The Committee then heard from representatives of external organisations and partners of the Safety Advisory Group involved in the operation of the Festival.

Taxi and Private Hire Licensing.

Mr M Utting, representing Leeds Taxi Owners Ltd, addressed the Committee highlighting that lighting and illuminated signage would improve access to the PUDO area and requesting the Hackney Carriage (HC) zone be relocated to the front of the area. He noted that the Taxi and Private Hire Licensing Section could not provide Enforcement Officers on site at all times, so it was possible that some PH drivers could ply for hire, his concern remained the safety of the travelling public. He also referenced difficulties with wi-fi signal which could prevent festival goers being able to ring/use an app to pre book a PH vehicle and in those instances, relocating the HC zone to the front of the PUDO area would assist the egress of attendees.

The Taxi & Private Hire Licensing Manager, reported receipt of a low number of complaints and of those it was regarding fees. He highlighted that in terms of festival goers leaving the site, access for PH/HC vehicles to the PUDO area was key, as it encouraged drivers to make multiple trips. He reiterated that, if a PH vehicle is not pre-booked and picks up passengers, LCC would consider prosecution for both plying for hire and operating without the relevant insurance.

In response, Mr Benn provided assurance that lighting and signage would be a priority for 2023 and he would raise the profile of the concern that festival goers may get into cars which are unknown. In terms of relocating the HC zone to the front of the PUDO area, he felt that attendees who pre-booked a car journey home should be rewarded with a short journey to their vehicle with the PH zone at the front of the PUDO area. If the HC zone was at the front, and an attendee who had pre-booked PH saw an empty vehicle, they may choose to take that HC vehicle instead which would leave the PH pre-booked vehicle empty, unable to take another fare and impact on overall egress from the site.

National Highways Agency – Mr D Skupski addressed the meeting, referencing the submission in the Supplementary Pack from LCC Traffic Management and stating the Agency was content with the level of engagement from the operator. Following the 2021 Festival, the traffic management plan had been reviewed to improve consistency and following 2022, slow egress from the site had been identified as an issue to address for 2023.

Yorkshire Ambulance Service – Mr E Turner addressed the Committee and confirmed the operator had provided good clinical provision on site, with all staff UK registered. Final medical plan received 14days prior, some gaps identified and rectified. No Xray facilities on site as planned but an alternative arrangement sourced. A during performance inspection was carried out with some weaknesses identified including contingencies for mass casualty, small/lack of waiting areas at medical and staffing at triage point stage side which was resolved by redeployment of staff. Festival Republic have started the medical plan for 2023 with early engagement. Top line is major incident/command and control preparedness. The medical provider for 2023 is well versed with NHS working practices. Mr Benn additionally set out the reasoning behind the change to the medical provider.

Environmental Health – Ms R Turner, LCC Environmental Protection Team outlined the support the team provided in terms of public safety, crowd dynamics and crowd movement. The team had worked with the operator on the site layout and noise propagation. No noise complaints were received. The operator had implemented additional noise monitoring for 2022, including measures to address noise emissions from the fairground.

Crime and Disorder – Superintendent M Davidson, West Yorkshire Police confirmed that 98 offences had been reported during the event and 50 arrests made. Given the scale of the event, he felt the Festival had been largely successful in terms of crime and disorder.

At this stage of the meeting, Members were asked to consider moving into private session as the discussion was likely to involve the disclosure of exempt information, particularly information relating to the financial or business affairs of the Event Operator and associates and also information relating to any action taken in connection with the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime.

RESOLVED – That the public be excluded from the following part of the meeting as discussion was likely to involve the disclosure of exempt information, particularly information relating to the financial or business affairs of the Event Operator and its associates and also information relating to action taken in connection with the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime.

(Councillors Downes, Farley and Smart left the meeting at this point)

At the conclusion of discussions in private session, the Committee meeting resumed in public.

The Chair thanked the representatives of Festival Republic Limited for their presentation and all attendees for the information shared with the Committee.

RESOLVED –

- a) That the contents of the report and verbal presentations received from the representatives of Festival Republic Ltd and partners of the Safety Advisory Group (SAG) following the Leeds Festival 2022, and the discussions of the Committee be noted.
- b) To note that the Committee had considered it necessary for the public to be excluded from part of the meeting to allow Festival Republic Ltd and SAG partners to provide Members information designated as exempt under the provisions of Access to Information Procedure Rule 10.4(3), as it related to the financial or business affairs of a particular person or organisation; and Access to Information Procedure Rule 10.4 (7), as the information related to any action taken or to be taken in connection with the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime. The Committee noted that both exclusions required that in all the circumstances of the matter, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information.

45 Date and Time of Next Meeting
RESOLVED – Tuesday 14th March 2023 at 10.00 am.