

## Bonfire Displays 2021

Date: 6<sup>th</sup> October 2021

Report of: Development Manager

Report to: Chief Officer Parks and Countryside

Will the decision be open for call in? Yes No

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? Yes No

### **What is this report about?**

#### **Including how it contributes to the city's and council's ambitions**

- The bonfire and firework events would normally take place at Bramley Park, East End Park, Middleton Park, Roundhay Park, Springhead Park and Woodhouse Moor on or around 5<sup>th</sup> November 2021, and were cancelled in 2020 due to COVID-19. This report sets out the implications of hosting these events in the light of national Government guidance concerning coronavirus published in July 2021.
- A key aspect of the guidance is considering implementation of the NHS COVID Pass which allows people attending events to demonstrate that they are at a lower risk of carrying COVID-19 and transmitting it to others. This would require people attending to provide evidence either through vaccination, testing or natural immunity.
- This would mean that every bonfire event would require additional infrastructure and crowd management arrangements. In addition, the council would have to put in place ticketed arrangements for each individual event and inform everyone who might attend that they need to obtain these before arrival.
- Given the issues and constraints identified it is not considered feasible to go ahead with the annual bonfire displays in 2021.

### **Recommendations**

- a) That bonfire and firework displays at Bramley Park, East End Park, Middleton Park, Roundhay Park, Springhead Park and Woodhouse Moor due to be held in November 2021, are cancelled.

## Why is the proposal being put forward?

- 1 The Parks and Countryside service provide one 'city' and five 'community' bonfire and firework displays each year around the 5<sup>th</sup> November. The sites that host these events are as follows:
  - Roundhay Park (city)
  - East End Park
  - Woodhouse Moor
  - Bramley Park
  - Middleton Park
  - Springhead Park
- 2 The bonfire and firework displays did not take place in 2020 due to issues arising from COVID-19.
- 3 On the 19<sup>th</sup> July 2021 the Government announced the final easing of restrictions and that all outdoor events, including firework displays, could resume and issued relevant guidance which can be accessed from the following link: [Events and attractions - Working safely during coronavirus \(COVID-19\) - Guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/events-and-attractions-working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19).
- 4 A key aspect of the guidance is considering implementation of the NHS COVID Pass which allows people attending events to demonstrate that they are at a lower risk of carrying COVID-19 and transmitting it to others. This would require people attending to provide evidence either through vaccination, testing or natural immunity.
- 5 In order to determine whether an NHS COVID Pass needs to be implemented, consideration would need to be given to the steps outlined below, in order to mitigate risk.
  - Congested Areas
    - Some areas are more prone to potential congestion, such as toilets, concessions and entry and exit points.
    - Event organisers may wish to consider additional risk management in these areas by limiting the numbers of people congregating and staggered entry and exit times
  - Free Movement
    - As crowds at the event become denser it becomes more difficult for people to be physically distant from each other and inevitably increases the risk of transmitting.
  - Number of attendees
    - Events where large numbers of people attend don't necessarily constitute a greater risk. However, end to end transmission is increased through large number of people travelling to and from the event and visiting nearby premises.
    - Early engagement with local transport authorities to manage crowds should be factored into the planning.
  - Events involving energetic activity
  - Observations indicate that events that are unstructured and energetic with high crowd density may lead to higher airborne transmission risks, which includes activities such as shouting, singing and chanting.
- 6 Through the council's Safety Advisory Group (SAG) a risk matrix has been created which enables an objective measure of whether the NHS COVID Pass is required. This has been prepared in line with the guidance and in consultation with the council legal team. An assessment has been made of the bonfire events in Leeds and they all indicate that an NHS COVID Pass is required for those who attend.

## What impact will this proposal have?

### Wards Affected:

Have ward members been consulted?      Yes      No

- 7 In order to implement the NHS COVID Pass, every bonfire event would require fencing and controlled access, enhanced welfare provision and a substantial number of professional contracted security staff implemented for crowd management inside and outside of each event. In addition, the council would have had to put in place ticketed arrangements for each individual event. To support crowd management, these tickets would have needed to be distributed to each attendee before each event took place, with no capacity to obtain them on the night.
- 8 The infrastructure required to deliver community bonfire events would be similar to that used at Roundhay Park. There would also be significant additional costs of putting these measures in place, with added uncertainty about any further COVID changes that may be made prior to the bonfire events.
- 9 Given the issues and constraints identified it is not considered feasible to go ahead with the annual bonfire displays in 2021.

## What consultation and engagement has taken place?

- 10 The proposal to cancel bonfire and firework displays have involved the council's Safety Advisory Group and legal team.

## What are the resource implications?

- 11 The infrastructure required to deliver community bonfire events would be similar to that used at Roundhay Park. There would also be significant additional costs of putting these measures in place, with added uncertainty about any further COVID changes that may be made prior to the bonfire events.
- 12 Leeds City Council's Safer Strong Communities Team will be working closely with partners in areas across the city to mitigate any potential negative impact of fireworks and associated anti-social behaviour in the run up to and on Bonfire Night. This work will be focussed in those areas that are known to have experienced anti-social behaviour around bonfire night in previous years.

## What are the legal implications?

- 13 Guidance was issued by national government when restrictions were eased in July 2021 that particularly relate to large gatherings at outdoor events including firework displays. A key aspect of this guidance is ensuring that people who attend these events demonstrate that they are at a lower risk of carrying COVID-19 and transmitting it to others, and that a limit should be made on numbers attending. The decision is not subject to call in.

## What are the key risks and how are they being managed?

- 14 Leeds City Council's Safer Strong Communities Team will be working closely with partners in areas across the city focussed in those areas that are known to have experienced anti-social behaviour around bonfire night in previous years.

## Does this proposal support the council's 3 Key Pillars?

Inclusive Growth

Health and Wellbeing

Climate Emergency

15 The health and wellbeing of every person in attendance at all proposed council managed events, including community bonfires remains a priority. The threat of coronavirus is still present and therefore every event on council land is subject to certain checks and safeguards in line with government guidance to limit the spread of coronavirus.

## Options, timescales and measuring success

### a) What other options were considered?

16 An assessment has been undertaken, and a number of additional measures would need to be implemented in order to host the bonfire events. These would also result in significant additional expense as well as affecting the enjoyment for all those attending.

### b) How will success be measured?

17 There is no specific measure applicable to this decision.

### c) What is the timetable for implementation?

18 The events will now no longer go ahead as planned.

## Appendices

19 None.

## Background papers

20 None.