

Report to: Scrutiny Committee

Date: 28 June 2018

Title: Lewes Bonfire Celebrations

Report of: Director of Service Delivery

Ward(s): Lewes, Falmer, Glynde, Southease and Cooksbridge

Purpose of report: For Scrutiny Committee to consider the consultation event with Members held by the Chair of the Tactical Co-ordination Group for station closures on bonfire night on public safety grounds.

Officer recommendation(s):

- (1) To consider the consultation event which took place on 8 June, which was presented by the Chair of the Tactical Co-ordination Group and attended by Lewes district, Lewes town and East Sussex county council members and representatives of blue light and related services
- (2) To note and consider officer advice which is as follows:

That in recognition that the paramount concern at Bonfire is one of public safety, any decision around the operation of the train service is one which should be taken by strategic and tactical commanders, based on threat and risk, whilst taking into account and mitigating insofar as may be possible, those concerns raised by councillors
- (3) To consider whether Scrutiny Committee should make any recommendation to Cabinet as to the response which Lewes District Council should make to the consultation

Reasons for recommendations: Public safety at this event is of considerable concern and of paramount importance. The impact of station closures will undoubtedly cause inconvenience to the public but it is considered that the risk to life and property outweighs the inconvenience for one night of the year.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Lewes Bonfire Celebrations take place on the 5th November each year unless

this falls on a Sunday when the preceding Saturday is usually chosen. They are one of the largest events of this type in Europe and include processional routes through the town and bonfire firework displays at their respective firework sites.

- 1.2 Lewes Bonfire Celebrations is internationally known around the world and attracts many thousands of people. Lewes is a historic market town with a population of just over 17,000 which historically has swelled to up to 60,000 on Bonfire Night.
 - 1.3 In 2016 there was a train strike which resulted in no trains calling at Lewes Station from midday on the 5th. This resulted in a much safer environment for societies and the public and reduced accidents. In 2017 following the positive impact of public safety the Emergency Services requested that trains did not stop at Lewes in order to restrict numbers attending and minimise the risk to public safety.
 - 1.4 Significant multi agency planning takes place as the Societies state they do not have a responsibility for members of the public who arrive to watch the processions in the town and therefore measures have to be taken to protect the public.
- 2 Crowd Safety
 - 2.1 Crowds safety reviews have been undertaken and the most recent in 2016 gave a judgement that *“Overall I consider that left unchanged, there is a very high likelihood of an accident occurring that could result in serious injury or death to one or more people in this event”*
 - 2.2 The trains present a particular challenge with one main entry point to the town and the crowds moving to the High Street. With every train arrival after 17:00 hours 1,000 additional rail passengers arrive and previously have added to already swelled numbers on the High Street with nowhere to go. With no trains the number of people is not only reduced but are spread around the town.
 - 2.3 As a comparison last year on a Saturday there were 92 injuries sustained with an estimated number of 30,000 attending and in 2011 (also on a Saturday) with trains running there were 170 injuries when it is estimated 60,000 attended. This equate to almost 50% reduction in persons who were injured. Approximately a fifth of the injuries sustained last year were as a result of bangers or fireworks.
- 3 Risk Assessment
 - 3.1 Apart from the obvious risks of fire, fireworks and crowds in close proximity the town centre is not well suited to the volume that attend, there is no single organiser for the event particularly for the procession routes and there are continuing concerns about fireworks thrown in the street by members of the public and members of the societies.
 - 3.2 Bonfire societies maintain that they are not responsible, individually or collectively for the management or safety of the overall event or the public that come to watch.

3.3 The following table gives an overview of the Sussex Police Threat Assessment for 2017.

Risk	Impact	Likelihood	Threat
Firework discharge and fire/firework related injuries during processions	Major	High	High
Crowd collapse or crushing due to density or movement or people.	Disaster	Medium	High
Significant public disorder/assaults/ criminal damage	Noticeable	Medium	Medium
Injury or harm to children or other vulnerable person.	Major	Medium	Medium
Impeded emergency service response to Fire / Medical / Police incident.	Noticeable	Medium	Medium
Injury to police staff deployed	Noticeable	Medium	Medium
Threat to continuing confidence in Sussex Police	Major	Medium	Medium
Injury or damage caused by fire or firework storage / carriage / use including within processions	Noticeable	Low	Low
Crime	Noticeable	Low	Low
Terrorist attack	Disaster	Low	Medium
Major disruption/serious safety issues on main roads	Noticeable	High	Medium

4 Impact on the public

4.1 The impact on the traveling public has been considered by the Strategic Co-ordination Group (SCG) and the Tactical Co-ordination Group (TCG) and the preferred option to close stations is not one that has been proposed lightly.

4.2 Southern have been asked to consider their preferred option and rather than having station closures from midday which happened last year it is considered a compromise of 17:00 hours is a balance allowing school and college children to get home and allows commuters to get home albeit earlier than usual.

4.3 It is proposed that with enough advance warning train users at Lewes, Falmer, Glynde, Southease and Cooksbridge will be able to make alternative arrangements for one day of the year.

5 Consultation

5.1 A consultation event was undertaken on 8th June 2018 to make District Councillors and Lewes Town Councillors aware of the proposal and seek their feedback. The presentation given to Councillors is attached as Appendix 1 and the Minutes of the consultation event are attached as Appendix 2.

5.2 It is important that views and feedback are sought from members whose constituents live in the areas affected by train station closures but the decision around the trains is an operational one for strategic and tactical commanders to make based on threat and risk.

6 Financial appraisal

6.1 There are no significant financial implications for the authority as result of this report.

7 Legal implications

7.1 None arising from this report.

8 Risk management implications

8.1 These have been considered within the report.

9 Appendices

- Appendix 1 - Presentation Given to Councillors
- Appendix 2 - Minutes of Consultation Event

10 Background papers

None