

Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council

Scrutiny Management Board

16th October 2008

Saint George's Day Parade

1. Summary Statement

- 1.1 The Shows and Events Team within Cultural Services support the Stone Cross Saint George's Association in the safe facilitation of a Parade between Stone Cross and Dartmouth Park in West Bromwich to celebrate Saint George's Day.
- 1.2 Direct costs of £9,500 are met by the Council to fund Health and Safety requirements to hold a safe Parade; this represents 28% of the total cost of £34,000 spent on the trilogy of Saint George's Day events.
- 1.3 This report examines how this Parade fits into the wider programme of events and its' impact upon community cohesion.

Further details are attached for your information

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 That the Scrutiny Management Board receive and consider the detail of The Report

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Head of Cultural Services

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Saint George's Day Parade

3. Strategic Resource Implications

- 3.1 £9,500 in revenue supports the Parade to ensure a safe and controlled Event.
- 3.2 Approximately 30 officer hours are dedicated to the preparation and management of the Event.
- 3.3 There are no implications for the Council's material assets.

4. Legal and Statutory Implications

- 4.1 As a co-organiser of the event, the Council shares responsibility for the health and safety aspects of the Parade and the other associated events.

5. Implications for the Council's Priorities

- 5.1 This Report links into the Council's Corporate Priority of safer, cleaner, active communities.

6 Background Details

- 6.1 The Saint George's Day Parade started ten years ago as a small, low key event by a group of patriotic Englishmen who wanted to recognise the National Day of our Patron Saint.
- 6.2 Over the years the numbers joining the Parade grew until it became obvious to both the Council and the Police that safety was now a major issue.
- 6.3 The Council was also in receipt of a number of petitions raised by residents of the Borough requesting that they organise an event to mark Saint George's Day, similar to that facilitated by Birmingham Council to recognise Saint Patrick's Day.
- 6.4 On the instruction of members the Events Team (then under the umbrella of Environment Direct) organised a Saint George's Fun Day in Dartmouth Park and a Concert in West Bromwich Town Hall. The Events Team was also directed to work with the Parade organisers (now constituted as the Stone Cross Saint George's Association) to ensure that the Parade was managed in a safe and secure environment.
- 6.5 Current costs associated with this series of events are as follows:
 - Parade - £9,500
 - Concert - £500
 - Fun Day - £16,500
 - Global - £7,500

- 6.6 This trilogy of events was marketed with the strapline “Forever England, For Everyone”, with a published aim of reclaiming the Flag of Saint George back from the associated nationalistic connotations and making it a source of pride for the entire population of Sandwell.
- 6.7 During the years that the Council and the Stone Cross Saint George’s Association have been working together on the event numbers participating have risen from an estimated 5,000 in the first year to 15,000 at its peak in 2006.
- 6.8 As with any large gathering the Parade has not been without its problems; increasingly the consumption of alcohol on the route together with urinating in public became an issue. In 2008 the three major bodies involved in organising the Parade (Council, Police and Association) launched a major publicity/education programme in an attempt to deal with the problem (See Appendix One) and hammered home the “No Alcohol” message in all press releases and advance publicity for the event. It is pleasing to report that this message was taken on board with a massive reduction in anti-social behaviour.
- 6.9 The 2008 event saw another disturbing incident where the Parade was infiltrated by an uninvited band which it appears have paramilitary roots, and this inspired some objectionable chanting. It must be emphasised that the two bands invited to join the Parade were the West Midlands Fire Service and the Northfield Caledonia Pipe Bands. This third band were uninvited, and would have been prevented from participating if their antecedents had been known.
- 6.10 The Saint George’s Day Trilogy is one of four major core events organised by the Council’ the other three being:
- Historic Vehicle Show
 - Sandwell Community Show
 - Bonfire

New for 2008 was the first Holocaust Memorial Day Commemoration in the Borough, and other smaller events include the Christmas Carol Concert and Organ Recitals.

- 6.11 Support for other sections within the Council for events is given to:

Sandwell Children’s Festival
Looked After Children’s Event
Remembrance Day Parades
Tipton Muslim Centre (Community Fun Day)

6.12 Support for non-Council organisations is given to:

Friends of Haden Hill Park (May Day Event)
Friends of Redhouse Park (Community Fun Day)
Guru Nanak Gurdwara (Vaisakhi Parade)
High Street Festival Committee (Smethwick High Street Festival)

6.13 Cultural Services support a wide-ranging and diverse programme of events, one of which is the Saint George's Day Parade.

APPENDIX ONE

“No Alcohol, Please” is the request from Parade Organisers

Planning is already well underway for the Sandwell Saint George’s Day Parade 2008, which this year takes place on Sunday 20th April.

One issue raising concerns with the Event Organisers is the amount of alcohol being consumed during the Parade, and the resulting unacceptable level of anti-social behaviour.

The streets and parks of Sandwell are designated alcohol-free zones, which means that as well as having alcoholic drinks confiscated, people flouting the ban will be liable for a £80 Fixed Penalty Notice.

Sandwell MBC Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure, Councillor Mrs. Linda Horton, said, “ The Saint George’s Day Celebrations are meant to be an opportunity for families to have fun and enjoy themselves while marking the National Day of our Patron Saint; drinking alcohol to excess has no place at this event.”

Mark Cowles from the Stone Cross Saint George’s Association said, “As co-organisers we are really concerned about the effect that people drinking alcohol on the route and in the park will have on the future of the event; continued anti-social behaviour will threaten the very existence of what we have worked so hard over many years to achieve in making our Parade the biggest and best in the country.”

Inspector Mark Cooper from the West Midlands Police said, “This event has grown in size over recent years and it is imperative that the community and people attending can enjoy the event free from crime and disorder. I implore people to refrain from bringing alcohol and drinking to excess to ensure that this event continues to be a success for all concerned.”

All three people closely involved with the planning for this years Saint George’s Day Celebration are united in one request – “No alcohol, please!”

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