



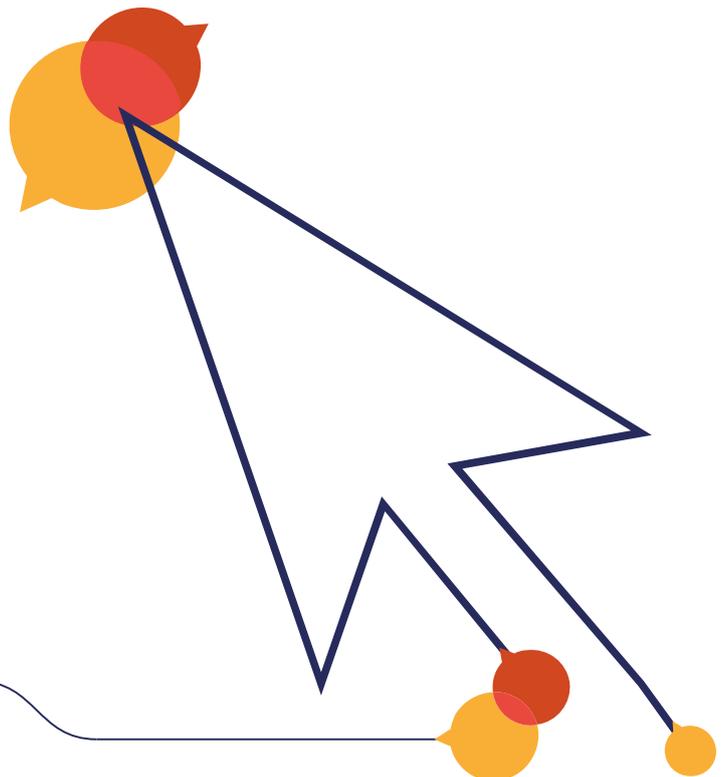
accidents don't have to happen

Safety Review



Dartmouth Park Bonfire Event,
Saturday 5th November 2016

Version: Final
Date: 02.03.2017



Dartmouth Park Bonfire Event

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Executive Summary

The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) was commissioned by Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council (SMBC) to undertake an independent review of the planning and operational management of the bonfire event at Dartmouth Park, Sandwell on 5th November 2016.

Although there were a number of complaints prior to, during and after the event. It was recognised that on the event night; there were no reports of any injuries or fatalities; crowd safety issues were recognised to be of primary importance during the event; and that the event management team acted swiftly and correctly when it became apparent that there were potential crowd control issues.

RoSPA staff have, where appropriate in its professional judgement, interviewed staff and reviewed documentation appropriate to this event so that an impartial view of the planning and operational control of the event can be formed. RoSPA has taken reasonable steps to ensure the accuracy of the information provided.

The opinions expressed in this report are the professional views of an experienced consultant and are designed to be constructive to identify the lessons that need to be learned so that future events can run smoothly and without risks to staff, visitors, and contractors. We have limited the scope of our comments to the agreed terms of reference.

In total, sixteen recommendations have been made, the key findings are:

1. Radio provision and command and control channels need to be upgraded.
2. Planning arrangements were based on historical procedures and protocols from previous events. Some of the assumptions were found to be incorrect. Pre-event intelligence is a crucial step in fine-tuning event management. Where safety critical decisions are made these should be tracked and subsequently impact assessed with stakeholders before they are implemented.
3. SMBC is inconsistent in its policy to charge/not charge and this caused confusion with the public. Improved public communications are required for future events. It is recommended that you consider and option of pre payment for events so that you have a better control of the numbers predicted to attend future events.
4. The decision to open the gates by declaring code 'amber' and allow free access to the event when it became apparent that crowd control outside the event was becoming a problem was a pivotal decision. This undoubtedly prevented any serious incidents developing, including injuries to staff and visitors. Your events team should be congratulated for reacting quickly to these events.
5. Following the lessons learnt from this report it is recommended that SMBC thoroughly review the event management plan in light of this report. SMBC should have a generic, consistent management plan that can be easily adapted for specific events and these should be reviewed annually via a desktop exercise and post event debriefings.



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Introduction and Terms of Reference

The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) was commissioned by Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council (SMBC) to undertake an independent review of the planning and operational management of the bonfire event at Dartmouth Park, Sandwell on 5th November 2016 following a number of complaints prior to, during and after the event.

The terms of reference were:-

1. Review the planning arrangements that were in place and undertaken in organising the Dartmouth Park bonfire, specifically the organisation of the event generally.
2. Identify any strength and weaknesses including any omissions in planning and managing the bonfire event.
3. Review the decision-making process prior to and during the event, including the effectiveness of the management arrangements at the event.
4. Review the effectiveness of visitor safety with regards to the bonfire and firework display that was held at Dartmouth Park.
5. Provide an appraisal of the quality of the existing health and safety management system for the event.

RoSPA has where appropriate and in its professional judgement, interviewed staff and reviewed documentation appropriate to this event so that it can form an impartial view of the planning and operational control of the event.

In all cases, RoSPA has ensured due diligence to ensure the accuracy of the information it was provided with.

The opinions expressed in this report are the professional views of an experienced consultant and are designed to be constructive to identify the lessons that need to be learned so that future events can run smoothly and without unacceptable risks to staff, visitors, and contractors.

Consideration has been given in our recommendations to the implications of case law, changes to relevant regulations and the findings of accident investigations where these have a bearing on safety.

RoSPA has provided the report and recommendations in good faith and it is essential that the options and suggested actions identified in the recommendations and from any following risk assessments are continually developed and reviewed in response to changing legislation, best practice documents, active monitoring and the investigation and outcomes of accidents and near misses.



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Methodology

The consultant reviewed the documentation provided below and attended site on the 21st November. The consultant held interviews with the people identified below and visited Dartmouth Park. Following the initial interviews and the site visit, the consultant formed a view on the events and drew the conclusions and recommendations.

Post holders, interviewed for this report and physical evidence examined:

- Senior Lead Officer (Health and Safety) SBMC.
- Service Manager Dartmouth Park.
- Event manager who was chair of the planning meetings for the Dartmouth Park Bonfire.
- Officer designated for site control for the 5/11 Bonfire event at Dartmouth Park.
- The Dartmouth Park site security coordinator (Operations Manager)

The RoSPA consultant toured the Dartmouth Park site with the site security coordinator (Operations Manager). Particular attention was given to the sites of the bonfires, entrances to the event and position of the security teams and money collection booths and lighting pillars. The UNISON representative was present for the interviews with the Events coordinator, and the Service Manager.

We recognise that other organisations and individuals may have been involved in the event process at different stages. We have sought to address the safety related issues and through focussing on the activities of SMBC we have considered sufficient information to draw conclusions and make justifiable recommendations in order to assist SMBC improve in future. The persons interviewed by the RoSPA consultant and documentation to be reviewed were arranged by the Senior Health and Safety Advisor and in the opinion of the consultant these were sufficient to enable an informed appreciation of the event to be taken. Discussions for additional persons to be interviewed were held with SMBC after the consultant had concluded his on site review. In the consultant's opinion additional interviews were not necessary as it was considered that this would not enhance the report.

Documentation referenced for this report

- Terms of reference dated 10.11.2016
- Community debrief of the 2015 bonfires at Jubilee Park, Victoria Park and Smethwick.
- Dartmouth Park bonfire planning meeting dated 14.09.2016 –minutes of the meeting.
- Dartmouth Park bonfire planning meeting dated 30.09.2016 –minutes of the meeting.
- Dartmouth Park bonfire planning meeting dated 14.10.2016 –minutes of the meeting.
- Dartmouth Park bonfire planning meeting dated 16.10.2016 –minutes of the meeting.
- Event safety arrangements- undated
- History of event summary produced by the Senior Lead Officer (Health and Safety) SBMC –undated
- Event security checklist, produced by the Event coordinator.
- Debrief notes post event, produced by the Senior Lead Officer (Health and Safety) SBMC
- Event time line produced by the Senior Lead Officer (Health and Safety) SBMC
- General notes post event 5.11.2016, relating to numbers of attendees and a breakdown of complaints received by SMBC.



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Results

The documentation provided was considered to be clear and well written and it contained sufficient information for the consultant to draw conclusions on the events and the outputs of the event.

Event Planning

1. The senior managers interviewed reported that the events coordinator post had not been filled by a substantive appointment for 10 months. Temporary appointments were made as necessary. The event coordinator was recently new in post.
2. A number of events management posts had not been filled and the events coordinator (who was still on probation) and the service manager were faced with a heavy work load due to reduced staffing levels and an increasing number of events requiring their control and development. Although they were both experienced event managers, we believe that there should have been more visible support for recruitment and retention of these safety critical roles them in the planning process; the senior managers interviewed reinforced this.
3. No previous documented agreements were available for the appointment of sub contractors (catering, security etc.) and the team had to develop these and start from scratch, which was a time consuming process.
4. Planning assumptions were based on historical procedures and notes provided by the previous post holder and protocols from previous events. Some of these assumptions resulted in arrangements which were less than ideal, particularly the number of expected visitors, which were very much on the high side. The 2015 event had been a free entry event and the number of security guards appointed was based upon these assumptions.
5. The senior managers interviewed reported that the tenders for contractors were not raised until August. It is not clear what caused this delay but it appears linked to the decision that the event at Victoria Park should be free and the event at Dartmouth should be chargeable. It is important that all decisions affecting safety and planning are accurately reported and tracked in the future so that accurate event plans can be developed.
6. It is reported by the Senior Lead Officer (Health and Safety), who attended the planning meetings that the events manager who chaired the planning meetings was also expected to take the minutes, this led to under reporting in some cases, the safety critical importance that the wardens should attend was not reflected in the minutes. Steps should be taken to avoid this occurring in the future.

The issue of removing the Funfair

7. The decision that was taken not to incorporate the Fun Fair adversely affected the crowd management arrangements on the night. It was not clear exactly who made this decision and upon what grounds this was taken, but it is believed to be because of previous damage to the grass in the park and other non-specified anti social behavioral issues.



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8. It is reported that this decision came late in the planning process. There is no documented evidence that an impact assessment was made for this decision and to how it would impact on public perception and reaction to the event.
9. Some members of the public, were reported to have become bored and restless and wanted to leave after the junior firework display, causing congestion at the entrances with those still waiting to gain entry into the park (at the designated entrance points).
10. The lack of a fun fair and the decision by the events team on the location of the catering outlets further exacerbated the public's perception that the event was not as comprehensive as in previous years.
11. Crowding around the toilets and catering outlets caused a problem whilst there was plenty of room around the rest of the site. Once identified the security team were tasked to address this by the event management team.
12. There are no records of the actual lighting levels, but the events team reported that the same number of lighting towers were provided as in previous years and that no issues were reported. They did not consider there to be a significant problem with the number, position or characteristics of the artificial lighting provided.
13. SMBC's press office had reportedly received a number of complaints prior to the event that there was to be no fun fair, there was no evidence provided to show that these issues were communicated to the events team.

Unexpected crowd pressure at the entrance points

14. There were no automatic counters on the entrance gates so it was difficult for the staff to estimate the numbers actually on site for this event. There was a general perception that numbers attending were much higher than normal.
15. The events team reported that from information gathered on the day that more people than expected attended the Dartmouth Park event as it was the cheapest in the area. In addition to this, other local events had already closed - Walsall closed their event at 1815 hrs and it is reported that other Birmingham events were cancelled, possibly causing increased numbers of visitors and the late arrival of some.
16. No consideration given to the requirement for providing a sufficient amount of 'float'/ change because of the set entrance fee, (£7.50 for a family) which is not a round amount. This is a practical issue which we believe should have been identified, by the events team and perhaps also by senior management, as a potential problem prior to the event.
17. 5th November fell on a weekend this year and additional attendance should have been expected. The weather was also better than average, this should have been considered by the events team.
18. Security guards were searching visitors between the entrance and the pay booths and not after the pay booths. This was in direct contravention to the verbal instructions given by the Operations Manager and is one of the factors that led to the general congestion at the entrances. Once the Operations Manager became aware of the congestion they immediately consulted other members of the events team and the decision was made to allow free entry.



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19. It is also reported by the events team, during the interviews with the RoSPA consultant, that the security staff took unauthorised breaks leaving their fence lines for refreshment or to view the events. The incidence and effect of this cannot be verified.
20. There were reports that some of the security guards became aggressive, not being used to the pressure of such a large crowd, again the incidence and effect of this cannot be verified. However this had not been a problem in previous years, leading the events team to perceive that individuals were possibly less experienced, contrary to the information SMBC had received during the due diligence activities.

Command and Control Communications

23. There were insufficient radios for all parties, especially for the security teams and this issue needs to be addressed for future events.
24. There was no radio channel discipline and no command and control channel (this was not included in the 'event safety instructions'). This will need to be considered as part of the recommended review of the event management plan and is common practice in events of this nature.

Wardens required for crowd control duties

25. The failure of the promised numbers of wardens (it was reported that previous years this had been between 8-10 wardens, in addition to security staff, only 5 arrived) to attend on the night caused problems with the management of the crowd outside the gates. Three did not turn up at the event due to sickness and a number had been granted annual leave.
26. The importance of the attendance of the wardens had been highlighted at the planning meetings by the Senior Lead Officer (Health and Safety Officer), but this comment was not reflected in the minutes.
27. The lack of wardens led to poor communication to the crowd outside the gates. This appears to have added to the restlessness of the crowd when those outside could not gain access and those inside could not leave.

Operational Management of the event

28. The Event management team coped well with the indications that the crowd were becoming restless and that an unsafe situation might develop, because of the delays caused by processing tickets and change. They reacted very quickly and positively to these reports and this demonstrates that they had maintained control.
29. The lessons learnt from the 2015 event where there had previously been problems with anti social behavior, had been put into operation and there were no reported incidents with the firework displays.
30. The road closure controls appear to have worked well although there was the odd report that non-residents were let through. There is no evidence that this caused a significant problem.
31. The decision to open the gates by declaring code 'amber' and allow free access to the event when it became apparent that crowd control outside the event was becoming a problem. In the opinion of RoSPA



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this was a pivotal decision, which undoubtedly prevented any serious incidents developing, including injuries to staff and visitors. The events team should be congratulated for reacting to this situation in such a prompt and professional manner.

Alleged reports of swearing on stage

32. Social media reports and comments complained that the DJ was swearing on stage. This is not a safety issue but when conducting the review, we have been unable to verify this as there was no recording of the entertainment, but enquiries have established that the entertainer's material had been vetted prior to the event. This appears to be adequate and pre-vetting of materials should continue in the future.



Conclusions

In specifically addressing the terms of reference, the following issues are highlighted:

1. Review the planning arrangements

Planning was based largely on historical data and used the plan from 2015, which was a free entry event. The decision making process was based on historical data, not the conditions and arrangements of the event. There had been no distinction of the impact between charged/non charged events and the needs and expectations of the community. Decisions taken which affected the event such as charging, removal of event features are not allocated clearly or recoverable by SMBC and this is a weakness in SMBC's planning arrangements. There was very little administration available from previous years and contract arrangements had to be made from scratch. The events team reported that crucial decisions, such as to charge for the event and not to have the Fun Fair, was received late in the planning process, causing problems for the planning team.

2. Identify any strength and weaknesses

The Events team and the management of Dartmouth Park are used to working together; this contributed to the crowd movement issues that existed of the event. There are a number of experienced staff who were able to identify potential problems on the ground in their early stages and then to react positively and professionally to prevent potential crowd control problems, despite lower than expected numbers of support staff on the actual night.

The timing of crucial event decisions by SMBC, a lack of pre-event intelligence and a lack of impact assessment on crucial decisions need to be addressed for the future. It is recommended that there is more oversight and direction for future events.

3. Review the decision-making process prior to and during the event

The planning process was hampered by untracked and late decisions by SMBC. Once these were made there was a lack of effective impact assessments. There needs to be more oversight and direction for future events, with clear understanding of the decision making process.

The minutes of the planning meetings did not always reflect the discussions/decisions made, due to a lack of administrative support to the events team.

The events team will need to be empowered to raise issues that they feel are hampering their decision and organizational arrangements.

The experienced events team on site on the night were able to make professional decisions in due time to prevent potential problems arising.



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4. Review the effectiveness of visitor safety with regards to the bonfire and firework display.

The lessons learnt from the antisocial behaviour, which were reported during the non-charged event in 2015, had been adopted and effective arrangements were put in place. This prevented a reoccurrence of antisocial behavior within the event.

5. Provide an appraisal of the quality of the existing Health and Safety management

The lack of consistency in decisions/guidance from the centre to charge/not charge for events, timeliness and validation of this are flaws in the event planning arrangements in SMBC. The quality of the health and safety management system could be improved by addressing these issues, including document control and tracking changes which affect the risk profile. This had not manifest into an actual unsafe event during the event, but, at the very least this caused confusion with the public. (This was reflected in the complaints received both before and after the event).



Recommendations

RoSPA makes the following positive recommendations, which are designed to build upon the strengths of the existing arrangements and to identify where procedures and assumptions need to be challenged and addressed to ensure that safe and enjoyable events are planned and delivered in future.

Ref..	Recommendations	Priority	Comp. Date	Signed
1.	It is recommended that you have a consistent published policy for a 12-month period and those fees and proposed facilities are transparent and consistent across all SMBC events.			
2.	The existing 'events safety arrangement plan' should be thoroughly reviewed to test the pre existing assumptions, which are based upon historical precedent. This is particularly important where decisions are made without a full impact assessment and consequences in good time before the event.			
3.	Ensure a system is implemented so that document and decisions can be recorded accurately and tracked.			
4.	Managers should receive training in the importance of impact assessments. The impact assessment should involve all stakeholders including the emergency services, service providers and focus groups.			
5.	Whenever decisions are made, they should be made in good time to allow the planning teams adequate time to plan, appoint sub contractors and ensure that adequate staff numbers are available. Late changes in plans should be avoided. Justification and decisions should be recorded.			
6.	The events management team should be given more comprehensive administrative support in view of the frequency of SMBC events.			
7.	It is recommended that consideration is given to allowing prepayment for events, perhaps using the Internet or SMBC help/booking lines. This should help stop payment problems at the entrance and provide a smoother transition into the event. An additional benefit will be to allow for an accurate estimate of numbers attending which will reflect on planning assumptions for staff numbers required.			
8.	It is recommended that contract security staff be placed under the control of a warden to ensure that they are complying with the event instructions and this should be clearly spelt out in the assignment due diligence arrangements written and verbal instructions.			
9.	You need to have additional hand held radios for the events. This needs training to all staff as part of the event briefing for all events.			
10.	The radio protocol, including who uses which channel, must form part of the 'event safety arrangement plan', this should also include a command channel for emergency 'amber' situations.			
11.	As part of the review of the event management plan, it is recommended			



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	that you develop a site cascade communications procedure which will include a lost child procedure.			
12.	There should be a procedure that if specific criteria are not met during a review near to the event then consideration should be given to 'pulling the event'. The event management manager on the ground should have the authority to make these decisions. (The safety critical requirement to have wardens in place for crowd control is a case in point). This will avoid or reduce any perception that cancelling an event at short notice on safety grounds will result in a disciplinary or pillory in social media.			
13.	Your event management should include closer integration with the police and emergency services, pre event intelligence would have identified most of the problems that were caused by larger than expected numbers attending on site.			
14.	You should consider the development of a generic event management plan that can be easily adapted for specific scenarios and this should be tested by a desktop exercise.			
15.	You need a comprehensive review of your event management plan which should be tested by a desktop exercise and all crucial decisions should be impact assessed before decisions are confirmed.			
16.	The criticism of SMBC and individual members on social media, including reported attempts to gain personal data, has reportedly caused great distress to individual staff members and SMBW are respectfully reminded of their 'Duty of Care' to staff under the HSWA, both to rebut this criticism and provide any necessary follow up support.			
17.	It is recommended that there is a controlled event debrief following each event in order to create a corporate memory and to address any issues that arise.			
18.	Once an event plan is created it should be tested by a desk top exercise.			
19.	Debriefs of events should be conducted to identify future improvements to planning and operations.			

Version	Date	Originator	Reviewer	Authority	Details
1	18.12.16	PM	ND	RoSPA	Draft for review.
2	30.01.17	PM	ND	RoSPA	Second Draft
3	22.02.17	PM	ND	RoSPA	Third Draft
4	02.03.17	PM	ND	RoSPA	Final





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