

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE BONFIRE SUB-COMMITTEE HELD REMOTELY (VIA ZOOM) ON FRIDAY 19TH JUNE 2020

PRESENT: Cllr Malcolm Worth, Bay of Colwyn Town Council **MW**
Cllr Jeff Pearson, Bay of Colwyn Town Council **JP**
Cllr Chris Hughes, Bay of Colwyn Town Council **CH**
Richard Orme, CCBC/Leisure **RO**
Lorraine Yorke, CCBC/Eirias **LY**
Shaun Thompson, CCBC/Leisure, **ST**
Peter Barton Price, CCBC/ERF, **PBP**
Terry Kearney, Get Set Go Events / NW Fire and Rescue Service **TK**
James Arthan, NW Police **JA**
Rachael Gill, CCBC **RG**

OFFICER: Tina Earley, Town Clerk **TE**
Louise Austin, Administrative Assistant **LA**

515/19 Apologies for Absence: No apologies were received.

516/19 Welcome:

The Chair welcomed Members to the meeting and invited views on whether the 50th anniversary of Colwyn Bay Bonfire and Fireworks Event could/should go ahead in November 2020, given the ongoing restrictions on gatherings and requirements for social-distancing to reduce the spread of COVID-19.

RG advised the Sub-Committee that she is involved in national level meetings regarding events. Following national advice, CCBC Safety Advisory Group (SAG) had advised that events up to the 1st July should not happen. Conwy Events team had been hopeful that events would be permissible again by November, however, there is still a lot of uncertainty and no real guidance to say that an event can or can't proceed. Events (mass gatherings) would fall under 'green' in the Welsh traffic-light system (low priority) and progression to green is dependent on the level of 'R' (rate of reproduction of the virus). An autumn spike in the rate of reproduction is feared and this could result in restrictions being tightened again, even if they have been relaxed.

CCBC had still been looking to support the Wales GB Rally event in October, but Motorsport UK had concerns over the 70,000 attendees the event attracts and the event was cancelled last week. Wales Rugby Union has said that there would be no events for the rest of 2020. RG also informed Members that Gwynedd CC had now written to all event organisers to advise that no events should happen in 2020.

RG had attended a similar Fireworks meeting with Llandudno Town Council earlier in the week and they had yet to make a decision on whether to proceed with their event, and were looking at timelines to ascertain the latest date when a decision would have to be made. RG had advised that the SAG would not support an event going ahead unless measures were in place to ensure social distancing. This would require a much higher level of stewards/security than in the past.

JA advised Members that Police guidance from March/April had not changed and that the Police (and all blue light services) would not currently support any

public gatherings. It is impossible to foresee whether these restrictions would still be in place by November. He stated that organisers of an event would need to display competence in social distancing, and that the Bonfire Night was a significant event and asked how the organisers could satisfy the SAG and ensure public safety? He warned that there could be significant added pressures and complications and that public safety must be paramount.

LY agreed that a decision date to cancel would need to be decided. Even if social distancing measures are reduced within the next few weeks, the event would still be affected. She recommended that local data could be looked at (the 'R' rate), rather than national statistics.

MW expressed concern over the social distancing measures that would be required and pointed out the issues faced by the Town Council, on an annual basis, to get enough stewards for the event. If stewards were required to assist with maintaining social distancing, how many additional stewards would be required and how would these be obtained?

JA agreed that all events post-Covid would need to look at how conflict could be managed within large crowds due to the potential of more incidents of aggravation.

CH discussed how Members of the Pandemic Crises Response Team (PCRT) had felt that the event would be impossible to run in its current format and had wondered if there were other alternatives. They had discussed the possibility of a display on the beach, where residents would have 3 miles of bay/promenade to view the display from, rather than congregating within a constrained area within the park.

TE advise the group that a display on the beach would have to be considered in the context of being a brand new event, which would require a new event safety plan, site plan, traffic management plan and steward plans and would therefore need a lot more time (and more meetings) to prepare.

RG agreed that a new location would create a different event and thought that people would still turn up in large numbers to view the fireworks and asked how that would be managed? A new location could also double or triple the attendance numbers (as had happened with the Llandudno event), and people would have an appetite for attending an event after spending months in lockdown. She mentioned Theatr Clwyd and that, due to social distancing measures, their capacity was down to 83 from 600. RG added that Conwy Events team would be happy to help if a change of location was decided upon, but that the requirement to restrict numbers and ensure public safety would result in a much higher event cost than currently budgeted for.

LY agreed and stated that an Emergency Action Plan would need to be looked at, as a priority.

TK informed the sub-committee that the fireworks were usually ordered in May/June, and that there was a minimum of 8 weeks lead-in time required from the date of event. However, ordering later reduced the choice of fireworks available and increased the potential costs. In relation to the beach being used instead, he mentioned that both the tide and wind speed/direction would need to be taken in to consideration and that a new risk assessment and

site plan would need to be drawn up. He reiterated that currently, the fire service was not supporting any mass gathering events.

MW expressed concern about the difficulty that may be faced from trying to build a bonfire, just before the event, and before high tide. He also wondered how stewards would be able to control access to the promenade. JA discussed the impact this would have on the policing of the event, should a Police Officer have to assist the stewards at control points. JA also highlighted TK's point that the Fire Service not supporting events would have a major impact on the ability of the event to go ahead.

TK confirmed that it would not be possible to build a bonfire on the beach. CH stated that he couldn't see the event being able to go ahead in Eirias Park, due to the issues with social distancing. He wanted events to go ahead in Conwy, but reluctantly proposed cancelling the event this year.

PBP mentioned that to hold the event on the beach would require a Marine Licence to protect the ecology and diversity. He also agreed that trying to enforce social distancing in the dark would be very difficult. RG informed Members that a Marine Licence would cost approx. £2,000 and agreed with the previous comments that people would not spread out along the promenade as people want to be in the middle of the action. At Llandudno Fireworks event they have approx. 17,000 people in a short period merging in a larger area.

MW countered that regardless of the location, whether the event be held in the park or on the beach, that the same problems would exist, i.e. social distancing and public safety. MW proposed a vote on whether to cancel the event at this point, or delay the decision to a later date. Four Members voted to cancel the event and two voted to delay the decision.

Resolved to recommend, for the reasons stated above, that the 2020 Bonfire and Fireworks event in Eirias Park be reluctantly cancelled, on public safety grounds.

TE informed the sub-committee members that she would need to take the recommendation of the Sub-Committee back to the next Town Council meeting and confirmed that she would inform the Members of the decision taken by the Council at a later date.

The Meeting closed at 3.00pm.

..... Chairman