
**Decision Session: Executive Leader
(incorporating Policy, Strategy and
Partnerships)**

18 September 2019

Report of the Director of Economy and Place

Coordinating the work of city centre agencies - Purple Flag and safer events

Summary

1. The purpose of this report is to set out a proposed approach to coordinating work with residents, businesses and visitors in York city centre through the development of Purple Flag (PF), potentially leading to an application for Purple Flag accreditation, and the coordination of the city's safety advisory group (SAG).
2. Purple Flag's objective is to raise the standard and appeal of city/town centres evening and night time economy. Purple Flag is the benchmark for good night time destinations. Town centres that achieve a Purple Flag are those that are safe, vibrant, appealing, well-managed and offer a positive experience to consumers. This is achieved through improved partnership working and coordination between the many organisations active in the city centre.
3. There are two critical factors in achieving Purple Flag accreditation - a city centre partnership of stakeholders to support the planning and delivery of a Purple Flag process, and active coordination through a dedicated staff resource to support and develop that partnership and project manage the application.
4. The core function of the SAG role will be provide and co-ordinate requests for advice and information from event organisers, with the aim of ensuring events go ahead safely, and with any risks to crime/disorder and the environment minimised as far as possible.
5. An Internal Audit report has identified the lack of a coordinator role in SAG as a key risk and has recommended that the Council create a post to undertake that role.
6. There is considerable synergy between these two elements of Purple Flag and SAG, with a complementary set of stakeholders involved in

both processes, and a skillset which includes understanding the range of organisations involved in managing a city centre and its evening and night time economy.

Recommendations

7. That the Executive Leader:
 - a. Endorses the proposed approach to coordination of city centre working through the Purple Flag model; and
 - b. Approves the creation of a new post in the Economic Growth Team to act as Purple Flag and SAG Coordinator.

Reason: To support growth in the city centre economy and to help ensure that the large number of events which take place in the city do so safely.

Background

8. The new administration have committed to using the Purple Flag scheme to coordinate efforts amongst a wide range of stakeholders to improve the standard of the city centre's evening and night time economy, and the public's perception of the city centre.
9. Financial resource has been made available to implement the approach through the July 2019 supplementary budget. This paper sets out the background to Purple Flag as a scheme, existing commitments from city stakeholders, and a proposed way forward to run a Purple Flag process as part of improved partnership arrangements for the city centre. It also outlines a requirement for additional resource to support the existing safety advisory groups in the city and proposes combining these two tasks into a single coordinating role.

What is Purple Flag?

10. The Purple Flag standard, launched in 2012, is an accreditation process, similar to the Green Flag award for parks and the Blue Flag for beaches. It allows members of the public to quickly identify town and city centres that offer an entertaining, diverse, safe and enjoyable night out. There are currently 70 Purple Flag towns and cities across the UK. Town centres that achieve a Purple Flag are those that are safe, vibrant, appealing, well-managed and offer a positive experience to residents and visitors. Embarking on a Purple Flag process supports stakeholders across the evening and night time economy, in order to work together to meet the required standards in these areas and improve the night time experience of residents and visitors alike.
11. The Purple Flag methodology includes an independent assessment of performance based on a unique set of standards – the Core Agenda.

Town centres that reach or surpass these standards can fly the flag, so providing a golden opportunity to present them in a positive light and in their true colours to consumers, residents, and visitors alike.

12. According to the Association of Town and City Management (ATCM), who run Purple Flag, the accreditation can bring the following benefits:
 - A raised profile and an improved public image
 - Wider patronage
 - Increased expenditure
 - Lower crime and anti-social behaviour
 - A more successful mixed-use economy
13. Purple Flag looks holistically at what a city centre can offer the general public and is based on five cornerstones:-
 - Wellbeing (covering safety, care and health, regulation, services, partnerships and perceptions)
 - Movement (covering public transport, car parking, pedestrian routes, crowd management, information, partnership)
 - Appeal (covering food & dining, pubs and bars, late night venues, early evening, public buildings and arts and culture)
 - Place (covering location, diversity, animation, design and identity)
 - Policy envelope (covering data, strategy, co-ordination, leadership, partnership and community)
14. There are more detailed criteria published which set out the minimum standards to be achieved to achieve Purple Flag accreditation.

Purple Flag in York

15. York city centre's evening and night time economy is both vibrant and challenging. The continued growth of our reputation as a place to visit for leisure has seen the number of bars and restaurants in the city centre increase in recent years. An Office for National Statistics (ONS) report from November 2018 shows that there are 15 more licenced premises in the city than there were in 2001. This is in stark contrast to national trends with ONS reporting that there has been a 23% reduction in the number of pubs nationally since 2008.

16. The challenges that this growth presents are related to the conflicting needs of different users of the city centre, and are most sharply expressed when hen and stag parties use the city centre. It is these challenges that Purple Flag seeks to address, through bringing together those involved in the day time, evening and night time economies and developing joint plans and management approaches.
17. ATCM produce a wide range of material to support places in seeking and maintaining the Purple Flag standard. They identify two crucial elements – a city centre partnership of stakeholders to support the planning and delivery of a PF process, and a Purple Flag Coordinator post to support and develop that partnership and project manage that process.
18. In terms of the partnership, the 5 cornerstones of the scheme cover a range of policy and operational areas with relevant CYC internal and external partners:

Purple Flag Cornerstone	Relevant internal & external services
Wellbeing (covering safety, care and health, regulation, services, partnerships and perceptions)	Safer York, Public Health, Licensing, Comms +Police, NHS, BID, YBAC, York Rescue Boat, businesses, UoY and YStJU (via their student bodies)
Movement (covering public transport, car parking, pedestrian routes, crowd management, information, partnership)	Transport, Safer York +First York, TOCs, Car Parks, special interest groups
Appeal (covering food & dining, pubs and bars, late night venues, early evening, public buildings and arts and culture)	Licensing, Culture, Env Health + MIY, BID, FSB, businesses, trade bodies (LVA, York Hospitality Forum, Retail Forum, traders groups)
Place (covering location, diversity, animation, design and identity)	Regen/My City Centre, Culture, Conservation +MIY, BID, FSB, theatres, etc
Policy envelope (covering data, strategy, co-ordination, leadership, partnership and community)	Intelligence/Smart Cities, Regen/My City Centre, Economic Growth, Communities + MIY, BID, Retail Forum

19. The Purple Flag Coordinator role involves a mix of partnership development, project management and administration, working across these multiple organisations and interests. Experience in other cities suggests that this would need to be a full-time post, perhaps also picking

up responsibility for related partnership and policy areas, and that it should not be based in a team which has a narrow focus on one of the Cornerstone areas.

20. The role would have a range of key responsibilities: to develop a PF partnership; to facilitate and service PF partnership meetings; to project manage a PF process leading to a PF submission in 2021; to coordinate communications around PF and evening and night time economy issues. The role would be based in the Economic Growth Team, working closely with other related City of York Council services.
21. While it is key for the Council to take a lead on initiating and coordinating Purple Flag, other partners have also expressed a willingness to contribute to the work and take forward the issues raised. For example, York BID have committed to funding the accreditation costs and there may be further actions identified in the PF process which could become areas for the BID and others to develop additional projects.

Safety at events in York

22. Events of all kinds play an important role in community life. They also provide commercial opportunities for those communities, organisations or other good causes and their impact can be far reaching bringing wider economic opportunity into the local area. But public safety at events must remain the number one priority. Safety Advisory Groups provide expertise to help event organisers take the necessary steps to help events go ahead, but crucially to go ahead safely.
23. There are two similar event safety groups operated by the City of York Council, they are as follows:-

Events Safety Advisory Group (ESAG)

24. An Event Safety Advisory Group is a collection of agencies, normally 'Category 1 Responders', under the provisions of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004, notably the police (including counter terrorism considerations), fire and ambulance service as well as services from the local authority – in particular emergency planning, highways, licensing, public protection and the health and safety advisory service. Officers from these areas are brought together to consider significant public events. The ESAG group has no statutory powers, but assists those responders comply with the 2004 Act in that they must undertake actions to prevent the emergency and /or reduce control or mitigate its effects. The City has a large number events –large and small- each year which are privately organised and managed but attended by both residents and visitors.

25. Many local authorities across the country have established ESAG's. However it should be noted that there is no statutory requirement for a local authority to establish such a group. The fact that they have been created is specifically due to the essential role local authorities have in relation to emergency planning, building control, licensing and highway regulation. Once established, it is essential it operates effectively to specific guidelines with clear membership and consultation. Failure to do so may result in serious consequences. For example, the Dreamspace incident (in Chester-Le-Street) in 2006 where an inflatable artwork broke free from its moorings in high wind and resulted in the deaths of two people walking around inside the artwork. This resulted in not only criminal charges against the event organiser but charges against the council and individual charges against council staff such as the Chair of the Event Safety Advisory Group. In this particular case, more emphasis had been placed on ensuring the event happened and not whether it was safe.
26. The group is hosted by the Public Protection team within the Economy and Place Directorate. The Chair of the group is the Head of Public Protection with limited administrative and technical support currently being provided by the Senior Licensing Officer. In both cases the ESAG duties are in addition to their substantive roles. It should be noted that administrative support in this context also includes technical advice on application procedure, information required and process.

Sports Ground Safety Advisory Group (SGSAG)

27. The Sports Grounds Safety Advisory Group has a **statutory** basis in the Safety at Sports Grounds Act 1975 and the Fire Safety and Safety of Places of Sports Act 1987. This group is also chaired by the Head of Public Protection and the Licensing team (Licensing Manager) currently provides the secretarial/administrative function. Also, like the ESAG it is attended by and has significant contributions from the police, fire service, Yorkshire Ambulance Service as well as other CYC officers (Licensing, Highways, Planning and Electrical Safety).
28. This function relates in York to two sports grounds i.e. the Racecourse and Bootham Crescent/Community Stadium. The fact that this group has some statutory leverage i.e. a safety certificate is required to operate and will not be granted unless the requirements of the group are met makes co-operation more forthcoming than is sometimes the case with the ESAG.
29. There is an annual inspection of the sports grounds undertaken by the Licensing Manager.

30. A Veritau audit (dated 15/3/18) and which is attached as appendix 1, identified a number of issues with the council's current ESAG and SGSAG Groups. All of the matters raised, apart from the recommendation to increase the administrative resource have been addressed. The Veritau audit report identified resourcing the ESAG as a priority 2 issue.
31. The table below shows the number of events that the Events Safety Group have considered over the past three years i.e. since Veritau reported in early 2017.

Year	No of events considered
2014	41
2015	51
2016	56
2017	41
2018	53
2019 (to 13.5.19)	36

32. In response to the growing demand for input from SAGs to event planning and the comments of Internal Audit, it is proposed that the Purple Flag coordinator should also support the Head of Public Protection through providing administrative and technical assistance for the SAGs. This would involve acting as secretariat for both SAGs, supporting event organisers to interface with the SAGs, and developing resources to streamline the SAG process.

Consultation

33. A series of meetings have been held to explore a York Purple Flag application, most recently in October 2018. These have included representatives from York BID, Make It York, the Police Commissioner and relevant Council services.

Options

34. Option 1 – do nothing, leaving Purple Flag undelivered and SAG coordination as an additional work stream for the Licencing team.
35. Option 2 – approve the use of resources identified in the supplementary budget in July 2019 to recruit a Purple Flag and SAG Coordinator to the Economic Growth Team as described above

36. Option 3 – separate the Purple Flag and SAG roles, leaving the latter as a budget pressure.

Analysis

37. Option one will leave Purple Flag as an aspiration only and disregard the findings of Internal Audit in relation to the operation of SAGs.
38. Option two would enable both activities to be developed in response to the commitments in the Supplementary Budget and the findings of Internal Audit.
39. Option three would enable Purple Flag to proceed with a single-focus role as Coordinator, but would leave SAG coordination as a budget pressure.

Council Priorities

40. Purple Flag and the operation of the safety advisory groups support the Council's priorities in respect of the following:
- A prosperous city for all – supporting a mixed economy, enabling a variety of events to take place in the city which are attractive to residents and visitors and helping to ensure that the events go ahead safely.
 - A focus on frontline services – to help deliver a vital aspect of service delivery.

Implications

41. **Financial:** The July 2019 supplementary budget has earmarked £33k in 2019/20 and £50k in 2020/21 for Purple Flag coordination. This would also be sufficient to also cover the SAG coordination elements.
42. **Human Resources:** The report is requesting an increase of 1x Full Time Equivalent (FTE) Officer.
43. **Equalities:** There are no equalities implications associated with this report
44. **Legal:** There are no legal implications associated with this report.
45. **Crime and Disorder:** Purple Flag aims, amongst a broad portfolio of policies, to reduce anti-social behaviour and support a safer city centre. For the SAG elements, the post will help organisers meet their legal

duties in respect of complying with their legal responsibilities and keeping people safe.

46. **Information Technology (IT):** There are no IT implications associated with this report.
47. **Other:** There are no other implications associated with this report.

Risk Management

48. There is a risk that the two roles cannot be delivered by one individual. This will be reviewed annually and brought back to the Executive Leader should a need to change the delivery model be identified.
49. In relation to the Internal Audit findings on SAG, applying the Council's risk scoring criteria, the current risk is 'moderate' (yellow risk). This is because there is a 'possible' risk of action in national court and imprisonment of employees, large numbers of people could be affected, with national media coverage and fatal injury. Introducing a dedicated officer to make processes more efficient reduces the risk to 'minor' (green risk) as the likelihood of the impact reduces to 'unlikely'.

Contact Details

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**Report
Approved**



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Specialist Officer Implications: None

Wards Affected:

All

Background Papers:

None

Annexes

Annex 1 – Veritau Report

List of Abbreviations Used in this Report

ATCM: Association for Town and City Management
BID: Business Improvement District

PF: Purple Flag
SAG: Safety Advisory Group