MEETING OF EXECUTIVE
17 February 2004

Report of the Director of Environment & Development Services

“Royal Ascot at York”

Summary

1. The report outlines progress to date on planning for the Royal Ascot meeting in York (expected to take place in 2005). Planning for the event is still in its early stages and the report provides the Executive with an overall picture of the issues involved, the action being taken/planned, and implications on Council services. Work on key areas such as the traffic management plan is in progress and further reports will come forward on this and other issues. The Executive is asked to comment/advise on the issues outlined in the report and, specifically, to consider approvals on three detailed issues under the terms of the current lease with York Racecourse.

Information

2. Current position regarding the race meeting

* Royal Ascot at York will be a five day race meeting, managed by the Ascot Racecourse executive. The meeting is expected to take place in York in 2005 and all planning is geared to that date. A number of detailed issues remain to be resolved (related to the development at Ascot) and a final decision is expected by their Board by the end of May. 2006 is the back-up date.

* The meeting will replace York’s normal two day June meeting. York Race Committee may look to stage these two days later in the season, added to their existing race meetings.

3. Arrangements with York and Ascot Racecourses

* Roy Templeman is leading the Council’s discussions with the two racecourses. Tony Bennett heads up a Steering Group that brings together the Council’s input in terms of traffic management, planning, leisure, licensing (safety), property, legal, communications and economic development interests.

* Monthly meetings of a “Royal Ascot at York Strategy Group” are scheduled with the two racecourses and the Police from January onwards. Royal Ascot have put in place a project manager operating from York 5 days per month.
* The Council’s response to the prospect of Royal Ascot coming to York has been positive and pro-active – seeing the wider benefits for the city. A collaborative approach has been adopted enabling the Council to secure measures from Ascot (and York) that extend beyond what is required by legislation.

* A financial model to deal with the costs of staging Royal Ascot at York has been agreed, reflecting the principle that York tax-payers should not be funding any of the costs that relate directly as a result of the meeting: These were confirmed with York and Ascot Racecourses at the Royal Ascot at York Strategy Group meeting on 13 January as follows:

  i) Any costs which are associated with the Royal Ascot meeting coming to York should be borne by Ascot Racecourse.

  ii) Any additionality or benefit to York Racecourse which is beyond that what was needed for the Ascot event was a matter for York Racecourse and Ascot to discuss.

  iii) Any additionality for the City in managing future race events which could be incorporated/tested at the Ascot event but not directly needed for the Ascot event were a matter for York Racecourse and the City.

  iv) Any costs associated with events staged within the City beyond the specific needs of Ascot were a matter for the Council.

* Traffic management issues (see below) would therefore be expected to fall within parts i) and ii) of this model. The principle area where Council services are likely to be affected are cleansing (within the city). This would be expected to fall within i). Additional costs will need to be identified and negotiated with Ascot/York racecourses. Commercial Services also provide cleansing services within the racecourse for normal York meetings.

4. Traffic Management

* Basic principles have been established by the Council (and outlined previously to the Executive). This involves using the A64 as the principle access route to the course, separating race traffic from other York and through traffic, taking car access directly from the A64 to the southern edge of the course and protecting adjoining residential areas.

* At the Council’s instigation, Ascot Racecourse have appointed traffic consultants Faber Maunsell (based in York) to produce detailed plans based on the above principles. This work is currently in progress and draft proposals are awaited. In view of residents’ concerns over this aspect Ascot are being urged to bring forward proposals as soon as practicable so that they can be discussed – and residents informed. They have been cooperative in pursuing the parameters set by the Council. The intention is that normal routes along Tadcaster Road and Knavesmire Road, and through Bishopthorpe should be avoided as much as possible.
5. Planning issues

* The planning application for the track extension (forming a continuous loop to facilitate the 2½ mile race that forms part of the Ascot meeting) was approved at the January 8th City Centre Area Sub-Committee. Planning applications are also expected to be required for some of the temporary stands that will be required (depending on the height and foundations required). No other planning consent is required on the basis of the current information available. The race meeting itself does not require consent and does not constitute an intensification of use in planning terms.

6. Licensing and safety

* Safety certificates (agreed on technical/Government guidance criteria by the Safety Advisory Group) currently exist for 5 stands, specifying the capacity for each area among many other requirements (each certificate is around 100 pages long). Changes to these certificates may be needed and new, temporary, stands are likely to require certificates. Legislation allows for charges to be made for these on a cost-recovery basis.

* The aggregated capacity of the five stands (15,557) does not define the overall capacity of the course and the relevant legislation does not allow for such a capacity to be set. However, a verbal agreement has been made with Ascot that they will agree with the Safety Advisory Group a safe total capacity for the whole of the course.

* Normal York race meetings tend to peak at around 40,000 – 45,000 attendance levels. Initial estimates for Royal Ascot at York suggest that attendance could range between 30,000 and 70,000. However, more detailed work on capacity planning is currently being undertaken by Ascot racecourse and additional information is expected to be supplied during February prior to discussion at the 25 February meeting of the York Safety Advisory Group.

7. Leisure/open space issues

* Key issues such as access and movement across the Knavesmire and the reinstatement of football pitches are being covered through the planning process. York Racecourse have been cooperative in covering these points.

8. Lease and Legal issues

* See exempt information contained in Annex A.

9. Residents’ interests

* The Royal Ascot meeting was discussed with residents at the Micklegate Ward Committee in October. Several of those present expressed concerns over potential car parking, traffic management and anti-social behaviour problems. The issue has also been discussed at the February Ward Committees (at Micklegate and Dringhouses and Woodthorpe) when William Derby (York Racecourse) and John Lacy (Police) also attended.
Generally, the open approach to talking to residents through the Ward Committees has been well received – and will continue. Bishopthorpe and Wheldrake Ward Committee will be included in the April schedule of discussions – with other Wards covered as appropriate as details emerge.

* The traffic management and policing aspects will be the subject of further discussion with Members and residents as details emerge over the next few months.

* Some residents have expressed interest in letting out their properties. This is being discussed with York Racecourse to see if this can be coordinated in some way to enable local people to benefit.

10. Communication Plan

* Marketing and Communications have put together a draft communication plan covering local aspects of the event. This will be developed further in conjunction with the York Racecourse, Ascot Racecourse and Police PR teams. The initial focus will address residents' concerns and the communication of the arrangements being made for the event. Promotion and awareness of the potential benefits – and promotion of the event itself will follow.

* The plan has been passed to Ascot’s traffic consultants for them to consider the implementation of that part of the plan.

11. Royal Visit

* The race-meeting is a “Royal” meeting and is usually attended (for 4 days) by the Queen and a significant number of The Royal Family. No details for Royal Ascot at York exist at this stage, but an initial visit from The Royal Household is due shortly. Requirements in terms of security and route-planning will emerge in due course and civic/ceremonial and community aspects of the visit will need to be explored.

12. Economic Benefit

* The Royal meeting is one of the top sporting events in the country and will provide a high profile for the city – in sport, tourism and economic terms. Extensive media coverage will be involved – whether sports, news, fashion, tourism or business-focused. The extra visitors will bring additional spend and the potential economic benefit for the city (over the week of the race meeting and beyond) is considerable. The opportunity exists to achieve longer-term benefit.

* Economic benefit in these cases is always difficult to quantify and contact is being made with other UK cities to estimate the scale of the benefit and assess what form it might take. Also, it is proposed to hold a forum of key business interests (in conjunction with the Council’s Chief Executive) within the next few weeks to discuss how the city might achieve lasting benefit from the event. Further detail will emerge from that process.
13. **Wider, community, opportunities**

* This is a major, one-off event for York which, in addition to the economic and business benefits it will bring, offers wider opportunities to do something special for York people. In terms of the race meeting itself access will be available to the centre of the course as usual and activities/services could be provided (capacity and safety issues will also need to be addressed). In addition, the opportunity exists to build activities around the event, for example a programme of summer activities, festivals, evening activity in the city centre (an Ascot “festival”), special activities at York’s attractions, involvement of schools, the Royal Party, activities targeting special groups (people with special needs), lecture activities etc etc. The aim would be to make the event special for York people as well as offering something to visitors creating a community atmosphere (and a safe environment).

* It is suggested by Management Team that a cross-Council group (possibly with member involvement) should be established to pursue this.

**Conclusions/recommendations**

14. The Executive is asked to:

i) Advise and comment on the issues covered in the report.

ii) Give consent to the three detailed points required under the lease with York Racecourse, subject to negotiation on an appropriate fee, and advise on the approach to be taken on seeking income from changes to the lease.

iii) Advise on action to be taken to secure maximum economic and community benefit from the event.

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