

# Audit and Governance Committee

**Dorset County Council**



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| Date of Meeting   | 7 December 2016  |
| Officer           | Andrew Martin – Service Director Highways & Emergency Planning   |
| Subject of Report | <b>Call to Account – Ironman Weymouth 2016</b>   |
| Executive Summary | <p>The inaugural Ironman Weymouth event was held in September 2016 following on from two similar events held in 2014 and 2015.</p> <p>As an internationally recognised athletic event organiser, with an associated reputational influence, Ironman`s involvement resulted in a significant increase in participation from previous years to over 2,700 in 2016.</p> <p>Following the event, significant levels of negative press and feedback on the traffic management arrangements on race day were received by the County Council.</p> <p>In particular the marshalling and communication with local communities fell short of expectations for an event of this scale.</p> <p>This report seeks to explore the process in place prior to the Ironman Weymouth race, examine the role of the County Council in the organisation of the event and identify any recommendations for improvement that will facilitate a more positive outcome for Dorset communities in future.</p> |
| Recommendation    | <p>The Committee are asked to :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>(i) Consider the contents of the report</li><li>(ii) Offer any additions to the recommendations contained within the report.</li></ul>   |

## Call to Account – Ironman Weymouth 2016

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| Reason for Recommendation | To ensure that a successful process for future large scale events can be implemented that offers a positive experience to participants and local communities alike.  |
| Appendices                | Appendix 1 – Timeline of meetings including attendance list<br>Appendix 2 – 2a. Minutes of Challenge Weymouth 2015 Wash up<br>2b Minutes of Ironman Weymouth 2016 Wash up<br>2c Minutes from Members Engagement Meeting<br>Appendix 3 – Economic Impact Assessment |
| Background Papers         | N/A  |
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### 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 In September 2014 and 2015, events known as “Challenge Weymouth” were held within the Borough, Purbeck and West Dorset, hosted by an organisation called “Just Racing”. Both events consisted of a full and a half distance triathlon with approximately one thousand entrants taking part, and proved to be a popular addition to Weymouth’s calendar.
- 1.2 Following the success of the “Challenge Weymouth” events, the Ironman organisation purchased the hosting rights and arranged to hold their version of the annual triathlon in 2016 to be known as “Ironman Weymouth”.
- 1.3 On 11 September 2016, this inaugural event took place, which consisted of both half and full distance races taking place simultaneously, and attracting nearly three thousand competitors.
- 1.4 Ironman is an internationally recognised brand in triathlon events and has a major international following which results in significant levels of entrants being attracted to their races. This certainly was evidenced in Weymouth with the 2016 Weymouth event seeing nearly three times the number of competitors taking part, compared to previous “Challenge Weymouth” meetings held in 2014 and 2015.
- 1.5 For “Ironman Weymouth” the swim and run stages of the event took place exclusively within the Borough, with the 114 mile bike course extending into Purbeck and West Dorset.
- 1.6 As is the case with events of such magnitude, to ensure the safety of the athletes involved whilst on the public highway, a number of full or one way road closures were implemented on the day of the race, commencing at phased times between 5.00am and 6.00pm.
- 1.7 The event was regarded by the competitors as an overall success, however a large number of public complaints were received on race day and following the event, from inconvenienced residents and businesses. These complaints were due to difficulties

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being experienced by drivers in navigating around the road closure arrangements, resulting in significant congestion and confusion; in some instances queues of up to two hours duration were experienced.

- 1.8 In addition to these delays, specific complaints were received regarding the effectiveness of the Traffic Marshalls deployed to reinforce the traffic management plan, with suggestions that the Marshalls had little or no knowledge of the locality, had limited if any access to the agreed traffic management proposals with some displaying a limited command of the English language.
- 1.9 It is important to examine the full scope of the organisational plan that was put in place leading up to and during the event to identify areas for improvement for future events, and the context within which it was prepared.
- 1.10 Section 2 of this report offers commentary against a range of Key Lines of Enquiry which is intended to provide an account of the County Council's role in the organisation of the 2016 Ironman Weymouth, together with observations as to the reasons behind the difficulties experienced on the day by many road users across the network.
- 1.11 Section 16A of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 enables a traffic authority to make a temporary traffic order to facilitate the holding of a sporting event, enable members of the public to watch an event or reduce disruption to traffic caused by an event. An event organiser can apply to the County Council asking that such an order be made. The process currently followed for events such as Ironman is;
  - Preliminary discussions with event promoter
  - Application received
  - In the case of a significant event, such as Ironman, we consult with the Portfolio Holder
  - Request for an event management plan
  - Consultation with the promoter to finalise proposals
  - Formal application for TTRO received
  - Formal consultation with key stakeholders
  - TTRO approved and issued

## 2.0 Key Lines of Enquiry

### 2.1 What specific duties/responsibilities rest with the County Council in respect of events such as Ironman Weymouth?

As the highway and traffic authority the County Council has statutory duties to maintain publicly maintainable highway; to assert and protect the rights of the public to the use and enjoyment of any highway; to manage the road network with a view to securing the expeditious movement of traffic and to exercise traffic regulation functions so as to secure the expeditious convenient and safe movement of vehicular and other traffic.

Officers from Dorset Highways are key members of the relevant Safety Advisory Group (SAG), chaired by Dorset Councils Partnership, which consists of representatives from all key stakeholder agencies across Dorset, including Police, Borough Councils/District Councils.

The purpose of the SAG is to collectively ensure the safety of the public, minimise disruption on the highway network as a result of any proposed event and to work in

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conjunction with event promoters to establish an effective approach to the specific traffic management issues.

The Event Proposer's Traffic Management Plan may require a Temporary Traffic Regulation Order (TTRO) the application for which is processed by the County Council's highways team. As part of the process highways officers will comment on the signing schedule within the Traffic Management Plan and, in conjunction with the event proposer, offer advice on the production of a clear and relevant communication strategy.

### **2.2 What Powers, if any, does the County Council have to stop such events - Who holds these Powers and on what grounds can they be exercised?**

Through its role on the SAG, the County Council can advise on proposals. The County Council can make reasonable requirements if the Traffic Management Plan requires a TTRO. When a TTRO is applied for, the County Council can withhold issuing such an Order until they are satisfied that key conditions have been met, and the route identified is safe. As with any of its discretionary powers, the County Council must act reasonably when deciding whether or not to act.

If no TTRO is required, or the event promoter do not wish to engage with the SAG, the County Council has limited influence over the event. If the public highway is used unreasonably, the County Council has limited powers to take immediate action and it is likely that the police would need to be involved if such a situation arose.

If a TTRO is granted to facilitate the event, it is only the Police who can enforce that Order.

### **2.3 How can procedural failings be avoided?**

After the event, it came to light that a requirement to obtain Secretary of State consent had not been followed. This is required when a specific road is closed on more than one occasion in a particular calendar year for an event (classed as not works) under Section 16 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984.

This oversight occurred, as the scale of this event covered a significant number of streets in Weymouth, West Dorset and Purbeck and officers overlooked that within the list of streets, two had been closed previously for a Section 16 application.

This procedural failing resulted in two of the streets within the order in Weymouth, The Esplanade and Custom House Quay falling outside the scope of the legal order. As soon as the oversight was discovered we immediately notified the Secretary of State who confirmed that no retrospective action would be taken against the County Council.

To ensure such an occurrence is not repeated in future, a more robust check list mechanism has been introduced into the TTRO process.

### **2.4 How do we seek necessary assurances the event organisers have planned appropriately?**

The Home Office Guidance, 'The Good Practice Safety Guide, August 2006' sets out the principles of planning an event on the highway. This guidance was issued as a result of the Hillsborough report.

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The County Council has also produced an extensive guidance schedule for event organisers which can be accessed within the Dorset For You website. All applicants are directed to the guidance as part of the application process.

All SAG's are run on the principles laid out in the Home Office Guidance. These include timelines for producing key documents and actions which include the Traffic Management Plan, as part of the overall Event Management Plan, risk assessments, public forums, consultation and communication strategy.

In relation to the Ironman Weymouth, two SAG meetings were held, the first on the 11<sup>th</sup> February 2016, and the second on the 5<sup>th</sup> July 2016, details of attendees at each are within Appendix 1. These meetings discussed all aspects for the proposals submitted by the Ironman organisation and offered all Stakeholders the opportunity to comment in relation to their particular priorities.

On the Wednesday prior to the event, a pre-race meeting was held and attended by all key Stakeholders to discuss any last minute issues. A full list of the attendees is included within Appendix 1.

In addition to these meetings, on Race Day, the County Council opened the Traffic Control Centre at County Hall and in addition deployed two experienced Traffic Officers within the Ironman race control room based in Weymouth with the intention of facilitating an integrated approach to managing any operational issues as they arose.

Unfortunately, there appeared to be a reluctance for Ironman representatives to liaise with County Council staff on the day which significantly reduced the ability of these Officers to utilise the resources at their disposal or opportunity to feed into incidents, which could have assisted in resolving issues that were occurring on the network.

### **2.5 How do we ensure that wider communications in advance of the event are sufficient?**

Although there is no prescribed notice or consultation procedures for making TTROs for special events, Department for Transport guidance recommends that traffic authorities should take account of the scale and the nature of the event. In particular any measure that could affect access to premises or property should be subject to appropriate consultation and notification with the intention of minimising the impact on local business and residents.

When considering an application for a traffic order for an event, the County Council requires the event promoter to undertake a communication exercise. The County Council will advise the proposer on how to undertake this in an effective manner.

Discussions with consultees and promoter will be facilitated by County Council Officers to address any concerns and to ensure that any mitigation measures can be implemented.

For the purposes of "Ironman Weymouth" the communication strategy contained several key activities:

- A Members Engagement Meeting was held on 25 May 2016. Please see Appendix 1, for list of attendees.
- 70,000 letters containing the event timetable and a route map were distributed through the Royal Mail.
- Parish Council liaison meetings were arranged

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- Ironman displayed route and access information on their website from May 2016.
- Dorset County Council hosted an Ironman webpage on Travel Dorset, with links directly to the Ironman Weymouth Website, this went live on the 25 August 2016.

It is questionable how successful the Parish engagement proved to be, there is evidence where invitations to meetings were distributed by the Ironman organisers but it would appear that attendance at these meetings was very limited.

### **2.6 When did the organisers present their final plans for approval?**

The initial plans were presented at the SAG meetings on the 11 February 2016 and 5 July 2016. Amendments and refinements were being made in consultation with the County Council and other Stakeholders up until Race Day.

Appendix 1 gives details of when these meetings took place and who attended.

### **2.7 What level of specific engagement took place with Districts & Boroughs / Town & Parish Councils prior to the event?**

Dorset Highways Officers arranged a Member Engagement Meeting which was held on the 25 May 2016 to which all members with wards/divisions on the race route were invited to attend. Some district members also attended this meeting, but it was specifically aimed at the County Council Elected Members.

Appendix 1 gives details of Members who attended together with apologies received, and Appendix 2c contains the minutes of the meeting.

The County Council also provided Ironman with the contact details for Town and Parish Councils and advised that they convene meetings to discuss the route and race proposals in further detail.

As outlined in 2.4 above, it would appear that engagement achieved with Town and Parish Councils was limited.

### **2.8 Who are the other key partners we worked with?**

- Ironman
- Events People (Ironman Traffic Management Company)
- Dorset Police
- Dorset Councils Partnership – (Licencing, Event Management, Beach Control, Facilities, Emergency Planning, Building Control)
- Dorset & Wiltshire Fire Service
- South West Ambulance
- HM Coastguard
- Port Authority
- DCC Emergency Planning Officers
- DCC Elected Members

### **2.9 Were there any last minutes changes which resulted in difficulties? How was it decided that these were to be mitigated?**

Ironman`s proposals were presented to the afore mentioned SAG meetings, with any subsequent minor amendments being agreed on an ongoing basis.

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Prior to Race Day, no significant amendments to these proposals were received, however on the afternoon of the race it was brought to the attention of County Council Officers in attendance within the Race Control Centre that a significant issue relating to resourcing of the Race Marshalls had occurred.

Ironman representatives confirmed that two weeks before the Race Day, the company appointed to specifically resource the Race Marshall's had pulled out and alternative arrangements had to be made through Ironman's Traffic Management contractor.

This was frustrating for County Council Officers, as had they been informed by Ironman immediately they became aware of this change, it is likely that Officers could have assisted Ironman in seeking volunteers to Marshall the event who would have possessed the necessary key attributes.

However by the time this issue was brought to the attention of County Council Officers on the afternoon of Race Day, there was insufficient opportunity or time to implement any mitigating actions.

### **2.10 What were the estimated costs & benefits associated with the event?**

The event organiser pays an application fee for a TTRO but there is a cost to the County Council in terms of staff time however, the County Council's various duties require it to consider and manage the impact of such events as Ironman Weymouth.

Following an Economic Impact Assessment, see appendix 3, the overall net benefit to the county as a whole was assessed to be £1.1 million with the net benefit to the rural economy totalling £186,200.

This assessment takes into account the positive and negative financial impact in Dorset for the Ironman Event.

Whilst economic well-being is an element of the County Council's Corporate Plan, the economic impact of an event does not override the statutory duties imposed on the County Council.

### **2.11 What lessons learned were identified from the previous event - why were repeat issues identified?**

Whilst this is technically the first Ironman Weymouth event there was a "Lessons Learned" meeting held following the "Challenge Weymouth" event in 2015 which had direct relevance to the 2016 Ironman Weymouth.

The minutes of this meeting are attached in Appendix 2a, and highlight the principle lessons as being:

- The need to deploy local Marshalls
- The requirement to put in place a multi-faceted approach to publicising the event
- That any proposed race course was designed following consultation and feedback received from Dorset Police, Residents and Businesses.

The County Council Officers were of the opinion that the process that had been adopted for the 2016 event had ensured that these issues identified from the 2015 event had been addressed within the Management Plan presented at the SAG Meetings.

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Unfortunately, as outlined above, Ironman omitted to inform us of their change in approach in relation to local Marshalls due to the change in contractor. The communication strategy was largely delivered, but again as outlined above, there is concern as to the effectiveness of the consultation and engagement achieved with Town and Parish Councils affected.

### **2.12 How can we be confident the necessary assurances will be in place before future events?**

We are working with Ironman to develop a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) which all SAG members will sign up to by the end of February 2017. Whilst this is not a legally binding document, it will record the expectations for each stakeholder.

The MoU will spell out the responsibilities of each Agency and highlight key dates that need to be adhered to leading up to September 2017, including:

- A timeline for all key activities.
- Clear outline of responsibilities of all stakeholders.
- Milestones for all key activities.
- Requirement for Ironman to provide a definitive plan for resourcing the traffic control stations along the race route with suitably experienced, and knowledgeable Marshalls, six weeks prior to Race Day.

Specific responsibilities will be placed on Ironman to provide full details of their Traffic Management and Control Plan with detailed contingency plans to ensure the required level of resilience has been identified.

Ironman will also be encouraged to liaise with Town and Parish Councils well in advance of the event date to encourage improved co-operation and ensuring that every opportunity is given to the local communities to contribute to the event.

At the time of writing, contact is being made with other authorities that have hosted previous Ironman events, to learn from their experiences and ensure we are adopting best practice wherever possible.

### **2.13 When can the council apply charges for such events to monitor compliance?**

The County Council has limited power to apply charges, however as part of our engagement with other Authorities we are exploring whether additional charges can be made, to cover the increasing staff time that is being invested in events of this scale.

At present, charges are made to cover the costs associated with the administration of Temporary Traffic Regulation Order and the operational staff manning the Traffic Control Centre.

In addition, charges would be made for any reactive operational input by Dorset Highway's workforce to provide such resources as additional signage, staff or specialist plant.

It is likely that in future charges will be made for Officers attending the Race Control Centre.



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### **3.0 Post Event “Wash Up” 2016/Lessons Learned Event**

- 3.1 Over eighty email complaints from residents and businesses, relating to the Ironman Weymouth event were received by the County Council.
- 3.2 As in previous years, a post event “wash up”/lessons learned meeting was held on 27 September 2016 to identify the main issues of concern and identify any areas for improvement for future years.
- 3.3 The 2016 meeting identified the following schedule of concerns
  - Elements of implementing the agreed Traffic Management Plan
  - Engagement of Marshalls with local knowledge
  - Implementation of consultation strategy with Town and Parish Councils
  - Consider amendments to course layout to reduce risk of disruption

The minutes of this meeting are attached in Appendix 2

- 3.4 Although the County Council has not yet received an application, a 2017 event is proposed to consist of a 70 mile total distance event only which will reduce the duration of the road closures by half compared to 2016, which will significantly reduce any disruption and inconvenience if a TTRO is approved.

### **4.0 Suggested Areas for Improvement**

It is clear that a number of issues relating to the 2016 Ironman Weymouth event contributed to the travelling public and local communities along the race route experiencing significant levels of disruption and inconvenience.

The review meetings have assisted us in identifying areas where additional attention is required in future to ensure that all communities enjoy the benefits of such an internationally recognised event.

The following suggestions are made as improvements to the process.

#### **Suggestion 1**

- Produce a Memorandum of Understanding between all key SAG members in accordance with Home Office guidance, by the end of February 2017.

#### **Suggestion 2**

- A post event meeting and evaluation is undertaken within a month of the event taking place and consider Legal Services involvement when legal issues are involved.

#### **Suggestion 3**

- Event organisers are asked to produce a detailed communication plan in support of their application which seeks to consult and where possible, engage the District, Town, Borough and Parish councils.

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### **Suggestion 4**

- Ensure that the Ironman hotline, Dorset County Council Traffic Control Centre and Event Control Centre work in a fully integrated manner.

### **Suggestion 5**

- Review and refresh practices, systems and training needs relating to legal and practical processes and requirements.

**Mike Harries**

**Director for Environment and Economy**

November 2016