

Amendment to the Festivals and Events Policy

Final Decision-Maker	Economic Regeneration and Leisure Committee
Lead Head of Service	Head of Regeneration and economic Development – John Foster
Lead Officer and Report Author	Visitor Economy & Events Development Manager - Laura Dickson
Classification	Public
Wards affected	All

Executive Summary

Maidstone is widely recognised for the quality of the events that take place and a desirable location for event organisers. Events and Festivals directly support tourism and the economic impact of events benefits the whole borough. In order to manage the existing events programme whilst encouraging the sustainability and growth of events, an amendment to the festival and Events Policy is proposed.

Purpose of Report

To recommend an amendment to the festival and events policy relating to the noise levels and frequency of events.

To provide an overview of events in our parks in 2019

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

1. That the amendments to the Festivals and Events policy set out in the report be agreed.

Timetable

Meeting	Date
Economic Regeneration and Leisure Committee	26 November 2019

Amendment to the Festivals and Events Policy

1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	Accepting the recommendations will materially improve the Council's ability to achieve A Thriving Place. We set out the reasons other choices will be less effective in section 2.	Head of Service or Manager
Cross Cutting Objectives	The report has no impact on the achievement of the cross-cutting objectives.	Head of Service or Manager
Risk Management	Already covered in the risk section – paragraph 5 of the report.	Head of Service or Manager
Financial	We expect accepting the recommendations may help to achieve existing income targets. This income is within amounts already accounted within the Council's financial planning.	Section 151 Officer & Finance Team
Staffing	We will deliver the recommendations with our current staffing.	Head of Service
Legal	The recommendations in the report and the amendment to the Festivals and Events Policy align with the Council's general duty, under section 3 of the Local Government Act 1999 as a best value authority, to "make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness". It is a function of the Economic Regeneration and Leisure Committee to oversee the development, review and implementation of the Council's Festivals and Events Policy and, therefore, it falls to this Committee to consider the Amendment to the Festivals and Events Policy report.	Team Leader (Corporate Governance), MKLS

Privacy and Data Protection	The proposed recommendations do not include a potential for processing personal data therefore a data protection impact assessment would not be required.	Equalities and Corporate Policy Officer
Equalities	The recommendations do not propose a change in service therefore will not require an equalities impact assessment	Equalities and Corporate Policy Officer
Public Health	We recognise that the recommendations will not negatively impact on population health or that of individuals.	Public Health Officer
Crime and Disorder	The recommendation will have no impact on Crime and Disorder.	Head of Service or Manager
Procurement	There are no procurement implications at this stage	Head of Service & Section 151 Officer

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Festivals and events directly support tourism and the economic impact of events benefits the borough. The Tourism Destination Management Plan identifies events as one of the key growth areas that will drive more visitors to the borough.
- 2.2 Well organised festivals and events are recognised for their ability to produce benefits for the local economy, bring life to an area, create interest in the area and reflect the place. Due to the broad dynamics of events and festivals, which cover sports, leisure, special interest, culture, heritage and the arts, they can each have a positive impact and make a significant contribution to the status and image of the Borough.
- 2.3 Maidstone Borough has an established history and tradition of hosting events and festivals. There is a comprehensive and diverse range of activities; from music events to community events that have a direct links to the well-being and cohesion of the local community.
- 2.4 In 2019, using the EventsImpact methodology, the three largest events in Mote Park, Ramblin Man Fair, Rock the Mote and Revival had a combined economic impact of over £3.1m to the borough.

Overview of 2019 Events

2.5 Proms in the Park

In October 2018 the Heritage, Culture & Leisure Committee agreed to discontinue Proms. As a budget saving, the funding of council events has been reduced by £30000 over a three-year period from 2017-2019. The

remaining £5000 in 2019 for Proms was agreed by Committee to be used to provide a series of bandstand concerts in Brenchley Gardens.

- 2.6 However, the Leader of the Council was able to secure sponsorship of £20000 in 2019 from Weston Homes. They have indicated that they will sponsor Proms for a 5-year period. They have confirmed sponsorship of the 2020 Proms.
- 2.7 Proms took place in Whatman Park on Saturday 25th May 2019. Parkwood Leisure who run the Hazlitt Theatre provided the event management of Proms as part of their contract.
- 2.8 The event was free of charge this year after the introduction of ticketing in 2018 to part fund the event. It is estimated that the number of attendees doubled this year from 900 to over 1800 as the event was free to attend. Variations do happen each year due to several factors including weather or other events.

2.9 Brenchley Gardens Bandstand Concerts

Maidstone Area Arts Partnership (MAAP) agreed to put on 4 concerts on consecutive Sunday afternoons starting on 23rd June until the 14th July.

- 2.10 The concerts were provided by Maidstone Youth Music Society, Jon Hamilton Big Band, BAE Brass Band and Invicta Jazz orchestra. Audiences ranged from 80 to several hundred people lasting an hour and a half. The costs including the management and marketing were achieved well within the £5000 budget. There is no baseline budget to continue this in 2020 as the final £5000 of the budget will be cut.

2.11 Shemomedjamo - Multi-Cultural Food and Music Festival

In November 2016 Heritage, Culture and Leisure Committee agreed to outsource a new three-day multicultural event and food festival to an external provider, with a reducing subsidy over three years so it could become self-financing. The contract was awarded to Event Umbrella and the new event is branded as Shemomedjamo.

In 2019, the final year of the contract, the Event Umbrella could no longer subsidise the event as they had been doing the previous year. It was not sustainable as a self-funded event as the cost of the entertainment programme required by the contract and rising event costs meant that it was unable to be covered by the income through the food festival.

2.12 Maidstone Community Mela

The Community Mela took place for the third year in Whatman Park. It is organised by Cohesion Plus who apply for Arts Council and other funding to support it each year. MBC agreed a contribution of £2500 in 2019 along with free use of the park, officer time and marketing support. As there is no baseline budget to support it, many members contributed from their allowance.

- 2.13 The Community Mela may move to Mote Park in 2020, and a date has been reserved. However, the additional costs that would be incurred by moving to a larger venue may prohibit the move.

2.14 There is no baseline budget in 2020 for MBC to support the Mela, but we can continue to provide free venue hire and additional marketing support. Event income would be affected by a free let of the park during the few weekend dates that are available for external hire.

2.15 Ramblin Man Fair

This is the fourth year that this promoter has run the event since taking over the brand. The event started on the afternoon of Friday 20th July until Sunday 22nd July.

2.16 Over 19,000 attendees came over the 3 days, from all over the world including Chile, Australia, Malaysia, Sweden. Around a third of attendees were from Kent and London. Over 60% of attendees stayed in accommodation in the area spilling throughout Kent as the serviced accommodation locally became fully booked. Many Ramblers were camping or glamping on site.

2.17 16 noise complaints were received, mainly on the Friday when the final sound checks were taking place. Although more than last year (3), it was still substantially less than previous years. The music noise levels did not breach the limits at any time. The music was audible but that did not make it too loud. The only difference to the event was that in 2018 there was a strong wind blowing westerly that carried the sound in the opposite direction. This was a category A event with the highest limits set.

2.18 All events that have operate category A or B events must contract a specialist noise monitoring company who measure the levels at noise sensitive locations and feed back to the production desk.

2.19 Rock the Mote, Revival and Oktoberfest

Rock the Mote was a new tribute band festival in August. There were 9000 attendees, with 1000 child tickets available. There were 4 complaints, 3 regarding music noise. This is Category B event with lower limits set.

2.20 Rock the Mote presents Big Top Live and Revival took place in September. The events had around 3000 attendees at each. There were 11 complaints about noise. Although the limits were never breached, the direction of the music was concentrated in one particular direction aided by the blustery conditions. Adjustments were made continuously to manage the noise levels and the organiser is looking at how to improve the sound levels for next year. This was a category A event with the higher limits set.

2.21 Oktoberfest is a Bavarian Beer festival where the music is secondary to the event. It is a category B event and there were no complaints.

2.22 Charity Runs and Other Events

The majority of events in Mote Park are for charities or for schools and are mainly sponsored walks and runs. The breakdown of all events is as follows:

Charity Walk/Runs – 12

Schools – 4

Food or drink events – 3

Music festivals – 3

Miscellaneous – (filming, boats, car, funfairs etc) - 6

2.23 The events season in Mote park is short from the end of May until the beginning of October. The parks will not be used for events outside this time unless restricted to pathways. Events all tend to take place at weekends, so the number of actual event days available is very limited. Large events may need 7 -10 days to build the infrastructure and 3-5 days for the de-rig after the event. It is necessary to build in recovery time after some events and limit the number of events taking place during the summer school holidays. There are only a few dates still available in 2020 for events.

2.24 Festivals and Events Policy

The Festival and Events Policy sets out the priorities, aims and objectives for the delivery of events in our parks and open spaces. (Appendix 1)

2.25 In 2016 it became necessary to differentiate type of events, particularly those that are noisier but not necessarily concerts. Three categories of events were created. They were added to the policy with limits on the number of events and total event days. Although the proposal was for up to three events and a total number of days as 6, committee decided to reduce that to two events up to 6 days in total.

2.26 The proposed amendment would allow more flexibility with events. Currently Ramblin Man Fair is a category A event that takes place over 3 days. The second category A event is the Revival and Big Top Live weekend. All other events were category B or C.

2.27 According to the policy non music events that have a significant impact on the parks or the surrounding area are classed as category A. The increase to the size and scale of many charity runs and walks requires them to be re-classified as category A. They can have a major impact on the roads and the park use. It is now necessary to increase the number of category A events to accommodate the growth of these events.

2.28 One day category A events might lessen the impact to residents rather than two events of up to three days. Ramblin Man is established as a three-day event but the the remaining 3 days could more spread out over a longer period rather than another weekend event. A current enquiry for a high-profile one-day music event cannot be confirmed as the limit has been reached on Category A events for 2020. This event could attract 10-15,000 people and provide an event for a mature target audience.

2.29 Whatman Park is not suitable for a Category A event and has never been used for an event of that size. It is also proposed that the policy be amended to limit events in Whatman Park to Category B.

2.30 Current Wording:

Large music events involving high powered amplification can cause disturbance to those living in the vicinity. These events we will categorise to ensure the impact of these events is minimised and spread out over the Festival and Event season. The category of events will be as follows:

- Category A events - amplified noise profile will extend beyond the boundary of the park and will be clearly audible at properties within and/or surrounding the parks and/ or significant:
 - increase in the number of visitors to the parks,
 - change to the normal use and operational matters in the parks,
 - impact on the surrounding area.

Examples- Music Concert, VIP Visit, high profile event

- Category B events - where the number of participants requires changes to normal use of the park and the surrounding infrastructure. Much lower noise profile but utilising amplified noise to communicate to audiences or with live / recorded music as part of the entertainment.

Example- Large scale charity run, cultural festival.

- Category C events - events with little or no impact on the surrounding area and no amplified noise.

Example- Nature talks and smaller community events.

In order to manage the impact of events, each park will be assigned limits based on the category types event and, where appropriate, the noise limits will also be set follows:

Mote Park

Category	No. Events	Maximum No. Days	Music Noise Level if appropriate
A	Up to 2	6	65dB LAEQ (15min)
B	Up to 8	12	Should not exceed 15dB LAEQ (15min) above the normal background levels
C	Unlimited	N/A	N/A

Whatman Park

Category	No. Events	Maximum No. Days	Music Noise Level if appropriate
A	1	2	65dB LAEQ (15min)
B	2	4	Should not exceed 15dB LAEQ (15min) above the normal background levels
C	Unlimited	N/A	N/A

2.31 New Wording:

Large music events involving high powered amplification can cause disturbance to those living in the vicinity. These events we will categorise to ensure the impact of these events is minimised and spread out over the Festival and Event season. The category of events will be as follows:

- Category A events - amplified noise profile will extend beyond the boundary of the park and will be clearly audible at properties within and/or surrounding the parks and/ or significant:
 - increase in the number of visitors to the parks,
 - change to the normal use and operational matters in the parks,
 - impact on the surrounding area.

Examples- Music Concert, VIP Visit, high profile event

- Category B events - where the number of participants requires changes to normal use of the park and the surrounding infrastructure. Much lower noise profile but utilising amplified noise to communicate to audiences or with live / recorded music as part of the entertainment.

Example- Large scale charity run, cultural festival.

- Category C events - events with little or no impact on the surrounding area and no amplified noise.

Example- Nature talks and smaller community events.

In order to manage the impact of events, each park will be assigned limits based on the category types event and, where appropriate, the noise limits will also be set follows:

Mote Park

Category	No. Events	Maximum No. Days	Music Noise Level if appropriate
A	Up to 5	12 of which a maximum of 8 days can be music events	65dB LAEQ (15min)
B	Up to 8	12	Should not exceed 15dB LAEQ (15min) above the normal background levels
C	Unlimited	N/A	N/A

Whatman Park

Category	No. Events	Maximum No. Days	Music Noise Level if appropriate
A	0	0	65dB LAEQ (15min)
B	2	4	Should not exceed 15dB LAEQ (15min) above the normal background levels
C	Unlimited	N/A	N/A

- 2.32 Members will need to consider whether the impact on residents is significant enough to reduce the availability of Mote Park as category A venue and compromise the delivery of the policy vision.
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3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 3.1 That the proposed amendment to the Festival and Events Policy be approved. It provides enough flexibility to allow the natural growth of events whilst still placing limitations on the number of noisier music events. **RECOMMENDED**
- 3.2 That at the proposed amendment is not approved. This would effectively reduce the number of events in Mote Park as we would have to limit the natural growth of both charity and music events. **NOT RECOMMENDED**
- 3.3 That the Festival and Events policy is approved subject to changes requested by committee. The amendments have been developed through examination of existing and potential events, awareness of the limitations of the number of events day available in Mote Park, and consideration of the issues that may arise from residents as potential complaints. **NOT RECOMMENDED**
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4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 The amendments to the policy enable the development of festivals and events that have a significant contribution to the status and the image of the Borough benefiting the local economy and creating a lively vibrant place to live, work and visit.
- 4.2 It is not expected that all the event days would be used for category A events, nor that all permitted to be a category A would reach the higher noise limits. There is already a diary limit to the number of events that can be scheduled in the park. Events may move away from the borough as they seek alternative venues if we cannot accommodate their growth.
- 4.3 Without the amendment, should any significant new opportunities arise, we would be unable to react quickly enough. If the issue had to come back to committee for a decision it probably would have already booked another destination. The amendment will provide the ability to react quickly to enquiries with potential event promoters if an opportunity for a top-class event arises.
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5. RISK

- 5.1 The risks associated with this proposal, including the risks if the Council does not act as recommended, have been considered in line with the Council's Risk Management Framework. We are satisfied that the risks associated are within the Council's risk appetite and will be managed as per the Policy.

6. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

6.1 There previous Heritage, culture and Leisure Committee agreed the former amendments.

7. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

7.1 Should the amendments to the policy be approved, the policy will be updated accordingly and implemented.

8. REPORT APPENDICES

- Appendix 1: Festival and Events Policy v5 30.11.16
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9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

[HERITAGE, CULTURE AND LEISURE COMMITTEE - minutes of the meeting held on 29 November 2016](#)