

Item 14

**Urgent Update to the Report of the Head of Commercial and Economic
Development - Revised Festivals and Events Policy**

**Maidstone Borough Council
Festivals & Events Policy
Revised February 2016**

**Version 3
February 2016**

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1. THE VISION

“To develop a festivals and events programme that creates a lively and vibrant place to live, work and visit, whilst ensuring the sustainable use of the Borough’s venues and;

That by 2017 Maidstone borough is recognised as a destination that hosts and develops high quality sustainable festivals and events; and cultivates community creativity for maximum economic benefit and social enjoyment.”

2. BACKGROUND

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. This policy will focus on events that take place in the boroughs parks and open spaces.

This document provides a strategic framework for events and festivals in Maidstone Borough. It recognises the fact that major events represent business, cultural leisure and sporting assets; they make a positive contribution in influencing perception of an area, in helping to stimulate economic activity and in enhancing social and cultural wellbeing.

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 direct links to the well-being and cohesion of the local community.

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. Specific areas impacted by an events programme include:

- Quality of life improvements
- Community engagement and cohesion
- Economic value
- Social inclusion
- Education
- Prevention and diversion of anti-social behaviour
- Health, vitality & wellbeing
- Publicity & media exposure
- Added value to the Borough as a visitor destination
- Delivering & inspiring sporting opportunities
- Culture and artistic expression

Therefore, Festivals & Events constitute a fundamental element and vital component to the Borough; although all activities must be managed effectively and efficiently to maximise opportunities (e.g. by extending the season to create economic value), they should also minimise any negative impacts (i.e. on the environment).

The Borough's Festivals & Events are an integral part of delivering core elements of the Council's Strategic Plan, Economic Development Strategy, Destination Management Plan and our commitment to celebrating our rich culture and heritage.

3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The Festivals & Events Policy sets out the priorities, aims and objectives for the delivery of the Council's Festivals and Events programme and ensures that any current or proposed event, whether organised or supported by the Council or as an activity held on its land, can be evaluated against the following set of guiding principles:

3.1 Aims

Each event or festival should meet at least two of the aims and five of the objectives outlined:

- i. **Economy**
 - a) Generate income for the local economy.
 - b) Help to regenerate parts of the Borough.

- ii. **Community**
 - a) To develop, generate, facilitate and support cultural, economic, community and social events for the benefit of the Borough and its residents to improve quality of life.
 - b) Interest or involve the Boroughs diverse communities.
 - c) Prevent and divert anti-social behaviour.
 - d) Increase the number of volunteers at events.

- iii. **Destination Publicity**
 - a) Maximise promotional, publicity and marketing opportunities through the Festivals and Events programme
 - b) Promote Maidstone borough as a vibrant, successful place.
 - c) Encourage people and businesses to live in, invest in and visit Maidstone.

- iv. **Education and Employment**
 - a) Provide skills & learning opportunities for the community.
 - b) Interest or engage young learners.
 - c) Provide new temporary employment and work experience opportunities.

- v. **Income opportunities**
 - a) To create opportunities to maximise Income and sponsorship for the Council.

3.2 Objectives

- a) Maximise enjoyment for those persons participating at a Festival or Event.

- b) Contribute towards the Council's Strategic priorities.
- c) Deliver and support cultural events in the Borough.
- d) Maximise the contribution made towards the economy of the Borough through increased visitor and participant spend.
- e) Maximise sustainable, inclusive economic growth from festivals and event activities.
- f) Contribute towards the Council's objective of creating a safe, inclusive and diverse day, evening and night time economy in Maidstone.
- g) Contribute and facilitate sporting events and activities that support healthy living and contribute towards an improved quality of life.
- h) Support volunteer schemes.
- i) Manage, develop and generate local, regional, national and international publicity for the Borough.
- j) Increase the positive image and reputation of the Council and Borough.
- k) Support & encourage social inclusion, well-being and healthy living activities.
- l) Undertake sustainable event practices to ensure the protection of the environment, ecology and wildlife.
- m) Increase and obtain sponsorship and income to sustain the Events and Festivals' programme and to generate efficiency savings and ensure value for money.

3.3 Outcomes

- a) Each event or festival maximises its economic opportunities and social benefits.
- b) Delivers recognised quality improvements from inception, management and delivery of events and festivals.
- c) Increases community involvement and civic pride in events and festivals.
- d) Reduces crime and anti-social behaviour throughout the Borough.
- e) Create a safe, inclusive and diverse day, evening and night time economy in Maidstone.
- f) Achieves greater community participation in activities.
- g) Contributes to delivering a sustainable and self-financing events programme by maximising sponsorship and income opportunities.

4. TYPE AND FREQUENCY OF EVENTS

Events will differ depending on their purpose, scale, location, content, and target audience. Some events will have an increased impact both on the long term condition of the venue and on local residents within immediate vicinity of the venue.

Event classification is broken into two main considerations, size and purpose. Another factor to consider is noise from music events.

4.1 Size and Scale

The size classification for an event will be based around the expected audience

capacity. This is the maximum number of people expected to be at the event at one time, and not the total number of people who may experience the event throughout the day(s). The scale of an event will need to be considered where the event spans multiple days.

Type	Size	
Small	Less than 500 attending	Small events are classified as those with a potential attendee and staffing level of less than 499.
Medium	Less than 3,000 attending	Medium scale events are defined as those with a potential attendee and staffing levels of no less than 500 and no more than 2,999.
Large	Less than 9,000 attending	Large scale events are classified as those with a potential capacity in excess of 4,999 people but no more than 8,999
Special	More than 9,000 attending	Any event with attendance and staffing levels reaching 9,000 or more will be classified as a special event. If an event is considered to be particularly disruptive, it too might be labelled as a special event, even if its attendance numbers equal less than 9,000. Some special events may be small in scale but due to the quality of their programme may attract a large proportion of visitors from out with Maidstone; they therefore have a greater economic and cultural impact and national recognition than their size suggests.
Major (Strategic)	Various	May be large or small but require extensive planning and very high security. It can be large public spectacle and usually has national and/or international significance e.g. Royal visit, Tour de France, Olympic Torch Relay, G8 Summit.

4.2 Purpose of Event

What is the purpose of the event? Is it a community led project, a commercial venture, a private event or a corporate event?

a) Community Event

When the event is organised by the community for the community, it is free to enter/attend and is not for the purpose of selling or promoting a commercial product, it shall be deemed as a "Community Event". Community events are generally not-for-profit, but can be they for fundraising through charging entry to an event.

b) Charity / Fundraising Events – Local and National

This category includes events that are organised by not – for – profit organisations but can also include events run by commercial companies for charitable fund raising e.g. bike rides and charity runs.

c) Commercial Events

Commercial events provide a beneficial gain to a particular individual, group or company, be it financial or promotional. The following events are classed as commercial events; however the list is not exhaustive:

- Corporate events
- Commercial Music, Cultural, Theatre or Comedy Concerts or Festivals
- Marketing and promotional activities for profit making organisations (not charitable or fundraising)
- Funfairs and circuses
- Private events e.g. a wedding reception / private party / large picnic

An event can fall into more than one category e.g. events can be community led and be considered commercial.

4.3 Noise from Music events

Large music events involving high powered amplification can cause disturbance to those living in the vicinity. The Noise Council Code of Practice on Noise Control at Concerts provides guidance on the number and level of noise for urban venues such as parks.

The number of amplified music events with a Music Noise Level (MNL) of up to and not exceeding 65dB(A) in Mote Park will be limited to 5 events per year. These events will be limited to a maximum of 3 consecutive days or a total of 8 days in the year. The number of amplified music events with a Music Noise Level (MNL) of up to and not exceeding 65dB(A) in Whatman Park will be limited to 3 events per year and a maximum of 2 consecutive days and no more than 5 days in the year. If the frequency and timing of these events will cause additional disturbance, then the maximum Music Noise Level will be set lower and must be agreed to by the event organiser.

Although setting the noise limits in terms of dB(A) is convenient it does not always take into account the intrusiveness of low frequency noise. It can be the frequency imbalance which causes disturbance. Therefore it can be more of a problem further away from the open air venue than in the immediate vicinity to it. Even if the dB(A) limits are being met it can seem to residents that the noise is loud. Therefore it may

be necessary to set additional criterion in terms of low frequency noise or apply additional conditions.

5. EVALUATION

As well as balancing existing events with new ones, we want to support the expansion and development of the programme of events. Occasionally an event may arise which is exceptional and will be supported even if it doesn't meet the criteria outlined above. This will be managed via the application process.

In order to ensure that all major supported events and festivals continue to meet the above aims and objectives, the council has adopted the use of an Economic Impact Toolkit www.eitoolkit.org.uk and requests all event organisers evaluate their event by this method.

For smaller events we will expect the organisers to use the event evaluation form in the Toolkit or their own equivalent evaluation questionnaire.

6. VENUES

The Borough has over 30 parks and open spaces and a number of venues that have been identified as suitable for holding events. This strategy aims to ensure that the use of these venues is sustainable and that the impact of events on parks and open spaces is managed.

6.1 Mote Park

Mote Park is within walking distance of Maidstone town centre. It is 460 acres parkland site and includes a large 30 acre lake, amenity grass areas, sports pitches as well as large areas of woodland and natural grassland which are managed for conservation. Over recent years the park has hosted a number of events ranging from: Radio 1 Big Weekend in 2008, an event attended by 30,000 music fans; the CBeebies Mr Blooms Roadshow in 2013 which attracted 18,000 people; the annual Mela which is a successful multi-cultural event, the Ramblin Man Fair held for the first time in 2015 and the Social Festival dance music event which started in 2013. In 2012 a series of Lottery funded improvements took place in the park, as part of this regeneration project a programme of smaller events put on in a partnership between officers and the Mote Park Fellowship friends group was started. This partnership continues to put on events and education walks and in 2013 put on 22 walks and worked in partnership putting on a number of events attracting over 20,000 people.

The park has huge open spaces which gives it the capacity to host very large events and potentially more than one small event at a time. There is limited infrastructure for larger events such as number of toilets and capacity and availability of power supplies but these can be overcome and brought onto site.

Whilst large areas of the park are set aside for conservation the amenity areas are of such scale that festivals and events can easily be accommodated.

6.2 Whatman Park

This 25 acre park was created as part of the Millennium River Park. The park has great potential for hosting festivals and events as it is located within walking distance of the town centre; it is surrounded by the railway line and the River Medway and has only three entrances which eliminates the need for fencing for an event; the River stage in the park provides a covered performance area as well as having a substantial electricity supply and is designed to host medium sized events. Currently the only event which has been regularly hosted in the park is Proms in the Park which has taken place every May. This has been a free event which attracts up to 1,000 people.

6.3 River Park Amphitheatre

This was built in 2000 as part of the same project as Whatman Park. It is located near to All Saints Church. Because it is located near to residential property it has limited scope for amplified music events and is more suitable for open air theatre type events. This area has a capacity of up to around 150 people.

6.4 Cobtree Manor Park

This park forms part of the Cobtree Estate which also includes Kent Life, Cobtree Manor Golf Course and a large field located between Forstal Road and the M20. There is currently an event plan for the park but this is limited to mostly educational and informative guided walks. A new visitor centre will opened in this very popular park in 2015, which provides much needed visitor facilities. There is limited capacity in the park for hosting larger events but these could be potentially located elsewhere on the estate.

6.5 Brenchley Gardens

These gardens are located within the town centre of Maidstone. It is a traditional town centre park with flower beds, ornamental trees and a bandstand. It has the capacity to host small events but due to the proximity of residential property these will be limited to non amplified events. The gardens are also located next to Maidstone Museum providing the potential for joint events.

6.6 Jubilee Square and Lower High Street

Jubilee Square is a large open public space in the middle of Maidstone Town Centre.

It was created as part of the High Street Regeneration scheme and is conveniently located on Maidstone High Street, in-front of Maidstone Town Hall. The space has access to event specification power and water supplies and has the capacity for both small and large events. As the site is located adjacent to the High Street, and the site is accessible by loading vehicles before 10.30am and after 5.30am, all events will need to consider how these vehicle movements will be managed.

6.7 Maidstone Museum and Bentrif Art Gallery

The Maidstone Museum & Bentrif Art Gallery's multi-layered history and award-winning modern architecture provides a totally unique environment for a range of events.

Available for hire are unique meeting rooms and 2 gallery spaces suitable for 2-130 delegates. Each meeting room has natural daylight and Wi-Fi. The Glass room is equipped with automatic blinds, air conditioning and hearing loop. Interactive TV and other AV equipment are available.

The Museum and its collections can be incorporated into events offering private viewing of current exhibitions, guided tours through its galleries and viewing of artifacts stored behind the scenes. The Museum is perfectly positioned to Brenchley Gardens allowing the possibility of joint events. Exclusive hire of the Museum can also be offered.

Located centrally within the town the Museum is a 2 minute walk from the Maidstone East train station or 5 minutes by car from junction 7, M20. Various bus routes stop outside, there is limited parking onsite with a multi-storey car park located opposite.

The Council will also consider requests for events in parks, open spaces and other venues that are not listed above. As with all requests, permission for events is based on suitability and considered on an event by event basis.

7. FINANCE AND COMMISSIONING

Event and festival organisers should undertake to self-finance activities through income and/or sponsorship opportunities. The Council may commission a number of festivals and events through a procurement process.

8. MARKETING AND PR

The Council will maintain the What's On section on the Visit Maidstone website and will encourage all events organisers to provide publicity information on their events. In addition

an Event Planning Calendar (Clash Diary) has been created to help event organisers in the planning stages check the best dates for events by seeing what else is already planned and to help avoid diary clashes and overload on support services.

The Festivals and Events programme will be promoted via social media and organisers will be encouraged to cross promote events and collaborate on marketing activity.

All organisers of Festivals and Events that will potentially impact on the community surrounding the venue, as assessed by the application process, will be required to inform the community affected in advance about the nature of the event and when and where it will be taking place.

9. ASSOCIATED POLICIES AND STRATEGIES

There are a number of key council policies and strategies that relate to all cultural, leisure, sporting, recreational or community activity and to the delivery of events in the borough as a whole.

9.1. Strategic Plan

Maidstone Borough has many attractive urban and rural places, a relatively robust economy and diverse communities. With both a rich heritage and an ambition for growth we want to make the best of our past and the future to support people, strengthen the economy and develop the public realm to build vibrancy and prosperity.

The Strategic Plan is a five-year document produced by Maidstone Borough Council, written for residents, staff and partners. It sets out clear priorities and expected outcomes by 2020.

In order to provide focus to our efforts we have identified three priorities for the Council:

1. Keeping Maidstone as an attractive borough for all.
2. Securing a successful economy for Maidstone Borough

The Council's Strategic Plan is available on our website.

9.2 Destination Management Plan (DMP)

The DMP process has identified three important "strands" where resources should be focused over the next three years, in order to deliver the promise of the Shared Story. These three strands are: Improving the County Town's appeal to visitors; Improving the impact of Events on the visitor economy; and Making more of the Countryside.

Events have many positive impacts on local economies and communities. The DMP is focusing on ways to improve the impact of business and leisure events on the visitor economy – which in turn will support jobs and services for local people. The DMP takes into account MBC’s Festivals & Events Strategy, which is about events that take place in the Borough’s parks and open spaces – but the thinking includes larger venues such as Leeds Castle, Kent Showground and Kent Life.

The DMP’s actions will support the development of events with wider reach (actual or potential) – i.e. events that will draw visitors from further afield (from beyond Kent), and/or enhance the image of the area further afield as a vibrant place to visit.

The Shared Story says Maidstone is “Kent’s capital for big events ... with tens of thousands at a time coming here for the South East’s biggest pop concerts, classical extravaganzas, and business shows.” This is a USP for Maidstone, so maintaining and strengthening the “capital for big events” status is a priority. It also means that there is significant events expertise in the Borough – in the big event venues as well as in the public agencies. The DMP should aim to tap into and make the most of this professional expertise.

This does not mean that the DMP will ignore smaller events – but from a visitor economy perspective the focus for actions will only be on those smaller events that are either clustered into festivals or seasons to give them greater reach, or that have a strongly distinctive niche appeal that draws visitors and generates publicity from further afield.

9.3 Equalities Policy

As a public authority, we believe we have a leading role to play in the promotion of equal opportunity in the community, both as employer and provider of services to the population of Maidstone and its visitors.

We would expect all events and festivals organisers to:

Recognise their duties under legislation and be committed to meeting them.

Take action to combat direct and indirect discrimination in all areas in respect of disability, sex, gender reassignment, race, age, marriage, and civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, religion or belief, and sexual orientation as far as it is permitted by statute law and associated Codes of Practice.

The Council’s full Equalities Policy is available on our website.

9.4 Environmental Policy

All events are opportunities to communicate environmental messages to the public. The Council aims to actively work with organisers to ensure that best practice is introduced at all stages of event management.

9.5 Health and Safety

Event organisers are responsible for and have a legal duty to ensure the health, safety and welfare of the people attending their events, as well as that of the employees, contractors and sub-contractors working at the event. Please refer to the Health & Safety at Work Act 1974.

Event organisers will also be required to conform to:

- The Events Safety Guide, A guide to Health, Safety and Welfare at music and similar events HSG 1995
- RIDDOR 1995
- Fire precautions act 1975
- The Children's Act 1989
- Health and Safety at work Act 1974
- Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981
- Any specific conditions laid out, local byelaws or instructions from a Council Officer
- Any relevant legislation relating to public safety

The Council and its partners have a duty to ensure all relevant health & safety guidance is followed, including checking risk assessments, emergency evacuation plans and method statements. In many cases the Council or its partners (i.e. emergency services) may require changes to be made to plans to improve safety at the event. All health & safety paperwork must be submitted to the Council as per the application timetable requirement, although this may be reduced for smaller events if agreed in advance with the Council's nominated Events Representative.

For larger or more complex events the Council may take a more active role. We may wish to meet with event organisers to discuss plans in more detail, and it may be a condition of hire that event organisers attend Safety Advisory Group meetings.

It may also be a condition of approval that management plans are submitted in advance of the application timetable requirement due to their complexity. If this is the case sufficient notice will be given of any change in deadline.

10. HOW TO APPLY

There will be a single point of entry for all festivals and events in the Borough via the Council's website. The website will provide all the relevant information on running a festival or event in Maidstone in the form of a toolkit which will include information on:

- Event Classification

- Application Timescales
- Do I need to apply for any other licences?
- Legislation
- Pre Planning
- Detailed Planning
- Final Preparations
- Health & Safety
- Help with your Risk Assessment
- Road Closures
- Stewarding
- First Aid and Medical Cover
- Insurance
- Contingency Planning
- Counter Terrorism
- After the Event
- Event Notification Form
- Road Closure Notification Form
- Event Application form: Public Open spaces
- Event Risk Assessment Form