

**The Relocation of the Mela Event to Mote Park**

<b>Final Decision-Maker</b>	ECONOMIC REGENERATION AND LEISURE COMMITTEE
<b>Lead Head of Service</b>	William Cornall
<b>Lead Officer and Report Author</b>	John Foster
<b>Classification</b>	Public
<b>Wards affected</b>	Shepway North

**Executive Summary**

*The Mela organisers wish to relocate the event from Whatman Park to Mote Park where they can grow the event. In order to do so they have requested a grant of £5000 per year for three years from the Council, at the end of which they will be able to sustain the event from income generated by it. The report recommends support for the Mela to be funded from the Kent Business Rates Pool.*

**Purpose of Report**

*To consider whether to financially support the relocation of the Mela to Mote Park.*

**This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:**

1. That the Mela relocates to Mote Park,
2. That a grant of £5,000 per year for three years, starting in 2020, is given to Kent Equality Cohesion Council to run the Mela in Mote Park.

**Timetable**

<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>
Economic Regeneration and Leisure Committee	28 <sup>th</sup> January 2020

# The Relocation of the Mela Event to Mote Park

## 1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
<b>Impact on Corporate Priorities</b>	<p>The four Strategic Plan objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Embracing Growth and Enabling Infrastructure</li> <li>• Safe, Clean and Green</li> <li>• Homes and Communities</li> <li>• A Thriving Place</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accepting the recommendations will materially improve the Council’s ability to achieve the objectives set out in Thriving Place, and in particular support the 2019-2024 focus “Enabling events which assist people in increasing their pride in communities and our environment”</li> </ul>	John Foster
<b>Cross Cutting Objectives</b>	<p>The four cross-cutting objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Heritage is Respected</li> <li>• Health Inequalities are Addressed and Reduced</li> <li>• Deprivation and Social Mobility is Improved</li> <li>• Biodiversity and Environmental Sustainability is respected</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The report’ recommendation addresses health inequalities by improving access for all to this event and celebrates our cultural heritage through dance, food and music and the organisers work within schools.</li> </ul>	John Foster
<b>Risk Management</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refer to section 4 of the report</li> </ul>	John Foster
<b>Financial</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accepting the recommendations will demand new spending of £5,000 per year for the</li> </ul>	Mark Green

	<p>next three years. The report proposes that the spending be funded from the Kent Business Rates Pool. Funding arrangements for local government are due to change in 2021/22 and there is no guarantee that the current pooling arrangements will be retained. Accordingly, funding for 2021/22 and 2022/23 will need to be earmarked from the 2020/21 pool proceeds.</p>	
<b>Staffing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We will deliver the recommendations with our current staffing.</li> </ul>	John Foster
<b>Legal</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Council has a general power of competence pursuant to Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 which enables it to do anything that individuals generally may do.</li> <li>Under Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972 the Council has power to do anything (whether or not involving the expenditure, borrowing or lending of money or the acquisition or disposal of any property or rights) which is calculated to facilitate, or is conducive or incidental to, the discharge of any of its functions.</li> <li>The proposed grant to the Kent Equality Cohesion Council is in accordance with those powers and comes under the function of the Economic Regeneration and Leisure Committee to promote Maidstone by providing opportunities for engagement in cultural and leisure pursuits.</li> </ul>	Team Leader (Corporate Governance), MKLS
<b>Privacy and Data Protection</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Accepting the recommendations will increase the volume of data held by the Council. We will hold that data in line with our retention schedules.</li> </ul>	Policy and Information Team
<b>Equalities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The recommendations do not propose a change in service therefore will not require an equalities impact assessment</li> </ul>	Equalities and Corporate Policy Officer

<b>Public Health</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We recognise that the recommendations will not negatively impact on population health or that of individuals.</li> </ul>	Paul Clarke
<b>Crime and Disorder</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Mela organisers will be required to submit an Event Plan for inspection and consideration of the Safety Advisory Group.</li> </ul>	John Foster
<b>Procurement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>None</li> </ul>	John Foster

## 2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Maidstone Mela has been taking place in the Borough since 2003. It is led by Kent Equality Cohesion Council (KECC) which is a registered charity.
- 2.2 KECC specialise in community development, community outreach and community cohesion working across the County of Kent. The charity also provides free, confidential advice and support around a range of diversity issues relating to Race, Faith, Disability, Sexual Orientation, Gender and Age. KECC contract with Cohesion Plus Kent to deliver the Mela.
- 2.3 Between 2003 and 2015 the Mela was organised in partnership with MBC KECC and Cohesion Plus. It was funded through a combination of MBC, Arts Council England, stalls and sponsorship income. Following the withdrawal of MBC's financial support, KECC and Cohesion Plus, working in partnership with local community groups, re-established the event calling it the 'Maidstone Community Mela' which has taken place in Whatman Park since 2017 regularly attracting from 3,000 to 4,000 people each year.
- 2.4 The whole ethos of the event is to bring diverse communities together through music, food and dance.
- 2.5 The success of the Community Mela is underpinned by the strong partnership of local community groups, representing some of the diverse communities, who work hard through their networks both geographically and socially to promote the Mela in and around Maidstone. This includes contacting local schools, places of worship, community centres and community groups as well as supporting fundraising activities in the build-up.
- 2.6 Why relocate back to Mote Park?
- 2.7 KECC have stated that the main reason all partners would like to take the Community Mela back to Mote Park is due to the fact that Whatman Park is at capacity, there is a limit to what can be done on the site and there are still major issues around accessibility especially for the elderly and disabled due to a lack of onsite parking. A larger site will enable more stalls, larger audiences and therefore greater sponsorship potential.

- 2.8 By moving to Mote Park the organisers believe the Mela will become more accessible and allow them to be more ambitious artistically as there is more space to work with. KECC also argue that it will allow local residents, new and old, to participate in activities and learn new skills. In addition, there will be opportunities for them to help shape and create the Mela through providing feedback at the event and actively taking part as a member of the Mela Advisory Group.
- 2.9 KECC have submitted documents that show a £5,000 funding gap each year for three years. Funding from stalls and sponsorship is shown to grow over the course of the three years resulting in the event not requiring MBC financial support after the third year.
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### **3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS**

- 3.1 The alternative option would be not to provide financial support to this event. For the reasons set out in section 4 this is not recommended.
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### **4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 4.1 The report recommends providing support to the Mela for the reasons set out in paragraph 2.7 and 2.8 above. The Mela is an established festival in the Maidstone events' calendar. Most of the risks are associated with event management and their event plan will be scrutinised by the Safety Advisory Group (SAG). A date in the Mote Park calendar for 2020 has already been reserved for the event.
- 4.2 KECC has successfully organised and run the Mela in Mote Park for many years and recognises the additional resources and logistical management necessary to hold and grow the Mela in Mote Park. The main risk is that after 3 years the income forecast from sponsorship and stall holders does not grow in line with their business plan. KECC has successfully implemented the same approach in Tunbridge Wells where the Borough's funding tailed off over a number of years and other funding increased to enable the event to continue. KECC have stated that should other funding not increase over the three years they will, in this order:
1. Fund the short fall from their reserves which is a strong possibility
  2. Seek additional support from Arts Council England using sponsorship and stalls income as match income
  3. Secure additional funding from other grant schemes
  4. Make savings elsewhere in the budget without compromising health and safety
  5. Move the Community Mela to a smaller venue
- 4.3 Remaining in Whatman Park will not address the current accessibility challenges and potentially restrict audiences, particularly those with a disability.

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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. That consideration is shown in this report in section 4. 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 On the 17<sup>th</sup> December a Member Briefing was organised at the Town Hall and Gurvinder Sandher the CEO of KECC presented the case to support the Mela to Members. Members at that meeting were generally supportive of the Mela and the advantages of relocating it back to Mote Park.

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## **7. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION**

- 7.1 If the Committee support the recommendation set out in this report, this will be communicated to KECC and a Funding Agreement will be put in place between KECC and MBC.

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## **8. REPORT APPENDICES**

None

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## **9. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None