

Maidstone River Festival Briefing

Background

The Maidstone River Festival first took place in 1980 and was organised by a committee of the Medway River users Association, Maidstone Borough Council and Maidstone Lions Club. The festival developed over the years but remained a free, non-profit event organised by volunteers and funded by sponsorship and donations from local businesses until 2008. The event usually took place over one day, but on occasion was a two day event.

With the introduction of Police charging for events, Maidstone Borough Council (MBC) agreed funding in addition to that raised by the River Festival Committee (RFC) for a 3 year period. This took the form of a grant to the RFC of £8,500 and a 50/50 split with the RFC on the post festival clean-up costs (£3,000 estimate for 2008 = £1,500 each), effectively making the grant £10,000.

2008

- Introduction of Police Charging - RFC Chairman agreed a fee with the Police a condition of which was the introduction for SIA stewards for security and safety to reduce police presence. The committee was advised as to the level of SIA stewards required. Unfortunately the use of Lockmeadow SIA stewards (who were employed there and could not leave area) meant that the level of stewarding was too low and not within the agreed number.
- Low key Friday night event in 2008 had no SIA Stewards as 'omitted' from event plan.
- Funding from MBC required adequate safety and security, hence introduction of SIA stewards.

2009

- SAG required more adequate event plan which had to be signed off and this took to the last week to produce. Contract for the use of MBC's entertainment license was on condition of SAG approval of event plan. There were also issues over MRF not being a legal entity and issues over their public liability insurance (taken out by Chairman's company).
- Cost of Policing increased.
- MBS provided additional support, staff, cleaning, clearing of pathways etc. not charged to RFC, absorbed into departmental budgets.

2010

- MBC meeting with Kent Police to agree police costs limited to £8,000. (Advised could be £25,000 in future).
- Cost against budget £12,551 excluding staff time.

2011

- Police costs at £8,000, was suggested again that this would be the last year at this level of charge before the full community rate would apply circa £25,000.
- Cost to MBC - £13,214, no staff costs apart from MBS were included in total event cost (absorbed by individual MBC budgets). Staff costs were much higher than previous years, covering a longer period and event control staff on day. Real cost to MBC estimated at over £20,000 plus impact on MBC staff to carry out other work.

2013

- Costs - £10,100 for an event company as no staff time available to manage the event, MBC also paid for the security company (but not police), MBS cleaning costs approximately £3,000. Total MBC costs £25,972 not including all staff time.

Issues for the return of a river festival supported by MBC:

1. The HCL motion on 31 January 2017 was to "Facilitate the River Festival Committee, including links to the Safety Advisory Group and clean-up after the event". This is a very open statement which makes it difficult to assess the likely impact on MBC resources both staff and budget fully.
2. MBC supported the River Festival financially for a 3 year period, this funding ended in 2013 having cost MBC substantially more each year than the allocated budget without staff cost being factored in as evidenced above.
3. The RFC ceased to exist and no formal events have been held since 2013 although many of the boat owners have continued to congregate on the weekend the event usually took place.
4. If the RFC reforms then they will need to get agreement from the Safety Advisory Group for the event to go ahead and comply with the conditions of any major event including but not limited to:
 - Application Timescales
 - Licence requirements
 - Legislation
 - Carry out pre planning, detailed planning and final preparations
 - Health & Safety plan and Risk Assessments
 - Road Closures
 - Stewarding
 - First Aid and Medical Cover
 - Insurance
 - Contingency Planning
5. In the past the RFC have not had the resources or expertise to carry out many of these functions and a lot of the work was picked up by MBC. As

RFC also relied on using the council's town centre licence this put many obligations on MBC

6. Until a detailed event plan is completed by the RFC it is difficult to assess what MBCs facilitation role would be or the resources that would be required.
7. The clean-up after the event is an issue to be considered by Maidstone Borough Services (MBS) who estimate the costs at £7,243.
8. If the River Festival is the same weekend as another event e.g. Ramblin' Man, it would not be possible to provide this level of resource. In order to provide this level of resource we would already be reliant on the use of grounds maintenance staff to support cleansing. Due to the reliance on a high number of staff and the length of shifts, a shift bonus would be required on top of overtime to secure sufficient people.

MBS River Festival – Cost Estimate 2017

Below are the estimated costs for the clear up and cleansing support for the River Festival. This is based on current costs and a review of previous charges (2011).

Team	Duties	Cost
Support Crew	Prep of route prior to event, including Fairmeadow toilets	£840
	Event – maintenance of toilets, early morning cleanse	£810
Street Cleansing	Additional staff for Friday night economy	£123
	Additional staff during day	£535
	Additional staff Saturday afternoon / evening	£612
	Additional town centre staff	£107
	Additional staff for Sunday clear up	£612
Supervision	Supervisor Saturday daytime	£196
	Supervisor Saturday afternoon / evening	£225
	Supervisor Sunday morning	£183
	Shift bonuses	£1200
Grounds maintenance	Additional works	£800
SUB TOTAL		£6,243
Contingency (damages, wheeled bins)		£1,000
TOTAL		£7,243