

Festivals and Events Update

Final Decision-Maker	Heritage, Culture and Leisure Committee
Lead Head of Service/Lead Director	Head of Regeneration and Economic Development – Dawn Hudd
Lead Officer and Report Author	Visitor Economy Development Manager - Laura Dickson
Classification	Public
Wards affected	All

Executive Summary

A reduction in council funding for the two Maidstone Borough council (MBC) run events of £30k was agreed in 2016-17 as a budget saving over three years. The new commissioned Shemomedjamo has a three year plan for the event to become self-financing. In 2017 Committee agreed to the introduction of paid ticketing for Proms in Park as an alternative funding model for the 2018 event. The report sets out recommendations for the future of Proms in the Park and provides a review of both council run events. The report also provides a review of other large events held on council land for information only.

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

1. To note the updates in the report.
2. To discontinue Proms in the Park and use the remaining £5,000 budget for 2019 to pump prime new events in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Committee.

Timetable

Meeting	Date
Heritage, Culture & Leisure Committee	30 October 2018

Festivals and Events Update 2018

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 1.1 MBC currently supports two events per year both financially and with officer time: Proms in the Park and the multi-cultural Food and Drink Festival, Shemomedjamo. Core funding for events is being reduced by £10,000 per year for 3 years from 2018-19. By 2020-21 MBC funding for these events will be zero.
- 1.2 Following consultation on the Council's support for the Mela Heritage, Culture and Leisure Committee agreed, on 29 October 2016, to commission a new 2-3 day multicultural food and drink festival from an external provider with a reducing subsidy over 3 years so it becomes self-financing. The contract was awarded to Event Umbrella and the new event is branded as Shemomedjamo, it has just enjoyed its second successful year.
- 1.3 Also, on 29 November 2016 Heritage, Culture and Leisure Committee agreed to continue supporting Proms in the Park but to look for alternative funding to reduce the Council's contribution and to delay the decision on the introduction of ticketing for 12 months.
- 1.4 On 18 December 2017 Heritage, Culture and Leisure Committee agreed to introduce ticket sales for Proms in the Park to support the £5,000 funding gap in 2018, with adult tickets capped at £7 and under 16s tickets to be free of charge.
- 1.5 This report also provides an overview of other large events in the council run parks.

Council Funded Events Proms in the Park

- 1.6 Proms in the Park is funded by MBC with additional tickets sales revenue introduced in 2018 to cover the £5,000 reduction in budget. Parkwood Leisure who run the Hazlitt Theatre, provide the event management as part of their contract. In previous years MBC have provided Parkwood Leisure with £14,000 for the delivery of the event as well as MBC staff resource in the planning and marketing of the event. In 2018 the MBC funding for the event was reduced to £,000, although £11,502 was paid to Parkwood, with an advance payment of £4000 made during the 2017-18 financial year for event costs that required payment in advance of the event.

Year	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Event cost	£14000	£14000	£16000 *	17,000*	18,000*
Payment to Parkwood Leisure	£14000	£14000	£11502**	£5000	£0
Ticket Sales			£2630	£2630*	£2630*
No .of tickets sold			587	587	587
Shortfall			£1868	£8370	£14370
Estimated Total Attendees	1800	1500	900	900	900

- *Costs estimated by Parkwood Leisure
- ** included additional payment from the 2017-18 budget

- 1.7 Despite early bird offers and promotion, early tickets sales were slow. This is normal with outdoor events, especially considering the bad weather during the winter and early spring.
5 weeks to go – 145 tickets sold
3 weeks to go – 187 tickets sold
1 week to go – 263 tickets sold
- 1.8 In the end a total of 587 adult tickets were sold providing a revenue of £3,156. 55% of tickets were sold during the last week, mainly 'on the door' as a result of the good weather. It is estimated that in addition over 300 children attended. Other attendees included the performers and staff Overall around 900 attended.
- 1.9 In previous years the audience has been estimated between 1,200–2,000. The variation each year is a result of a variety of factors including weather at the time, changes to the programme including no longer including fireworks at the finale.
- 1.10 Parkwood Leisure have covered some of their own staffing cost to meet the event budget.
- 1.11 Parkwood Leisure have estimated that it will cost more than £14,000 to run the event in 2019. All costs look set to increase, in particular the performer's artists fees and costs. It is estimated that it will require at least £17,000 to deliver the event next year. This does not include the costs of marketing and MBC staff time.

Shemomedjamo - Multi-Cultural Food and Music Festival

- 1.12 This is the second year of our multi-cultural food and drink festival held in Mote Park. Event Umbrella is the appointed event management company for the 3 year contract. They have considerable knowledge in event delivery that includes the management of multiple traders and food fairs, delivering events on behalf of local government and delivering large scale events across the South East. The festival included a quality programme of music and entertainment from across the globe, both traditional and current.
- 1.13 The event was moved to the August Bank Holiday weekend to avoid conflict with other events such as the Faversham Hop and Beer Festival. Many of the traders and performers take holidays around this time and as a result there were less stalls than the previous year, but there was no impact on the event as there was still a good choice of food and drink on offer. Those traders that did come had a successful event with many running out of stock by the end of day one.
- 1.14 Over the weekend, it is estimated that around 9,000 people visited. It was very unfortunate that the rain on Sunday was so bad that the event was unable to run.
- 1.15 Improvements were made to the layout this year, with a larger seating area facing the stage with more tables and chairs. The tables and chairs were full during the event with visitors also bringing their own chairs and blankets to

sit on. This year the fencing around the event was removed to allow free flowing of visitors in and through the event.

1.16 Additional improvements could be made to programming and signage and dressing of the event area. However the budget reduction in year 2 for the event did mean that choices made to be made on spend.

1.17 Year Two has been successful and the funding model is anticipated to be achieved by the end of year three.

Non- Council Funded Events in MBC Venues

1.18 Festivals and events directly support tourism and the economic impact of events benefits the borough as outlined in the council's Economic Development Strategy and the Festival and Events Policy. The Tourism Destination Management Plan identifies events as one of the key growth areas that will drive more visitors to the borough.

1.19 Over 700 events of all sizes and nature have or are due to take place in the borough in 2018. These are listed on the What's On section of the Visit Maidstone website and in the quarterly leaflets. A summary of the large events is included in Appendix I.

1.20 A request to look at future significant anniversaries and events was made by committee. A list of these anniversaries and events is in Appendix II.

1.21 On 5 June it was proposed at that committee that we investigate the potential to have a Gay Pride event in Maidstone. As council does not have any budget to support events our role would be to encourage others to bring this event to the borough. However we have not been approached by any organisation and currently we do not have any connections within the LGBT community locally. Therefore we seek assistance from committee with connections to take this forward.

Ramblin Man Fair

1.22 Ramblin Man Fair was held from 30th June to 1st July. This was the 3rd year for this promoter to run the event since taking over the brand.

1.23 Ticket sales were down this year but enjoyed a surge on the days before and during the event. 6850 people attended the event over the weekend.

1.24 The value of the event to the local economy has been calculated using the eventIMPACTS model and inputting the data on attendees from the event organiser. The value to the local economy in 2018 is estimated at over £1.1m

1.25 The council received two noise complaints compared to 26 in 2017. One complaint was received and investigated by the noise monitoring team at the event. Some sound could be heard at times but it was not clearly audible. The second complainant said she could hear it from Allington and was complaining on behalf of the residents living around the park. There

were no complaints from residents around the park but there was a complaint made about the way the noise management was controlled.

- 1.26 The event organisers worked hard on the sound management, including making changes to all of the stages, reducing the size of the main stage and removing one stage.

Oktoberfest

- 1.27 This was the second year for German beer festival in Mote Park on 12th & 13th October. There were 5000 attendees and there were no complaints.

Community Mela

- 1.28 The Community Mela was organised for the second year by Cohesion Plus following the committee's decision to cease funding this event and to commission a new multi-cultural food and drink festival.
- 1.29 Although invited to tender for the multi-cultural event and subsequently invited to take part by the Event Umbrella, the previous Mela committee, through Cohesion Plus, continued to organise an independent event. MBC accepted and supported their decision through a free let of Whatman Park and substantial marketing. Many of the community groups are loyal to the Mela organiser although it is hoped that they will participate in more than one event in future and engage with Shemomedjamo.
- 1.30 MBC have been approached by Cohesion Plus who have stated that the event is under severe financial pressure and is at risk next year. They are seeking a contribution to the estimated costs from MBC in 2019

2. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 2.1 Increase ticket prices for Proms in the Park.

Based on the predicted cost of running the event in 2019 with the £5,000 remaining MBC funding, based on the number of tickets sold in 2018, the tickets would have to be set at £20 per adult. The 2016 survey results showed that a fee of £5-£10 was an acceptable price. It would require the same amount of tickets sales to break even and it is highly unlikely to achieve the sales at this ticket price. To increase the ticket prices would require the event to have added value and any added value would have a cost implication.

Future years would require an additional increase as the last of the budget is removed, and to be entirely self-funding the cost of marketing and MBC staff costs would also have to be included. This option is **NOT RECOMMENDED** as there would be significant risk of overspend on the budget and attendance numbers would be likely to be extremely low.

- 2.2 No longer support Proms in the Park.

Events have a life cycle and it could be an appropriate time to discontinue Proms in the Park. Attendee numbers are falling, costs are rising, Whatman Park is a challenging venue due to lack of access for temporary toilets and lack of parking. The remaining £5,000 budget in 2019 could be used to pump prime a new event or events such as a programme of music on the bandstand in Brenchley Gardens or events in Jubilee Square. The contractual obligation from Parkwood Leisure to support an event would be also be reallocated to another event/s. **RECOMMENDED.**

- 2.3 Seek alternative funding to support Proms in 2019 whilst a long term solution is sought.

The Council is currently developing its new Strategic Plan and this could result in a reallocation of budgets. However, as stated at 2.2 the current format for Proms in the Park is not sustainable. Sponsors have previously been sought but have not been forthcoming due to the nature of the event and the attendee numbers. This option is **NOT RECOMMENDED** as it is unlikely to be viable.

- 2.4 No longer support Proms but instead provide £2500 sponsorship to the Community Mela for 2019 and £2500 to pump prime a new event .

Funding for one year would assist the Community Mela in the short term and provide one event in Whatman Park. This option is **NOT RECOMMENDED** as the budget already supports the multi-cultural event created to replace the Mela. The Community Mela were invited to tender for the multi-cultural event and subsequently invited to take part by The Event Umbrella but decided to run an independent event. The Community Mela could work with the Event Umbrella by integrating into one event and sharing costs.

3. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Option 2.2 above is recommended for the reasons stated.

4. RISK

- 4.1 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.
- 4.2 The risks associated with the recommended option are primarily associated with reputational damage of the Council cancelling a long standing event. A communications strategy will be put in place to limit the impact which will include liaising with past performers and the public.
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5. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

5.1 Committee Decision on 18 December 2017:

That Proms in the Park becomes a paid for event through tickets sales and other commercial activities;

That the idea of free entry for children up to the age of 16 and an entry fee for adults of no greater than £7 be supported;

That a steering group be organised to include the Chairman and Vice-Chairman.

5.2 Committee Decision on 29 November 2016:

To continue to support Proms in the Park but look for alternative funding to reduce the Council's contribution and delay the decision on the introduction of ticketing for the next 12 months;

To develop a new 2-3 days multi-cultural event and food festival [to replace the Mela] and outsource it to an external provider with a reducing subsidy over 3 years so it becomes self-financing and potentially profitable to the Council.

6. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

6.1 A communications strategy will be put in place to manage the impact of cancelling the Proms in the Park.

6.2 We will identify potential events to receive pump prime funding for 2020 from the remaining £5k budget.

7. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	We do not expect the recommendations will by themselves materially affect achievement of corporate priorities.	Head of Regeneration and Economic Development
Risk Management	Already covered in the risk section/	Head of Regeneration and Economic Development
Financial	As described in this report, the Council has agreed that core	Section 151 Officer &

	<p>funding for Festivals and Events be reduced by £10,000 per year over the 3 years from 2018-19 in order that the events become self-funding. Any underspend of in the events budget in 2018 will be offset against a shortfall in income. By the end of the financial year it is predicted that the budget will balance.</p> <p>The report describes how this policy will be implemented, thus ensuring that the service delivers against agreed budgets.</p>	Finance Team
Staffing	We will deliver the recommendations with our current staffing.	Head of Regeneration and Economic Development
Legal	None	[Legal Team]
Privacy and Data Protection	N/A	[Legal Team]
Equalities	The recommendations do not propose a change in service therefore will not require an equalities impact assessment	[Policy & Information Manager]
Crime and Disorder	N/A	Head of Regeneration and Economic Development
Procurement	N/A	Head of Regeneration and Economic Development

8. REPORT APPENDICES

- Appendix 1: Summary of Large Events 2018
- Appendix 2: Significant Anniversaries and Events – 2019-2023

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.