

**TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**LEISURE and ARTS ADVISORY BOARD**

**15 October 2007**

**Report of the Chief Leisure Officer and the  
Cabinet Member for Leisure, Youth and Arts**

**Part 1- Public**

**Matters for Recommendation to Cabinet - Non-Key Decision (Decision may be taken  
by the Cabinet Member)**

**1 TONBRIDGE CASTLE FESTIVAL OF MUSIC AND FIREWORKS**

**Summary**

**This report seeks approval to progress arrangements for a Festival of Music and Fireworks to be staged at Tonbridge Castle in 2008, in liaison with the present promoters and in accordance with the agreed Leisure Services arts programme.**

**1.1 Background**

1.1.1 The eighth Tonbridge Castle Festival of Music & Fireworks was staged in July this year, and proved to be very successful. Ticket sales (95% of capacity) and feedback from the audience attending were both good. The programme below showed a number of changes to previous years, including the replacement of Some Enchanted Evening and the Proms performance on the last two nights. Members previously endorsed the continuation of the Festival on an annual basis as part of the Leisure Services arts programme.

Friday 13 July	- Abba Magic supported by West Kent College All Stars
Saturday 14 July	- Summer Nights – The World's greatest rock and pop musicals in concert
Sunday 15 July	- Rat Pack Legends

**1.2 Ticket Sales**

1.2.1 Tickets for the event went on sale on 1 April 2007. Proving as popular as ever, tickets for Abba sold out within four weeks. The new Saturday night show, Summer Nights, also proved successful with the full ticket allocation being sold within two months of going on sale. Rat Pack Legends sales reached 1,293 out of a 1,500 capacity, which was encouraging bearing in mind the Sunday night performance is always the hardest to sell, with many people working the next day.

### **1.3 2008 Festival**

- 1.3.1 A preliminary discussion has taken place with the promoters of this year's event (Musical Associates), who are keen to organise a similar event during the weekend of 11, 12, 13 July 2008. The proposal is again for a three-day event of professional performances, with one night including a local community group. This year the community group was from West Kent College. The programme for next year's Festival is still to be confirmed, and will take into account feedback from the public, and the views of Members of this Board.
- 1.3.2 A telephone survey of public attending the Festival this year has been progressed. The majority of the public stated they would return in 2008, with a number of very positive comments being received. With regard to the 2008 programme there was general support for a similar line-up to this year, with a change of tribute band on the Friday night, for example the Bee Gees or Beatles. In terms of improvements, a number of requests were received for more toilets, especially for ladies, and more advertising of the event prior to the tickets going on sale.

### **1.4 Legal Implications**

- 1.4.1 The Council has powers to undertake this activity by virtue of Section 145 of the Local Government Act 1972. The contract with Musical Associates (MA) will be drawn up in agreement with the Council's Chief Solicitor.

### **1.5 Financial and Value for Money Considerations**

- 1.5.1 A subsidy of £18,000 is allocated in the 2007/08 arts revenue budget to support the event. The Leisure Pass Holder ticket price ensures fair access for all. The promoters have public liability insurance cover of £5 million.
- 1.5.2 Whilst the promoters have proposed raising the ticket prices in line with inflation next year, it is felt appropriate that a review of the prices should be progressed, taking into account similar events across the county. If the opportunity is available to raise prices above inflation for any of the performances, this will reduce the overall subsidy paid by the Council.

### **1.6 Risk Assessment**

- 1.6.1 A risk assessment and detailed Event Safety Plan for the Festival is undertaken on an annual basis in liaison with the Council's Health & Safety Officer. The contractor providing the firework display also has public liability insurance of £5 million. MA produce their own Health and Safety documents for this event, and employ external security staff to be on site over the weekend.
- 1.6.2 The opportunity exists to formally seek proposals from alternative promoters to run the Festival on the Council's behalf, rather than maintain the existing arrangements. MA has proven to be both consistent and stable over the last eight years, in a market where a number of promoters have ceased trading, particularly

due to the risks involved in outdoor events. MA has worked closely with the Council to change the programme in light of feedback from audiences and the quality of performances has been extremely high. It is, therefore, felt appropriate that an exception to Contract Procedure Rules be approved in accordance with Rule 3.1(g) as stated in Part 4 of the Constitution.

## 1.7 The Way Forward and Recommendations

1.7.1 The Festival again proved to be a success in 2007 and allowed many residents and visitors to enjoy high quality music performances in an idyllic setting at affordable prices. The promoters have expressed an interest in repeating the event, and their experience and performance to date would be beneficial in staging a similar event in 2008, subject to the programme being agreed.

## 1.8 Recommendation

1.8.1 It is, therefore, **RECOMMENDED** that:

- 1) the staging of a Tonbridge Castle Festival of Music & Fireworks in July 2008 be confirmed in accordance with the Council's arts programme;
- 2) authority be given to an exception from Contract Procedure Rules in accordance with Rule 3.1(g) to enable detailed negotiations to be entered into with Musical Associates in respect of the 2008 Festival;
- 3) the 2008 programme be determined following Member discussion at the meeting, and be finalised in consultation with the Chairman and Vice Chairman of this Board, and the Cabinet Member for Leisure, Youth and Arts; and
- 4) ticket prices for the 2008 programme be reviewed, taking into account market conditions.

The Chief Leisure Officer confirms that the proposals contained in the recommendations, if approved, will fall within the Council's Budget and Policy Framework.

Background papers:

contact: Lyndsey Bennett

Nil

Robert Styles  
Chief Leisure Officer

Sue Murray  
Cabinet Member for Leisure, Youth & Arts