

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

LEISURE and ARTS ADVISORY BOARD

22 September 2010

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

Part 1- Public

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

1 2010 TONBRIDGE CASTLE FESTIVAL OF MUSIC AND FIREWORKS

Summary

The report provides Members with feedback on this year's Festival of Music and Fireworks, and recommends that a detailed review of the event should be progressed.

1.1 Background

1.1.1 Members will be aware that this year the Festival of Music and Fireworks celebrated its tenth anniversary taking place on 23-25 July inclusive. Following record levels of ticket sales in 2009, expectation levels for the event were high, despite the event being moved back two weeks in the calendar to avoid any potential clash with the Football World Cup.

1.2 2010 Ticket Sales

1.2.1 Ticket sales this year were as follows, with the comparison for 2009 shown in brackets:

Friday (Motown's Greatest Hits)	1,122	(1,591)
Saturday (Strictly West End)	685	(1,446)
Sunday (Magic of the 80s)	992	(1,716)

1.2.2 Members will note that ticket sales were disappointing, despite extensive marketing including the following:

- Leaflet sent to last year's ticket sales database.
- e-flyer to local businesses and Assembly Hall Theatre database.
- Door-to-door leaflet drop in Tonbridge and Tunbridge Wells.

- Leaflet distribution at local Sainsbury's, railway stations in Tonbridge and Tunbridge Wells and at the Lions Summer Carnival.
 - Two week radio advertising campaign with KM FM.
 - News releases/coverage in Here and Now /Leisure Guide feature.
 - Posters in Tonbridge and Tunbridge Wells.
 - Banners and leaflets at Tonbridge Castle, Angel Centre, Poult Wood and Larkfield Leisure Centre.
 - Adverts in local magazines (for example Kent Life/Kent Profile/Index).
 - Adverts in Y2 Crew, Activate and Playscheme brochures.
- 1.2.3 It is felt that there are a number of reasons for the level of ticket sales this year, most notably the current economic climate which has impacted heavily on the live music industry nationally. Sales at other Musical Associate venues have been down 30% and for the first time in the promoters history it had to cancel a weekend of events at Harewood House, which would have included a performance by popular artist James Morrison.
- 1.2.4 It is felt that the public were distracted by a number of key factors this year including the World Cup and were concerned about the uncertainty of personal economic circumstances around and following the General Election.
- 1.2.5 Historically the Tonbridge Festival of Music and Fireworks has always taken place during the second week of July. The Council and the Promoters decided to change the date as otherwise this would have clashed with the weekend of the Football World Cup final. Due to their other commitments the only date the promoters could deliver the event at Tonbridge Castle was the weekend of 23 – 25 July, which clashed with the War and Peace event at the Hop Farm. Whilst these are two different markets, it is apparent that the public are being more selective about what they spend their income on. Residents are less likely to attend two ticketed events on the same weekend.
- 1.2.6 Whilst all three nights were down on numbers compared to previous years, ticket sales for Saturday's Strictly West End concert were particularly disappointing and it is felt that in hindsight the show was too similar to previous West End Musical performances held at the Castle over recent years. Events of all types can reach a point sooner or later when the product requires a fresh approach. The splendid venue we have at the Castle Lawn is a real asset and the event needs to be refreshed to reflect that, and must also have careful regard to the economic position that we face in continuing to promote the Festival.
- 1.2.7 In reviewing the 2010 Festival Musical Associates feel that in hindsight raising the ticket prices was a mistake. The ticket price this year meant that the Festival was

more on a par with concerts that were delivering known artists, as opposed to tribute bands. It is also felt that a family ticket would have generated additional demand.

1.3 Public Feedback

- 1.3.1 A summary of people attending this year's Festival is being undertaken, and feedback will be taken into consideration when considering the review of the event. Respondents are being asked for their suggestions for the future, including the type of music they would prefer to see.

1.4 Value for Money Considerations

- 1.4.1 Members will be aware from previous reports to this Board that, in the light of the financial pressures facing this Council, the overall cost of the Festival has been reduced over recent years, whilst still retaining the same high quality of performances. The aim has been to work towards delivering a Festival at no cost to the Council in the future. The estimate for the 2010 event was a cost to the Council of £5,000, which was based on an average of ticket sales over the previous three years. Whilst the basis of the contract with the promoters places the majority of the financial risk with the promoter, it does include a share of ticket sale income. Due to the levels of ticket sales this year it is estimated that the overall cost to the Council will be in the region of £17,000. The financial impact of the Festival will clearly be a key issue within the review of the event, with the continued aim to deliver an event at no cost to the Council.

1.5 Future Review

- 1.5.1 The event has become an established part of the Council's art programme since its inception in the Millennium, receiving positive public feedback and providing high quality performances. The Festival provides an opportunity for residents to experience a sense of pride in their community and the town.
- 1.5.2 Nevertheless, it is clear that a detailed review of the Festival needs to be undertaken in light of this year's ticket sales, the current market for outdoor concerts and the Council's existing and future financial position. It is, therefore, the intention to progress a review and report back to Members at the next meeting of this Board in December.

1.6 Legal Implications

- 1.6.1 The Council has powers to undertake this activity by virtue of Section 145 of the Local Government Act 1972. The contract with MA (Concerts) Ltd was been drawn up in agreement with the Legal Services Partnership Manager.

1.7 Risk Assessment

- 1.7.1 A risk assessment and detailed Event Safety Plan for the Festival is undertaken on an annual basis in liaison with the Council's Health and Safety Officer. The contractor providing the firework display also has public liability insurance of £5 million. MA Concerts produce its own Health and Safety documents for the event, and employ external security staff to be on site over the weekend.

1.8 Policy Considerations

- 1.8.1 Community, Healthy Lifestyles, Communications, Customer Contact.

1.9 Recommendation

- 1.9.1 It is, therefore, **RECOMMENDED TO CABINET** that a detailed review of the Festival of Music and Fireworks be undertaken, with a report to the December 2010 meeting of the Leisure & Arts Advisory Board.

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

Background papers:

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Nil

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