

COUNCIL

28 July 2025

QUESTION ASKED PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE NO 5.5

The following question has been asked pursuant to Council Procedure Rule No 5.5 by Councillor Cope:

'In light of the challenges many grassroots festivals and community events are currently facing, does the Council believe it is doing everything it can to support these vital initiatives that help make Tonbridge unique? Specifically, is the current approach to requirements and cost structures at the Castle acting as a barrier to not-for-profit groups, and what more can be done to ensure these important local events are supported rather than stifled?'

Response of the Cabinet Member for Community Services (Cllr Keers):

The Council is delighted to promote and support a vibrant and diverse events programme in Tonbridge, making full use of the opportunities provided at historic locations such as Tonbridge Castle. Our programme of events during 2025 has seen a wide-ranging programme including music festivals, open air theatre, car shows, artisan markets and we look forward to the Christmas festival during December.

Event organisers are asked to provide the appropriate documentation to ensure the safety and well-being of attendees, performers and staff. The requirements will be tailored to the size and scale of the event and are in line with best practice elsewhere in the events industry. It is in everyone's interests that we have a successful event programme and our Events team based at the Castle work closely with all organisers, whether they are commercially led or community focussed, to offer any support they need in preparing for their event.

Our fee structure offers significantly reduced fees for charity and community events, to reflect our continued support to the groups delivering these events. Further financial support has been provided to event organisers through the Community Development Grant Scheme, with awards totalling £3175 recently approved to support the delivery of this year's Rotary Christmas Festival.