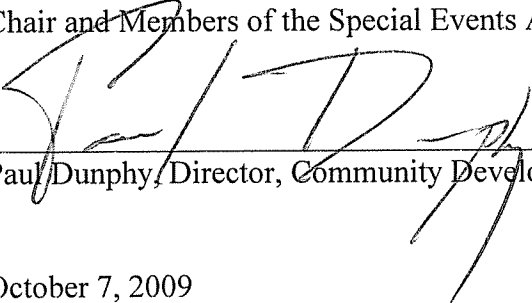




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Special Events Advisory Committee
October 14, 2009

TO: Chair and Members of the Special Events Advisory Committee

SUBMITTED BY: 
Paul Dunphy, Director, Community Development

DATE: October 7, 2009

SUBJECT: Draft Event Strategy, Overview of Phase 2 Community Engagement

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

1. 2007/08 Council Focus Areas identifies the establishment of an Events Strategy
2. October 2008 - Draft Events Study submitted to HRM by Cameron Hawkins Association
3. November 2008 - Information Report Draft Events Study to SEAC
4. April 9, 2009 - Events Strategy presentation at SEAC
5. June 10, 2009 - Overview of Draft Strategy

BACKGROUND

Competition around events and festivals has increased significantly in the past decade as stakeholders recognize the cultural and economic benefits associated with them. Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) has many positive opportunities for developing events, however, there are challenges that need to be addressed.

A draft HRM Event Strategy has been created to guide Council on areas of strategic event development. The strategy establishes a vision and program that will foster an environment contribute to HRM's long-term health, sport, economic, social and cultural life.

A component of the Event Strategy development process included a two phased community engagement directive. The first phase included one-on-one interviews which served to form the basis of the draft strategy.

The second phase of consultation was initiated to seek the opinion of those stakeholders it will directly impact and to assess their overall satisfaction with the strategic direction to address the sectoral issues.

The draft strategy and questionnaire were provided via e-mail to key event stakeholders. The questionnaire circulated to the key stakeholders included thirteen (13) questions (Appendix A). These specific stakeholders were selected given their role as leaders in HRM's event industry. The stakeholders include:

- ▶ Destination Halifax
- ▶ Trade Centre Limited
- ▶ Eight (8) Hallmark Status Events & Festivals
 - Atlantic Jazz Festival
 - Atlantic Film Festival
 - Blue Nose Marathon
 - Halifax Pride Week Festival
 - International Busker Festival
 - Pop Explosion
 - Royal Nova Scotia International Tattoo
 - Scotia Music Festival

It is important to note that the draft strategy excluded an implementation section on governance, funding and service delivery. This was intentional as it was important to seek general thought on the strategic direction of the strategy, before the specific of implementation could be discussed. An implementation sections has since been included in the final draft.

DISCUSSION

This report is intended to provide SEAC with an update on the results of phase two of the community engagement (survey questionnaire) on the draft Events Strategy.

The response rate to the survey was high at eighty percent (80%). All feedback from the stakeholders has been gathered and analyzed. Overall, there appears to be general support for the Event Strategy. The majority of comments provided were directed towards the need for clarity and/or to address specific gaps in the strategy.

Staff have endeavoured to reflect the input. Stakeholder input and any proposed changes that have been derived from the input are documented in table format (Appendix B).

Survey Results:

1. Funding/ Grants

There remains support for HRM's operating budget, which is funded through the general property tax, to support community oriented events, while revenues from the marketing levy should be earmarked of new-non residential business and major events. There also seems to be general consensus on establishing a new event incubation program for launching new events, but not without additional funding. Finally, with respect to administration, there appears to be strong support for a more streamlined grant process and support use of innovative funding programs. A suggestion for the creation of the Mayor's Award for corporate support of events, arts and culture was also put forward. Respondents also indicated support fore reduced municipal service costs.

2. New Events

Emerging from the consultation are a number of ideas for new festivals as well as general consensus that all events should have some kind of cultural component. Specific feedback on new event ideas included a fall Celtic event to celebrate HRM's close connection to the ocean, or a digital media arts festival.

3. Governance

There was overall consensus that a formal body representing the event sector or region in HRM would be valuable for adding structure, networking, and a voice for the industry. In fact, there was unanimous support for an annual forum on the HRM event industry. Respondents also supported HRM in a leadership role for fostering new partnerships among events.

4. Service Delivery

When asked about the concept a one-stop-shop service model, overall respondents indicated support. However, one respondent suggested support for a one stop shop model, but that improved accountability measures would need to be in place, as well as clear and understood roles.

5. Capacity Building

Suggestions for other forms of supports that HRM could provide included an events toolkit, a bidding process tool kit, and marketing consultations with Destination Halifax.

6. Infrastructure:

The most commonly suggested theme with infrastructure was the absence of a large outdoor multipurpose facility. When asked about an additional levy charge on ticket surcharges, no stakeholder supported the idea.

7. Major Hosting

General support for the creation of a formal structure for major event bidding was noted. Some stakeholders would like to see the HRM build the resources, staff and capacity to manage a bidding process, others would like to see a board constructed of all interested parties, and lastly, there was support for Event's Halifax to run the formal structure.

Next Steps:

Over the next month, staff will finalize the implementation section and complete final the editing of the Event Strategy. The Event Strategy will be tabled at a November meeting of Regional Council for final approval.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

While some of the suggestions from the consultation would have financial implications for HRM if implemented, the purpose of this report is to simply provide feedback from the consultation. Once staff develop the Event Strategy for consideration by Council, the financial implications will be included at that time.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT POLICIES/BUSINESS PLAN

This report complies with the Municipality's Multi-Year Financial Strategy, the approved Operating, Capital and Reserve budgets, policies and procedures regarding withdrawals from the utilization of Capital and Operating reserves, as well as any relevant legislation.

ATTACHMENTS

Appendix A - Stakeholder Questionnaire

Appendix B - Community Engagement Stakeholder Feedback Report

A copy of this report can be obtained online at <http://www.halifax.ca/council/agendasc/agenda.html> then choose the appropriate meeting date, or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 490-4210, or Fax 490-4208.

Report Prepared by: Paul Forrest, Civic Events, Community Development, 490-6773

Report Approved by:  _____
Andrew Whittlemore, Manager, Community Relations & Cultural Affairs, 490-1585

Appendix A - Stakeholder Questionnaire

HRM Contact person: Paul Forrest, forrestp@halifax.ca

Survey title: HRM Event Strategy Stakeholder Feedback Questionnaire

Brief survey description: Included on questionnaire, page 2.

Start and end date of when the survey will be active: June 22, 2009 through September 30, 2009

Explanation of how the survey will be promoted, including a list of pages on Halifax.ca that are to link to the survey: The URL for this survey will be emailed to the Special Events Task Force, Special Events Advisory Committee and 2008/09 Civic Events Grant Recipients. A button linking to the survey will be added to <http://www.halifax.ca/events>.

If your survey will capture personal information (ie. name, address, phone number, email, etc) please explain why it is necessary to collect this information: Survey participants will be asked to voluntarily provide their contact information at the end of the survey. This information is not required though can provide context to participant answers.

A complete, approved, and final electronic copy of the survey (with the type of questions that you would like ie – single answer, multiple answer, comment boxes etc): Questions follow on page 2. All questions should be provided an expanding comment box with the exception of contact information, which should be single line answer.

Appendix B

HRM Event Strategy Stakeholder Feedback Questionnaire

In 2007, Cameron Hawkins and Associates Inc. was contracted to develop a Major Events Hosting Strategy. This report suggests HRM is currently well positioned in the capacity of maintaining, developing and acquiring events. In terms of strategy, the report recommends two categories of strategic focus:

- 1) ***Community & Cultural Events: Unique or complimentary events generally developed within the region with characteristics distinctive to the citizens and can grow to be a larger or 'signature' event.***
- 2) ***Major & Sporting Events: Unique or touring large-scale events which involve a bidding process, activity specific infrastructure and may change geographic location annually.***

A HRM Event Strategy has been developed suggesting a vision, principles, goals and objectives to meet the strategic focuses spanning the next ten years.

This questionnaire has been developed to provide stakeholder feedback to the strategy's proposed approach. Responses will be used to reaffirm or develop suggestions put forward in the strategy to enhance HRM's event sector. This survey has been developed for event organizers operating in HRM. Anyone who has organized or plans to organize an event in HRM is invited to participate.

This survey will be live from June 22, 2009 through to 4:00 pm on September 31, 2009.

For further information on the Strategy or this survey, please contact Paul Forrest, forrestp@halifax.ca.

Programming

1. The strategy envisions HRM as ***FUN, CREATIVE and ENERGETIC, with a diverse calendar of signature & complimentary events that promote the vibrant, active, and dynamic interests of the citizens.*** Is this vision aligned with how you would like to see the Region's events develop?
2. HRM has a growing cultural community which the strategy and HRM Cultural Plan encourage supporting. How would you like to see culture further included in future events?
3. The strategy suggests identifying and growing signature events so their identity and theme are closely linked to the Region. What type of existing and potential events do you consider uniquely HRM?
4. The strategy suggests working to fill HRM's event calendar as a way of positioning HRM as a year-round destination for events. Do you support this idea? What events would you consider priority for supporting?
5. To further enhance and grow the year round calendar of events, the strategy suggests the creation of a scaled development program for events. Would you support an event incubation program to help launch new events in HRM? What type of supports should be offered? How long should these program supports continue?

Roles & Responsibilities

6. To increase sector capacity and coordination, the strategy recommends clearly defined stakeholder roles and increased partnerships. As a stakeholder in HRM's event sector, what role do you currently play and how could it be enhanced? Do you currently work with other events on joint programs? What role do you currently see HRM as contributing to the sector? How would you like HRM to enhance this role? Please describe.
7. High quality events are important to maintain local event attendance and draw visitors to the Region. What steps do you apply to ensure quality events?

Governance

8. The strategy identifies the lack of a formal body representing the event industry in the Region, or a forum for the views and concerns of the industry to be heard by all government levels. Would you support the establishment of a more formalized structure engaging other partners such as the Province of NS, Government of Canada, sports organizations, corporate sponsors and community-based organizations in pursuing certain events?
9. There are many agencies in HRM involved in the marketing and promotion of HRM, and the acquisition of events. The Strategy suggests a one stop shop is required to improve our effectiveness. Do you support the concept of a more centralized service?
10. The local industry approach to major competitive event bid hosting as it stands is quite ad hoc. The Strategy suggests a more formal structure is needed. Do you support the establishment of such? Who should be included?

Resources

11. HRM provides an annual operating budget (tax base) and receives 40 of hotel tax to fund events. What other innovative funding sources are you aware of that HRM should consider? What additional resources outside of financing would you like to see available to you as an organizer (ex. Planning manual, staff meetings, etc)? Would you be interested in participating in annual forums on the HRM event industry?
12. The strategy identifies the importance in up-to-date infrastructure for successful events. What do you consider HRM's strengths and weaknesses associated with the current event infrastructure in the region? Consider venues, equipment, transportation, etc.
13. Municipal services are a regular occurring associated expense for events. The strategy suggests investigating methods for offsetting this expense through tax levies or ticket surcharges. Would you support the tax levies or ticket surcharges? Are you aware of practices used in other cities to cover municipal services? What are they? Do you support them?

Contact Information

14. Please provide your name, organization and contact information. (optional)

Name:

Organization:

Email:

Phone:

Mail:

Webpage:

Other:

Additional Feedback

15. If you have an additional comments or feedback, please provide it here.



Event Strategy Stakeholder Questionnaire Feedback

Section: Programming

Question 1) *The strategy envisions HRM as FUN, CREATIVE and ENERGETIC, with a diverse calendar of signature & complimentary events that promote the vibrant, active, and dynamic interests of the citizens and visitors. Is this vision aligned with how you would like to see the Region's events develop?*

Comment

More clarity required around signature event definition and scope of strategy.

ACTION: Vision statement amended to include reference to citizens and visitors. Signature event has been amended to include emerging and annual events.

Statement is too focused on community and culture events.

ACTION: The strategic direction outlined brings a new focus to community and cultural events given that local events will foster healthy communities. The concept is to build local events and to create an environment in which they will thrive. Over the long term, some of these community and cultural events will become major events.

No direction to operationalize the strategy.

ACTION: The vision and principles are not intended to define the strategy's implementation. Implementation section was not provided for review to stakeholders as this would be unfair to seek an objective opinion on the services that they are currently providing. An implementation section is now included.

Question 2) *HRM has a growing cultural community which the strategy and HRM Cultural Plan encourage supporting. How would you like to see culture further included in future events?*

Comment

Culture needs to be defined in the strategy.

ACTION: The scope definition section was amended to include a detailed definition of culture (section 1.1.1.)

General support for cultural elements/components to be integrated into all HRM events to strengthen the community.

ACTION: New action added which directs HRM to enhance existing reviewing process to ensure that cultural components are addressed and included. Implementation section provides new opportunities for various cultural presentations.

Cultural and sporting activities encourages growth because they offer a degree of ownership by the local community, where as pure entertainment events do not offer ownership, are at the mercy of the economy and event fatigue, and do not contribute to local infrastructure.

ACTION: A proposed Cultural Panel will host annual brain storming sessions through which members of the cultural community will be invited to identify creative ways of integrating culture into existing and emerging events.

HRM Event Strategy Community Engagement

Question 3) *The strategy suggests identifying and growing signature events so their identity and theme are closely linked to the Region. What type of existing and potential events do you consider uniquely HRM?*

Comment

HRM is a diverse region that has many different interest groups and therefore there is no singular identity of the region.

ACTION: The strategy's proposes a new signature/emerging events category that will provide more support for events that will appeal to varying interests.

General consensus that HRM has several existing unique events that cover a wide variety of themes (Natal Day, Bluenose Marathon, CIS sporting events, international hockey, and the Royal Nova Scotia International Tattoo.

ACTION: The strategy recommends continued support to Hallmark funding category which will definitely support events such as listed above.

General suggestions for potential unique events included an off season hockey event (annual old timers/legends of the game); The Bluenose Cup, The KingFisher Cup or a Fall Celtic Fest;

ACTION: Proposed funding and support policy for new events will help emerging unique events such as these get off the ground. Some of the potential event suggestions were inputted into Section 3.2, Goal 3, Expand HRM's Event Calendar.

Current roster of HRM Signature Events does not include events such as the Maritime Fall Fair (because it engages rural Nova Scotia).

ACTION: The strategy's strengthened focus on community will ensure that rural events are supported through the community events and signature event program.

Question 4) *The strategy suggests working to fill HRM's event calendar as a way of positioning HRM as a year-round destination for events. Do you support this idea? What events would you consider priority for*

Comment

Filling HRM's event calendar has to ensure natural growth and cannot come at the expense of existing events. Building events during the shoulders and off peaks of the annual event calendar could create economic productivity but needs higher incubation support.

ACTION: he strategy supports buliding existing events as outlined in Objective 1 of Goal 3, "Maintain and Develop Existing and Recurring Events."

HRM should capitalize on their strong visual and digital media arts sector by building up existing arts events or creating a new event to address the winter months gap. Addressing the gaps in the event calendar is a positive idea because of the diverse nature of the event sector and appeal of various events to a wide array of audiences should eliminate event fatigue.

ACTION: The strategy also supports the creation of new cultural events such as the growth of digital art in the cultural presentation. This comment was also used to ammend information in Section 2.1.3., "Event Gaps," and Section 3.2, Goal 3, "Expand HRM's Event Calendar."

Synergy is needed between all factors being considered when building the event calendar and off-season should be tailored more for local consumption.

ACTION: Local consumption is promoted with this strategy through the inclusion of a new cultural presentation grant.

1. HRM has the largest concentration of oceanographic research, supply and related business anywhere. HRM is a city forged by our connection to the sea. A festival that celebrated this with film, art, business development, food, trade show etc could be quite unique.

HRM Event Strategy Community Engagement

2. A Mayors Award for Corporate support of arts and culture could be developed. It could recognize and encourage the business community to give support, services and even volunteers.
3. Developing a late winter event and perhaps one in the late fall (.i.e: annual sporting event in the late winter/early spring and a Celtic celebration in the late fall).

ACTION: All three previous comments/ ideas were submitted into Section 3.2, Goal 3, "Expand HRM's Event Calendar."

Question 5) *To further enhance and grow the year round calendar of events, the strategy suggests the creation of a scaled development program for events. Would you support an event incubation program to help launch new events in HRM? What type of supports should be offered? How long should these program supports continue?*

Comment

Festivals and Events Grants budget needs to be increased in order to sustain an incubation program.

ACTION: The Event Strategy is recommending that the Festival and Events Grants budget be increased. Details of the recommended budget increase can be seen in Section 5.3.3., "Funding the Strategy."

Municipal services costs are very high and can act as a hindrance or even deterrent of creating events in

ACTION: The strategy proposed that HRM would cover municipal costs associated with Hallmark status events. This information can be seen in Section 4.1.2., b), "Performance Underwriting" as well as under Section 5.3.3., "Funding the Strategy."

New and emerging events should have to provide information regarding their vision, feasibility, sustainability, contribution to the community and HRM and should be individually assessed.

ACTION: New measures to ensure event quality are proposed in the strategy.

Section: Roles & Responsibilities

Question 6) *To increase sector capacity and coordination, the strategy recommends clearly defined stakeholder roles and increased partnerships. As a stakeholder in HRM's event sector, what role do you currently play and how could it be enhanced? Do you currently work with other events on joint programs? What role do you currently see HRM as contributing to the sector? How would you like HRM to enhance this role? Please describe.*

Comment

HRM should be building relationships with the Province, Industry Associations, Cultural Federations and industry on behalf of the event industry.

ACTION: The proposed strategy recommends revising SEAC and developing three (3) SEAC sub-panels which will all be responsible for facilitating discussion between all levels of government and associations. The detailed responsibilities of each sub-panel can be found in section 5.3.1., Special

Grant process timeline is too long and there is no communication or relationship.

ACTION: A revised grant process system is proposed to streamline existing procedures that make it exhaustive (Section 3.2, Goal 4, Objective 2, "Streamline Decision Making"). The strategy also recommends hiring new staff to administer the application process and to provide more capacity to build relationships.

HRM needs to have a process where grants and support can happen outside council but with their direction (without the cheque to cheque Council approval), more along the lines of the provinces Culture Division.

HRM Event Strategy Community Engagement

ACTION: The strategy recommends the creation of a single-point service delivery model, which would call for major events to be managed outside the Council realm, allowing for a faster decision. Reducing the number of gateways will also reduce some strain on existing grant procedures. More information on this topic can be seen in Section 4.1.1.

Major lack of flexible space and venues that is free on encumbrance.

ACTION: With the creation of new supports and resources, especially the recommendation of a new staff liaison, communication can be fostered into a formal avenue on infrastructure issues (Section 3.2., Goal 2, Objective 1, "Increasing Event Sector Capacity"). As well the proposed timeline of the "Infrastructure Improvement" objective (Goal 2) establishes steps that will be taken to improve existing infrastructure.

An enhanced role for HRM could call for demonstration of regard for events as positive opportunity for growth and enhanced source of community/citizen pride.

ACTION: The strategy acknowledges the importance of events and will take a pro-active role of formally identifying Event Champions for event advocacy (Section 3.2., Goal 1).

There has been overlap and duplications in HRM of the development, acquisition, and execution of major conferences, national meetings and major events

ACTION: Major event hosting would no longer fall under the realm of HRM direct services if the strategy is accepted.

Question 7) *High quality events are important to maintain local event attendance and draw visitors to the Region. What steps do you apply to ensure quality events?*

Comment

Coach event organizers, and provide them competitive information and resources.

ACTION: Developing learning and training opportunities to increase the capacity and skills of the managers/promoters, organisers and workers is an objective of the strategy. This is addressed throughout the objectives of Goal 2, Enhanced Event Impact.

A third party survey is conducted every year to identify participants rating of varying components of the event. This information is used in future planning and provides new and surprising material.

ACTION: Ensuring events have the capacity and resources to evaluate their existing program/event has been added to the strategy to ensure quality and sustainability (Section 3.2., Goal 2, Objective 3, "Quality Events").

Section: Governance

Question 8) *The strategy identifies the lack of a formal body representing the event industry in the Region, or a forum for the views and concerns of the industry to be heard by all government levels. Would you support the establishment of a more formalized structure engaging other partners such as the Province of NS, Government of Canada, sports organizations, corporate sponsors and community-based organizations in pursuing certain events?*

Comment

1. There should be a regional organization to work on behalf event organizations (outside the idea of pursuing events).
2. A structure would speak with one voice and HRM should act as a catalyst to demonstrate that the event sector is growing and maturing.

HRM Event Strategy Community Engagement

3. Forming a formal festivals body would help with networking and support and allow more information and knowledge to be shared.
4. It is important that this body should be useful to the events industry rather than being a new level of bureaucracy that needs to be dealt with. It must have clear goals and yet not be so rigid that it is unable to deal with innovation.

ACTION: SEAC's proposed sub-panels would have the responsibility of liaison and networking and would represent the broad compliment of interests. These sub-panels would also have the responsibility of representing the events sector and will communicate on behalf of the industry (Section 5.3.1.).

Question 9) *There are many agencies in HRM involved in the marketing and promotion of HRM, and the acquisition of events. The Strategy suggests a one stop shop is required to improve our effectiveness. Do you support the concept of a more centralized service?*

Comment

1. One marketing promotion entity may not work in HRM due to the diverse market segments.
2. There currently does exist overlapping with marketing and promotion, however one organization should not have sole control but rather a central mandate.
3. A one stop shop is the answer if it offered more services and made Halifax more attractive to the rest of the world.
4. The role and responsibility of marketing is clearly understood but the processes and roles relative to procurement and staging are splintered. Rather than a centralized service, a succinct plan with designated and subsequently accepted roles is needed.

ACTION: There appears to be general support for the model of a one-stop gateway.

Question 10) *The local industry approach to major competitive event bid hosting as it stands is quite ad hoc. The Strategy suggests a more formal structure is needed. Do you support the establishment of such? Who should be included?*

Comment

1. HRM needs to build the resources, staff and structures so major events can be held by the city.
2. It is ad hoc whereas it seems whoever thought of it runs with it. Events Halifax could be the main portal to go through.
3. A committee should consist of the levels of government, interested organizations and leaders in the industry as well as peoples from a diverse population to ensure representation.
4. There can be better process without a formal structure if the process is well communicated and supported with a strategy and a bid tool kit.

ACTION: The strategy provides a proposed bidding process. Further, the strategy recommends a review of existing service providers and the establishment of a new central body to administer the process. In the interim, the strategy suggest formalizing this role for Eh!.

Section: Resources

Question 11) *HRM provides an annual operating budget (tax base) and receives 40 of hotel tax to fund events. What other innovative funding sources are you aware of that HRM should consider? What additional resources outside of financing would you like to see available to you as an organizer (ex. Planning manual, staff meetings, etc)? Would you be interested in participating in annual forums on the HRM event industry?*

HRM Event Strategy Community Engagement

Comment

HRM Council needs to allocate more money for arts, culture and sport.

ACTION: The strategy proposed an increased operating budget. The strategy also suggests alternative funding ideas for HRM.

Small to medium sized events would benefit from an event planning manual, available meeting spaces.

ACTION: A planning manual is part of the proposed strategy in the Enhanced Event Impact goal (Section 3.2.)

Strong consensus for the creation on an annual HRM event forum.

ACTION: An HRM forum would fall under the responsibilities of the SEAC sub-panels and is proposed under them.

The operating budget should bear the costs association with community oriented events while the revenues from the marketing levy should be earmarked for new non-residential business including major conferences and events.

ACTION: The strategy proposes several changes to the reserve as well as potential expansion of its application (i.e., other businesses beyond hotels).

Question 12) *The strategy identifies the importance in up-to-date infrastructure for successful events. What do you consider HRM's strengths and weaknesses associated with the current event infrastructure in the region? Consider venues, equipment, transportation, etc.*

Comment

2. HRM has an absence of a large outdoor mutli-purpose stadium and lacks in-door venues large for medium scale events.

ACTION: The proposed strategy recognizes the deficiencies in major infastructure and recommends several options to correct this issue this including long term capital planning and strategically facility development with major event and hosting acquisition.

HRM owning more staging and other event equipment would help supplement local events.

ACTION: The strategy supports the continuation of funding directed towards small scaled event infrastructure and equipement.

Question 13) *Municipal services are a regular occurring associated expense for events. The strategy suggests investigating methods for offsetting this expense through tax levies or ticket surcharges. Would you support the tax levies or ticket surcharges? Are you aware of practices used in other cities to cover municipal services? What are they? Do you support them?*

Comment

Overall stakeholders did not support ticket surcharges however the market event levy reserve is still considered to be a viable, addition source of income.

ACTION: No recommendations for increasing tax levies or surcharges are included in the strategy.