

Larissa Reed
Chief Executive
Swale Borough Council

Dear Ms Reed

Faversham Hop Festival, 3-4 September 2022

The Hop Festival is one of Swale's premier events, much missed over the last two years and going ahead this year thanks to a successful public appeal for funding. We are very excited about giving the people of Swale something to celebrate again as we emerge from Covid, and to provide a significant boost to local businesses.

However we have a last minute problem which we need your help urgently to resolve please, or we won't be able to proceed.

We have been informed of requirements for stall holders to apply individually for street trading licences (cost £10) and to have DBS checks (cost c£20). These requirements were not set out in our stall application process and have emerged so late we don't consider it reasonable to expect stall holders to take on this additional cost (*even supposing there is time to complete the DBS process in time for the festival*). We anticipate many stall holders will walk away, undermining the viability of the festival which relies on this income source; and a successful street festival needs a diverse range of stalls.

Were we as the festival promoters to pick up the costs for around 50 stalls we are looking at additional unbudgeted costs of some £1500. We are already having to absorb much higher supplier costs than anticipated as a result of rising fuel, energy etc costs so this could tip us over into insolvency, which we are not prepared to contemplate.

Clearly something has gone wrong with communicating these changes, which we now understand were introduced from April 2021, prior to us signing our latest contract with the Council. As promoters of one of the largest events in Swale we would have expected to have been consulted on these changes in advance. We weren't consulted then and have not been informed of them until now.

In the circumstances we would ask that we be exempted from the changes this year please (an exemption I understand Faversham market traders operating during the Festival already get).

Despite our reservations about the changes - which we can expand on separately - we do recognise the Council wishes to move in this direction and will ensure we build them into our application process next year.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Chairman
Community Heritage Events