

MEETING OF THE PUBLIC HALLS SUB-COMMITTEE
Of the AMENITIES COMMITTEE

Held on 6 March 2017
at 5.00pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Witney

Present

Councillor: Cllr P J Dorward (Chair)

Councillors: C Brown C Holliday
B J Churchill C K Woodward

Officers: Town Clerk Democratic Services Officer
Operations Officer Public Halls Officer
Bookings Administrator

Also present: 3 members of the public

H088 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

An apology for her absence was received from Cllr S Bartington.

H089 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest in matters to be discussed at the meeting.

H090 **MINUTES**

- a) **RESOLVED:** that the minutes of the meeting held on 31 October 2016 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman;
- b) **MATTERS ARISING:** a member queried if the meeting detailed in minute H603 had taken place. The Town Clerk confirmed that it had happened in November 2016.

H091 **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

The members of the public present did not wish to address the meeting.

H092 **FINANCIAL REPORT**

The Committee received and considered the report of the RFO as circulated with the agenda. The Chairman remarked that financially the situation appeared fairly stable and in some cases quite good. The Town Clerk would ask the RFO to add in the revised budget for the next meeting.

RECOMMENDED: that the report be noted.

H093 **PROGRESS ON REPAIRS AND IMPROVEMENTS SINCE THE LAST MEETING**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Operations Officer as circulated with the agenda. He highlighted that wi-fi and a new reception desk had been installed in the Corn Exchange. The Bookings Administrator was in the process of moving over to the Corn Exchange so the building would be manned and open for business. The new boiler had been installed and the lift well had been painted. There were still some issues with the emergency lighting, which were under investigation by the electrical contractors.

A member welcomed the new Public Halls Officer and commented that the new reception desk looked very good in the lobby. He asked if all the records for the emergency lighting were up to date and the Operations Officer confirmed that they were. The Operations Officer added that there might be a financial implication from the emergency lighting if he could not get the electrical contractors to repair/replace as faulty.

The Operations Officer advised that a new ceiling had been required in one of the changing rooms at Burwell Hall as a result of showers being left running after lock up. The extractor fans could not cope with such a build-up of steam. Members asked if the showers could be put onto a timer system so that they only ran for a short period and then shut off automatically. The Operations Officer would obtain quotes for this. The Town Clerk also suggested that a reminder to turn off the showers before leaving could be included in the letter going out to teams shortly and also signage in the changing rooms. Members thought this was a good opportunity.

RECOMMENDED:

1. that the report be noted;
2. that the Operations Officer obtains quotes for changing the showers to timed operation;
3. that the teams using the changing rooms are reminded in the annual letter to turn off the showers before leaving the building.

H094 **HALL USAGE FIGURES AND PROSEPTIVE HIRERS FEEDBACK**

Members received and considered the report of the Bookings Administrator a circulated wth the agenda. The Chairman commented that the usage figures were as expected. Hopefully this would improve now that the Public Halls Officer was in post. The Chairman noted from the information supplied that it was clear the charges needed to be looked at.

The Bookings Administrator was confident that she could get custom if the charges were right. In answer to a member's question the Bookings Administrator confirmed that she though an hourly charge rate would help. She put a lot of effort into corresponding with potential hirers for them to walk away when they were advised of the hire charges.

Members discussed this and all agreed that football was important and that charges should be reviewed whilst keeping in mind that the Council needed to cover its costs. The Public Halls Officer added that with an hourly rate there were opportunities to slot in events such as fitness classes.

The Town Clerk advised that the pricing structure was supposed to be simple but in fact it had become rigid and inflexible and did not suit the customer. She suggested that perhaps new groups could be given a discounted rate to start with.

The Public Halls Officer added that a meeting had been held with the bar supplier and he had said that if he got 2 bookings a month he would be prepared to give some of his profit back to the Council.

The Chairman proposed that a Working Party be set up to examine the charges and that in the meanwhile authority is delegated to the Town Clerk and Public Halls Officer to determine which potential customer should receive a discounted rate. The Town Clerk was also charged with writing a Policy for this which would go to the next meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee. The members of the Working Party would be the Chairman, Cllr Churchill, the Town Clerk, the Bookings Administrator and the Public Halls Officer.

RECOMMENDED:

1. that the report be noted;
2. that a Working Party be set up to consider the hire charges;
3. that authority is delegated to the Town Clerk and Public Halls Officer to determine which potential customer should receive a discounted rate;
4. that the Town Clerk writes a Policy on discounts or incentives for long term bookings to be reviewed at the next Policy and Resources Committee meeting;
5. that research be undertaken for licencing the Corn Exchange for weddings;
6. that a wedding fair of local businesses be arranged;
7. that a rebranding/relaunching of the Corn Exchange be undertaken.

H095 **CCTV IN THE CORN EXCHANGE**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Operations Officer as circulated with the agenda. There were three options to consider and quotes by different companies. There would be associated costs for extra electrical works and he recommended deferring the decision until he had managed to get costings.

Members discussed this and decided that in order not to delay the work, authority should be delegated to the Chairman, Cllr Morris, the Town Clerk and the Operations Officer to progress this item.

RECOMMENDED: that authority should be delegated to the Chairman, Cllr Morris, the Town Clerk and the Operations Officer to progress the installation of CCTV in the Corn Exchange.

H096 **FIRE SAFETY REPORT**

A fire inspection of the Corn Exchange had recently been undertaken by the Fire Officer, the details of which had been circulated with the agenda. He had asked for a fire seal around the small kitchen door which was in hand. However, the most significant issue was that he had been unhappy with the total occupancy figure of 380 and had suggested that it should in fact be 200. The Fire Officer had recommended changing the fire escape for the gallery room to the one previously used which would give an extra 90 people to the capacity.

There followed a discussion on the impact of this on the hall and it was agreed that the Operations Officer and Public Halls Officer should look at ways of increasing the capacity and take this back to the Fire Officer.

RECOMMENDED:

1. that the report be noted;
2. that the Operations Officer and Public Halls Officer review and update the fire risk assessment with suitable paperwork and occupancy numbers;
3. that correct information and building plans etc. be added to the Fire Risk assessment.

H097 **EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

RESOLVED: that in accordance with section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960, and as extended by Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, the public, including the press, be excluded from the meeting because of the confidential nature of the following business to be transacted.

H098 **LANDGALE HALL & THE CORN EXCHANGE**

The Committee received and considered the confidential report of the Town Clerk as circulated prior to the meeting. She updated Members on the situation with regard to the Langdale Hall and also a proposal from a company in respect of the events and catering in the Corn Exchange. Given the commercial nature of the proposal for the Corn Exchange Members requested that expressions of interest be sought on facilities/improvements for the lobby.

The Town Clerk also reminded Members of the vision the Council set in 2012 and asked if this was still relevant and what the Council aspired to achieve. Members suggested that this be reviewed following 12-months of operating the Corn Exchange.

RECOMMENDED:

1. that the confidential report be noted;
2. that negotiations with the community group mentioned in the Town Clerk's confidential report be progressed with regard to them leasing the Langdale Hall;

3. that the necessary works in order to bring the Langdale Hall back into operation be commissioned and in doing so that Policy and Resources Committee be asked to agree the necessary budget to cover the works;
4. that negotiations for full repairing lease be delegated to the Leader and the Town Clerk and this is to be presented back to the Policy and Resources Committee and Full Council for agreement;
5. that expressions of interest are invited for the lobby of the Corn Exchange;
6. that the Council's 2012 vision is reconsidered after the building has been running for a year.

The meeting closed at 6pm.

Chairman