

## **Notes of a Meeting of the Assembly Hall Working Group**

**held on Thursday 13 July 2017**

Present: Richard Wiltshire; Geoff Mitcham; Adrienne Westbrook; Terri Welch; Tim Cross; Steve Gray; Jean Harris.

### **1. Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Andy Hinchcliffe.

### **2. Financial Overview**

JH reported that the Assembly Hall financial performance was tracking satisfactorily with bar revenues year to date running at £13k and room hire income at 9.3k. TC pointed out that bar income was down year on year and one of the major contributory factors for this was the fact that the football and rugby clubs now had their own venues for events such as sportsmen's dinners which were lucrative events in terms of wet sales.

JH pointed out that the debtor situation had improved markedly in recent months and it was acknowledged that credit for this should in large part go to Jack Land who was rigorously chasing outstanding invoices.

### **3. Stocktaker Report**

TC provided copies of the latest Stocktaker's report dated 13 July 2017 for members' perusal and consideration. TC pointed out that it was pleasing to note that gross profit was running at 63.14% and that actual sales was only .05% adrift from the attainable value. Whilst there were some minor anomalies in relation to sales of wine and gin, TC stated that the report was encouraging and illustrated again that a GP significantly in excess of 60% was now consistently being achieved.

### **4. Apprentice – Edie Stanford**

TC stated that a recruitment process had seen four excellent candidates interviewed for the role and that the successful applicant, Edie Stanford, had commenced employment with the Town Council in the capacity of Apprentice Facilities and Hospitality Team Assistant effective 6 July 2017. Edie appeared to be settling in well and TC encouraged Councillors to pop in and introduce themselves to her when in the vicinity of the Assembly Hall.

TC added that he had met with Edie's nominated course tutor from Wiltshire Council and that together they had identified work based experience and objectives to complement the course work that Edie would undertake as part of her apprenticeship framework.

### **5. Recent Events Review**

TC provided a schedule which revealed that whilst the Patsy Cline tribute and Brian Poole and Tremeloes shows had lost money, all other live events in the last four months had generated positive results, providing an overall profit of £7,325.92. Members acknowledged that secondary sales were key to the economic viability of the live entertainment offer and noted that the wet sales revenue from live events (£9,188.21) represented that vast majority of year to date bar income discussed in 1) above.

### **6. Forthcoming Events and Financial Exposure**

TC provided a schedule of forthcoming events and reported that ticket sales were generally buoyant. Over 410 tickets had been sold for the Mike Smith Big Swing Band in September; over 125 for the Jimeoin gig in October; and 192 tickets had already been sold for Jethro's show in December. Whilst ticket sales for all other shows were not as prolific, the contractual arrangements were such that TC had few concerns in respect of any significant financial exposure.

## 7. Status of Working group and Terms of Reference

SG pointed out that the primary focus of this meeting was to consider the status of these meetings and suggest appropriate terms of reference. SG explained that the Town Council had expressed some concern about the scope and nature of Assembly Hall Working Group meetings and had suggested that a meeting be convened for members to consider this topic and suggest an appropriate way forward which could be taken back to Town Council on 4 September for further consideration.

SG stated that the fundamental issue appeared to be whether the Assembly Hall Working Group should be regarded as a working group or should be formally constituted as a sub-committee of the Asset Management Committee. SG explained that the Council could delegate its functions to a committee or sub-committee (LGA 1972 s.101) which could have delegated powers to act on behalf of the Council and be subject to normal procedural rules. A working group on the other hand is not a decision making group, is not bound by normal procedural rules and does not have delegated powers; and any decisions are still made by the relevant committee or by full council.

Members discussed the various advantages and disadvantages. It was acknowledged that the informal nature of the meetings had allowed for a frank and honest exchange of views which was particularly helpful in supporting the Facilities and Hospitality Team. Whilst a sub committee would allow decisions within a delegated framework to be made, it was noted that the timing of meetings ten days prior to Asset Management Committee meetings meant issues such as staffing matters or the procurement of non replacement items for which no budgetary provision had been made, could be raised on the imminent agenda for early determination.

On balance and following considerable debate, members agreed that these meetings should remain on a working group rather than a sub-committee basis. All councillors should be invited to attend and the concept of open meetings (perhaps two a year) possibly allied to a 'Friends of the Assembly Hall' initiative, should be further explored.

Suggested Terms of Reference for the Assembly Hall Working Group are:

- To review and discuss financial performance in the intervening period between meetings
- To review and discuss the stocktaker's periodic reports
- To review and discuss recent events to consider successes, problems, and lessons learnt etc
- To review forthcoming events including ongoing ticket sales and contractual arrangements, identifying any potential areas of financial exposure
- To discuss current and prospective operational matters (including staffing issues) with a view to referring items to the Asset Management Committee for determination
- To suggest possible hospitality and entertainment offerings (e.g. cinema; alternative content; live entertainment) for future consideration
- To suggest and discuss possible enhancements to the facilities/hospitality team offer
- To discuss and recommend the procurement of capital items for consideration and determination by the Asset Management Committee
- To discuss and suggest marketing initiatives to promote the Assembly Hall, its events and facilities

## **8. Any Other Business**

### **8.1 Fridge**

TC explained that the fridge in the bar area had broken and was beyond economic repair. TC pointed out that this was creating severe operational difficulties and that a replacement would cost in the region of £430. Given that this was a replacement item; the equipment was required for the professional and efficient running of the bar area; and the spend was within the Clerk's delegated authority level, members suggested that the Clerk should authorise the purchase of a suitable replacement fridge without delay.

### **8.2 Seat Numbers**

TC explained that the decision to number seats had been well received by patrons to the Assembly Hall who were now able to book their seat on line and attend the event in the secure knowledge that their seat had been reserved for them. It was perceived that this had greatly enhanced the customer experience.

TC stated that to facilitate seat numbering, paper numbers had been printed in house, laminated and attached to seats. As an expedient measure this had worked but the laminated surfaces were coming away from the paper which in any event looked tatty and amateurish. TC had therefore investigated whether a more robust and presentable solution might be available and had sourced a supplier of embossed or engraved numbers on plastic discs. Securing magnets to the discs meant that discs could be attached to the metal seat surround and removed as required. TC explained that the cost of plastic numbered discs would be £196.80 (+VAT) and the magnets would be £110 (+VAT).

Members considered that this was a sensible way forward that would enhance customers' perception of the Assembly Hall. However, given that this represented a new spend and investment, it was considered that the proposed spend should be referred, with the Working Group's recommendation, to the next Asset Management Committee for determination.

### **8.3 Illuminated Curtain**

TC explained that Paul Weymouth had on occasion provided an illuminated curtain for use in the Assembly Hall. This had been used as a backcloth for live entertainment on the stage, and as a light feature in other area of the Hall including the bar. TC suggested that the light curtain's effect was significant in creating ambience and atmosphere and could be used extensively if purchased for outright use. TC stated that the cost of the light curtain was £232.50 and he sought members' views on whether the Town Council should look to procure this equipment.

Members understood the attraction of owning and using this equipment and considered that the proposed spend should be referred, with the Working Group's recommendation, to the next Asset Management Committee for determination.

### **8.4 Deputy Facilities and Hospitality Team Managers**

AW asked if the job re-evaluation of the Deputy Facilities and Hospitality Team manager had been completed. SG confirmed that it had and revisions to terms and conditions of employment had been backdated to 1 April 2017 in accordance with the resolution passed by Town Council on 15<sup>th</sup> May 2017.