



Devizes Town Council

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RECREATION AND PROPERTIES COMMITTEE

You are summonsed to attend a meeting of the Recreation & Properties Committee at the following, place and date.

Date: 14 DECEMBER 2017

Time: Immediately following Planning Committee

Venue: Council Chamber, Town Hall, Devizes

Enquiries: 01380 722160

The Town Mayor: (Councillor Carter)

Councillors:	Burton	S Evans	Gay
	Geddes	Giraud-Saunders	Johnson
	Parsons	Rowland	Shaw
	Wooldridge	Greenwood	

AGENDA

1. MINUTES

To approve as a correct record and authorise the Chairman to sign the minutes of the meeting held on 14 November 2017 and which have been circulated alongside the agenda.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

3. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

To receive any disclosure(s) of interest by a Councillor or an officer in matters to be considered at this meeting, in accordance with provisions of Sections 94 or 117 of the Local Government Act 1972 or the National Code of Local Government Conduct.

4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

At the Chairman's discretion, members of the public attending the meeting will be allowed to ask questions, make a statement or address the Council upon a matter of concern to that person which is relevant to the Council. A time limit of 5 minutes per person will be permitted, but this may be extended at the Chairman's discretion and a maximum period of 20 minutes has been allocated by the Council for this item of business

5. REPORT FOR INFORMATION – VENUES INCOME FIGURES

Documents are issued alongside.

6. REPORT FOR INFORMATION – VENUES - CUSTOMER SATISFACTION FEEDBACK, VENUES OCCUPANCY FIGURES & MARKETING INFORMATION

The first conference offer was sent to all those existing customers and advertised on the venues website, Facebook and Twitter page. One company has made a booking further to seeing the advert. Officers will continue to promote officers through the year and it is hoped that it will attract bookings. Again, officers will continue to monitor the success of each offer.

A similar offer for those looking to book weddings has just been sent to those who attended a recent wedding fair at the Corn Exchange and will be advertised across social media.

Officers are also looking into the viability of co-hosting a wedding fair in the Town Hall with a number of local businesses in the Spring. A campaign to attract business into the Wessex and Yeoman Rooms is also being planned for delivery in January 2018.

7. REPORT FOR INFORMATION – KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS NARRATIVE

November was a busier month in the venues than October, particularly in the Town Hall, which is reflected in the income received.

Whilst the Ceres Hall continues to be a popular venue, the smaller Corn Exchange rooms (Wessex and Yeoman) are underused. Officers are currently working on a promotion targeted to these rooms specifically, which will be rolled out in the New Year.

Overall, less enquiries were received in November than October and the conversion rate is lower. Officers are waiting on a number of companies to confirm bookings, therefore some enquiries are still 'live'.

8. REPORT FOR INFORMATION – QUAKERS WALK ALLOTMENTS CONSULTATIONS

A questionnaire was despatched to all allotment holders at the Quakers Walk allotment site at the same time as requests for payment of the allotment fees were despatched in early September 2017.

31 questionnaires were received back from Quakers Walk allotment holders.

26% of those questioned stated that facilities could be improved.

94% of allotment holders felt that the current rent offered good value for money.

94% also felt that the majority of allotments were in good order.

90% of respondents rated the site as good or satisfactory whilst 97% felt that the Town Council administered the site to a satisfactory or good level.

When asked if allotment holders would be prepared to take part in a 'clean-up day', 84% stated that they would.

When given the opportunity to give general comments these ranged from the unrealistic to those warranting discussion.

Unrealistic

Skips fill too quickly – more skips – more often

Mow paths between allotment sites

Communal allotment mower

Provision of toilets and washroom

Allotment holders donate £100 each to fund improvements to site

Arrange a pigeon shoot

Discussion Topics

Install twice the number of water troughs

Communal compost area

Increase cost of allotments to upgrade gate/lock

Rent is too low

9. REPORT FOR INFORMATION – PARK CAFÉ PERFORMANCE

Officers have continued to provide members with progress reports relating to the performance of the Café at Hillworth Park.

Officers also advised that although the objective is to at least break even, there is a view that the café is a community service that sits alongside the delivery of the park.

Café performance data has been updated (doc 9/1) to include actual data for the first eight months of the 2017/18 financial year and projected income data based on previous year data and updated payroll costs after the recruitment of a number of part time employees in order to minimise the use and impact of utilising Town Council venues staff.

Projected income for the full financial year is £49,614 with a Net Loss after costs of £8,857. This data is accurate as at the time of the preparation of this report.

Income in September 2017 was £3,296 compared to £4,495 in September 2016 whilst October 2017 was £3,897 compared to £3,490 in October 2016 and November 2017 was £1,855 compared to £1,502 in November 2016. Gross margin for the first eight months stood at 52.2% with estimates assuming a 52% gross margin.

The Café is extremely vulnerable to poor weather conditions and should activities fall on a wet day this has a negative impact on Café performance.

The 2017/18 estimates were agreed on the assumption that the Café would produce a net loss of £14,886.

10. REPORT FOR INFORMATION – FIRE RISK ASSESSMENTS FOR COMMERCIAL PROPERTIES

Officers reported to members at the meeting of this committee held on 3 October 2017 that a local firm of fire consultants had been commissioned to review the level of risk of harm to human life, due to fire, within its commercial property portfolio.

The company have undertaken fire risk assessments in respect of 11 properties at the time of writing this report as follows:-

3 Albion Place
13 Maryport Street
14-15 Maryport Street
1 Sheep Street
24/24A Sidmouth Street
25 Sidmouth Street
26 Sidmouth Street
18 The Brittox
18 & 19 The Brittox, Communal areas
19 The Brittox
26 The Brittox

Tenants whose properties have been inspected have received a copy of the fire risk assessments and a fire log book making reference to the summary action plan and a target date for implementation.

The remaining 12 properties are scheduled to be assessed during December 2017 and January/February, 2018.

11. REPORT FOR DECISION – CERES HALL MAXIMUM CAPACITY NUMBERS

Recommendation

That the committee agrees to raise the maximum capacity numbers for the Ceres Hall from 400 to 450 for standing room only.

Purpose of the Report

To raise the maximum capacity numbers for the Ceres Hall from 400 to 450 for standing room only.

Background

The maximum numbers of people allowed in the Ceres Hall has been set at 400 for some years for both standing room only and theatre style layouts.

Officers have been approached on a number of occasions by promoters who wish to use the venue for professional concerts and comedy events. However, a capacity of 400 means that promoters struggle to make a profit after paying for the acts and the venue. Thus, they do not book the venue, losing potential income for the Town Council and professional acts do not come to Devizes.

Councillor Ian Hopkins has made a request for the capacity numbers to be investigated and, as such, officers contacted the Dorset & Wiltshire Fire Service to gain advice on this matter. An officer explained that fire capacity numbers were no longer dealt with by the fire service and advised we contact the company who carry out the fire risk assessments for the Corn Exchange.

Colin Powney of CP Fire Consultants was contacted and he visited the Ceres Hall to carry out an inspection of the hall. Mr Powney used two calculations:

Exit Calculation

There are 4 fire exits from the hall (all of good width, i.e. in excess of 1050mm).

Total Floor Area	-	250m ²
4 x fire exits totalling	-	6630mm
Less wide exit @ 1860mm	=	4770mm

Total persons based on exit calculation is **915**.

Floor Area Calculation 0.5m²/per person

Total floor area of hall	-	250m ²
Divided by 0.5	=	500 persons

Total persons based on floor area calculation is **500**.

As the floor area calculation is the lower of the 2, this is the maximum number of persons that should be permitted to a standing only event.

Total Maximum Standing Capacity of Hall 500 persons

Promoters using the Ceres Hall for festival events, comedy nights, concerts etc., bring their own sound desks, which can be large and need to be accommodated in the same room. This reduces the room's floor area and impacts on Mr Powney's recommendation of 500 persons.

Officers are therefore recommending that we increase the maximum standing capacity to 450, which takes into account any large mixing desks or PA equipment.

Officers will ensure that, if the Ceres Hall has been booked for an event and promoters intend to sell 450 tickets, no chairs or tables at all will be allowed in the room. This will form part of the booking contract and will be enforced by the Venues Team.

Options Considered

The committee needs to decide if they agree to raise the current maximum capacity numbers for the Ceres Hall from 400 to 450 for standing room only.

Implications & Risks

Financial and Resource Implications

The income generating potential for this increase will have a positive impact on the Venues budget.

Legal Implications and Legislative Powers

The Council will be considering this matter under its General Power of Competence.

Environmental Implications

Officers are not aware on any environmental implications associated with the decision.

Risk Assessment

If the proposed change is agreed, officers will re-visit all relevant health and safety documents and risk assessments associated with the Ceres Hall and Corn Exchange.

Crime and Disorder

Officers are not aware of any issues the Council should consider under Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder act 1998.

14. QUESTION TIME

A short time is allowed at the discretion of the Chairman for councillors to ask questions on matters which are not on the current agenda but which are related to matters which have been previously discussed on an agenda relevant to the committee.

At least 24 hours' notice must be given to officers of the intended question. All other matters should be raised on an agenda and the request should be submitted through the Town Clerk.

DEPUTY TOWN CLERK