

Civic Hall Management Committee
Monday 8th July 2019 at 8.45 pm
Park Room, Didcot Civic Hall



Minutes

Note: These minutes are subject to approval as a true and correct record by the next meeting of this Committee.

Present:

Councillors:

Dr P Siggers
Mr A Thompson
Mr P Giesberg

Mrs E Hards
Mr M McNeill

Officer:

Mrs J Wheeler - Town Clerk
Mr A Silva - Civic Hall Manager

Three Councillors in the audience.

1. To elect a Chairman for the municipal year 2019 - 2020

Proposed by Councillor E Hards, seconded by Councillor M McNeill – it was **RESOLVED** that Councillor P Siggers would be the Chair for the municipal year 2019-2020.

2. To elect a Vice-Chairman for the municipal year 2019 - 2020

Proposed by Councillor P. Siggers, seconded by Councillor A. Thompson – it was **RESOLVED** that Councillor E Hards would be the Vice-Chairman for the municipal year 2019-2020.

3. Apologies

There were no apologies.

4. Declarations of interests

None.

5. To review the Terms of Reference

The Terms of Reference were considered and approved without amendment. It was noted that a list of meeting dates was still to be agreed.

6. To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 27 February 2019

None of the Councillors had been present at the meeting so it was RESOLVED to accept the minutes. There was one amendment to minute 453, line two: Councillor Thompson was the Chairman for the municipal year 2018 – 19 and not the Vice Chairman.

It was unclear whether the actions agreed under minute 457 had been actioned. The Town Clerk would make enquiries.

7. To review a proposed timetable with the VAT office to resolve any outstanding monies owed

The Town Clerk had spoken to the VAT office and they had agreed to extend the response deadline until 15 November 2019. This will give enough time for the Council to appoint a VAT professional to liaise on behalf of the Council. The letter from the VAT office warned that “no further extension will be granted”. The Town Clerk proposed that the professional be employed as soon as possible in order to meet this deadline. The Council meeting due to be held on 4 November 2019 would be the last opportunity to approve the work of the professional.

The letter and timetable were approved by the Committee.

8. To appoint the VAT professional to resolve the VAT issue

It was proposed by Councillor P. Siggers; seconded by Councillor E Hards

To recommend the appointment of the Parkinson Partnership to:

- Finish their work on the Dicot Civic Hall's potential outstanding VAT calculations
- To liaise with the tax office on behalf of the Town Council
- To explore any charitable/not-for-profit methods of running the Civic Hall in the future that makes the best use of tax-payer's money.

It was not cost effective to invite another company to quote as the Parkinson Partnership was familiar with the Civic Hall and the Town Council. The price quoted was £75 per hour.

The Town Clerk had also spoken to Steve Parkinson about the possibility of operating the Civic Hall as a not-for-profit entity; seconding staff and services to help the Hall to run as a community asset as well as a business; and any methods of ensuring that Didcot Town Council remain the sole trustee of the Civic Hall.

The recommendation will be considered at the Extra Ordinary meeting of the Council on 12th August 2019.

9. Civic Hall Manager's Report

The Civic Hall Manager presented his report and the new initiatives that he has introduced.

- The **outdoor bar** was introduced at a cost of £3,000 and can be hired to support weddings; corporate events and DTC events. 72 hours already booked at a cost of £11.99 per hour.
- New **EPOS system** (digital register machine) to make simpler and quicker sales.
- Two **new CCTV cameras** were installed as recommended in the health and safety report – to improve the safety of staff in the Civic Hall late at night – this was a cost of £1,300.

The Civic Hall Manager reported that wedding bookings were increasing with 12 in the diary for this year.

The **outdoor cinema experience** did not make a profit this first year but more than 200 people attending and ticket sales were around £1200 and bar sales of £900 (total £2100) compared to an expenditure of £2,468 – the Manager thinks the event will grow and operate at a profit in the future.

The **Halloween experience** in the main hall has already attracted much interest and 50 tickets already sold.

Free entry Summer events include:

- 27 July – Culture and Community Day
- 24 August – Didcot Family Day

Charity events include:

- July – MIND – Oxfordshire in partnership with NHS
- Weds and Fridays in August – Grub Hub Lunch Club run by Didcot First and SOFEA.

Members discussed the above events. It was noted that the Civic Hall was busy in months like July but quiet in August. Bookings were two years ahead for some months. Social media and advertising was helping to get the Civic Hall on the map. It was also noted that some of the curtains would need to be replaced with fire retardant materials –and some re-decoration will be needed. Overall the Civic Hall is now well-placed as a community asset and future business.

Members discussed the parking situation and whether there was a need to close off part of the parking for larger events in the Hall. There were complaints from hall users on busy days.

The Town Clerk confirmed that financial statements for the Civic Hall would be brought to the Committee in future meetings.

The meeting closed at 9:40pm.

Signed _____ Chairman Date _____