



Civic Hall Management Committee
Wednesday 22nd July 2020 at 7.30pm
Meeting held via zoom.

Minutes

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

Present:

Cllr P Siggers (Chair)
Cllr J Moody (Vice Chair)
Cllr A Thompson (sub for Cllr Durman)
Cllr M Mallows
Cllr M Walsh

Cllr P Giesberg
Cllr M McNeill

Officers:

Mrs J Wheeler - Town Clerk

Also in attendance:

Cllr M Khan (Leader of Didcot)
Two members of the public

13. Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllr J Durman and Mr Andre Silva – Civic Hall Manager.

14. Declarations of interests

There were no declarations.

15. To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 27th May 2020

It was proposed by Cllr P Siggers and seconded by Cllr M Walsh and RESOLVED to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 27th May 2020. The Chair paged through for amendments and questions.

16. To note the Civic Hall accounts for May 2020

Cllr Walsh queried the figures in brackets for the income on the Civic Hall rooms – cost centres 401- 1000; 1001; 1002 and 1003. *(Post meeting note: the figures in brackets relate to the refunds that had to be given due to covid 19 virus closing all bookings at the Civic Hall. The Finance Manager said that there was no other way of showing the refunds.)*

There was a sum on cost centre 1020 “Other income” – which was a holding area of income where the Finance Manager was not sure where to put it. Approx £200 was received from fishing tickets and the rent received for the Salvation Army clothes bank is also shown here.

On cost centre 4103 “sundries” – the sum of £352 had been posted. This was the cost of the vases and table decorations for the Mayor’s Civic Dinner in March 2020; new seat covers for the sofas in the foyer and the covid warning posters.

On cost centre 4027 “Advertising and Marketing” the cost of £225 was posted to cover the cost of the covid leaflet which was meant to be covered by the District Councillors’ grant.

The accounts to the end of May 2020 were noted.

17. Up-date on the outstanding debts and the monies received

It had not been possible to an up-date for this meeting. A written report was requested on the status of the aged debtors list and how much had been recovered. This report was requested before the F&GP Committee meet on 27th July and the report would be circulated to all members of both Committees.

18. To review the Deputy Civic Hall manager’s report on prospective bookings from August/September 2020 onwards

The Deputy Civic Hall manager had compiled a report to inform the Committee of the regular hall hirers who wished to continue as soon as possible; the bookings cancelled due to safe-guarding reasons and lack of attendees; and bookings that had not cancelled but were unsure when they would resume. The report was noted.

19. To give guidance on whether we can take bookings beyond 2021

The Town Clerk had noticed that some companies were block booking certain dates for up to five years in advance. Some dates at certain times of the year were more popular than others and the Committee was asked to give staff some guidance as to how far in advance we should allow a company to book. After discussion it was AGREED that bookings should be taken up to 18 months in advance.

20. To consider the request to hold a medical exhibition in August and September 2020.

This exhibition had been delayed due to the enforced closure of the Civic Hall due to the pandemic crisis. The exhibition features ground-breaking healthcare research and is now even more topical due to the Covid virus. It was currently on display at Newbury and the organiser would like to come to the Civic Hall towards the end of August.

Originally the plan was to display the exhibition in the corridors of the Civic Hall but Councillors felt that this would not be possible due to the narrow pinch areas which would be high risk for those using the hall. It was AGREED that the exhibition should take place using the foyer and café area of the Civic Hall where social distancing was easier to achieve. The café area currently had the tables removed and would have just a few chairs – as in the foyer. The exhibition could be opened by the Mayor and would be a good way to present the Civic Hall as continuing to work with the NHS in the community.

21. To review the Business Recovery report and draft risk assessments for visitors to the Civic Hall

The Business Recovery report had been compiled by Officers over the course of the lockdown. The report contains a plan to cover all aspects of the Council and Civic Hall work. Government advice was changing regularly so this report and the risk assessments would be subject to change.

In particular, the Committee noted that the larger rooms at the Civic Hall could hold reduced numbers to facilitate with social distancing. The bar would initially be closed and areas to mingle would be discouraged with limited chairs in the foyer. Attention would be paid to use of the fire exits to introduce a one way system and reduce the footfall through the main foyer. It was essential that the Civic Hall should gain a reputation for being a safe place to come. An Action Plan detailed the work that would need to be done before the hall could open to the public.

Comments on the risk assessment include:

- Washing hands was more important than the wearing of gloves where there was a risk of cross-contamination.
- Well fitting, material face coverings are more appropriate for use in the Civic Hall than medical masks and will be in-line with Government guidance. DTC staff will not sell masks to hirers.
- Toilets would not be restricted but every other toilet and basin should be taped off to aid social distancing.
- Hand dryers should be switched off and hand towels provided in the rooms and toilets.
- Hirers to be required to store the contact details of their clients in line with Government guidance and in case of the need to help the NHS track and trace hall visitors.
- Temperature checks were not to be carried out by Civic Hall staff as it was difficult to enforce but would remain optional to hall hirers.
- Sanitisers and towels to be provided in all rooms.
- Cleaning of touch points to take place several times a day and in between hires.
- Reduced numbers of wipable chairs in the foyer and café to discourage gathering of people in one area.
- The kitchen would be closed and no hot drinks would be offered.
- In the event of an outbreak, the room would be closed for 72 hours and would be deep-cleaned before re-opening to the public.

The report and the risk assessments were discussed and agreed by the Committee. The Town Clerk was also directed to the latest Government guidance for the opening of multi-purpose facilities – <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-multi-purpose-community-facilities>

22. To note the report regarding the newly installed wifi

The report from the Planning and Environment Officer regarding the receipt of Section 106 grant to install a new wifi network at the Civic Hall was noted. There was now a staff network and a guest network which would improve the service for both hirers and staff. The bandwidth had been adjusted to allow the maximum upload and download. The guest login cannot access the staff network.

23. To consider the following energy-saving reports from the Planning and Environment Officer:

- **Energy-Saving Recommendation report** – A survey had been carried out in January 2020 to consider the improvements that the Civic Hall can make in terms of implementation; carbon impact; cost and other factors. The survey covered the current energy costs and recommendations which could make a difference – in terms of usage and cost.
- **De-stratification Fans report** – this was one of the recommendations intended to re-circulate the air to warm the lower layers in the main hall. The de-stratification units would balance internal temperatures; minimise heat loss and energy demand. A quote had been gathered for the installation and fitting of the fans.
- **Solar PV report** – The Civic Hall had also been surveyed by a team from Oxford Brookes University's Energy Information Exchange which had recommended the solar panels as the ideal project to save energy and progress the Council's declaration of a climate emergency.

For many of these projects, Section 106 money could be applied for funding. It was important to remember that this was part of a larger programme of improvements to the Civic Hall and not all projects could progress to completion due to the Council being signed up to a five year utility programme which still had around three and a half years to run.

The Committee noted the reports and felt that they needed more understanding of the projects and also the workings of the Civic Hall in order to make informed decisions. They were keen to look for small improvements which would make a difference and were relatively easy and cost-effective to progress. The de-stratification fans would require further quotes to be brought to the Committee before an order could be placed. Cllr Giesberg was keen to look at the benefits of LED lighting in the building.

24. To note the progress report

The Chair went through the items on the report. It was AGREED to remove the incidents at the Civic Hall car park from the progress report.

It was AGREED to suspend standing orders to allow the two members of the public to address the Committee. They were long standing hirers looking to resume their businesses as soon as the Civic Hall would allow. They agreed with many of the

comments made on the draft risk assessment and wished to play their part in helping support the community.

The Chair noted their comments and agreed that there should be a two-way discussion into how the hall should open for the maximum safety of all.

The standing orders were reinstated.

25. Exclusion of the press and public

RESOLVED: pursuant to Section 1 of the Public Bodies [Admission to Meetings] Act 1960 to exclude the press and public from the meeting on the grounds that publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

25. To consider the figures from the vending machine usage earlier this year and a possible contract

The Councillors discussed the figures and agreed that the income from the snack machine was opaque and any income was marginal even if the five year lease was taken. There was concern over the future footfall in the Civic Hall and it was AGREED to remove both machines as soon as possible.

26. To consider a request from Ridgway Community Church

The Church were requesting free use of the Civic Hall for the months of August and September. The virus meant they had been unable to meet for quite some time. The Committee were sympathetic to their predicament but felt that the Sunday opening was a cost in terms of staff time and heating. It was AGREED not to offer free use of the Civic Hall.

27. To note the quotes for installing a glass or Perspex screen in the Civic Hall reception area

Several quotes were considered by the Committee. It was AGREED to allow a budget of £1000 for the installation and delivery of screens to cover the reception area and to protect the office staff.

It was also AGREED that hirers would not be allowed to return to the Civic Hall if they still had money outstanding. The staff must not allow hirers to run up huge amounts of credit and the Committee were still awaiting a report on the aged sales ledger and the process used to control the debts.

The meeting closed at 9.25pm.

Signed _____ Chairman Date _____