

Notes of a Meeting of the Assembly Hall Working Group

held on Thursday 2 November 2017

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

1. Appointment of Chair

It was proposed that the meeting should be chaired by TC. This was unanimously agreed.

2. Apologies

Retrospective apologies for absence were received from Mike Sankey.

3. Financial Overview

JH reported that Assembly Hall financial performance was still tracking below that of the corresponding period last year but that recent credit card sales had been buoyant and the reconciliation for last month had yet to be accounted for. JH suggested that at current levels an estimated year end projection might reveal a deficit of some £45-50k (compared to £43k in 2016/7). JH reminded members however that the salary costs associated with the employment of an Apprentice were impacting on the current year figures.

4. Stocktaker's Report

Members were provided with a copy of the latest Stocktaker's Report (dated 4 October 2017) for their information. TC explained that whilst the GP attained (61.13%) was down on previous reports in the recent past it still represented an improvement over the c.60% GP that was being generated some twelve months ago.

TC added that there was no cause for concern in relation to stock loss but pointed out that the £400 figure for staff soft drinks was anomalous given that the actual cost of post mix syrup was negligible but that the cost of sales suggested that it was significant. TC explained that this would be addressed going forward through the provision of cordials which would not impact on the stock report in the same way.

5. Recent Events Review

TC provided a schedule detailing the financial impact of the shows staged at the Assembly Hall during this financial year. Cumulative totals revealed that, whilst a loss of £3.9k had been recorded in respect of ticket sales revenue, secondary spend in the sum of £16.25k had been generated which represented a net profit of £12,311k. TC pointed out that since the Tony Stockwell performance on 19th September of the eight shows staged, only one (The Cureheads) had generated a net loss.

Surprise was expressed that the Big Swing Band on 16 September had generated a net loss given that these shows had proved popular in the past. TC explained that, for a variety of reasons, this show had not received the level of promotional support it had previously received but that the next dinner dance would be handled by the previous promoter who enjoyed a large and loyal following.

6. Forthcoming Live Events and Financial Exposure

TC reported that that advanced ticket sales for forthcoming shows were relatively buoyant and that 188 tickets had been sold for the Jersey Boys show on 3rd November; 137 tickets had been sold for Christmas Memories show on 8 November; 31 tickets had been sold for the Quo experience on 9th November and 167 tickets had been sold for the Big O and the Wilburys Tribute Show on 10th November; 30 tickets had been sold for the Dodgy Acoustic show on 24 November; and 165 tickets had been sold for Back to the 80's Christmas Party on 15th December. In addition TC pointed out that the Jethro show scheduled for 14th December was now a sell out with all 465 tickets sold.

7. Recruitment Update

TC reported that advertisements would be placed in the Melksham News for the positions of Cleaner and Deputy Facilities and Hospitality Team Manager and that the Deputy Manager position would also be advertised in the Wiltshire Times and on the Indeed recruitment website.

TC explained that it was hoped to extend the notice period of the Deputy Facilities & Hospitality Team Manager position on a reduced hours basis pending the appointment of a replacement. TC added that the coverage for the Christmas Day Lunch would be provided by the remaining Deputy Manager though this would be on a remote basis other than opening the Hall and securing the premises following the event.

8. Councillor Suggestions

- 8.1 TW stated the Seniors 55+ forum had been charged £18 for the hire of the kitchen at a recent International Day event. TW asked if this was appropriate given that the kitchen had only been used to boil water for teas and coffees. TC explained that the charging structure for hire of the kitchen facility ranged from £90 for hot prep catering down to £18 for basic teas and cakes. Members agreed that it was entirely appropriate to levy a charge for hire of the kitchen and it was incumbent on the hirer to determine the nature of the catering facility required.
- 8.2 TW raised a concern that there was apparently a paucity of teaspoons available because they had allegedly been misappropriated. TC confirmed that Wiltshire Council's catering team had suggested that not all teaspoons were being returned after certain events. In order to overcome this scenario it was suggested that TC should purchase plastic teaspoons which had no intrinsic value and were perfectly adequate functional for stirring teas and coffees.
- 8.3 TW asked if new Christmas decorations for the Hall had been procured. TC replied that one of the Deputy Managers together with the Apprentice had been tasked with this responsibility and that the matter was in hand.
- 8.4 AW stated that it had been brought to her attention that community groups might be having difficulty booking the Hall given the amount of entertainment activity currently taking place. TC emphasised that community groups were very welcome to book the Hall - which is fundamentally a community asset and resource – but pointed out that it was untenable to decline bookings simply to keep the Hall vacant on the off chance that a community group may wish to book it at some future time. TC stated that if community groups wished to book the Hall then they should look to book well in advance in order to secure their preferred dates. By way of example, TC pointed out that the Rock & Roll Club had already booked events at the Hall up to 2019. TC added that he and his team were always receptive to approaches from community groups and would accommodate them wherever possible, and asked that any group interested make direct contact to discuss their requirements with the Hospitality Team.
- 8.5 RW noted that there was a paucity of films scheduled over the Autumn and Winter periods. TC explained that demand for the Hall throughout this period was such that there was a lack of available times to schedule screenings. TC stated that he and the team were currently exploring the viability of matinee screenings (which might prove particularly attractive given our typical cinema audience demographic) and half term/school holiday screenings for children and families.
- 8.7 AW pointed out that the recent half term activities for children organised by Wiltshire Council at various venues had been extremely well received and suggested that the Assembly Hall might be a more appropriate venue, given the level of demand, in the future. TC confirmed that he would be happy to discuss the use of the Hall for this initiative with Wiltshire Council representatives.

9. Any Other Business

There were no items members wished to raise under any other business.