

Agenda item 9

For information - What's been going on at the Town Hall?

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Summary

The purpose of this report is to explain what has been going on to improve occupancy of the Town Hall and update on facilities management

Occupancy of the building

Tenants

All the tenants are now in attendance – although at time of writing the tenancy agreement with WHY has not yet been signed - we are very nearly in agreement and it is expected to be completed in the very near future.

Data on bookings

The meeting rooms are currently at 10% capacity, which moves to 30% if we include the tenants. Currently bookings are averaging 2-3 meetings a day during the week, down to 1-2 a day at the weekend. What has yet to happen is much booking in advance of a fortnight. This is set to change as the uses of the building broaden out from meeting rooms to a venue for businesses and weddings as the marketing strategy allows. The use of two areas of the building are particularly affecting the capacity and so deserve special mention.

- *The Parlour*
Frome Community Cars were already using the space known as the Parlour for free as a Frome Town Council initiative and this opportunity has now been extended to other community groups. The Parlour will now be made available free of charge subject to conditions for a maximum of 2 hours per meeting between 10am and 4pm every day for small community group bookings. A group that requires a larger room can apply to the Mayor's fund to cover the cost of hiring a larger space. So far, this seems to be working quite well and is not to the detriment of the uptake of the other multi-use rooms.
- *The Café*
The café is currently mostly empty as it has been identified as not commercially viable by a number of existing café businesses. This is due to limited facilities, planning issues and other kitchens in the building. However, as indicated earlier we are hoping to use it for a number of supper clubs and in house events, it will be a welcome addition to the wedding offer as a bar and is currently a very nice space for people to eat their sandwiches in!

Targets

The indications are that we are moving in the right direction from a standing start. There are a few anomalies – as everybody would prefer to use multi – use room 1 rather than 2 and so while we have limited occupation this appears to be the weaker link. However, when we

imagine heady days of full capacity for meeting room 1 it is anticipated that meeting room 2 and even the café will pick up the pace.

Licensing

We are still very much in process regarding Licensing both for Alcohol and for Weddings. Following very useful meetings with the Fire and Police services we are now have the fire regulations in place although the capacity of the Council Chamber has been reduced to 100 people.

It is a requirement of Avon & Somerset Police that all licensed premises have CCTV and so we are now waiting on a report from the police regarding the placement of a new fit for purpose CCTV System. This will have to be commissioned, fitted and in use before the Premises License can be granted and so we are a little way off yet – until then we are using Temporary Events Notices to cover events.

The Wedding License is awaiting a decision from Mendip regarding whether we need Change of Use Planning Consent to hold weddings. Following an expression of interest and subject to fire regulation work being completed we have been advised that we would likely be successful in our application as long as planning is in order. The decision on whether we need Change of Use is due to be made on Monday 5 June.

Facilities Issues

Hammonds

Snagging for the building has now been completed and Hammonds work has been signed off. Any other works in progress will be picked up from freelance contractors.

CCTV & Panic Alarms have been costed and we are awaiting the aforementioned police report before a contractor is appointed. Likewise, work on the sash windows in the Council Chamber and shelving for the offices and for the leaflets in reception are also an outstanding matter. We are currently looking to appoint a local carpenter to make sure that all works are in keeping with the fabric of the building.

Smaller jobs

There are other smaller jobs which are currently being undertaken at the moment including the fixing of the hinges on the front door. A second list of directional and information signs is also being compiled to assist with movement around the building and to enable us to manage the car park.

Quinquennial plan

Geoff Hunt who acted as building surveyor on the refurbishment of the building has produced a survey in order to give us a quinquennial (or 5 year plan). This sets out monthly and annual repairs and improvements relating to virtually every facet of the building. This also includes a budget. It is complete & ready to be incorporated as is into a maintenance plan from next year.