

Agenda item 8

For information – Update on the Frome Town Hall

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Summary

This report provides an update on Town Hall occupancy of the Town Hall, a year end income forecast and a summary of our marketing initiatives.

Update on Town Hall occupancy

The tenants currently are embedded and happy. Fair Frome are in the Elliot Building and we have recently installed new heating and a new storage container beside it. Frome FM have nearly finished their studio build; Active and in Touch and Fair Housing for Frome are in the Parlour; and Frome Learning Partnership are in room 3 (beside the reception desk). WHY are embedded into their offices upstairs and remain in room 2 (to the right of the front door) on a temporary month by month basis.

As reported last time, the occupancy of the ground floor rooms has put a little pressure on room availability which has led to the café space being used more for impromptu meetings. The Baby Café and the SPARK continue to use the café space as well as Frome Learning Partnership and other hot deskers. We may look to a slightly different arrangement with the hot desk space going forward as we are confident that it will be in greater demand as a space to complement the Council Chamber. We also have a group interested in the café space during office hours from January for three days a week.

The café continues to offer free community group use for two hours, at a week's notice, when room three is let although this is not often taken up.

Room 1 and the café, as well as the Council Chamber, remain bookable meeting spaces. Occupation rates are increasing but, now, we are comfortably meeting demand. As a result, we are in early stage discussion with another prospective, more permanent, tenant from the charity sector for both room 1 and 2.

This will put pressure on the Council Chamber and work is being done around the tipping point of Council staff needing to book rooms outside the Town Hall vs us renting out the Chamber. In addition to the tenants and external meetings, FTC staff and Councillors have used the meeting rooms or the Council Chamber 148 times in the last three months.

Over the last 3 months we have hosted among others large events such as Rise, the Rubbish Meeting and Trinity Community Group meeting.

Licenses

We have had one hurdle overcome and another put in our way. Since our last report the acoustic report has been accepted by Mendip and the air conditioning installed. This means the conditions for the Change of Use have now been discharged.

However, whilst applying for our wedding license it became clear that we needed to install and become trained in the use of evacuation chairs. This has taken place and is currently being cascaded through all staff and tenants. It will be offered to Councillors and will be a condition of hirers who want to use the hall without desk staff.

This means that we will finally be able to hire out the Council Chamber for functions.

We have also finally been granted a Premises License which means that we can have licensable events without going through a TENS process. This includes amplified music, films and alcohol.

The wedding license process which stalled following a health and safety inspection is now being revisited and we are waiting on a new health and safety inspection which we expect will be in the following two weeks. This will then mean that discussions can be resumed around holding the license ourselves or giving it over to the registry service to provide an alternative and cheaper wedding offer to residents in the town.

Marketing

The work to provide a professional brochure to show case the Town Hall as a multi-use facility inches forward. This will include our wedding offer. As explained in the work programme report, a programme of Google ads and banners is ready to go. This will sit alongside a press campaign, the brochure and other cross channel media.

Budgeted and forecast income for the Town Hall

	Actual up to end of Sept 2018 (£)	Budgeted at 31/3/2019 (£)	Forecast income as at 31/3/2019 (£)
Café	762	3750	2001
Chamber	2508	25790	6424
Equipment hire	140	-	-
Events	4273		-
Meeting room hire	5080	17230	8352
Tenants	12017	18720	25297
Total	24781	65490	42,074
Forecast year end deficit			18,921

The table above compares the budgeted income with the forecast income. The forecast column below indicates a year end income deficit of just under £19k. This forecast deficit is based entirely on the figures in the system and is a conservative forecast. It has improved by

£2k since we last reported in July and the expectation is that it will dramatically improve once we are able to offer a full range of events in the Town Hall.

Conclusions

The Town Hall continues to be well used but the budgeted income remains the biggest risk to the budget this year. The slow road to licenses despite the best efforts of staff has meant that in effect the Town Hall has had little targeted marketing in line with the strategy. Going forward however, we have every reason to be positive.