

Agenda Item 6

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 occupying the building are: Fair Frome in the Elliot Building; Frome FM and WHY are upstairs; Active and in Touch have moved to their own room, the Rangers Room; and Fair Housing for Frome who have been on sabbatical for the summer and will return to the multidesk parlour in September; Frome Learning Partnership remain in Room 3 (beside the reception desk) but are interested in more space as it becomes available.

Rent reviews for our long-term tenants are due in March and so we will start that process shortly.

From July to the end of September we have been accommodating SS&L as tenants in Room 2 and in the parlour. They are set to move out but with an option to remain until the end of October. In the meantime, we have taken another potential long term booking from October–December for two days a week which will enable us to keep Room 2 as a meeting space on the other days of the week whilst still ensuring that targets are being met.

As reported last time the occupancy of the ground floor rooms has put a little pressure on room availability. The café currently houses WILD co-working on Tuesdays, Wednesday and Thursdays, leaving it free for hotdesking and other meetings on Monday and Friday and other functions at weekends. We continue to offer free community group use for two hours, at a week's notice, when the room is not let - although this is not taken up very often.

We have also developed a new initiative to encourage community groups to use the building on a Monday evening, offering them a session rate for the hourly fee regardless of the length. This has been well received and will both help community groups and make use the building at a time when it is not often booked.

Room 1, the café, as well as the Council Chamber, are our current bookable meeting spaces. And as occupation rates are increasing, room 2 will be a welcome addition. The Probation Service, The Baby Cafe and the Discovery Group look set to remain as long term hirers and we are working to continue to attract regular bookings from services that complement our offer.

In addition to the tenants and external meetings, FTC staff and Councillors have used the meeting rooms or the Council Chamber for scheduled meeting 179 times since 1st April.

Licenses

I am delighted to report that a Memorandum of Understanding has been signed with the registry service that will mean that they will be able to offer a registry wedding service from the Town Hall. A few details are still to be discussed such as which Saturdays this service will be offered, but the agreement is to offer 10 days a year initially, with a review period. The weddings will be booked via their wedding service and we will offer a package of services including desk service, refreshments etc.

Marketing

Our Omni channel strategy remains ready to press go as soon as the wedding service dates are agreed. We are currently working with the SCC marketing team to prepare for the Town Hall to be marketed by their service too. We look to be open, accessible, and easy to use and be able to answer questions with full and frank answers.

Town Hall Budget & Income

	Bookings - at 31/3/2020 (£)	Budgeted at 31/3/2020 (£)
Cafe	4665.5	2000
Chamber	10944.66	15000
Equipment hire	350	500
Meeting room hire	11539.75	5000
Tenants	26817.96	31992
Total	54,317.87	54,492

The current forecast, which is actual income so far plus bookings already in the system, indicates a tiny shortfall of £174.13. As we are not yet halfway through the year, we have every reason to be cautiously optimistic about exceeding our budget.

Other factors to note with budget implications is that demand for the support stewards has been higher than anticipated and we have started running a limited bar service this year which is proving to be another cautious success.

How are we doing?

To ensure high standards we have been doing a Customer Feedback survey. Hirers of the Town Hall are asked a number of questions following their hiring of spaces at the Town Hall. These rated from 1-5 with 5 being the best. The questions include: How satisfied were you with the booking procedure? How would you rate the facilities? How would you rate the cleanliness? How would you rate staff service? And would you recommend the Town Hall to a friend?

The Town Hall consistently scores 5 in cleanliness, staff service, facilities and recommendation categories. This is a testament to our front line and cleaning staff with Tricia, Nykki and Sean often being personally thanked for their good service. The improved

quality and extra capacity provided by the addition of our cleaning staff is proving to be a successful addition.

In our view, the building feels vibrant and well used.

Facilities wise we continue to manage the building in line with the Quinquennial action plan. The leaky guttering and flashing around a chimney stack have been dealt with and decorators have been engaged to repaint some internal walls where the rain came in and elsewhere to keep the Town Hall looking good. Following a lovely summer the Rangers have installed a much requested bench in the garden which is useful for meetings and lunch alike.

Future mini-projects include a perennial border and window boxes.

Conclusions

The Town Hall continues to be well used and the figures indicate that we have every reason to be positive as we look forward to hosting ever more interesting and varied events. Frome Town Hall is increasingly at the very heart of the community and becoming more embedded into the cultural fabric of the town every day. For example, it was really good to be able to expand our offer in the Frome Festival this year, which we hope to be able to continue as we look forward to their 20th Year.

We are only halfway through the financial year and look to build on our cautious success.