

CABINET**Tuesday, 17th November, 2015**

Present:-

Councillor Burrows (Chair)

Councillors T Gilby
T Murphy
Blank
Huckle

Councillors Ludlow
Serjeant
A Diouf

Non Voting Members Bagley
J Innes

Hollingworth
Wall

*Matters dealt with under the Delegation Scheme

98 DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' AND OFFICERS' INTERESTS RELATING TO ITEMS ON THE AGENDA

No declarations of interest were received.

99 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Brown.

100 MINUTES**RESOLVED –**

That the minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held on 3 November be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

101 FORWARD PLAN

The Forward Plan for the four month period 1 December, 2015 to 31 March, 2016 was reported for information.

*** RESOLVED –**

That the Forward Plan be noted.

102 PUBLIC PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP (PPP) UPDATE

The Executive Director presented a report to update Cabinet on the performance of the PPP (Public, Private Partnership) contracts with arvato and Kier between October 2014 and September 2015.

The Executive Director highlighted key areas of achievement and improvement for members to note including:

- An increase in housing tenants paying their rent by direct debit.
- Improved Council Tax collection rates.
- The smooth integration of changes introduced by welfare reform.
- The awarding of Customer Service Excellence accreditation.
- ICT progress in the rollout of flexible working solutions.
- High occupancy rates of commercial properties.

The report also looked at developments over the next six months including the Town Hall restack, the opening of the new Queen's Park Sports Centre and the implementation a new corporate website and how arvato and Kier would be involved with delivering these projects.

***RESOLVED -**

1. That the report on PPP Performance for the period October 2014 to September, 2015 be noted.
2. That a further progress report on PPP Performance be received in November, 2016.

REASONS FOR DECISIONS

To enable the Cabinet to be updated on PPP Performance during the period, October 2014 to September 2015

103 CULTURAL VENUES FEES AND CHARGES 2016

The Arts and Venues Manager submitted proposals for maintaining or raising the levels of fees and charges for lettings at the Pomegranate Theatre, the Winding Wheel, the Assembly Rooms in the Market Hall and Hasland Village Hall for 2016.

The report provided details of the hire charges applied to different categories of hirers at the two main cultural venues, and proposed increases. It also included details of hire charges and proposed increases at the Market Hall Assembly Rooms and Hasland Village Hall. The report only covered the scale of fees and charges for lettings at the Council's cultural venues. Ticket prices were negotiated with visiting companies throughout the year when productions were booked, whilst bar prices had been reviewed in January 2015 to take account of the increase in supplier prices.

Following a review in 2011 the Council had implemented an improvement programme for the venues with the key aims of integrating the operation of the venues, improving the arts and cultural offer of the two theatres and reducing the overall subsidy to the Council tax payer. It was noted that the review had contributed in part to the reductions in subsidy over the last three years, with savings in net controllable costs of £180,000 being achieved compared to the 2011/12 outturn.

A report had been presented to Cabinet on 22 September 2015 on the VAT treatment of venue hire. It was agreed that, as required by HM Revenue and Customs, VAT should be charged on all new hires of the Winding Wheel and the Pomegranate for all new hires as from 1 October 2015. It was also agreed that because the majority of room bookings at Hasland Village Hall did not require any additional services to be provided, room hire charges would continue to be classified as VAT exempt. In addition VAT would continue to be charged on all hires of the Assembly Rooms.

The report recommended that due to the recent application of VAT on hire charges for the Winding Wheel and the Pomegranate Theatre that there should be no increase to hiring charges for 2016. However, increases to room hire charges were recommended for the Assembly Rooms, where VAT had always been charged, and for hiring Hasland Village Hall where charges were VAT exempt.

The option of introducing a significantly greater increase to the charges was ruled out as there would have been a risk of losing potential hirers. Another option of leaving the charges unchanged was also ruled out as increases in the charges were still required to develop a sustainable business plan for the Venues.

***RESOLVED -**

1. That there be no increase to the building hire charges for the Pomegranate Theatre for the financial year 2016-17.
2. That there be no increase to the room hire charges at the Winding Wheel for the financial year 2016-17.
3. That an average increase of 4% be levied on all equipment hire charges at the Winding Wheel from 1, April 2016.
4. That there be no increase to the building hire charges for professional companies and commercial use at the Winding Wheel.
5. That an average increase of 3% be levied on all room hire charges at the Assembly Rooms in the Market Hall from 1 April, 2016.
6. That an average increase of 3 % be levied on all current room hire charges at Hasland Village Hall from 1 April, 2016.
7. That the Arts and Venues Manager be authorised to negotiate rates for bookings more than a year in advance, including the level of required deposits and payment terms, and pricing packages.

REASON FOR DECISIONS

To make further progress towards a sustainable financial position for the venues.

104 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 - EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC**RESOLVED –**

That under Regulation 21(1)(b) of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2000, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 – as it contained information relating to financial and business affairs.

105 APPLICATION FOR BUSINESS RATES RELIEF

The Chief Finance Officer submitted a report requesting that members considered an application from a company for discretionary business rates relief.

***RESOLVED -**

That discretionary business rate relief is not awarded.