

To: Scrutiny Committee
Date: 17 May 2018
Report of: Head of Community Services
Title of Report: Oxford Town Hall

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	To update the committee on the Oxford Town Hall so they consider how the Council can improve the profile and accessibility of the Town Hall
Key decision:	No
Executive Board Member:	Councillor Susan Brown, Leader of the Council, and Board Member for Customer and Corporate Services
Corporate Priority:	A Vibrant and Sustainable Economy Strong and Active Communities An Efficient and Effective Council
Policy Framework:	Corporate Plan
Recommendations: That the Scrutiny Committee resolves to:	
1. Note and comment on the report	

Appendices
None

Introduction and background

1. This report provides information on the promotion and accessibility of the Town Hall.
2. The report includes investments over previous years and the future projects, income generation, marketing and the balance of bookings.

Performance

3. The below table shows the income and expenditure for the past three financial years

	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Town Hall Events Income	£751,137	£764,963	£744,524
Property Income (Offices & Flat Rent)	£122,742	£137,077	£148,307
Total Income	£873,879	£902,040	£892,831
Town Hall Events Expenditure	£419,611	£357,033	£382,192
Facilities Expenditure*	£718,859	£702,336	£708,625
Total Expenditure	£1,138,470	£1,059,369	£1,090,817
Balance	-£264,591	-£157,329	-£197,986

* Note - the expenditure includes the SAC Offices):

4. The Town Hall facilitated 2902 bookings in 2016/17; this is an average of 242 each month. We also welcomed many new types of events including Prosecco & Vegan festival and some high profile speakers including Gordon Brown. The busiest months were November and February.
5. For all external bookings we ask for a feedback form to be completed, during 2017/18 97% of events were satisfied, with 72% rating the Town Hall and service as excellent.
6. The Oxford Town Hall has a mix of bookings and has to balance the council, civic, community and commercial uses.
- We offer free community usage to groups that have a positive impact on Oxford's residents on Tuesday and Thursday in specific rooms. In 2017/18 we accommodated 380 community bookings on these evenings, an average of 31 per month. This room usage equates to a hireable value of £54,000 per year.
 - The Town Hall also subsidises numerous groups for room hire and equipment for specific groups, in 2017/18 this equated to £79,378 of hireable charges.
 - In 2017/18, 56% of our bookings were internal Oxford City Council meetings, in the previous year this was 49%

Promotional & Marketing

7. In 2017 we created Sales and Marketing Officer to lead on this at the Town Hall and our other community facilities working with the Commercial Manager. An officer was recruited to this role in June 2017.
8. The main focus of the Sales and Marketing Officer was to increase our exposure online and particularly on social media. Results since June have been:
- Facebook following of 2215, an increase of 18%
 - Twitter following of 3983, an increase of 8%

- c. Launched Instagram, now with a following of 752
 - d. Average website of 7064 per month
9. These increases have been made by posting more regularly and making the content more visual and engaging, for example an increased use of videos.
 10. The appeal of the Town Hall is the dynamic way of how this historic building can accommodate a variety of functions, adding character and elegance to each one of them. We value online channels and invest heavily in them but we also keep a stubborn presence in print publications and of course, we reach out personally to many of our clients.

Maintenance

11. Planned maintenance is extremely important to ensure the venue both looks and operates to the highest level, to ensure it can compete with other similar competitors. Failure to keep on top of maintenance holds significant financial risk for the future and to the use of the Town Hall.
12. Over the previous few years the Town Hall has had significant investment (day to day reactive maintenance not included):

Year	Works Completed	Cost
2015/16	Town Hall Lift Motor Replacement and Refurb	£60k
	Boiler replacement	£140k
	Main Hall redecoration	£167k
	Main Hall audio & visual upgrades	£60k
	Museum Courtyard External Refurb	£32k
	Dumb waiter lift replacement	£25k
	Exercise Yard external works	£35k
2016/17	Chandelier Motors for Main Hall	£30k
	Water Pipework Replacement	£100k
	Replacement Wayfinding signs	£15k
	North Courtyard Fire Escape Refurb	£26k
	Main Flagpole redecoration	£38k
2017/18	Assembly Room Chandelier Motors	£60k
	External Refurb and Redecoration Phase1	£118k

- a. A 10 year maintenance plan for the Town Hall is currently being developed which aims to incorporate these works:
 - i. Light well Refurbishment
 - ii. External Refurb and Redecoration (phased approach)

- iii. Damp proofing and asbestos removal
 - iv. Replacement of electrical distribution boards
 - v. Replacement of Access to Main Flagpole
 - vi. Restoration of central timber cupolas over Assembly Room and Main Hall roofs
13. A new Fire Risk Assessment was commissioned and has been taking place in March and April 2018. It is anticipated that extra works will be required following this which will be confirmed after the report is published.

Access

14. In March 2018, Jane Toplis Associates were commissioned to produce an access report on the Town Hall. They are experts in their field for listed buildings. From this a plan will be created on how we can improve the access to the Town Hall.

The Future

15. The new museum, costing £3.2 million will open in the summer of 2020 and will enhance the Town Hall as a leading venue in Oxford. It will include a new entrance and gift shop, whilst restoring the grandeur of the magnificent 19th century building.
16. The focus now for the Town Hall team will be to improve the current Town Hall space where possible to compliment the new museum. This will include reviewing the possibilities of use for current vacant spaces.

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Background Papers: None