

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE GUILDHALL COMMITTEE,
HELD ON TUESDAY 16TH MARCH 2010,
IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, KING'S HOUSE, THETFORD,
STARTING AT 6 P.M.

Present:

Councillor S N H Wright, Chairman

Councillors:

M P Brindle

T J Lamb (from 6.40 p.m.)

A Paines

Mrs P P Quadling

B J Skull

489/09 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Committee Chairman, Councillor S N H Wright, declared personal interests in items 495/09(a) and 498/09(c)(i) owing to, in the case of the former, his authorship of the subject document and, in the case of the latter, his involvement with the Dad's Army production. The other Committee members present agreed they would possibly advise him to leave the Chamber, in the event of the discussion of either item touching on matters, in which the objective onlooker might perceive his interest to be more prejudicial than personal. This proved not to be the case and Councillor Wright remained present throughout.

490/09 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology was received on behalf of Councillor J A Harding.

491/09 MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 24th September 2009, as received by the Council on 30th September 2009 under minute 228/09(e) with certain provisos, be confirmed as a true record and signed/initialled by the Chairman.

492/09 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES NOT ADDRESSED ELSEWHERE ON THE AGENDA

Nothing raised.

493/09 FINANCIAL PICTURE 2009/10

The Department 5 summary financial position at the end of February 2010, together with a transactional analysis, had been included in the agenda papers. The officers responded to questions put, explaining the basis behind some figures.

RESOLVED that the financial position be noted.

494/09 CARNEGIE ROOM ISSUES

(a) Roof Update

The Town Manager updated the Committee on where things stood as regards commissioning the work, the scope of which had been approved recently by the Council. An additional cost was going to be incurred, arising from the need to remove an asbestos flue.

RESOLVED that the information be noted and - although it was hoped to avoid this - hirers be made aware of possible disruption during the period scheduled for carrying out the work.

(b) Roller Shutters / Serving Hatch / Curtains

The Chairman led the discussion on this item.

Roller Shutters

There were frequent occasions when those 'caught short' resorted to urinating in locations around the Carnegie Room perimeter.

To minimise the harmful consequences, indicative quotes had been received for the installation of roller shutters both beyond the kitchen doors (in line with the overhang), as well as immediately in front of the rear door to the dressing room area.

RESOLVED that, once the total roof repair cost was known, further consideration be given to a range of possible solutions, including the introduction of roller shutters, with cost-effectiveness the main factor.

Serving Hatch

The Chairman had received an indicative drawing from the bar provider. It was acknowledged that, before any final decision could be taken, further information was required regarding firewall security and the possible need to install a lintel.

RESOLVED that this information be sought.

Curtains

There were two openings in the wall to the front of the upstairs 'coffee bar' area, from where one could enjoy a good view of the main hall. However, there were times when the lights needed to be on upstairs and off downstairs. It was agreed that curtains should be drawn across the openings on such occasions.

RESOLVED to seek quotations for velvet curtains, which would not be left hanging when not required but stored in a secure area.

495/09 GUILDHALL ISSUES

(a) Arts Centre and Dad's Army Museum Leases

After some discussion, it was agreed to refer the following Recommendations to the Finance & General Purposes Committee, which was scheduled to meet next on 31st March 2010, immediately prior to the Council meeting that same evening:

Recommendation 1

RECOMMENDED that the Small Court be made available for the use of 'the Arts Centre' (being the successor body to 'Upstairs in the Guildhall') for a term of one year under a licence, which would also entitle 'the Arts Centre' to book the Large Court on occasion at concessionary rates. In the Committee's view, said use of the Small Court should not affect the terms under which 'the Arts Centre' currently occupied first floor premises in the Guildhall; these dated from 1980 and resulted from the Agreement reached then between the Town Council and, quote, "representatives of the 'Upstairs in the Guildhall' Group". It would be written into any licence that the Small Court must remain available for any Town Council events.

Recommendation 2

RECOMMENDED that the request by Dad's Army Museum to occupy its premises under a lease be looked upon favourably and that the requested changes to both the lower ground floor exterior off Cage Lane and immediately adjacent curtilage area be welcomed, subject to a break clause being included in any lease document, giving the landlord a reversionary right for purposes of redevelopment.

(b) Large Court 'Blackout' (blinds or curtains?)

RESOLVED that, as a first step, an interior designer with specialist knowledge not only of fabrics but of 'acoustic dampening' be asked to advise on means of tackling the potentially related issues of occasional, streaming sunlight and an echoing acoustic.

496/09 REVIEW OF VENUE HIRE OPERATION

A paper from the Town Clerk, dated 12th March 2010, had been included in the agenda papers.

The following decisions were reached:

Inclusion of VAT in charges

RECOMMENDED that the current charges be deemed VAT-inclusive.

Operating Hours

RESOLVED that:

(a) any booking running past midnight be subject to the prior approval of the Council, notwithstanding the premises being licensed to operate until 2 a.m.

(b) any serving of alcohol prior to 6.30 p.m. or after midnight be subject to the prior approval of the Council.

Hire of Stage Extension / Catwalk

RECOMMENDED that a £40 charge be levied.

Smoke Machines / Dry Ice Machines

RESOLVED that hirers be alerted to the risk of such devices triggering the alarm system.

Hirers Providing own Alcoholic Beverages (when not for re-sale)

RESOLVED that this not be permitted owing to the arrangement made with the contracted bar provider (concerns expressed over need to 'monitor' otherwise unsupervised consumption of alcohol).

497/09

BAR & LICENSING UPDATE

The Town Manager informed the Committee that the 28-day public notification period had yet to be completed.

RESOLVED that this be noted.

498/09

CONCESSIONS AND CHARGING

Another paper from the Town Clerk, dated 12th March 2010, had been included in the agenda papers.

(a) Review of concessionary criteria and overall charging basis

RESOLVED that current practice continue.

(b) Ratification of charges already agreed

RESOLVED that the figures agreed in respect of Concession Forms 35 to 39 (inclusive) be ratified.

(c) Charges for other future events

The Finance Manger tabled schedules, setting out the hire charges being 'waived' in respect of items (i) and (iii) below.

(i) Dad's Army Weekend (June 2010)

RESOLVED that the Committee note that, under the current fee structure, charges amounting to £1,590 were being waived, enabling the production team to have adequate rehearsal time as well as use of the Carnegie Room for the performances. There would be a need for the production team to show a degree of flexibility in the week preceding the performances owing to other hirers having priority at certain times.

(ii) 70th Anniversary of Battle of Britain Concert: September 2010
This had been referred to the Committee by the Council on 27th January 2010 under minute 389/09.

RESOLVED that the Committee, on the Council's behalf, agree to the Royal Air Forces Association's having free use of the Carnegie Room for its Band Concert on 15th September 2010. RAFA's Honorary Secretary's letter of 23rd November 2009 referred.

(iii) Pantomime (January 2011)

RESOLVED that the Committee note that, under the current fee structure, charges amounting to £2,670 were being waived.

Chairman