

ABINGDON-ON-THAMES TOWN COUNCIL
MEETING OF THE GUILDHALL COMMITTEE
THURSDAY 13TH SEPTEMBER 2018

Agenda item 8: Management and operation of the Guildhall

Following a tender exercise in relation to the above, two bids were received for the management and operation of the Guildhall. The Regal (Evesham) were awarded the tender, subject to contract. The Regal are also operating the cinema at the Abbey Hall.

The specification on which the contract will be based is attached.

The interviewing panel was of the view that the contract period should be two years rather than the one year originally offered. Whilst the Town Clerk considered that he had delegated powers to increase the contract period accordingly Members had been requested, by way of e-mail of 31st July 2018, which also informed Members of the decision regarding the tender, to inform the Town Clerk if they were not content on the variation in relation to the term of the contract. No objections were received and the decision was subsequently endorsed by the Guildhall Development Working Group at its meeting of 17th August 2018.

The tender is subject to contract and the commercial terms are therefore in a confidential report. However we are confident that based on the tender this arrangement will be beneficial to both the Council and the contractor and yield a significant revenue saving to the Council.

The Committee is requested to note this report and endorse the actions taken under delegated powers since the last meeting.

Nigel Warner
Town Clerk
11th September 2018.

Specification for management and operation of the Guildhall, Abingdon-on-Thames – revised following tender exercise

Introduction

The Guildhall comprises a suite of historic rooms which are available for hire by the community, individuals and businesses for a variety of purposes, including conferences, weddings and meetings. Over a period of many years the Guildhall has not been as well utilised as it could have been and the Council wishes to develop the Guildhall into a well-used facility which will enable it, at the same time as improving the service to the public, to reduce the subsidy from the council tax.

The Guildhall comprises the following rooms:

- The Council Chamber – capacity 100;
- The Roysse Room – capacity 90;
- The Old Magistrates Court – capacity 60;
- The Abbey Room – capacity 40;
- The Bear Room – capacity 18.

The Council is intending to hire and adjoining the adjacent Abbey Hall (with its ancillary rooms) to a cinema operator for a two-year period. It should be noted that the two premises operate as one building, sharing heating systems, fire and intruder alarms and means of escape etc.

The Guildhall also has a fully equipped commercial kitchen which enables the various rooms to be catered.

The Guildhall is currently closed to hirings due to an ongoing refurbishment and improvement project but the Council plans to reopen the facility to the public.

The contractor will be responsible for the management and operation of the historic rooms of the Guildhall with the Council retaining responsibilities for maintenance and repair of the property.

Procurement aims

Through outsourcing the Council aims to:

- Increase the use of the building and promote the heritage of the town centre;
- Provide a reason for residents to come to the town centre;
- Reduce the annual level of operating subsidy.

Aspirations for the Guildhall service

The Council's aspirations for the Guildhall service are to:

- Minimise the cost of the facility to the Council and reduce the current subsidy by increasing its use and developing the commercial business of the Guildhall, balancing this with its role as a community facility;
- Provide excellent levels of customer care;
- Maintain high levels of housekeeping and cleanliness throughout the facility;
- Improve energy efficiency and the decrease waste at the Guildhall thereby reducing the service's carbon footprint, reducing costs and improving the service's environmental credentials;
- Provide marketing and promotion of the facility and activities in an accessible, attractive and professional manner;
- Provide suitability qualified staff;
- Provide suitable the necessary furniture and equipment to deliver the services;
- Support the development of use by community organisations clubs/groups at competitive rates;
- Develop the Guildhall as a high quality and venue of first choice for conferences and weddings;
- Maintain the buildings so as to protect and enhance the building structure, fabric, fixtures and fittings, mechanical and electrical plant and equipment;
- To ensure that the Guildhall service works in close partnership with the proposed cinema at the Abbey Hall;
- Provide a secure and safe environment for customers in the Guildhall and its immediate surroundings;
- Comply with all statutory regulations regarding Health and Safety etc;
- Provide suitable ICT systems for all types of customer bookings that will also enable the Council to monitor both detailed participation at the facility and other agreed key corporate performance indicators;
- Use local staff and suppliers where possible;
- This list is not intended to be exhaustive.

Contract period:

Two years from re-opening to the public.

Opening hours

The Guildhall shall be available for hire by the public every day of the year except for the period of the Christmas/ New Year closure which is 25th and 26th December and 1st January, although the Council would have no objection to the contractor taking bookings on those days. The premises licence for the Guildhall allows operation during the following hours:

Sunday to Thursday: 9.00am to Midnight;

Friday to Saturday: 9.00am to 1.00am;

Day preceding Bank Holiday 9.00am to 1.00am (including Christmas Eve but excluding Maundy Thursday and New Years' Eve);

New Years' Eve: 9.00am to 1.00am.

Fees and charges, terms and conditions

The Council has agreed the fees and charges which apply to the different rooms.

These are attached as a separate document.

The Council has agreed the terms and conditions of hire. These are attached.

It is the intention that the room hire contract is between hirers and the contractor and not the Council.

The commercial kitchen is available for hirers to use caterers of their choice, subject to subject to the caterer complying with requirements in relation to competence, health & safety and food hygiene regulation. The contractor may make their own arrangements in relation to commercial hires, including conferences.

Permitted use

The rooms of the Guildhall shall be available for hire in accordance with the premises licence.

Contractor's responsibilities

- Management and operation of the Guildhall including its locking/ unlocking and security on a daily basis. For security reasons and having due regard to the Council's treasures and works of art which are on display in the building there is requirement that a minimum of two members of staff will be on duty when the building is occupied by the contractor although the Council will consider varying this requirement if the contractor can provide a risk analysis in relation to sole working which is acceptable to the Council and takes in to account the requirements of the service.

- Providing the necessary qualified staff to fulfil the requirements for effective management and operation of the Guildhall including marketing and promotion; cleaning; reception; setting out rooms; operating equipment; providing a bar service; providing and serving refreshments.
- To ensure that a personal licence holder is present at the premises at all times when alcohol is being sold, unless otherwise varied ahead of a function at the discretion of the Council's Designated Premises Supervisor.
- Providing for the use of the premises by the Town Council for the meetings as advised on the attached schedule.
- The contractor will be responsible for taking all bookings for the Guildhall and for collecting income from room hire charges, bar charges etc.
- IT equipment for administering the contractor's responsibilities and provision of any necessary till equipment for sales etc.
- Provision of any additional telephony additional to the system already in place and the payment of all telephone bills.
- Providing a monthly report to the Town Council regarding the management and operation of the Guildhall, including any complaints logged in relation to the service.
- To report all issues in relation to buildings maintenance, equipment etc to the Town Council on a timely basis.
- To provide adequate employer liability insurance for its staff working at the premises and public liability insurance in the sum of £10 million.
- Insurance of its own equipment.
- The contractor will conduct a risk assessment of the premises for the permitted use.
- Establishing working protocols with the cinema operator in the Abbey Hall in relation to building security, health and safety (including fire and means of escape).
- Providing access to designated officers of the Council, who will retain keys to the premises, and providing general advice and assistance concerning use of the Premises.
- Removing refuse from the premises to the refuse bins provided.
- Providing nominated keyholders and 24-hour telephone access to a responsible person in the employment of the contractor.

- Compliance with the premises licence including ensuring consideration of neighbours in administering the service.
- The conduct of its staff and contractors while on the premises.
- Advising the public of recommended access routes and parking.
- Providing and staffing a telephone enquiry line and information desk.
- Ensuring that the Premises shall not be used for any unlawful purpose or in a manner which invalidates the Council's buildings insurance policy.
- Providing access by the Council's officers to designated managers of the contractor for the purposes of communication, liaison and the smooth running of the Premises including the ability for the Council's officers to contact the contractor at all times.
- The premises may be used at short notice by the local authorities in the case of a civil emergency.
- Undertaking all necessary inhouse fire alarm testing and emergency lighting testing and practice of evacuation procedures.
- To be responsible for health and safety matters including provision of staff who have had first aid training, to report all accidents in the building to the Town Council.
- To comply with all legislation and have proper regard to good practice in relation to equality and diversity issues, employment, environmental matters and energy conservation.
- The contractor is strongly advised to arrange business continuity insurance or similar to cover the possibility of an unanticipated closure of the building.

Council's responsibilities

- Maintenance and repair of the premises, furniture, fittings and equipment including all necessary and regular tests and services of systems.
- The above will include gas/ boiler testing, electrical fixed wire inspections, water quality testing.
- Provision of necessary intruder alarms and retention of a key holder service for out of hours call outs.

- Payment of premises-related expenditure including National Non-Domestic Rates, water rates, building and contents insurance.
- Providing and payment for utilities and ensuring that water, lighting, heating, toilets and internet are working.
- Undertaking and maintaining a fire risk assessment and ensuring that the premises are compliant with fire safety regulations, including provision of all necessary fire detection equipment, firefighting equipment, electric and gas regulations.
- Ensuring that the premises hold a current premises licence and wedding licence.
- To provide the Designated Premises Supervisor.
- Providing and agreeing an Inventory of Council-owned items.
- Providing one parking space for the use of the contractor. Guildhall customers will be allocated, alongside those of the cinema, the use of two disabled parking spaces adjacent to the external lift.

Financial arrangements

In providing the required services the contractor should detail the financial arrangement which they propose. The Council's preference is that this should be related to the revenue of the services provided by the contractor.

Any payments made would be monthly.

Legal agreement

The above would be subject to conclusion of a legal agreement with the Town Council. Having due regard to the timescales ahead of the re-opening of the Guildhall for hire the Council proposes to proceed on the basis of agreed heads of terms with it likely that formal legal agreement will be concluded after the effective contract start date.

Original tender specification issued: 28th June 2018.

Updated: 11th September 2018.