

**Guildhall Committee**

**Monday 4<sup>th</sup> March 2019**

**Agenda item 8: Guildhall Development**

**Report of the Town Clerk**

The final items of building work will be complete by 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2019. The major items for completion are Space for Change (which will be complete shortly), the covering of the walkway from the bar area to the landing outside the Abbey Room (“pigeon alley”) and the installation of Cat ladders and roof gantries.

The matter of the portable audio-visual system is under the confidential agenda as quotes are being considered.

The new Muniment Room is “drying out” and once a stable environment has been established a decision will be taken, following consultation with the Berkshire Records Office and the County Archivist Mark Stevens, on whether any mechanical environmental control is required and the racking system can be installed ahead of the archive coming back from Reading.

The installation of a new treasures cabinet will be considered in the new financial year. The current wooden front will remain, it is being repaired, but a new, higher specification cabinet up to current standards is required for safe keeping of the treasures and to comply with insurance requirements. This will require specialist design, the cabinet being designed around the treasures themselves.

Planning permission and listed building consent has been applied for the proposed water fountain together with release of funds from the former Joint Environmental Trust.

Members will have had the opportunity to tour the Guildhall to look at what has been done during this last year and to begin to consider the next stages steps required in relation to the continued improvement and maintenance of the buildings.

Nigel Warner  
Town Clerk  
3<sup>rd</sup> March 2019

**Guildhall Committee**

**Monday 4<sup>th</sup> March 2019**

**Agenda item 9: Guildhall Management and Operation**

**Report of the Town Clerk**

The Guildhall was formally handed over to the Abbey Cinema, who now manage and operate the facility, on Monday 11<sup>th</sup> February 2019. A successful open weekend took place on Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> and Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> February.

Your officers work very closely with the Abbey Cinema and have a good working relationship with the cinema.

Mr and Mrs Wiper will be at the meeting to update Members further.

Old Magistrates Court

At its meeting in January 2019 approved in principal an offer from the Abbey Cinema in relation to use of the Old Magistrates Court. This is attached as Appendix A.

Following further discussions with Mr and Mrs Wiper, a revised offer was received, this is attached as Appendix B and should be read in conjunction with Appendix A.

Authority was delegated by the Town Council to determine this matter, with direction to the Committee to consider the balance between community and cinema use, and the charges to the Abbey Cinema in relation to use of the Old Magistrates Court.

The Committee is requested to consider the offer from the Abbey Cinema.

The Committee may wish to undertake all or part of its consideration of this matter in confidential session as the matter may be subject to further negotiation and consideration of terms.

Nigel Warner  
Town Clerk  
3<sup>rd</sup> March 2019

Old Magistrates Court, original proposal

**MAGISTRATES COURT: PROPOSAL FOR ENHANCED AUDIO-VISUAL FACILITIES**

**Introduction**

We have submitted a quotation from our audio-visual consultants to supply an easily moveable screen and projector for business meetings. This, in addition to the Guildhall's existing equipment, will be sufficient to support basic conferences and meetings in all the Guildhall rooms.

Our proposal is that we invest a further £80,000 in the Old Magistrates Court to provide equipment which would be removed at the end of our contract, providing cinema quality projection (to be located out of the way in the gallery), a state-of-the-art Dolby 7.1 surround sound system, a fully retractable screen behind the magistrates' bench and a modern infra-red hearing system for the hard of hearing. There would also be audio description for the sight-impaired and subtitled films which are not always possible on the big screen in the Abbey Hall during every performance.

This investment would allow projection from any source, for example :-

- DVD/Satellite/web browser/laptop/Sky/HD TV
- Any current film from all our normal distributors

As an example, this would enable Council meetings to project planning documents directly from the planning portal in HD on a large screen or access internet documents in real time and all other users would enjoy the same benefits.

**Benefits**

Installing these facilities in the Old Magistrates Court will enable us to screen films with full disabled access to supplement the film schedule in the Abbey Hall where access is limited to the lift from the carpark at the rear of the building.

Develop film genre for smaller user groups of Abbey Hall customers i.e. foreign language, small independent films.

We would pay commercial rates for this purpose.

There is great demand for private hire of cinemas for birthday parties and independent film premieres and the Abbey Hall is too large to be feasible for this purpose. Under these proposals the public could rent the Magistrates Court from the Guildhall for this purpose.

The Abingdon Film Club and other local film clubs would be able to move their activities into the Magistrates Court should they wish to do so.

Companies would be able to hold full scale professional product launches and promotional events using these facilities.

The Magistrates Court is ideally suited for the purpose not only because of disabled access but also because of the adjacent room which provides tea and coffee and pop up bar opportunities.

The Town Council plans to hold many of its meetings in the Magistrates Court and has reserved approximately 20 dates for the first sixth months of 2019 and will benefit from these facilities along with the public.

Room set up would remain as currently planned (meeting table and chairs) and we would change the seating configuration when films were being screened either for our own or for private hire purposes.

#### **Our minimum usage requirements**

In order to support the above investment, we request use of the Magistrates Court on Friday, Saturday and Sunday evenings from 6pm, two mid-week evenings, two mid-week afternoons and weekend daytime during term-time. During school holidays we request full use. We would then wish to have the right to book any additional sessions which have not been allocated for other public use two months ahead (this fits with film booking cycle). The effect would be that other users would be able to book sessions two months or more ahead.

In order to maximise occupancy and revenue, we will encourage optimal use of all the Guildhall rooms in line with our current booking strategy. Thus, any proposed use which specifically requires either the enhanced audio-visual facilities or disabled access will be given priority and other groups will be directed to other rooms.

#### **Guildhall revenue contribution**

	No. of weeks	3 hour session/week	Total sessions
School Holidays	14	28	520
Non School holidays	38	12	456
Total	52		976
Price per 3 hours session			£24
<b>Total Guildhall revenue</b>			<b>£23,424</b>
<b>Proposed 25% uplift</b>			<b>£29,280</b>

This would result in full occupancy for 14 weeks and 40% occupancy for 38 weeks, assuming a maximum of 4 x 3 hour sessions per day.

The above is based on the published room rate however as this is a commercial activity, we suggest that a higher rate would be applicable of £30 per 3 hour session, which provides a 25% uplift, giving £29,280 of which the council's net annual contribution would be £11,712.

#### **Issues**

The Guildhall licence currently covers commercial use but there may be an addition required.

Sound incursion between the Magistrates Court and the Council Chamber above. This will be managed via our booking policy as is currently the case where we consider likely noise levels when these two rooms are booked simultaneously by different groups.

Timing – in order to proceed with our capital investment and booking, we are seeking an early decision so that we can market these facilities early in 2019.

## APPENDIX B

### Text of revised offer from the Abbey Cinema, to be read in conjunction with Appendix A

Revised proposal for use of Old Magistrates Court (“OMC”):-

It remains our primary objective to encourage use of the room by many users.

- i) We would be able to use the OMC to show films during school term dates as much as we wish, including weekends.
- ii) During school holidays we would not be able to use one in every two Fri and Sat evenings but see point iii) below.
- iii) If no other bookings had been taken to use the OMC 3 months in the future, we would then be free to use the OMC
- iv) The council will be paid a minimum fee of £12 per session or 66.66 pence per admission, whichever is the greater.

This means that if there were more than 18 admissions, The Town Council would benefit from an uplift in the proposed £12 fee. It would receive £30 or more per session if there were 45 or more admissions per session.

We would provide weekly figures showing the number of admissions and the revenue due to the council every Friday for the week to the preceding Thursday.