

DUDLEY METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

STOURBRIDGE AREA COMMITTEE – 15th NOVEMBER 2004

REPORT OF THE AREA LIAISON OFFICER

APPLICATION BY STOURBRIDGE THEATRE GROUP FOR FUNDING TOWARDS
TIERED SEATING FOR STOURBRIDGE TOWN HALL

1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To inform the Committee of the recommendations of the Stourbridge Area Committee Town Hall Working Group in respect of the request by Stourbridge Theatre Group for a grant of £5,000 towards the cost in installing tiered seating at the Stourbridge Town Hall, which was submitted to the meeting of the Committee held on 12th July 2004.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 At the meeting of this Committee held on 12th July 2004, a representative of the Stourbridge Pantomime Company spoke opposing the request by the Stourbridge Theatre Company for a grant towards the cost of installing a tiered seating system at the Stourbridge Town Hall, as a part of a wider programme of refurbishment of the Hall.
- 2.2 A Working Group, comprising Councillors Knowles, Mrs Cowell, Mrs Collins and Vickers was established to consider, as a matter of urgency, the details of the installation of the proposed tiered seating and the resulting impact of the system on all User Groups of the Town Hall.
- 2.3 Representatives of the User Groups were invited to attend the initial meeting of the Working Group on 20th August, and take part in the resulting site visit to the Wolverhampton Music School. The tiered seating system at the Wolverhampton Music School did not reflect the style envisaged for the Town Hall and therefore the Working Group did not feel in a position to make any recommendation to the Committee's meeting in September 2004.
- 2.4 In order to ensure that the views of everyone was taken into consideration, the Working Group met with representatives of the User Groups again in September to consider a more detailed joint visual presentation by Events and Hall Manager and the Stourbridge Theatre Group, giving more in depth detail of the system under consideration. At this meeting samples of the type of seating to be installed was on show. The Group were advised that the Earls High School had tiered seating of the type proposed for the Stourbridge Town Hall and therefore the Group visited the Earls High School on 28th September.

- 2.5 During discussions with the User Group representatives, it was acknowledged that there was a great deal of fund raising to be undertaken to secure adequate funding. It was considered that a donation from the Stourbridge Area Committee would go some way towards showing Council support for such a project, which indirectly could influence others to contribute towards the total costing of the project.
- 2.6 Representatives of the Stourbridge Pantomime Company were in attendance at all meetings of the Working Group and provided figures reflecting the impact on the Pantomime Company of the loss of seating for audiences as a result of the installation the tiered seating system.
- 2.7 At the meeting of the Working Group on 23rd September 2004, Councillor Knowles commented on his wish for the working Group, together with representatives of the User Groups, to investigate further projects to enhance the Stourbridge Town Hall. look at other refurbishment needs of the Stourbridge Town Hall and how these could be achieved.

3.0 PROPOSAL

- 3.1 The Committee is asked to accept the Working Group's recommendation to agree to allocate the sum of £5,000 to the Stourbridge Theatre Company, towards the cost of installation of a tiered seating system at Stourbridge Town Hall, subject to confirmation to the Area Liaison Officer that the remaining funding required for the project had been secured from alternative sources.
- 3.2 The Committee is asked to consider the request of the Working Group, that the Working Group continue, in order to identify further projects to refurbish and enhance the Stourbridge Town Hall.

4.0 FINANCE

- 4.1 The cost of the proposal is estimated at £54,000. The Theatre Company will provide £9,000 of this, and Stourbridge Arts Festival has agreed to contribute a grant of £3,000. Two local benefactors have pledged £1,000 between them, and other interested bodies and individuals will be invited to sponsor seats.
- 4.2 In addition, the floor will need to be strengthened at a cost of £40,000, a project which the Directorate of Urban Environment supports and intends to raise funding through the Council's repairs and maintenance budget, grant aid and other means.

5.0 LAW

- 5.1 Section 111 of the Local Government Act, 1972 enables the Council to do anything that is calculated to facilitate or is conducive or incidental to the discharge of its functions.

6.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

- 6.1 The report takes into account the Council's Equal Opportunities Policy.

7.0 RECOMMENDATION

7.1 The Committee is recommended to note the contents of this report.

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