

WARDS: ALL

AGENDA ITEM NO. 8

DUDLEY METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

SELECT COMMITTEE – CULTURE AND RECREATION

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF THE URBAN ENVIRONMENT

**HIMLEY HALL & PARK AND EVENTS SECTION
PERFORMANCE 2004-2005**

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1** To review the annual performance of the Himley Hall and Park and Events Section for the 2004-05 financial year with reference to the section's annual Service Plan.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1** The annual Service Plan for Himley Hall & Park and Events 2004/05 highlighted the following targets:

- Ensure that the Borough Festival provides accessible events and activities for priority groups, including a range of culturally diverse groups
- Develop the Directorate's PRD (Performance Review Discussion) programme to all employees
- Allocate Grant support to voluntary bodies for Borough Festival Events
- Conduct a Health & Safety Review for Himley Hall & Park and events
- Develop operational and marketing plans for each section of the service

2.2 Estate Income

2.2.1 Car Parking Income

	£	% +/-
1998/99	27,315	
1999/00	31,854	+28%
2000/01	25,157	-21%
2001/02	23,747	-6%

2002/03	29,238	+23%
2003/04	30,617	+ 5%
2004/05	36,915	+20%

It should be noted that in financial years 2000/01 to 2001/02 the car parking scale of charges was rationalised at Himley Park, reducing the short stay charge to the public, the short term reduction in income was anticipated, but was aimed at increasing income via increased visitors medium/long term. This strategy has been successful and has been followed in 2004/05 by the rationalisation of the car parking charges for the Estate, resulting in an increase in car parking income of 20%

2.2.2 Fishing Income

	£
2001/02	11,115
2002/03	11,512
2003/04	12,353
2004/05	15,262

Fishing on the Great Lake at Himley was extremely poor in 2000 onwards due to overfishing as a result of the ending of the closed season and no restocking strategy over the last 15 years. In 2001/02 the Lake was considerably restocked with mirror and grass carp, roach, tench and perch. The closed season was re-introduced in order to rest the fish and allow them to breed and grow. As a result we are now beginning to see a steady increase in fishing income and quality of fishing. A regular re-stocking of the pool is now programmed, which should provide healthier fish and a an increased interest from anglers.

2.3 Hall Hire and Catering Income and Hall Bookings

2.3.1 The table below highlights levels of Hall Hire Income since 1997/98

	Hall Hire		Catering Income	
	£	% inc	£	% inc
1997/98	27,200		36,500	
1998/99	26,500		39,300	+7%
1999/00	43,300	+63%	46,500	+18%
2000/01	49,200	+14%	56,600	+22%
2001/02	57,700	+17%	81,000	+43%
2002/03	71,000	+23%	111,700	+38%
2003/04	108,400	+53%	138,500	+24%
2004/05	110,000		150,000 (estimated)	

Hall hire income is derived from conferences, weddings, and general public bookings eg craft fairs, etc. Catering income is derived from conferences, wedding receptions, public tea room, etc. The estimated profit from catering this year is £45,000

2.3.2 A public catering facility (tea room) was established on weekend afternoons during late spring and early summer 2003 as a test marketing exercise to gauge demand. This was very popular with visitors and its viability has been evaluated. This is being continued in 2004 and is increasing in popularity

2.3.3 Civil Weddings Bookings

The table below shows the current level of increase in the number of civil weddings/receptions taking place at Himley Hall.

	No of civil weddings
1999/00	19
2000/01	24
2001/02	35
2002/03	36
2003/04	42
2004/05	53

2.3.4 Himley Hall Hire bookings

The number of bookings for hire of Himley has been increasing over the last 12 months, the table below highlights the number of bookings per month for each financial year

	No of bookings			
	01/02	02/03	03/04	04/05
April	12	18	29	27
May	18	16	30	28
June	23	32	34	40
July	23	15	29	37
Aug	16	10	12	10
Sept	26	18	27	36
Oct	17	34	37	29
Nov	18	24	33	52
Dec	18	20	30	22
Jan	12	24	40	35
Feb	20	28	44	37
Mar	19	18	37	39
	<hr/> 222	<hr/> 257	<hr/> 382	<hr/> 392

Previous 'off-peak' periods for conference and seminar hire of December, January and April and are now becoming extremely busy periods with high levels of bookings, however there is still large amounts of spare capacity for increasing business bookings.

2.3.5 Visitors to Exhibitions

1999	18,352
2000	15,323
2001	13,787
2002	10,845
2003	9,374
2004	12,232

Visitor numbers to exhibitions in Himley Hall steadily declined 2000 to 2003, however new types of exhibitions other than arts and crafts eg BBC Pride and Prejudice costumes were introduced to Himley in 2004 and the success of this change is shown in a dramatic increase in

visitor numbers, in contrast to certain regularly featured exhibitions which have lost visitor numbers.

2.4 Building Improvements

The list below highlights desired Hall & Park improvements and their current status:

- 2.4.1. Heating Boiler conversion** - Assessments of methods and budget Costs have been drawn up by Dudley Property Consultancy for the conversion of Himley's coal fired boilers to either gas or oil. The boilers are now inadequate in providing the level of heating required in line with the increased usage of the Hall. In addition coal fired heating is costly and renders the development of the North Wing of the Hall impossible. Himley Hall is one of a small number of coal fired heated buildings within the authority.

From January 2005 the Hall has recorded the amount of business, that is being lost through the Halls current inability to cater for specific needs, principally larger scale conferences and wedding receptions with dances:

Event Date	Evening receptions Inc. disco	Wedding b'fast 60 = persons	Wedding rooms booked
Jan 2005	18	-	12
Feb 2005	16	3	9
Mar 2005	18	6	9

In addition during January-March 26 potential non-wedding bookings requiring either the usage of a larger room than is currently available or requiring flooring which would allow dancing have also been turned away.

The majority of Himley's civil wedding clients move to other venues for wedding receptions as it is not possible to accommodate large numbers for evening receptions and dancing. An average evening wedding reception would generate a significant catering income plus room hire thus indicating significant additional income generation potential at the Hall.

The development case for the Council refurbishment of the North Wing is strong but could not take place until the coal fired boilers are converted. A detailed business plan is being prepared for this project for consideration by the Cabinet Member for Leisure in due course.

- 2.4.2 Himley Central Drive** - The main driveway was completely re laid and resurfaced 2 years ago. The central driveway is now in need of repair. Approximate costs to complete this project are £55k and this remains a low priority on the councils repairs and maintenance list.
- 2.4.3 Himley Park Perimeter fence** - The oak fence is in urgent need of replacement. This is currently low on the prioritised lists of repairs and maintenance of the council.
- 2.4.4 Wash Up Room** – Increased pressure on the catering kitchen has necessitated the upgrading of an old storeroom adjacent to the catering kitchen into a separate wash up area. This was carried out in September 2004 and has provided increased food preparation capacity, Himley can now easily cater for large scale dinners and functions up to 300 people in one session.
- 2.4.5 West Gate and Main Gate renovation** – An action plan is to be drawn up to develop a bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund for grant funding to refurbish the historic gates at the park.
- 2.4.6 ICT and Telephone Network** - Himley Hall & Park has now been linked to the Council's telephone network following extensive exterior cabling along Himley Road and throughout the park. Whilst in this financial year the improvements have cost Himley Hall & Park approximately £3000 it is envisaged that conversion to the cable system will create savings in call charges in the following financial years.
- 2.4.7 Himley Development Fund** - The Decision Sheet allowing any surplus income over targets to be ring-fenced and set aside in a development fund for Himley has enabled a fund of approximately £90,000 to be established. The provision of the development fund is an important step in helping to finance the improvement works detailed above.
- 2.4.8 DDA Reviews** – It has been ascertained that there are no DDA implications for Himley Hall, however the park does not have an accessible public toilet, these are only available in the Hall. Options for changing public toilet provision in Himley Park are being appraised.

2.5 Exhibitions in Himley Hall

2.5.1 The spring of 2004 saw a new style of exhibition opening the season at Himley, Jane Austen - as seen on TV! a display of the actual costumes worn in BBC TV's Pride and Prejudice as well as many worn in the modern version of the classic Sense and Sensibility. This type of exhibition aims to widen the scope and general attractiveness of exhibitions at Himley and extend the average visitor stay time. The exhibition was a huge success with over 5000 visitors viewing the display.

2.5.2 The Oak Room tea room was open during weekends throughout the Exhibition season in order to capitalise on any income generation opportunities.

2.5.3 The Himley annual schools art exhibition has been established in partnership with Dudley Performing Arts as part of the Dudley Borough Festival. This new style of informal art exhibition, in partnership with the Directorate of Education & Lifelong Learning involves over 40 local schools developing artwork across a given theme, and their work being display in Himley Hall. The aim of this exhibition is to encourage involvement in visual art at a 'grass roots' level – ie through schools

2.6 Events in Himley Hall and Park and Dudley Borough

2.6.1 Numerous events were staged in 2004/2005, some organised by external organisations, others are organised by Himley itself or in partnership with other organisations such as South Staffordshire Council via the adjoining Baggeridge Park, Beacon FM and the British Mini Owners Club.

2.6.2 The number and range of events at Himley Hall and Park has increased dramatically over the last four years. Some of these events are externally organised events, others are organised by Himley itself or in partnership with other organisations such as Beacon FM radio or South Staffordshire Council via the adjoining Baggeridge Park.

2.6.3 New events created since 2000 are:

Summer XS with Beacon FM (Himley)
Summer Music and Fireworks (Himley)
Wheels Events (Himley and in Borough parks)

Under 5's Funday (Himley)

Winter Wonderland (Himley)
Band Concerts (Himley)

Several of these new events are developing towards being sustainable events and have been 'pump-primed' in terms of funding to establish them, by being part of the Dudley Borough Festival.

- 2.6.4** In particular the Wheels Events in 6 of the Borough Parks attracted nearly 8000 visitors and thus, in partnership with local cycling clubs, hundreds of youngsters in the Borough learned safe cycling skills, enjoyed high quality, exciting cycling demonstrations as well as an insight into the benefits of cycling to health and the environment.
- 2.6.5** In 2004 Himley staged several of the key events of the Dudley Borough Festival eg. Summer XS, Summer Music and Fireworks, In particular the Summer XS concert with Beacon FM was a phenomenal success with a capacity crowd of 15,000. The Kids Under 5's Day is now organised solely by the Culture & Community Services Event Team based at Himley and has grown since inception with over 4000 youngsters, predominantly from Dudley Borough, attending the event. Several neighbouring and regional Local Authorities have consulted the Dudley Events team on this event with a view to staging a similar type of event in their own area.
- 2.6.6** The Dudley Trail 2004 broke all records for numbers of participants with some 1900 walkers taking part! 2005 will see the 25th anniversary of this popular event which is still growing and much of its increasing popularity is due to an increasing awareness on behalf of the public of the health agenda and the benefits of walking as a way to a healthy lifestyle. The Events Section has established regular partners for this event such as Action Heart, Community Rambling Groups in the Borough, Steps to Health and local outdoor equipment retailers.
- 2.6.7** The second Winter Wonderland Event was staged in December 2004 and again was extremely successful. The emphasis of Winter Wonderland is a traditional Christmas complete with old fashioned fairground rides in the courtyard, Christmas gifts craft fayre in the Hall and Santa in residence at Himley. The partnership with South Staffordshire Council worked extremely well and it is intended to continue this event in 2005.
- 2.6.8** The Himley Bonfire and Fireworks display has, in the last five years, established itself as the largest Local Authority Fireworks display in the country, regularly attracting between 18,000 – 25,000 people and is viewed by Fireworks Displays organisers as one of the top 6 displays in the UK. The display in November 2004 attracted some 22,000 visitors.

2.6.9 In 2004/05 the Himley Events Team staged 36 events at Himley and a further 23 events elsewhere in the borough. This does not include the large number of externally organised events advised upon in parks and open spaces within the Borough, such as the Netherton and Upper Gornal Fundays.

3.0 PROPOSALS

3.1 That the Committee considers the performance report for the Himley Hall & Park and Events Section and comments accordingly.

4.0 FINANCE

4.1 Sections of the report are financial in nature and detail the improvements achieved in income generation for the Himley Hall & Park operation. These improvements have led to income targets being achieved for financial year 2004/05.

5.0 LAW

5.1 Section 19 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 empowers the Council to provide recreational facilities in its area.

5.2 Section 111 of the Local Government Act, 1972 enables the Council to do anything which is calculated to facilitate or is conducive or incidental to the discharge of its functions under the 1976 Act.

6.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

6.1 This report contains proposals which accord with the equal opportunities policy of the Council.

7.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 That the proposal outlined in 3.1 be approved.



PP. Director of the Urban Environment
Contact Officer: Sally Piazzalunga, Extn. 7823

