

SELECT COMMITTEE ON CULTURE AND RECREATION – APRIL 12TH 2005.

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF THE URBAN ENVIRONMENT.

1.0 Purpose.

- 1.1** To advise the Select Committee for Culture and Recreation on the work done by the Members Working Group for Stourbridge Town Hall.

2.0 Background.

- 2.1** A Members Working Group was established in December 2004 to look into a range of possible projects at Stourbridge Town Hall by the Halls and Entertainment Section.
- 2.2** The Group comprised The Mayor, Councillor Malcolm Knowles, Councillor David Vickers, Councillor Margaret Cowell and Councillor June Collins.
- 2.3** In particular the Group wished to examine projects which would enhance the appearance and profile of the Hall.
- 2.4** The Group expressed support for the tiered telescopic seating Project. This project will see 180 new seats installed in the main hall to improve the ambience and comfort to theatre-goers, and has received funding from a variety of sources, including the Stourbridge Area Committee. The Seating is now included in the Capital Programme. It is planned to install the seating during the Summer and re-open the main Hall in September 2005.
- 2.5** The Group expressed support for a project to re-open the original Town Hall entrance and Box Office, in Market Street and to restore the Amblecote Room which was the original Stourbridge Council Meeting Chamber.
- 2.6** As a result a visit to the Hall was included in a tour of the borough by Officers of the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF). They inspected and discussed projects for Dudley Museum and Art Gallery, Wrens Nest Nature Reserve, and Stourbridge Town Hall.
- 2.7** The Town Hall project was favourably discussed by the Officers from HLF, and Council Officers are seeking funding for a feasibility study.
- 2.8** At some future point a decision will have to be made to prioritise the three main projects being proposed by the Council and noted in paragraph 2.6 above as it is virtually certain that not all be successful. Consideration also will need to be given to the

operational issues which will naturally be driven out of physical changes to the Town Hall, e.g. storage and hiring space.

- 2.9 Members also considered the programming of entertainment at Stourbridge Town Hall and had expressed concern that the predominance of events is at Dudley Concert Hall.
- 2.10 Officers explained the rationale for this, i.e. that in prior years, shows programmed at Stourbridge Town Hall had not performed well at the Box Office. However, new shows would be programmed again this year and the demand for such a programme tested again.
- 2.11 Some decorative work was suggested by Members.
- 2.12 The Hall will be decorated to complement the installation of new seating . New flower planters are to be arranged on the roof of the Town Hall in Market Street, having established via consultation with the Council's Conservation Officer that hanging baskets were not acceptable, on the Market Street elevation.

3.0 Proposal.

- 3.1 That the Committee note the progress being made with a number of projects at Stourbridge Town Hall, being monitored by the Members Working Group.

4.0 Finance.

- 4.1 There may be financial implications in supporting the bid for Heritage Lottery Funding, as the Lottery will not support all the building works, ie lifts for disabled access, alternative storage space etc. The feasibility study will illustrate the financial commitments necessary from DMBC before the project can be initiated.

5.0 Law.

- 5.1 The powers to provide public halls for entertainment are contained in Section 145 of the Local Government Act 1972.
- 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 statutory functions.

6.0 Equal Opportunities.

- 6.1 This report contains projects which are consistent with the Council's Equal Opportunities Policy.

7.0 Recommendations.

7.1 That the proposal outlined in 3.1 be noted.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "M. Lourdes". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

PP. Director of the Urban Environment:

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