

Report of	Meeting	Date
Chief Executive	Overview and Scrutiny Committee	3 September 2012

## LANCASTRIAN SCRUTINY TASK GROUP - MONITOPRING REPORT

### PURPOSE OF REPORT

- To review the implementation of the recommendations of the Lancastrian Scrutiny Task Group since their acceptance by the Executive earlier this year.

### RECOMMENDATION(S)

- That the report be noted

<b>Confidential report</b> Please bold as appropriate	Yes	No
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### CORPORATE PRIORITIES

- This report relates to the following Strategic Objectives:

Strong Family Support		Education and Jobs	
Being Healthy		Pride in Quality Homes and Clean Neighbourhoods	
Safe Respectful Communities		Quality Community Services and Spaces	x
Vibrant Local Economy		Thriving Town Centre, Local Attractions and Villages	x
A Council that is a consistently Top Performing Organisation and Delivers Excellent Value for Money			x

### BACKGROUND

- The Lancastrian Scrutiny Task Group met during 2011 with the following terms of reference:

4.1 To look at the current function, suitability, space and operational costs of the Lancastrian Suite within the Town Hall.

4.2 To look at the current and future working arrangements and alternative methods of service delivery.

4.3 To assess the need for the type of facilities offered by the Lancastrian Suite – both commercially and for community facilities.

4.4 To look at all other options for the future management of the Lancastrian Suite including use of external companies on a commercial basis and not for profit organisations for a community use facility.

4.5 To consider whether there needs to be investment in the facilities to make them more usable.

## PROGRESS ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS

5. The recommendations were approved by the Executive Member for Resources in January 2012. This is the first of the three monitoring reports that Overview and Scrutiny Committee will consider looking at the progress and impact of the implementation of the recommendations. The recommendations are listed in the table below with action and impact to date detailed in the adjacent column.

REVIEW RECOMMENDATIONS	ACTION TO DATE
<p><b>Principal recommendation:</b></p> <p>The Task Group emphasised that the Lancastrian Suite is an important resource for the Council, they valued its use for Council events – meetings, training, elections, Mayoral events, etc and want to retain it for these purposes as well as maximising it for commercial and community use. With this in mind the Task Group recommended that the Lancastrian Suite be self resourcing with bookings seeking to cover costs as a minimum.</p>	<p>The Lancastrian Suite continues to be an excellent resource for the Council – and its use in June on the day the Olympic Torch came through Chorley; plus as a venue to celebrate following the Special Jubilee Civic Sunday event has shown the venue as invaluable for the Council as a resource.</p> <p>However there has been an on going commitment to try and ensure that bookings do cover costs as a minimum and the new flexible pricing structure has allowed us to do that much more easily.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 1</b></p> <p>That external management by another public sector body be not pursued at the current time but may be reconsidered if the opportunity arose in the future.</p>	<p>This continues to be the position.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 2</b></p> <p>That the proposal from Chorley Little Theatre to use the Lancastrian Suite for events where the Little Theatre is either too small or unsuitable, be pursued based on a ticket sales sharing agreement to be agreed on an event by event basis and reviewed in 12 month's time.</p>	<p>Chorley Little Theatre have not shown any interest in staging any events so far but we will continue to pursue this as an option.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 3</b></p> <p>That whilst there is no current interest in frequent and regular bookings of the Lancastrian eg on a weekly or monthly</p>	<p>We have recently secured a regular weekly booking for Jive Classes on a Tuesday evening. This is currently a 12 week booking to be reviewed.</p>

<p>basis, if this situation changes, a flexible approach be taken to increased discount to make the booking viable for both the hirer and the Council.</p>	<p>Under the flexible pricing policy we were able to offer incentives to make the booking sufficiently attractive to the organisers and we hope this will become a much longer term booking. The classes attract people from across Lancashire and this assists in our objective of bringing more people into Chorley and into the Town Hall. It also uses one of the Lancastrian's greatest assets – a traditional dance floor.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 4</b></p> <p>That the following improvements be undertaken to the Lancastrian Suite at an approximate total cost of £15,000 to make the venue more attractive to hirers:</p> <p>4.1 Improvements to the backstage area to include improved changing room accommodation plus the creation of a second small changing facility with toilet/washroom area.</p> <p>4.2 Improvements to the bar area to include a tea and coffee preparation/serving area, replacement door, minor redecoration and new furniture.</p>	<p>The following improvement works have been undertaken or is planned in the Lancastrian Room and bar area:</p> <p><u>Backstage</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The back stage changing accommodation to the left of the stage been renovated to provide a larger changing room with smaller curtained changing area.</li> <li>• All the backstage area has been redecorated and new floor coverings laid. The kitchen units have been replaced and provide a better working area with more storage space.</li> <li>• A small changing room with toilet and wash area has also been created back stage.</li> </ul> <p>The overall impression provided by the backstage area is considerably improved.</p> <p><u>Bar area</u></p> <p>The bar area has had some changes with more underway:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A tea and coffee serving area with a lowered section of bar area has been created, along with improvements at the back of the bar – new floorcovering, replacement glass washer and ice maker, etc;</li> <li>• The shutter door is being replaced with a sound proof traditional opening door;</li> <li>• Secondary glazing and additional heating is being installed; plus a wall mounted TV with IT connectivity for use as a screen in training events.</li> <li>• Improvement work to the actual bar, redecoration, and new furniture is planned, so that the area can be used for more informal meetings and training events for up to around 12 people.</li> </ul> <p>As some of the above work is general</p>

	<p>maintenance, the cost exceeds £15,000 with the additional amount of approximately £10,000 funded from the Town Hall maintenance budget.</p> <p>It is too early to say what impact these changes will have but they will extend the use of the bar area for other purposes like training courses. It provides a separate refreshment area away from any main event in the Lancastrian eg during a larger course/conference and improves facilities for existing users, including responding to some of the issues raised through the customer survey.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 5</b></p> <p>That a new pricing policy be adopted as soon as possible - including the reintroduction of private parties. The pricing structure and private parties policy be then reviewed after 12 months to evaluate the success and address any problems.</p> <p>In adopted the revised pricing policy, the Head of Governance (or any other appropriate post discharging the management function of the Lancastrian Suite) be delegated the authority to allow the hire of the Lancastrian Suite below the pricing structure but at not less than cost to the Authority over the whole of the financial year.</p>	<p>The new pricing policy has been in place for 6 months and appears to be working well, providing the flexibility needed to accept as many bookings as possible – including incentivising for regular bookings.</p> <p>There has been some interest in private parties but at this atge only two have been booked and these take place in August and September – a baby naming ceremony and a wedding.</p> <p>The income target for this year has been increased by £5000 for 2012/13 and is set at around £12000. So far we have income of around £6000 and so would appear to be on target to achieve the required income level at this stage.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 6</b></p> <p>The following issues continue to be pursued and implemented accordingly:</p> <p>6.1 Discussions continue with environmental health officers regarding the food safety requirements which will need to be introduced for private parties, particularly in relation to serving hot food.</p> <p>6.2 Discussions continue with the proprietors of Café Ambio regarding opportunities for combined marketing and pricing of the venue with their function menus and also the potential for a share of bar takings for large functions and events</p> <p>6.3 The booking pack/process for the Lancastrian Suite be shortened and simplified.</p>	<p>We have worked with environmental health staff to provide a one sheet guidance note on food safety. Those holding private parties must use a caterer registered with a local authority.</p> <p>Since the approval of the final report, Café Ambio has withdrawn from the running of the bar in the Lancastrian Suite. We now use two different mobile bar providers and bring them in when required. There is currently insufficient bookings which require a bar to make a firm arrangement with another permanent provider, however this arrangement is in its early stages and will be monitored.</p> <p>The booking pack for the Lancastrian has been refined and much reduced to a shorter, simpler form.</p> <p>Limited promotion of the Lancastrian has taken place with an article in the spring edition of the Council’s magazine; press releases about the new</p>

6.4 That if approved, the marketing of the new arrangements be undertaken on a limited scale through the Council's website, the Chorley Smile magazine and a printed leaflet.	pricing structure; and information on the Council's website. Once the improvement works to the bar area are complete, a promotional leaflet with photographs will be produced in line with the Task Group recommendations.
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## IMPLICATIONS OF REPORT

6. This report has implications in the following areas and the relevant Directors' comments are included:

Finance	x	Customer Services	x
Human Resources		Equality and Diversity	
Legal		Integrated Impact Assessment required?	
No significant implications in this area		Policy and Communications	

## COMMENTS OF THE STATUTORY FINANCE OFFICER

7. All of the works included in the Task Group recommendations and accepted by the Executive are being contained within the budgets approved by the Council.

## COMMENTS OF THE MONITORING OFFICER

8. I have no comments on this report.

**GARY HALL**  
**CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

Report Author	Ext	Date	Doc ID
Carol Russell	5196	15 August 2012	***

Background Papers			
Document	Date	File	Place of Inspection
Finale Report of the Lancastrian Scrutiny Task Group (considered by the O & S Committee on 12 December 2011)	December 2011	***	www.chorley.gov.uk