

Report of	Meeting	Date
Chief Executive	Overview and Scrutiny Committee	8 April 2103

## LANCASTRIAN SCRUTINY TASK GROUP : MONITORING REPORT

### PURPOSE OF REPORT

- To review implementation of the recommendations of the Lancastrian Scrutiny Task Group since their acceptance by the Executive approximately 12 months ago.

### RECOMMENDATION(S)

- That the report be noted.

Confidential report Please bold as appropriate	Yes	No

### CORPORATE PRIORITIES

- This report relates to the following Strategic Objectives:

Involving residents in improving their local area and equality of access for all		A strong local economy	
Clean, safe and healthy communities		An ambitious council that does more to meet the needs of residents and the local area	/

### BACKGROUND

- The Lancastrian Scrutiny Task Group met during 2011 with the following terms of reference:
  - To look at the current function, suitability, space and operational costs of the Lancastrian Suite within the Town Hall.
  - To look at the current and future working arrangements and alternative methods of service delivery.
  - To assess the need for the type of facilities offered by the Lancastrian Suite – both commercially and for community facilities.
  - 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.

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

## CURRENT POSITION

- Listed below are the recommendations that the Task Group made and were adopted by the Executive in early 2012. In the adjacent column is the current position, 12 months after implementation. A report was considered by the Committee in September 2012 which looked at progress in the initial 6 months.
- The clear message is that Lancastrian Suite usage has increased significantly and income has more than doubled in 2012/13.
  - Income in 2011/12 was £5560
  - Income in 2012/13 to date is £13976

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 selfresourcing with bookings seeking to cover costs as a minimum.</p>	<p>The Lancastrian Suite continues to be a valued internal resource for the Council and as a facility to be hired by external individuals and organisations and community groups. The flexible pricing policy, introduced following the review in 2012, has enabled the Council to offer discounted initial bookings or a discount for frequent or regular bookings. The success of this is reflected in the increase in income which is largely down to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the regular weekly modern jive classes;</li> <li>• more regular Northern Link dance events; and</li> <li>• a small number of private parties</li> </ul>
<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. We would still want to retain control of the facility as both an internal resource and to have say over external usage.</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 has still not shown interest in staging any events and so this seems unlikely to be the case in the future – however it does remain an option we would be happy to consider.</p> <p>On 4 May 2013 we have a booking by Chorley Amateur Boxing Club for a large scale boxing show with the potential for this to become more regular venue for them.</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 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>The regular weekly booking for Modern Jive Classes on a Tuesday has run for 6 months and provides regular income and frequent external use. Whilst the organisers say continuation is dependent on attracting enough participants to make it viable, it does 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. We are working with the organisers to look at how we may retain their booking.</p> <p>Northern Link is an organisation who have increased their number of regular dance events – currently around 8 for this year.</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 since the last report in September 2012 which then detailed the improvements to the backstage facilities.</p> <p>The Lancastrian Bar has now been refurbished to make it a more attractive venue with redecoration; a new bar and fridge units; a wall mounted TV and new carpet. New furniture is also currently being sourced. The idea is that as well as being an improved bar facility, the area can more easily be used to serve food and hot drinks but is also a suitable room for small training courses and informal meetings. Staff in the Town Hall can also use the facility at lunchtimes when the room is not in use. There are no other facilities in the Town Hall to use at lunchtime.</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</p>	<p>The new pricing policy has been in place for 12 months and appears to be working well, providing the flexibility needed to accept as many bookings as possible – including incentivising for regular bookings. Whilst there has been increased use and additional income, interestingly there has been very limited interest in private parties.</p> <p>The income target for this year was increased by £5000 for 2012/13 and as can be seen from paragraph 6 above this has been more than met.</p>

<p>structure but at not less than cost to the Authority over the whole of the financial year.</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>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.</p>	<p>We have worked with environmental health staff to provide a one sheet guidance note on food safety. There has been no problem to date with compliance in the use of local authority registered caterers.</p> <p>The bar provider is currently a mobile bar provider who has undertaken the service provision since Café Ambio withdrew last year. The arrangement works well because the demand for bar facilities is very erratic with some events eg concerts selling very few drinks but larger events being more profitable. We do require a bar provider to be able to support all types of events and the current arrangement provides this for us.</p> <p>The shorter booking pack for the Lancastrian continues to work well.</p> <p>Some promotion of the Lancastrian has taken place and a leaflet has been produced and a stall held at the Town Hall Open Day last autumn. The increased usage suggests that word is getting round, however now the bar facility has been completed and the new website is in place we are looking at other ways of promoting the facility through the website including a 360 degree view of the facilities; a photo gallery; and a checklist to assist event organisers.</p>

7. Further action which has taken place which impacts on support for the Lancastrian Suite is that a staffing restructure has been completed within the Governance team. The restructure did delete the post of Lancastrian (bookings) Assistant but has created an additional part time Civic Attendant post, providing dedicated support to Lancastrian events including dealing with event organisers and service providers to help make sure events run smoothly. Bookings and promotion of the Lancastrian Suite are now dealt with by the Mayors Secretary working in the Democratic Services team. It is hoped that the new arrangements will assist in more consistently supporting events and continuing to improve the promotion of the facilities and increase bookings.

**IMPLICATIONS OF REPORT**

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

Finance	/	Customer Services	/
Human Resources		Equality and Diversity	
Legal		Integrated Impact Assessment required?	

No significant implications in this area		Policy and Communications	
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#### COMMENTS OF THE STATUTORY FINANCE OFFICER

9. In total £46k has been spent upgrading the areas that were not updated when the Lancastrian itself was updated a number of years ago. It is not clear when the back stage area or the bar area were last upgraded, but it is not within the last 10-15 years. The investment which is a long term investment, has resulted in an improved facility that is generating additional income. Further marketing is now planned to attempt to increase turnover further, and this is more likely now that the facility is fit for purpose.

#### COMMENTS OF THE MONITORING OFFICER

10. There are no Monitoring Officer comments.

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

<b>Background Papers</b>			
<b>Document</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>File</b>	<b>Place of Inspection</b>
Final Report of the Lancastrian Scrutiny Task Group	December 2011		<a href="http://www.chorley.gov.uk">www.chorley.gov.uk</a> Overview and Scrutiny Committee Agenda of 12 December 2011
<b>Report Author</b>	<b>Ext</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Doc ID</b>
Carol Russell	5196	18 March 2013	