

Report of	Meeting	Date
Chief Executive	Overview and Scrutiny Committee	1 October 2013

## LANCASTRIAN SCRUTINY TASK GROUP: THIRD MONITORING REPORT

### PURPOSE OF REPORT

- To review implementation of the recommendations of the Lancastrian Scrutiny Task Group since their acceptance by the Executive approximately 18 months ago. This is the third and final monitoring report to the Committee.

### 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

5. 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, 18 months after implementation. There have been two previous monitoring reports since the task group completed its work in early 2012.
6. There continues to be improved usage of the Lancastrian Suite. In April this year we reported that income had more than doubled in 2012/13. Below is the updated income position which indicates we are on target to meet the 2013/14 income target.
- **Income in 2011/12 was £5560**
  - **Income in 2012/13 was £13919**
  - **The income target in 2013/14 is £11740** which is less than 2012/13 as it reflects the loss of the regular income from Jive Classes which ended in June 2013.
  - **Income in 2013/14 (invoiced as at end September 2013) is £5760.** In addition internal uses have been costed as **£7150** (the value of internal bookings where potentially we may have had to hire other venues). This figure hasn't previously been calculated but helps demonstrate the value of the venue to the organisation.

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 well used internally and externally and whilst the summer months in 2013 have been quiet, income is still quite good and on target to meet 2012/3 level of £11,740.</p> <p>Because of the Lancastrian's value to the Council for staff and councillors internally, eg training, formal meetings like Development Control Committee and Equality Forum, Elections, events put on by the Communications and Leisure teams, and Mayoral uses, we are now also monitoring the hire cost of internal bookings – to show the added value of the Lancastrian as an asset to the organisation. This also includes the range of free uses granted by the Mayor.</p> <p>The flexible pricing policy, introduced following the review in 2012, continues to provide a means of offering discounted initial bookings or a discount for frequent or regular bookings.</p> <p>Unfortunately we have lost the weekly Jive Classes which were a good source of regular income and use of the Lancastrian during the week – however the organiser couldn't attract the numbers needed for such a large venue and has moved elsewhere. We have had more frequent Northern Link dance events – including 12 events booked for 2014.</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 and in fact becomes stronger as bookings increase for Council based events, it is even more important that we retain control of the facility as both an internal resource and to have say over external usage. Internal usage has been increased by a greater number of business events held by the economic development team and events like Chorley Live. There was also a week long Heritage Event at the end of September for which the organisers were given free use in lieu of core funding. This is part of the notional internal income shown above.</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 held a very successful boxing event run by Chorley Amateur Boxing Club which as an initial booking, we provided at a reduced hire charge. The Club have booked for a second event in November and we hope the Lancastrian will become their chosen venue for future twice yearly events.</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>As mentioned, the regular Modern Jive Classes no longer take place and we continue to work on securing regular bookings. Northern Link is an organisation which has increased their number of regular dance events – and in 2014 these will become monthly events.</p> <p>We continue to seek regular users for weekly classes but the venue is a large one for such events.</p> <p>We would like to develop the facility as a regular wedding venue. It can be a very affordable venue for larger weddings and we are working on promotional material/better website presence.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 4</b></p> <p>That the following improvements be undertaken to the Lancastrian Suite to make the venue more attractive to hirers:</p> <p>4.1 Improvements to the backstage</p>	<p>Since the last report the full refurbishment of the bar has been completed with new furniture which makes a much more attractive and welcoming bar facility which can also be used for small/informal meetings and events. For the recent Heritage Event it was used as a café area.</p>

<p>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 improved backstage facilities are well used and are particularly important for events like Chorley Live where a number of bands/acts are performing.</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 18 months and works very well, providing the flexibility needed to accept as many bookings as possible – including incentivising for regular bookings. There has only been a small number of private parties but these have been well organised and have presented none of the problems which originally brought about the decision to stop them.</p> <p>As mentioned above, we feel there is scope to promote the Lancastrian as a wedding/party venue and we are investigating holding a wedding fayre to promote local wedding related businesses – photographers; caterers; etc. There has certainly been an increase in enquiries and potential bookings for Asian Weddings.</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 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 remains Ace bars, 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 the increased usage suggests that word is getting round. However we are still working on a better website presence and a new dedicated page will go live shortly. We are also working on a photo gallery; and downloadable promotional material</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>including a checklist to assist event organisers.</p> <p>Staffing changes introduced earlier in 2013 mean that the Mayors Secretary now undertakes all bookings and support for the Lancastrian Suite with one of the Civic Attendants attending the majority of Lancastrian events. These arrangements provide a consistency of support to hirers. We have also recruited 4 new Lancastrian Attendants who work on a casual basis.</p>
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## IMPLICATIONS OF REPORT

7. 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	

## COMMENTS OF THE STATUTORY FINANCE OFFICER

8. The financial implications are contained within paragraph 6 above.

## COMMENTS OF THE MONITORING OFFICER

9. There are no Monitoring Officer comments.

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

Background Papers			
Document	Date	File	Place of Inspection
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

Report Author	Ext	Date	Doc ID
Carol Russell	5196	1 October 2013	