

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

27th June 2012

PRESENT:-

Conservative Group

Councillor Atkin (Vice-Chairman in the Chair) and Councillors Mrs. Hood and Mrs. Patten.

Labour Group

Councillors Bambrick, Bell and Pearson.

OS/1. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence from the Meeting were received from Councillor Mrs. Plenderleith (Chairman) and Councillor Mrs. Mead (Labour Group).

OS/2. **MINUTES**

The Open Minutes of the Special Meetings held on 25th April and 2nd May and of the Meeting held on 2nd May 2012 were taken as read, approved as true records and signed by the Chairman.

OS/3. **PRESENTATION - TOWN HALL AND THE DELPH AREA REVIEW**

At the Committee's Meeting on 2nd May 2012, approval was given to the scoping document for the review of Swadlincote Town Hall and The Delph. A presentation was made to Members which reminded of the scope of the review, to increase business, improve facilities, look at a potential for a change of use and the links between The Town Hall and adjacent Delph area.

The presentation started with a history of the Town Hall, including its origins and the improvements made over the years. Also reported was the Town Hall's listed building status and other issues which would need to be considered in deciding its future use. In response to a Member's question, it was confirmed that planning consent would be required for any internal or external alterations to this listed building. Another aspect requiring research was whether there was a restrictive covenant in place which might further limit uses of the premises.

The presentation covered the facilities available at the Town Hall and the current programme of use. There were a number of weekly bookings and ad hoc usage throughout the year. Statistics were also provided with regard to use of the adjacent Delph area. A new use was hire of the Town Hall for weddings, with 13 planned over the course of the current year.

Next, management aspects were discussed and a particular issue was the caretaking arrangements if usage was expanded. Marketing literature was circulated to the Committee and a number of suggestions were put forward by Members to improve this documentation.

Officers referred to a survey undertaken in 2008, to assess users' perceptions of the facilities. Copies of the survey were available. An outline was given of the key survey results including the benefits of the Town Hall's location and its comparative hire costs. Some of the findings from the survey had subsequently led to changes being implemented. A slide was provided on the budgetary aspects. In addition to the reported figures, income was received from the integral shop units of the order of £32,000 each year, resulting in a small budget surplus. It was noted that there had been a steady rise in income streams over recent years.

The Committee discussed the use of The Town Hall as a wedding venue which would further increase the reported income. A suggestion was made around removing the current stage, expanding the kitchen facilities and purchasing a larger temporary stage. Members were reminded of a previous successful bid to the Arts Lottery, which ultimately was not taken forward, due to revenue implications. An explanation was given of subsequent plans for an arts venue at the West Street Methodist Church, the services provided by People Express and the facility at the Glade at Rosliston Forestry Centre. Further information was circulated on the pricing structure for hire of The Town Hall.

Note: At 6.40pm, Councillor Mrs. Patten left the meeting.

An update was then provided on the Town Centre redevelopment and the events held in The Delph area. This included commercial organisations as well as the voluntary and community sector and Council organised events. The proximity of the Town Hall provided a useful contingency in the case of adverse weather affecting events.

Members comments and suggestions were invited. The Chairman raised safety concerns over the current Town Hall flagpole, which would be investigated. There was a discussion about the marketing arrangements and it was noted that the format of the current literature could be improved.

It was acknowledged that the listed building status and possible restrictive covenant would limit the potential for development of this venue. However, with the shop income and growth in use as a wedding venue, a small surplus was being made. There was recognition of the successful events held in the Town Centre, praise for the Council staff involved in organising events and particularly praise for the events led by the voluntary sector.

It was agreed to receive the presentation and to ask Officers to complete the planned review of marketing literature.

OS/4. **WORK PROGRAMME**

It was reported that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed an annual work programme, which was reviewed at each Meeting. It had been agreed that the September meeting would be held at the Rosliston Forestry Centre, with the agenda focusing on the leisure service updates.

The scoping document for the cemetery review had been submitted. It was considered that this review should be undertaken by the full Committee rather than using a task group. There was discussion about the provision of further cemeteries and the potential to use planning gain monies for land purchase, although it was noted that there were competing pressures for the use of such funding. It was proposed that the cemetery review work be undertaken in December 2012. At the same meeting, it was proposed to receive the presentation on the elections function.

It was agreed:-

- (1) That the Committee approves the scoping document for the cemetery review.**
- (2) That the work programme be updated as outlined above.**

N. ATKIN

CHAIRMAN

The Meeting terminated at 7.25 p.m.