

Report of a Meeting between Representatives of Wem Town Council and Wem Town Hall Community Trust held on Tuesday 20th November 2018 at 16.00 in Wem Town Hall.

Present:-

Wem Town Council - Cllrs Mrs C Granger (Chairman), Cllr Broomhall, Cllr Dee, Cllr Dodd, Cllr Towers
Mrs P O'Hagan (Town Clerk).

Wem Town Hall - R Owens, R Reeves, S Zacharek, S Yates.

1. Appointment of Chairman

Cllr Granger appointed Chairman at the June meeting

2. Apologies for absence.
none

3. To approve as a correct record the minutes of a meeting of this Working Group held on 19th June 2018.

Resolved:- to approve as a correct record the minutes of the working group meeting held 19.6.18

4. To receive an update from the representatives of the Trust.

Sarah Zacharek presented an overview of activity as follows:-

- Footfall from events is in excess of 6000 and volunteer hours are increasing and contribute a huge amount to the running of the hall.
- There has been an increase in the number of days the gallery is booked and an increase in Friends memberships along with business friends.
- The Town Hall provides 246 hours of employment per week for its staff.
- There has also been an expansion in the number of people hiring the hall externally and there is a very varied mix of groups using the building.
- Wem into Work is still ongoing, although numbers have dropped but this could be due to people seeking full time employment. 49% of the those on the scheme are now employed.

Mr Reeves presented the financial report as follows:-

- VAT registering has had an impact on the budget as not all of it is recoverable and the cost of registering for VAT has been in excess of £2000.
- Lettings income has increased and staff costs are less than budget which is due to maternity leave.
- The closure of the Town Hall for the boiler work has not significantly impacted on the budget.

Concerns over the end of funding for the Wem into Work programme were discussed and it was explained that there is still uncertainty over the continuation of the Building

Better Opportunities Fund which started January 2017 in light of the uncertainties over BREXIT. It was suggested that the Town Council be asked to write a letter of support for this initiative as it was important that it continues in Wem. It was suggested that it may be better to write to LANDAU the organisation that is overseeing the scheme in Shropshire and if the scheme were to continue this would be the awarding body.

If the grant is not awarded then this would significantly impact on the Town Hall as these costs could not be absorbed.

A question was asked about the set up of the café and how the finances worked. It was explained that café card payments were made on the Wem Town Hall card machine and then transferred back across.

It was reported that Shropshire Council's art grants have reduced significantly and a discussion took place on this. The lease agreement with Shropshire Council is also still under discussion and The Trust is starting to hold further discussions over a new SLA agreement.

Cllr Dee left the meeting at 16.55

5. To discuss Service Level Agreement and draft funding agreement.

The Clerk explained the reason behind the SLA which was to provide greater financial stability for the Town Hall over a 3 year period. Rod Owens queried why if the purpose was to provide stability did the proposed financial contribution decrease over the 3 year period? It was explained that the proposed contribution figures were discussed at the October meeting of the Town Council and as Councillors were keen to operate in an open and transparent way and it was agreed that the proposed contribution should be discussed with trustees at this meeting as this would provide trustees with adequate time to submit a response to the Town Council prior to the January meeting when the final decision would be made.

The current agreement with the Town Council that it would underwrite any losses made by the Town Hall (up to a set amount) was discussed and Trustees agreed that this agreement would cease under the SLA

A discussion took place on the SLA delivery objectives and trustees felt that the following objective was ambiguous and difficult to measure.

- **To support the development of Wem Town Hall to increase its regular use by all people predominantly within the local community.**

RESOLVED:- to RECOMMEND that the Town Council agree to the amendment of objective 1 to include reference to the provision of arts.

It was agreed that the Town Hall Trust would submit its response to the proposals by 31.12.18

Trustees also raised concerns over the following objective

- **Provide free exclusive hire of the Town Hall's main room, community kitchen and entrance area to Wem Town Council from 12.00 noon until**

midnight twice per year to enable the Town Council to use the building to host 2 civic receptions (or equivalent) per year.

It was explained that including the provision of a service of this nature in the SLA may make part of the contribution liable for VAT which could not be reclaimed. It was suggested that instead of the inclusion on this item within the SLA a letter agreeing to the provision of free hire of the hall as outlined above.

RESOLVED;- to recommend that the Town Council agree to a separate written agreement to cover the free hire of the Town Hall including entrance area and community kitchen twice a year for Civic receptions.

Cllr Broomhall left the meeting at 17.15

6. To consider any other issues raised.

A question was asked about a mission statement and Sarah stated that the Town Hall had adopted a mission statement.

Cllr Granger asked whether the two Honorary Townsman boards could be displayed in the Town Hall. Trustees explained that as the trustees were keen to promote the Town Hall as an independent arts venue it would not be appropriate to display these boards as it could confuse the public as to what the venue was. Sarah Zacharek reported that the staff often had to explain to the public that the building had nothing to do with the Council and the addition of these boards would further add to the confusion.

It was explained that the Honorary Townsman Award, whilst agreed by the Town Council was an award for service to the community and therefore the boards should be on display in the community not held in the Town Council office where no one could view them. A suggestion was made that they could be hung upstairs in the Town Room then they would not be on view to the general public.

It was agreed that the trustees would be asked to consider this request again and that the Clerk would provide dimensions of the boards.

Chairman.....

Meeting ended 17.30