

HALLS, CEMETERIES & ALLOTMENTS COMMITTEE

Date: Monday, 23 May 2022

Title: Corn Exchange Main Hall & 1863 Cafe Bar Operations

Contact Officer: Venue & Events Officer - Tomas Smith

Background

The new seating will shortly be installed in the Main Hall and groups had asked if there would be a reduction in hire fee due to the change of available hireable space. 1863 has recently changed its opening times and started serving paninis at lunchtime.

Current Situation

Main Hall

Having looked at the proposed seating and the implications the new layout will have on available space, it is the Venue and events Officers' opinion that there should be no reduction in the hire cost of the hall.

Most groups currently hire the hall with the stage set-up which takes up 5 metres of space from the back wall. The new seating will encroach 3 meters from the entry wall. Taking into consideration the imminent installation of the seating, if the stage is removed and the curtains pushed back, there will be 2 metres of space in addition to the space currently available. Having recently met with the hirer potentially most affected by the new layout, the Venue and Events Officer can confirm they are happy with the solution presented by the removal of the stage and the gain of 2 metres of hireable space.

Therefore, any reduction in hire charge is not relevant.

1863 Café

From the 4th April, Café 1863 extended its opening hours to **Monday – Friday 09:00 – 18:00** and introduced paninis served between **10:00 – 15:00**. So far uptake has been positive with customers and the extended opening having proved especially popular with people who are waiting for groups to start or finish. By having café staff in later there has been a reduction of required caretaking hours for some times in the week and a continued presence of staff which pre café would have been untenable.

Having the option to serve a light lunch has helped sales in what has been a slow period of the day, with the imminent Gala Opening and a concerted push on advertising, the Venue and Events Officer feels that the serving of food is required to drive the viability of the café.

The Venue and Events Officer feels that the café could benefit from opening later on Friday to capitalise on the Fizzy Friday offer. Saturday evening opening might be beneficial, but both these times may interfere with private hire in the arts facility. Friday evening opening could be carried out on an ad-hoc basis (if the café is busy) until 9pm over the coming months if the committee is in agreement.

The café was less busy during the Easter Bank Holiday days, so the decision has been taken by officers to not open on Bank Holidays for the foreseeable future.

Hall Usage Figures

Are attached to this report showing a slightly higher percentage usage over the last period of hire.

Environmental impact

Having declared a Climate Change Emergency at its Council meeting on 26 June 2019 – with this in mind Councillors should have due regard to the environmental impact of any decisions they make with regard to its facilities and services it operates.

Risk

In decision making Councillors should give consideration to any risks to the Council and any action it can take to limit or negate its liability.

Financial implications

Described here or as stated in the report above.

- Staffing of bar for the extended opening hours

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and consider the following:

1. That there is no reduction of Main Hall hire charges for non-performance hirers
2. The continued opening of 1863 for longer hours on a Friday