

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL**Report by Strategic Lead Communications, Culture, Communities & Facilities****Cultural Committee: 23 September 2019**

Subject: Investment for Clydebank Town Hall**1. Purpose**

- 1.1** The purpose of this report is to seek funding for the purchase of furnishings and equipment to improve Clydebank Town Hall's event space and increase the potential for income generation.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1** The Committee is asked to:

- Note the proposal outlined in the report; and
- Agree £60,000 funding from the Cultural Heritage Fund to invest in furniture and equipment for Clydebank Town Hall.

3. Background

- 3.1** The B-listed Clydebank Town Hall is the Council's premier events venue, providing bespoke space for a range of civic, public, corporate, and cultural events as well as the museum/gallery and coffee shop. In 2011-2013 a £3.6m restoration and renovation project at the Town Hall was undertaken jointly by the Scottish Government, Scottish Enterprise and West Dunbartonshire Council. This was based on a proposal to change the Town Hall into a commercial venue for the Council and local area.
- 3.2** The Town Hall is open to the public and regularly staffed from 8.45am to 6pm Monday to Friday, and 9.30am to 5pm on Saturday. Events space can currently be hired seven-days-a-week until midnight or 1am, subject to licensing.
- 3.3** A new charging structure was introduced at the Town Hall in 2018/19 to ensure the building operated on a financially sustainable basis for the future. In addition, progress has been made on streamlining the operating costs for the building, and generating increased revenue through marketing the building to a wider audience. Successes have included: operating the bar in-house on a commercial basis; wedding dressing services; as well as securing new corporate bookings from organisations such as the DWP and Strathclyde University. Progress has also been made to shift the balance of income at the Town Hall away from internal Council bookings which did not improve the Council's net budget. In 2019/20 64% of income came from external sources.

- 3.4** As part of the future strategy the management team is seeking to continue to increase income from the wedding, events and conferencing sector. To this end the Town Hall website has been significantly updated to better promote the service, new wedding and conference packages have been created, two successful wedding fairs have been staged, a new Town Hall uniform has been introduced, and lively new social media content on Facebook and Twitter is reaching increasingly bigger audiences.
- 3.4** The building has a selection of attractive spaces of varying sizes which can accommodate a range of corporate events and conferences. While the rooms lend themselves to these events, a market assessment and comparator exercise has identified that additional investment is required in both equipment and furnishings to ensure the venue can compete locally and regionally in the corporate marketplace.
- 3.5** In March 2018 the Council agreed to create a £4m Cultural Capital Fund to invest in West Dunbartonshire's cultural and heritage infrastructure in order to unlock regeneration, increase tourism and raise the reputation of the area. The 2018/19 budget document and accompanying Administration motion to Council pointed to the transformation of the waterfront at Clydebank and the perfect opportunity this created to undertake bold and exciting projects that revitalise Council assets and change the way people look at our area. Officers were asked to focus upon renewing the historic Town Hall and develop detailed proposals into reports for consideration by the Cultural Committee.
- 3.6** This report responds to those wishes by bringing forward proposals that explore how to maximise the potential of the Clydebank Town Hall, to ensure its continued operation as a flagship venue within Clydebank, and achieve improved commercial success. It is noted that a further report will come before a future Committee regarding investment in the external and internal fabric of the building. This report on furniture and equipment is being brought in advance of this to allow officers to take immediate action to improve the Town Hall offer and the income potential in 2020/21.

4. Main Issues

- 4.1** In order to meet running costs and ensure that the Town Hall is sustainable for the future, external income must be significantly increased. Through market research it has been established that the greatest opportunities for income generation come from the wedding, events and corporate market. Importantly the corporate market also presents opportunities to generate bookings during weekdays and working hours when there is currently significant under utilisation of the Town Hall.
- 4.2** The Town Hall's historic façade and architecturally appealing interior make the building an attractive proposition for the corporate market. To maximise this advantage, the Town Hall needs to offer a comparable corporate package to competitors in the form of IT and conferencing equipment, furniture and

furnishings. In the reception, a digital display board would welcome guests and provide the opportunity to market events. In the Clyde Room, a display screen is required for presentations as well as furniture to replace the current fittings which are worn, bulky and difficult to manoeuvre. In the Coffee Shop current furniture is broken and worn and would be replaced with new modern, furnishings. These would be flexible enough to allow them to be used elsewhere in the building should changes be made to the layout of the building or coffee shop in future. In the Lesser Hall, the addition of a projector screen and AV equipment would enhance the space providing an opportunity for those seeking smaller venues. In the Grand Hall the event chairs are around 20 years old and showing signs of wear. It is suggested that these are replaced with new modern chairs. In addition, the Grand Hall stage needs to be re-skinned to maintain it at a suitable standard and protect income from local theatre and dance show groups. The provision of in-house bar services is providing a new income stream for the Council. The purchase of an ice-machine would remove the requirement to purchase ice for each event and ensure efficient use of employee time. Each of these items will enhance the current offer at the Town Hall, complement any future refurbishment and ensure the venue can fully facilitate corporate and other bookings.

- 4.3** If agreed officers would aim to have this equipment in place by end of December 2019. A marketing drive to the corporate sector would then follow in January 2020 with an expectation that new bookings would be secured for the 2020/21 financial year.

5. People Implications

- 5.1** There are no people implications arising from this report.

6. Financial and Procurement Implications

- 6.1** The recommendations in the report are intended to support income generation for the Town Hall in line with the strategy outlined at Cultural Committee in May 2018. The ultimate ambition is to reach a position where the costs of running the venue are minimised as much as possible.
- 6.2** The cost of undertaking the proposal is £60,000 and it is proposed that this is funded from the Council's £4million Cultural Capital Fund. There are sufficient funds within the cultural capital fund to support this taking into account committed spend to date and the planned proposal to refurbish the building.
- 5.1** For the benefit of Committee the following other projects are also in the pipeline for the Cultural Capital Fund. Costs are not available for most of these so indicative outline estimates have been provided:

Project	Cost
Alexandria Library (first floor)	£0.330 (Agreed)
Clydebank Town Hall	£1.400 (Indicative estimate)
Clydebank Library (basement museum)	£0.500 (Indicative estimate)
Back Door Gallery	£0.130 (Indicative estimate)
Bruce Street Baths	£0.500 (Indicative estimate)
Total	£2.860m
Total including proposals in this report	£2.920m

6.3 Procurement advice has been sought and the relevant guidance in relation to obtaining quotes would be followed should the committee approve the recommendations.

7. Risk Analysis

7.1 The Council is required to ensure best value for Council tax payers. Failing to capitalise on all opportunities and maximise paying bookings for the Town Hall would have an ongoing negative financial impact for the Council.

8. Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA)

8.1 An equalities impact screening has been undertaken and no significant impact has been identified.

9. Consultation

9.1 The enhancements detailed in this report have been collated in consultation with officers from Clydebank Town Hall, Communications, Assets, Finance, Legal and Procurement.

10. Strategic Assessment

10.1 The improvements outlined in this report will contribute to the Council's strategic priority of efficient and effective frontline services that improve the everyday lives of residents.

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Date: 27 August 2019

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Appendices: N/A

Background Papers: None

Wards Affected: All