

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by Strategic Lead – Communications, Culture, Communities & Facilities

Cultural Committee: 23 November 2020

Subject: Weekend opening of Clydebank Town Hall

1. Purpose

- 1.1.** The purpose of this report is to respond to a request from the Cultural Committee to examine the possibility of restricting weekday opening of Clydebank Town Hall, and increase weekend opening including any potential revenue implications.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1.** It is recommended that the Committee:
- notes this report;
 - notes that the Town Hall remains closed following lockdown;
 - agree not to progress with a change to the opening hours of the Town Hall at this time.

3. Background

- 3.1** The B-listed Clydebank Town Hall incorporates elected member and office accommodation, a museum, gallery and Coffee Shop as well as providing bespoke space for a range of corporate, civic and cultural events.
- 3.2** Currently the building remains closed following on from the national lockdown due to Covid-19 in March, 2020. Prior to this, the Town Hall was open from 8.45am to 5.30pm, Monday to Friday, and 10am to 4pm on Saturday. The Museum and Gallery were open 10am to 4pm, Tuesday to Saturday and the Coffee Shop was open 11am to 1pm, Monday to Friday.
- 3.3** A £3.6m restoration and renovation project was undertaken jointly by the Scottish Government, Scottish Enterprise and West Dunbartonshire Council in 2011 to 2013 based on a proposal to change the Town Hall into a commercially-focused venue for the Council and local area, creating the Clydebank Museum and Gallery, the Garden Gallery and garden and the Coffee Shop.

Despite these additions, the venue has historically struggled to attract visitors in significant numbers and to generate income, and in recent years the focus has turned to events in order to attract revenue.

- 3.4** The report to Committee in November 2019 on the Town Hall refurbishment outlined a number of issues . These included the size of the Museum and Gallery inhibiting the ability to attract prestigious exhibitions on a regular basis.

This means the exhibitions that are displayed tend to be more modest and less able to attract visitors from across West Dunbartonshire and beyond. Footfall is on average less than 30 people per day and the numbers differ very little between weekdays and weekends.

This low footfall undermines the business case for the Coffee Shop which was predicated on a regular flow of visitors. With daily footfall in the dozens this provides an unsustainable performance level with the coffee shop sometimes taking as little as £11 a day. Staffing costs and food waste mean this represents an inefficient use of resources.

In addition the Coffee Shop location between the existing Museum and Lesser Hall with limited natural light makes it an ill-defined venue. This contributes to the failure to attract regular non-museum customers

- 3.5** Committee agreed to resolve these issues in November 2019 by removing the Coffee Shop from its existing location to allow for the creation of an expanded gallery space. This larger facility could attract more prestigious exhibitions, and in turn, higher levels of footfall to the Town Hall. In addition the coffee shop would become a mobile kiosk that could be located in the more attractive Garden Gallery and atrium depending on bookings and weather conditions.

These plans are progressing with officers bringing forward updates to Committee as required.

4. Main Issues

Coffee Shop

- 4.1** In an effort to minimise losses and protect Council funds as much as possible, officers restricted opening hours of the coffee shop to 11am-1pm, Monday to Friday. Even with this limited opening the Coffee Shop at the Town Hall costs an estimated £1000 per week to operate but only generated approximately £120 in income (based on average weekly income Oct to Dec 2019). It would need an estimated 300 additional customers per week to address this situation which management consider is unrealistic in advance of the planned changes to expand the gallery space.
- 4.2** Although the museum and gallery are open on Saturday, visitor numbers are small and so it is difficult to justify the cost of opening the Coffee Shop at the same time.

If Committee wished the operational hours to change so that the Coffee Shop was closed on two weekdays and open on both Saturday and Sunday, consultation would be required with existing employees. The Catering Assistants currently engaged at the Town Hall both work 19 hours per week to support opening of the facility Monday to Friday. One employee works four days and the other across five days. Weekend working is not stipulated within their contract and therefore a consultation would be required with the affected employees and their Trade Union representatives should there be a decision to change opening

hours. In addition, if the Coffee Shop hours were to be extended for example to match the museum hours of 10am to 4pm, five days per week, an additional member of catering staff would be required. The cost of this would be around £10 an hour, equating to up to an additional £200 per week or £10,400 per annum. Management are not confident much more than a small percentage of this could be recouped through sales in the Coffee Shop.

Museum and Gallery

- 4.3** The Museum and Gallery operate Tuesday to Saturday, 10am to 4pm, this is supported by three Events Assistants who also undertake roles in support of wedding, events, room bookings and administration. Currently these staff work a Saturday. If a change was made to operational hours, closing on a Tuesday and opening Wednesday through to Sunday, similarly this would require a full consultation with staff.
- 4.4** It is presumed the building would continue to be open to elected members and employees, Monday to Friday, and therefore the building would become operational seven days a week. In this instance there would be staffing implications as a resource would be required to open and close every day and there would also likely be some increase in property costs, such as utility bills. It is difficult to accurately estimate this, however, as an indicative figure the building currently costs around £200 daily for heating, lighting and electricity. As a result there would be an estimated £10,000 additional annual cost for utilities following this decision, with limited income to offset. In addition, there would be two less days to meet event organisers on site for tours to secure bookings. If the building is open at weekends, this would also likely create an expectation from the public of wedding and event enquiries being responded to on these days.

Renovation work

- 4.5** As has already been outlined, the Cultural Committee has approved a £1.4m refurbishment of the Town Hall. This will include significant works to the Coffee Shop and the gallery areas of the Town Hall – both of which will be out of commission for more than six months. Changing the opening hours of the Town Hall to allow weekend opening when the gallery and coffee shop will both be temporarily closed will be of limited benefit to the public. As such it may be better to revisit the question of opening hours once the refurbishments are complete.

Impact of Covid-19

- 4.6** The Town Hall is currently closed due to Covid-19 and with current restrictions is not anticipated to open before January 2021. Given any changes to opening hours would not have an impact at this time, officers would recommend no action is taken at this point with a view to revisiting the subject once West Dunbartonshire is moving out of restrictions.

5 People Implications

- 5.1** If Committee wishes to extend the opening hours at the Coffee Shop, and/or open at weekends then this will require a contractual change for existing catering assistants who currently work part-time in the venue and also for events assistants. Part-time employees could increase their hours of work. All of these employees could also opt to go on to the SWITCH policy to find alternative roles on their existing hours.

6 Financial & Procurement Implications

- 6.1** If Committee decides to extend the opening hours of the Town Hall, this could cost up to £10,000 more per annum on staffing. There would also likely be an increase in property costs, such as utility bills, of approximately £10,000 per annum depending on the model introduced. At this time there is no expectation that there would be any increase in footfall until the enlarged gallery was open to the public. Therefore this would have a revenue budget impact.
- 6.2** The Cultural Committee has delegated powers to implement its functions, remit and responsibilities as detailed above. However the capital and revenue budgets for its functions are monitored by the Corporate Services Committee and therefore if this change was to be progressed, the matter would require to be remitted for final approval.
- 6.3** There are no procurement implications from this report.

7 Risk Analysis

- 7.1** There is a high risk that extending the opening hours does not result in an increase in visitors or income at the Coffee Shop and therefore the Council will have to meet the additional cost of weekend opening. This would require to be factored into future budgets for the Town Hall.

8 Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA)

- 8.1** An Equality Impact Screening did not indicate any further action required in relation to any recommendations.

9 Consultation

- 9.1** This report has been consulted on with Finance, Legal and Procurement.

10 Strategic Assessment

- 10.1** The proposals within this report support the following strategic priorities:

- Efficient and effective frontline services that improve the everyday lives of residents.

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Date: 23, August 2020

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Appendix:	None
Background Papers:	Business case for the redevelopment of Clydebank Town Hall – Cultural Committee November 2019 Draft Budget Book 2020/21 – West Dunbartonshire Council November 2019
Wards Affected:	All wards