

THE MINUTES OF THE SHOTTON HALL SUB COMMITTEE
HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, SHOTTON HALL, PETERLEE
ON TUESDAY 20TH JULY 2010

PRESENT: COUN R CURTIS (CHAIR)

Messrs: J Alvey, C Austin, C J Metcalfe, R W
Jones, G Cowie, W M Jeffrey, D Langan & R
Huitson

**MEMBERS WERE REMINDED OF THE NEED TO DISCLOSE ANY
INTEREST PREJUDICIAL OR PERSONAL IN ACCORDANCE
WITH THE CODE OF CONDUCT.**

1. ELECTION OF CHAIR
**RECOMMENDED that Councillor R Curtis be appointed as
Chairman of this Sub Committee for the ensuing year.**

2. ELECTION OF VICE CHAIR
**RECOMMENDED that Councillor C J Metcalfe be appointed
Vice Chairman of this Sub Committee for the ensuing year.**

3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE
Apologies for absence were submitted and accepted on behalf of
Councillors H Bennett, MBE, D & M Milsom,(on holiday), J I
Mearor, (at the Youth Club – Eden Lane).

4. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING HELD ON 9TH FEBRUARY 2010, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member, were accepted.

5. RESOLUTION TO EXCLUDE THE PRESS AND PUBLIC IN VIEW OF THE CONFIDENTIAL NATURE OF THE FOLLOWING ITEMS TO BE DISCUSSED, THE COMMITTEE PASSED THE FORMAL RESOLUTION TO EXCLUDE THE PRESS AND PUBLIC FROM THE MEETING, PURSUANT TO THE PUBLIC BODIES (ADMISSIONS TO MEETINGS) ACT, 1961 & THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985.

6. THE REPORT OF THE FACILITIES MANAGER

The Council Leader explained the reason for the request for this report; the financial climate and changes in government and why he had asked the Team for their thoughts and ideas.

The report of the Facilities Manager was considered under the following headings:-

General Information:

The long standing insurance claim following the theft of lead from our roof and the subsequent water ingress was now complete.

The repair and re-decoration to the external fabric of Shotton Hall is now also complete, as per the quotation of the successful tender applicant, Ray Wood.

The advertising campaign with Yell.com was well underway and was due to be going-live online within a week or so.

RECOMMENDED that the information given, be noted.

Usage:

In an attempt to measure how the current economy was affecting Shotton Hall, the Team had produced to illustrate their findings. The chart showed the number of individual hiring's in the last quarter of

the 2008/2009 financial year compared with the last quarter of the 2009/2010 financial year. This period was historically was always the Banqueting Suites worst time of the year, as people struggle to recover from Christmas and then companies reduce spending as budgets run-out; the Team considered if the current economy was making this time of year even harder.

	Suites (Day)	Suites (Eve)	Meeting Rooms	Total Hirings
Jan 2009	16	8	16	40
Feb 2009	13	10	19	42
Mar2009	20	18	33	71
Jan 2010	11	7	12	30
Feb 2010	15	5	22	42
Mar2010	14	11	15	40

Surprisingly, on the whole, the total number of hiring's in any given month in 09/10 does not differ too much from those of 08/09. The largest and most significant drop over the period of a year was on individual bookings in our Meeting Rooms during the month of March. Indeed, across the board, March 2010 was a poor month. This can be explained partly at least, to local businesses cutting training budgets, holding meetings at the own sites and generally spending less money. This in itself is a major contributing factor in the 26.5% decrease in individual hiring's between, the final quarter of 08/09 and the final quarter of 09/10. What also needed to be considered was that some of Shotton Hall's regular customers, including various departments from Durham County Council were now choosing The Pavilion as their preferred location for informal training days, whereas in 08/09 they would have more than likely have been held here. The need to have a business strategy and to increase promotion for events during the week was agreed.

The above findings are echoed with our wet sales over the bar. Generally, despite the current climate, bar sales had remained reasonably stable. The difference in sales may appear exaggerated to a certain degree, as March 08/09 seems to have been a particularly decent month.

The Facilities Team believed that these figures should be of no great concern. This was a trend that affecting many venues, not just Shotton Hall and was certainly not only having negative affects on this type of business alone. Shotton Hall's diaries for the next two years were filling up nicely and there were still customer's lying-in-wait should dates become available due to cancellations.

In considering this information Members suggested an exercise be carried out to give the average cost of a wedding, and from there consideration be given to if a package deal could be offered to customers.

RECOMMENDED that this course of action be followed and a further report be awaited.

Draught Beer Prices:

Members were asked to further consider the Team's request to increase bar prices on draught beers/lagers and ciders and examples of local pub/private hire prices pint for pint were given. The figures suggested, that Shotton Hall's pricing structure was well below average. However the Banqueting Suites, in terms of a venue; an overall service; staff and the quality of our beers/lagers, as much better than 'average'. Generally, customers expect the bar to be much more expensive than it actually is, and they consider us cheap.

Some Members felt that the prices were far too low; others felt that the Town Council had to be price sensitive.

RECOMMEDED that further consideration of the bar prices be given at the next meeting.

Catering Franchise:

The current catering franchise was now well into its final year and the Team asked that consideration be given to future intentions regarding catering. The options were to operate with the existing strategy of a franchised caterer, or to consider the possibility of a full in-house catering service within the Council including Shotton Hall, The Pavilion, Hill Rigg House and Peterlee Football Supporters Club. The Town Council now had 4 venues and 2 fully fitted kitchens. The

question was asked if employing chefs and catering staff, and generating income, under the Facilities branch now more viable than renting out the kitchen and food sales rights. This was an issue that the Sub Committee felt needed further investigation and consideration.

RECOMMENDED that this matter be considered further at the next meeting of this Sub Committee.

Long-Term Letting of Meeting Rooms 1&2:

Following the recent, disappointing change of circumstance over the proposed relocation of the East Durham Registrars Service to Shotton Hall, every effort was being made to market the availability of rooms for long term hire. A note has been included in the Yell.com advertisement. The Team suggested attaching adhesive stickers to the sides of the Town Councils' vehicles advertising Shotton Hall and in particular, drawing attention to the availability of prestige office space at Shotton Hall and costings for this work were being carried out. Members felt that was a positive suggestion and would await prices. The Facilities Manager reported that he had been approached by Yellow Pages with various advertising web options.

RECOMMENDED the representative be invited to a future meeting to present these advertising and promotion proposals to Members.

Corporate Clothing for Front Line Staff:

Consideration was given to the supply of corporate clothing for front line, reception staff at Shotton Hall. It was noted that this was the only section where corporate clothing was not worn and it was felt that the image portrayed was important.

RECOMMENDED that consideration of this matter be deferred.

Council Chamber Chairs & Tables:

Provision has been made for upgrade of the Council Chamber furniture in our 2010/2011 budget and quotes had been sought for the repair and re-upholster of the green Council Chamber chairs. These chairs were very worn and several are damaged. Three local firms were asked to quote.

Quotes were asked to be given on a 'price per chair' basis, and to involve the stripping of approximately 30 chairs, to strengthen joints and repair where necessary, re-spring and replace fabric with that of a similar quality as existing material (colour to be confirmed). Two of the three companies replied with a written quotation and details were given to the Sub Committee.

In considering the matter Members suggested perhaps the chairs should be renewed and asked if prices could be sought on that basis. Other Members felt that the chairs were suitable and should be re-considered next year

During discussions the Manager advised that he needed to consider the replacement of Banqueting Suites tables. Members commented on the dance floor and comments received from users on the floor.

RECOMMENDED that further prices be obtained for the chairs in the Council Chamber.

7. OUR LADY STAR OF THE SEA

The Manager reported that this school had been rebuilt and there was an opportunity to obtain several items of kitchen equipment that could be used in various venues belonging to the Town Council. He had priced up the items from a trade catalogue and advised that the suggested offer of a maximum of £1,500 for all of the items represented very good value for money.

RECOMMENDED that standing orders be waived as this was a one off opportunity and represented excellent value for money and plenary powers be given for the Manager to agree an offer for the equipment.

8. FUTURE MEETINGS OF THE SHOTTON HALL SUB COMMITTEE

It was agreed that more regular meetings of the Shotton Hall Sub Committee be held.