

LEISURE AND YOUTH POLICY AND REVIEW PANEL

Meeting held on Monday, 5 September 2016 at The Empire, Aldershot at 7.00 pm.

Voting Members

Cllr Liz Corps (Chairman)
Cllr Mrs. D.B. Bedford (Vice-Chairman)

Cllr T.D. Bridgeman
Cllr P.I.C. Crerar
Cllr Sue Dibble
Cllr R.L.G. Dibbs
Cllr J.H. Marsh
Cllr M.L. Sheehan
Cllr L.A. Taylor

9. MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 6th June, 2016 were agreed as a correct record.

It was **NOTED** that a report on the changes at Connaught Leisure Centre would be prepared for the Cabinet meeting on 20th September, 2016.

10. THE EMPIRE

The Panel welcomed Mr. Justin Coll, General Manager of the Empire, who gave an overview of the Empire's working arrangements and activities followed by a tour of the building.

It was noted that the building had been built primarily as a cinema in 1930 and also had a large stage and Compton organ, allowing for a variety of events. The organ had been removed in the 1960's and the cinema was renamed the Odeon Empire in 1964. The Odeon Empire had closed in 1981 when the building had been taken over by a Christian organisation and renamed the Kings Centre. In 2015, a local property company had bought the building and sub leased it for 15 years to PRB Aldershot, which was using the building as an entertainment venue hosting a variety of events.

Since taking over in 2015, PRB Aldershot had installed a large projector, screen and sound system for film showings, installed a bar in the main auditorium and started to redecorate the interior of the building, amongst other things. The first floor had been converted into a Korean restaurant and the top floor had been leased as a Hindu Temple for worship.

Events could be held in the main auditorium, which had a capacity of 800 seated, or 990 standing. Events could also be held in the smaller hall which had a capacity of 150. Events included wedding parties, charity events, private screenings and corporate events. It was noted that both the Police and the NHS had hired the smaller hall for events. The Panel was informed that the size of the venue had been more suited to the larger events hosted within the Nepali community and the venue was booked out, for most weekends, up to the end of the year. A kitchen was located underneath the stage and was used to cater for events.

It was advised that an enquiry had been made regarding installing an original Compton organ, from the Plymouth ABC, at the venue. It was noted that this organ was orchestra ready and had featured on the BBC in its own show. The installation of the organ would provide further scope for events at the venue.

In response to a query, it was noted that only the ground floor of the building had disabled access and the installation of a lift would be costly considering the structure of the building. However, the thick walls did provide excellent sound proofing for the venue. It was also noted that when hosting large events extra staff were employed to manage the large volume of visitors and barriers were erected to stop people walking into the road.

In response to a question about listing the building, it was noted that an application had been made to English Heritage several years earlier but it had been turned down.

Mr. Coll advised that, whilst it was well used, the venue was currently not making much of a profit, as the running costs, particularly the heating costs, were high.

The Chairman thanked Mr. Coll who then gave a tour of the building.

11. **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Panel **NOTED** the current work programme, and were advised that the items on the Leisure Contracts, including the Lido Review, and the Football Clubs had been agreed.

It was **NOTED** that the membership of the Lido Working Group had been confirmed at the last mid cycle meeting of the Panel. The membership for the 2016/17 Municipal Year was confirmed as, the Chairman (Cr Liz Corps) and Crs. A.H. Crawford, A.R. Newell, M.J. Roberts, M.L. Sheehan and B.A. Thomas.

The meeting closed at 8.04 pm.

CLLR LIZ CORPS (CHAIRMAN)
