

Report of:	Meeting	Date	Item no.
Marianne Hesketh, Service Director Performance and Innovation	Overview and Scrutiny Committee	22 October 2018	4

## Performance of Wyre's Theatres – Marine Hall and Thornton Little Theatre

### 1. Purpose of report

- 1.1** To provide an update around the operational performance of the council's entertainment venues – Marine Hall and Thornton Little Theatre, focussing on the improvements and changes that have taken place over the last year.

### 2. Background

- 2.1** The Marine Hall is located on the seafront at Fleetwood next to Marine Gardens. It was built in the 1930's as a seaside theatre entertainment complex. The Marine Hall complex comprises of a theatre and dance hall with adjoining café and bars, entrance foyer and associated offices. The main theatre seats 600. The annual entertainment programme provides a diverse range of shows and events, with top international performers and independent local groups and dance schools using the facilities. The venue is also available for weddings and conferences.
- 2.2** Thornton Little Theatre (TLT) was originally built circa 1930's. It was built as an assembly hall possibly for lectures in conjunction with the adjoining library. TLT seats 200 people. Thornton Little Theatre is a great little venue at the heart of the local community. It hosts all types of events from touring theatre performances to plays by local amateur dramatic companies, live acoustic gigs and family friendly shows.
- 2.3** Following the sudden death of the Head of Leisure, Culture and Tourism back in January 2017, the responsibility for the operation of the theatres was formally transferred to the Commercial Manager, Julia Robinson, following her appointment in August 2017. Overall strategic responsibility sits under the Service Director Performance and Innovation, Marianne Hesketh.

### **3. Key improvements / changes over the last year**

#### **3.1 Income generation and increased levels of business**

A detailed analysis of financial performance at the end of September 2018 compared to performance at the same time last year shows that there has been a better control of expenditure as well as a significant increase in the income generated. Current projections indicate that we are on target to achieve the subsidy level for Marine Hall of £251,000 and £118,000 for TLT. Detailed financial information is available at section 4.

The improvement in income generated has been through general lettings as well as an increase in the number of weddings and other social events such as dinners. There has also been an associated increase in the amount of secondary spend through bars and refreshment services as well as commission from catering and ticket sales.

The programme at both theatres has been restructured, with a reduced number of direct engagements of artistes and an increase in the number of promoters hiring the venues or agreeing to split the box office takings with us instead of a guaranteed fee. This reduces the risk to the council and ensures that the independent promoters have an incentive to ensure a good audience. In addition to this, we now sell marketing packages to the hirers, which has brought in additional income.

The Mount Pavilion in Fleetwood was licensed for wedding ceremonies at the beginning of this year and so far there have been two celebrations held there. Several more are booked in over the next year. Thousands of people have viewed the photographs online and there has been tremendous community support for using the Pavilion for this purpose.

Marine Hall will host a Wedding Open Day in February 2019 to attract more wedding business to Wyre. This will not only showcase the offer at Marine Hall but also the wedding and family celebration offer at Thornton Little Theatre, the Pavilion and also the Civic Centre in Poulton.

Our online engagement through social media has more than doubled in the last year and customer satisfaction has increased with fewer complaints and much more positive feedback.

#### **3.2 Increased focus on Health and Wellbeing activities**

With assistance from Health funding and working in partnership with Healthier Fleetwood as well as other local community groups from across the area, there has been an increased focus on Health and Wellbeing activities at our theatres.

The first Health and Harmony singing group was held at Marine Hall in September 2017 and has just celebrated its one year anniversary. Attendances have regularly reached 80 to 100 people every Tuesday

afternoon in the Waterfront Café Bar. A second group was launched at Thornton Little Theatre in April of this year and numbers are now reaching 40-50 people each Tuesday morning. A third group was set up in Hambleton just a few months ago.

The health funding has covered the cost of hiring the Theatres and the cost of singing 'leaders' to work with the groups as well as a small contribution towards refreshments. The BBC are following the progress of this project as part of their coverage of Healthier Fleetwood.

Healthier Fleetwood has also hired Marine Hall for a number of events such as 'Fleetwood Loves Dancing' (a free event which showcased all the different types of dance that people can participate in) and the 'Tea and Talk' afternoon - as part of World Mental Health Day. They have also hired Marine Hall for the Healthier Fleetwood Annual Christmas Party, which brings together all the different Healthier Fleetwood projects.

Last year, Marine Hall held its first 'One You' event - a Sunday afternoon get together /showcase for all Health and Wellbeing organisations across the area, including not just voluntary and community organisations but also local businesses. The first event attracted over 500 people. We are planning another 'One You' event to build on its success.

The numbers of regular attendees at weekly tea dances at Marine Hall have also increased significantly over the last year.

### **3.3 Staffing**

There is the potential to grow the income further at both theatres but this is limited based on the current staffing capacity. There are currently two posts vacant. One is in the process of being recruited to. The other is being considered in the context of a restructure which should equip the team to deal with an increased level of business in a more efficient and effective way. It is hoped that the restructure will be in place by the end of November 2018.

### **3.4 Policies and Procedures**

The Commercial Manager has worked closely alongside the Theatres team for the last year, reviewing processes and procedures and highlighting areas for improvement. There are clearly challenges around capacity to deliver a growing service. A number of training and development needs have been identified across the team and are being progressed.

An Audit and Risk Management review was completed in May 2018 which also highlighted a number of areas for improvements around the controls in place at Marine Hall. Since the audit, the theatres team has worked closely with the Senior Auditor to ensure the right controls are being implemented.

The following progress has been made:

- Health and Safety team training day
- Personal License Training
- Food Hygiene Training
- Asbestos Awareness Training
- Water Quality /Legionella Training
- Finance meetings to discuss and agree procedures with Audit
- More regular stock takes
- Updates to documents and procedures
- More structured training and induction
- Financial event sheets for each booking showing income and expenditure.

#### 4. Financial Information

##### 4.1 Marine Hall – Operating Income and Expenditure

	2018/19 Budget £	2018/19 Forecast £	2017/18 Actual £
<b>Operating income and expenditure</b>			
Admissions	(35,000)	(35,000)	(32,966)
Kiosk/Café/Bar/Catering	(90,500)	(93,250)	(86,750)
Lettings	(70,000)	(70,000)	(65,871)
Other income	(3,980)	(23,980)	(5,196)
Pantomimes	(7,000)	(7,000)	(8,402)
Weddings	(10,000)	(10,000)	(5,249)
<b>Total income</b>	<b>(216,480)</b>	<b>(239,230)</b>	<b>(204,434)</b>
Staffing	228,530	203,780	218,182
Premises	86,120	90,183	118,943
Vehicle	980	980	1,363
Supplies and Services	84,310	99,839	91,752
Third Party	2,000	2,000	1,732
Recharges	102,420	93,460	95,981
<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>504,360</b>	<b>490,242</b>	<b>527,953</b>
<b>Operating Deficit</b>	<b>287,880</b>	<b>251,012</b>	<b>323,519</b>
<b>Non-operating costs</b>			
Capital charges	181,110	181,110	174,760
Ticket sales for externals	0	0	0
<b>Total cost centre</b>	<b>468,990</b>	<b>432,122</b>	<b>498,279</b>

## 4.2 Thornton Little Theatre – Operating Income and Expenditure

	2018/19 Budget £	2018/19 Forecast £	2017/18 Actual £
<b>Operating income and expenditure</b>			
Admissions	(5,000)	(5,000)	(1,345)
Kiosk/Café/Bar/Catering	(2,200)	(2,200)	(4,282)
Lettings	(40,000)	(40,000)	(35,727)
Other income	(540)	(540)	(3,307)
Pantomimes	0	0	0
Weddings	0	0	0
<b>Total income</b>	<b>(47,740)</b>	<b>(47,740)</b>	<b>(44,661)</b>
Staffing	117,070	117,070	116,913
Premises	21,570	21,570	19,859
Vehicle	0	0	0
Supplies and Services	9,550	9,550	5,920
Third Party	200	200	1,330
Recharges	17,690	17,690	17,162
<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>166,080</b>	<b>166,080</b>	<b>161,183</b>
<b>Operating Deficit</b>	<b>118,340</b>	<b>118,340</b>	<b>116,522</b>
<b>Non-operating costs</b>			
Capital charges	37,410	37,410	37,407
Ticket sales for externals	0	0	0
<b>Total cost centre</b>	<b>155,750</b>	<b>155,750</b>	<b>153,929</b>