

Report to Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Agenda
Item:
A.3

Meeting Date: 15th October 2015
Portfolio: Culture, Health, Leisure and Young People
Key Decision:
Within Policy and
Budget Framework
Public / Private

Title: OLD FIRE STATION
Report of: DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE
Report Number: SD 22/15

Purpose / Summary:

This report will be accompanied by a presentation to Carlisle City Council's Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel on the 15th October 2015.

Together they are intended to give an update and overview of the operation of the Old Fire Station since it's opening in May 2015. They will cover key milestones, successes / challenges, operations and budgetary performance to date.

Recommendations:

The Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel are requested to consider the contents of this report and the presentation delivered at the panel meeting and provide feedback on the programme, operations and performance to date.

Tracking

Executive:	
Overview and Scrutiny:	
Council:	

1. BACKGROUND

The Old Fire Station officially opened on 15th May following completion of the capital development on the 30th April.

The completed new facilities include:

- An entrance foyer and lobby with seating and eating area (home to McGrew's Bistro)
- the Old Engine Room main performance auditorium (divisible to increase available café/bistro space through the week, and to create a range of performance spaces for events)
- Kitchen area and storage facilities for the catering partner
- The Parquet Room performance / event Studio
- The Dormitory performance / event studio
- Upstairs and downstairs male and female / disabled toilet blocks
- Five rentable workshop / office spaces
- A hot desk office for touring companies / road managers
- Two large dressing rooms / green room spaces
- Three private dressing rooms
- Backstage showering facilities
- External equipment storage space

The opening events (a soft launch with live bands as part of Carlisle Music City; and the formal opening event) were very successful with over 800 people attending events or visiting the site for tours during the opening two weekends.

Since the launch the programme has developed at a significant pace and offers a considerable scale and diversity of content. The opening programme to date has included theatre, comedy, jazz, pop / rock, classical music, dance, spoken word, world music, and poetry and literary events.

The building itself has operated as planned with little adaptation required (the only significant alteration to the completed design being the implementation of additional internal acoustic cladding to improve acoustic performance).

Building related operational costs have been broadly in line with estimates with (to date) significant savings on electricity, gas and NNDR offset by slightly higher than anticipated costs on cleaning and waste collection.

Snagging lists have been completed satisfactorily with the contractor with the only outstanding item being the installation of the lift following the liquidation of the original supplier and sub-contractor. This has had a detrimental effect on office lettings and room hire for non-artistic events and the Council will seek compensation to cover this lost income.

2. THE PROGRAMME

In it's opening 5 months the Old Fire Station has presented a varied and balanced programme covering a wide range of genres and a cross section of professional, amateur and community scale events. In total there have been 45 performance and public events with a total attendance of almost 5000 people.

This is purely for the performance and event side of the programme and excludes visitors to the gallery space and exhibitions in the dormitory. We have no formal footfall counter on the gallery space but exit surveys have been conducted by exhibitors which estimate total visitor numbers to exhibitions at approximately 2000 people.

A further 38 performance events have been confirmed extending the programme through until the end of January 2016 and conversations continue with acts and promoters at a local, regional and national level on a daily basis.

The support of key programming partners (Highlights North, Root Music, Cumbria Dance, and Music in the Round – all procured with support from the Arts Council) has ensured a high quality, critically acclaimed programme at an affordable cost. A full break down of past and planned performance events and attendances is provided below:

Performance Events:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Event</u>	<u>Promoter</u>	<u>Numbers Attending</u>	<u>Genre</u>
<u>Past Events</u>				
09/05/2015	CMC	Carlisle City Council	280	Pop Music
15/05/2015	Official Opening	Carlisle City Council	270	Mixed
16/05/2015	Classical Matinee	Carlisle City Council	60	Classical Music
16/05/2015	Little Comets	Carlisle City Council	120	Pop Music
17/05/2015	Children's Comedy	Carlisle City Council	29	Comedy
17/05/2015	Salsa Social	Carlisle City Council	75	Dance
22/05/2015	Inspirational Carpets	Carlisle City Council	270	Pop Music
26/05/2015	Ha HaHadrians Wall	Jon Stewart	40	Comedy
29/05/2015	The Wild Murphy's	Jon Stewart	90	World Music

30/05/2015	CN Comedy	3rd Party	40	Comedy
11/06/2015	Hypnotic Brass Ensemble	Carlisle City Council	77	World Music
12/06/2015	Crime Writing Weekend	Carlisle City Council	300	Literature
16/06/2015	Danny Bhoy	Carlisle City Council	200	Comedy
18/06/2015	Zoe Bestel	Jon Stewart	40	World Music
20/06/2015	Terry Christian	Carlisle City Council	29	Spoken Work
24/06/2015	Richard Rose Rock Night	3rd Party	85	Pop Music
25/06/2015	New Rope String Band	Carlisle City Council	115	Theatre / Music
26/06/2015	The Jeremiahs	3rd Party	120	Folk and Blues
03/07/2015	Kings ov Leon	Jon Stewart	45	Tribute
04/07/2015	CN Comedy	3rd Party	60	Comedy
09/07/2015	Blossoms	Carlisle City Council	80	Pop Music
10/07/2015	Lez Hammersley	Jon Stewart	64	Spoken Word
14/07/2015	John Cooper Clarke	Carlisle City Council	299	Poetry
16/07/2015	Wild Beasts	Carlisle City Council	210	Pop Music
17/07/2015	Andy Fury	Jon Stewart	37	Comedy
18/07/2015	Matt Watson	Jon Stewart	35	Magic
19/07/2015	Kids Comedy Club	Carlisle City Council	45	Childrens
24/07/2015	We Are Quasars	Carlisle City Council	50	Pop Music
25/07/2015	Chicken Licken	Carlisle City Council	92	Theatre/Childrens
26/07/2015	Sunday Sounds	Jon Stewart	20	Jazz
31/07/2015	The Farm/Tommy Scott	Carlisle City Council	49	Pop Music
04/08/2015	New Palace Talkies	Carlisle City Council	22	World Music
08/08/2015	Sunny Ormonde	Carlisle City Council	33	Theatre
14/08/2015	Mark Morris & Chris Helme	Carlisle City Council	75	Pop Music
23/08/2015	Cast	Carlisle City Council	377	Pop Music
28/08/2015	Hugh Cornwell	Carlisle City Council	142	Pop Music
30/08/2015	Kids Comedy Club	Carlisle City Council	80	Childrens
04/09/2015	Edwina Hayes	3rd Party	95	Folk and Blues
05/09/2015	Cumbria Live Comedy Club	3rd Party	220	Comedy
08/09/2015	The Colour of My Voice	Carlisle City Council	60	Theatre
11/09/2015	Hardwicke Circus	Carlisle City Council	140	Pop Music
12/09/2015	Kontiki Suite	Carlisle City Council	120	Pop Music
13/09/2015	The Sherlocks	3rd Party	70	World Music
14/09/2015	Every Brilliant Thing	Carlisle City Council	115	Theatre
18/09/2015	Folk & Blues Club	3rd Party	80	Folk and Blues
Totals			4955	

Future Events

19/09/2015	The Other Half	Carlisle City Council	Theatre
20/09/2015	Youth Zone	3rd Party	Theatre
27/09/2015	Dickens Abridged	Carlisle City Council	Theatre
01/10/2015	The View	Carlisle City Council	Pop Music
02/10/2015	John Emil Montagnino (F&B)	3rd Party	Folk and Blues

03/10/2015	Local Band Day	3rd Party	Pop Music
04/10/2015	Sunday Sounds	Jon Stewart	
08/10/2015	Beryl	Carlisle City Council	
09/10/2015	Mark Chadwick	Carlisle City Council	
10/10/2015	Darren Farley	Carlisle City Council	
11/10/2015	International Guitar Night	3rd Party	
15/10/2015	Tijuna Bibles	3rd Party	
	Folk & Blues Club - Luke		
16/10/2015	Jackson	3rd Party	
	Cumbria Dance -		
18/10/2015	Motionhouse	Carlisle City Council	
21/10/2015	Ensemble 360	Carlisle City Council	
22/10/2015	Matthew Halsall& Orchestra	Carlisle City Council	
23/10/2015	Roger McGough	Carlisle City Council	
24/10/2015	Ferocious Dog	Carlisle City Council	
25/10/2015	My Teacher's a Troll	Carlisle City Council	
27/10/2015	King King	Carlisle City Council	
30/10/2015	Real Time	3rd Party	
31/10/2015	No Soap No Radio	Jon Stewart	
01/11/2015	Kids Comedy Club	Carlisle City Council	
04/11/2015	Strictly Balti	Carlisle City Council	
06/11/2015	The Henry Girls	3rd Party	
07/11/2015	The Parltones	Carlisle City Council	
08/11/2015	Board Game Challenge	3rd Party	
	Skip McDonald & King Size		
12/11/2015	Slim	Carlisle City Council	
13/11/2015	Liz Lochhead	Carlisle City Council	
20/11/2015	Festival of the Spoken Nerd	Carlisle City Council	
26/11/2015	The Chaplins	3rd Party	
27/11/2015	Sean Hughes	Carlisle City Council	
29/11/2015	Lau	Carlisle City Council	
11/12/2015	Vin Garbutt	3rd Party	
12/12/2015	A Christmas Carol	Carlisle City Council	
18/12/2015	Soul City Walkers	3rd Party	
20/12/2015	He Wore a Red Hat	Carlisle City Council	
19/01/2016	Oyster 3	Carlisle City Council	

Exhibitions:

14/05/2015 – 24/05/2015	Morton Photographic Society
01/06/2015 – 31/06/2015	Stephen Lynn (Pop Art)
01/07/2015 – 31/07/2015	Olly Alcock (Paintings)
01/08/2015 – 31/08/2015	This is Eden (Photographs)
01/09/2015 – 12/09/2015	Cumbria Wildlife Trust
24/09/2015 – 27/09/2015	Gallery Number Three (Various art forms)
15/10/2015 – 31/10/2015	Colin Beck (Paintings)
01/11/2015 – 30/11/2015	Gavin Bannister (Wood carvings)
01/12/2015 – 13/12/2015	West Walls Artists (Various art forms)
02/01/2016 – 31/01/2016	Andrew Taylor (Photography)

3. OPERATIONS

The building has operated in accordance with initial proposals. Jon Stewart has enjoyed a successful opening period with McGrew's Bistro and is contributing significantly to the programme. A pop up bar has been added to the facility in the Parquet Room and is used to increase capacity for major events. The food offer through the day has been well received and Jon Stewart is currently developing proposals to increase the offer in the evening (with particular exploration of pre-show meal offers).

A pavement café has been licenced and outdoor seating is now provided on nicer days on the Warwick Street side of the building.

Set up, event management, and take down for performances is being managed by the Arts Development Officer with support from the Contracts and Community Services Team. A bank of casual staff including Event Supervisors have been trained and are deployed directly for smaller scale events.

The City Council have developed a strong programming partnership with Mighty Boof promotions and they have supported the major events (including technical production, stewarding, provision of SIA qualified security staff and negotiations with the acts and agents). This has resulted in significant savings on the casual pay cost code for the arts centre but an increase in the payments to contractors, third party administration fees, and artists fees codes (where Mighty Boof's costs are recorded).

Ticket sales for Carlisle City Council promoted events are handled via three platforms. Through Skiddle for online tickets, at the Tourist Information Centre, and at the Old Fire Station itself. A range of promotional activity has been utilised to increase ticket sales. Most notably the e-voucher scheme with the CN group allows customers to secure 2 for 1 tickets, in return the Old Fire Station receives significant free publicity in CN publications as the offer is promoted. Other 2 for 1 offers and social media competitions have been used to increase sales for slower selling events.

There can be significant variation in events' popularity and no clear patterns are currently emerging in terms of particular genres or high yielding genres. Across all genres some events exceed ticket sales expectations and others perform disappointingly. Promotional (particularly 2 for 1 offers etc) are understandably largely reserved for events where ticket sales are slow.

The development of a customer database and the use of 'Mail-Chimp' to circulate automatic newsletters and event updates to previous customers has significantly boosted sales since coming on line in early September and we are confident this will further bolster the year end ticket sales income.

Ticket sales income is broadly in line with income expectations at this stage of the year, with £21,400 delivered to date against an annual income target of £54,600. There is also a lag in ticket sales feeding through (and a further £6000 of income due and on account), allowing for this we will be almost exactly halfway towards the ticket sales income target at the half way point of the financial year.

All the income received to date has been subject to VAT. The City Council is awaiting on advice from Price Waterhouse Cooper's regarding the implications of applying for Cultural Exemption for ticket sales income at the Old Fire Station (specifically the effect this would have on the Council's partial exemption). If the Council is in a position to apply for cultural exemption for the Old Fire Station it would provide an immediate boost current and future income.

The Old Fire Station's website and social media presence continues to be developed. This year we have received X hits on our website; X hits on Skiddle; we have X followers on Facebook and X on Twitter. Two 'What's On' guides have been published with print runs of 10,000 and distributed across a range of outlets and organisations across Cumbria and Southern Scotland.

Room Bookings have not effectively come in to operation as yet (although a number of internal meetings and a limited number of external meetings and events have been hosted). This is in part due to an initial focus on the event programme but primarily due to a decision not to market and promote this stream of the business actively as yet. This decision has been taken as the lift has not yet been installed and the building therefore not being fully accessible on the first floor. The City Council may consider seeking compensation from the contractor with regards to the lift to cover the lost revenue from room bookings in the opening months.

Four of the five office / workshop spaces are now occupied by tenants and will start generating revenue from quarter 3 of the financial year. The fifth office is being held back for a potential partnership with the University of Cumbria which would see them take the office and a long term block booking on the dormitory for exclusive use and programming as gallery space. The proposal is subject to Arts Council funding and a bid will be submitted in November.

The cleaning of the building is provided via additional hours to the City Council's existing cleaning staff and the service provided is high quality and within budget.

Biffa have been contracted to handle waste disposal on site and collect all waste and recyclables.

4. CUSTOMER FEEDBACK

Customers and Visitors nominated the Old Fire Station in two categories at the recent Carlisle Living Awards (Best Arts Venue / Event; and Culture City). At the actual awards the Old Fire Station surpassed all expectation and went on to win the prestigious and wholly open 'Inspiration' final award.

A formal customer feedback and satisfaction survey was launched in September with results due back in in November.

Informally customer feedback is being monitored via social media.

On Facebook we have 23 reviews and an average venue rating of 4.5 stars out of 5. We have 18 x 5 star ratings, 1 x 4 star, 3 x 3 star, and 1 x 1 star.

Comments on Facebook include:

"Great music venue spot on , great food will recommend."

"Really great venue! Only one thing needed.....real ale!"

"Well done everyone involved in this new venture. A quirky venue and love the stained glass window. Comfortable and friendly place to pop in for a coffee and have lunch and probably an exhibition you can browse. Lots of interesting things happening, definitely offering alternative entertainment to Carlisle in an accessible place close to the main shops and buses. I went last night to see JCK and it was packed so looking good for the city."

"Fantastic to have this venue in Carlisle. Been twice for very different performances. Both worked well."

"A really great venue and relaxed atmosphere. Looking forward to attending future events."

As well as further development of the formal customer satisfaction surveys, in the coming weeks we will also be looking to establish the Old Fire Station of TripAdvisor to gain further customer insight and feedback and promote the programme and venue.

6. BUDGETARY PERFORMANCE

The Old Fire Station is operating on profile for this stage of the year and a full financial break down is provided on the following page. The expenditure and income profiles are understandably different as booking fees and / or deposits are committed well in advance but income (particularly ticket sales income) is not realised until after the events and can be subject to a lag of 1-2 months.

There are significant underspends and overspends noted in the table below, but the net positions for income and expenditure remains on track for budgetary provision.

	Annual Budget	Income / Expenditure (to Date)
<u>Expenditure</u>		
Employers NI	0	123
Employers Pension	0	199
Overtime	0	1554
Special Responsibility Allowance	400	0
Casual Pay	20,100	578
Recruitment Local Advertising	700	0
Internal/Own Training	3,000	393
Planned Premises Repair and Maintenance	35,000	35142
Reactive Premises Repair and Maintenance	28,900	1136
Gas	13,700	3103
Electricity - Small Users	13,200	2888
Climate Change Levy	800	158
NNDR	25,000	18752
Unmeasured Water Charges	2,800	1707
Cleaning Materials	600	473
Cleaning Contract	18,000	4457
Fire Insurance	1,800	1755
Transport and Plant Hire Charges	0	0
Specialist Equipment	15,000	15073
Corporate Hospitality	0	1572
Uniforms and Protective Clothing	1,000	865
Exhibition and Publicity Expenses	20,000	4398
Events & Consultation	0	-679
Non Vehicle Licences	5,000	0
Payments to Contractors and Operators	800	8080
IT Software Licences	1,200	0
Subsistence	0	4740
Public Liability Insurance	3,200	0
Contingency	18,000	740
Artists Fees	86,900	53653
Payment of Consultants Fees	0	661
Third Party Administration Fees	13,800	2000
	<u>328,900</u>	<u>163519</u>
<u>Income</u>		
Grants from Other Bodies	-39,200	-35,393
General Sales	-54,600	-22,339
Sale of Meals and Refreshments	-5,900	0
General Letting Income	-11,600	0
General Rent Income	-3,700	-240
	<u>-115,000</u>	<u>-57,972</u>
Net Position (Income less Expenditure)	<u>213,900</u>	<u>105,547</u>

N.B The annual expenditure and net positiosn above are both inflated by £38,900 of premesis maintenance carry forward from the 2014/15 financial year (this is not recurring revenue provision)

Accommodation & Support Charges	81,500	81,500
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**Appendices
attached to report:**

Note: in compliance with section 100d of the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 the report has been prepared in part from the following papers:

- **None**

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS/RISKS:

Chief Executive's -

Deputy Chief Executive –

Economic Development –

Governance –

Local Environment –

Resources -