

AGENDA MANAGEMENT SHEET

Report Title: Creation of Duty Manager post at The Benn Hall

Name of Committee: Cabinet

Date of Meeting: 4 December 2023

Report Director: Chief Officer - Leisure and Wellbeing

Portfolio: Leisure and Wellbeing

Ward Relevance: All

Prior Consultation: Finance and Human Resources

Contact Officer: Jayne Brannan - The Benn Hall Manager

Public or Private: Public

Report Subject to Call-In: Yes

Report En-Bloc: Yes

Forward Plan: Yes

Corporate Priorities: This report relates to the following priority(ies):
 Rugby is an environmentally sustainable place, where we work together to reduce and mitigate the effects of climate change. (C)
 Rugby has a diverse and resilient economy that benefits and enables opportunities for all residents. (E)
 Residents live healthy, independent lives, with the most vulnerable protected. (HC)
 Rugby Borough Council is a responsible, effective and efficient organisation. (O)
[Corporate Strategy 2021-2024](#)
 This report does not specifically relate to any Council priorities but

Summary: The purpose of this report is to seek approval for the introduction of new staffing resource at The Benn Hall. The resource is needed to ensure the Council delivers The Benn Hall function responsibly and efficiently with appropriate staffing levels to manage its leisure asset. The role will support the Management Team in the safe delivery of functions with appropriate staffing resources to open the venue.

Financial Implications:	The financial implications of adding to the establishment list is proposed to be met through increased income and salary savings through the reduction of the number of casual hours used.
Risk Management Implications:	The current staffing structure enables a set number of hours and provides minimal resilience to staff sickness and holidays. The additional resource will add resilience to the team, preventing staff working continually beyond their contractual hours and also enable further opening of the venue. Non approval of the post will mean the venue will be limited with further growth and low staff resilience.
Environmental Implications:	None arising directly from this report.
Legal Implications:	Section 7 of The Local Government and Housing Act 1989 provides a statutory mandatory obligation in relation to every appointment of staff to paid office or employment of a local authority to appoint on merit.
Equality and Diversity:	None
Options:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Approve the request to establish the role of Duty Manager on to the Council establishment list. 2. Do not approve the creation of a new Duty Manager post.
Recommendation:	<p>IT BE RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL THAT -</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) a new post of Duty Manager be added to the establishment be approved; (2) a temporary staffing budget of £9,083 be introduced for 2023/24 which will be funded from additional income from fees and charges; and (3) a permanent staffing budget of £31,140 be introduced for 2024/25 which will be funded from additional income from fees and charges.
Reasons for Recommendation:	To facilitate and ensure robust business continuity and resilience and quality of service through contracted hours and staff commitment and reduce the reliance upon a currently small structure of core officers.

Cabinet - 4 December 2023

Creation of Duty Manager post at The Benn Hall

Public Report of the Chief Officer - Leisure and Wellbeing

Recommendation:

IT BE RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL THAT -

- (1) the post of Duty Manager be added to the establishment;
- (2) a temporary staffing budget of £9,083 be introduced for 2023/24 which will be funded from additional income from fees and charges; and
- (3) a permanent staffing budget of £31,140 be introduced for 2024/25 which will be funded from additional income from fees and charges be approved.

Executive Summary

The Benn Hall is a civic hall function owned and operated by the council, delivering conferences, seminars, exhibitions, live music, theatre and community events. The council have been operating the venue since bringing the service in-house during 2013.

The service has seen positive growth with increased bookings, bar sales and ticket income and has exceeded pre-pandemic delivery. The venue has continued to develop its reputation and service growth with projected over achievement in revenue income.

The service is also taking 2024 and 2025 with over 60% of 2024 weekends already having bookings in place.

The venue operates on a core staff team of 5 following the establishment of a new part time post approved in 2021.

- The Benn Hall Manager (37hrs)
- Operations Manager (37hrs)
- Bar Manager (20hrs)
- Administrator (20hrs)
- Event & Meeting Assistant (16hrs)

The core team is supported by the utilisation of casual staff, primarily bar staff and occasional casual Duty Manager shifts.

The capacity of the building is therefore dependent on the ability to effectively staff and manage events, and this strain leads to overtime working, additional casual staffing, or a refusal of a booking.

The experienced growth and over achievement of income, places additional pressure on core staffing to ensure all functions are deliverable and the venue remains health and safety compliant and that staff welfare is not adversely affected.

To ensure the continued upward trajectory of the venue, it is proposed to reorganise current casual staffing budgets, and to reprofile the budget expectations for revenue income to establish a Duty Manager post to the establishment list.

The role will allow the continued strategic direction of the service to be managed to be carried out by management staff and avoid an over reliance on the core team to perform operational duties that can be coordinated by a junior management style role. The Duty Manager would be a responsible key holder with access to systems that would not be given to casual staff.

It is therefore imperative to grow the establishment list to enable The Benn Hall to continue driving its revenue income streams above the budgeted targets.

1. Introduction

1.1 The Benn Hall is the Borough Council's civic hall function, providing a wide range of commercial, community and charitable events for the residents of Rugby and surrounding areas.

1.2 The venue has continued to grow since reopening after the Covid pandemic and is experiencing both higher levels of external hire, but also increased attendances.

1.3 In 2023, The Benn Hall has hosted Strictly Come Dancing stars Ian Waite and Vincent Simone, a regular bingo evening, the UKDF Bodybuilding Tournament, theatre show Les Mis performed by Five Star Theatre and an Irish Dance Championship.

1.4 The venue continues to support vital community events such as NHS Blood Donating every month, Warwickshire Air Ambulance, Myton Hospice and Rotary annual events.

1.5 In 2021, Council approved a new part time post to support the continued growth with a 16-hour post for Event and Meeting Assistant. This post has enabled the core management team to continue to drive excellence and focus on the revenue generation of the venue.

1.6 However, with a core of 5 individual staff members, only 2 of which are full time, the staffing resources of the venue are reaching full capacity with regards to the potential occupation and hire of the venue.

1.7 The current staffing structure to deliver the performance and operational objectives consists of 130 hours per week whilst relying on a pool of casual bar staff to operate the bar facility on events:

- The Benn Hall Manager (37hrs)
- Operations Manager (37hrs)
- Bar Manager (20hrs)
- Administrator (20hrs)
- Event & Meeting Assistant (16hrs)

1.8 The Benn Hall has been operating a controlled Box Office service as previously reported with Box Office opening times restricted to 10am to 2pm Tuesday to Friday. This operational decision was to enable key tasks to be carried out whilst not overly restricting when the public can make event enquiries or bookings over the telephone or in person. Online bookings can be made 24/7 where the public are able to do so.

1.9 The Benn Hall has continued to improve its service offer and visual improvements including new projectors, LED screens and sound & lighting equipment. This has reduced the need to hire in external equipment and reduced the strain on the budget accordingly.

1.10 The 2023 and 2024 events calendar sees a high volume of weekends having at least one function, with multiple event bookings also being made. A recent example, in September 2023, The Benn Hall hosted The Carpenters Legacy on Saturday 16 September (3pm to 10pm) and UKDFA Bodybuilding 8am to 9pm on Sunday 17 September. All events and external hires require loading and unloading and the volume of hours exceeds what is publicly visible for an evening event.

1.11 To date, over 60% of weekend days are already booked for **2024**. 34 Saturdays and 31 Sundays already have confirmed bookings. As with 2023 we expect to see occupancy in excess of 80% at the weekend every year at The Benn Hall.

1.12 Whilst the performance of The Benn Hall is positive, the continued growth and future bookings puts ever increasing strain on a small core team to deliver The Benn Hall function. The team operated above contracted capacity to ensure that the operation of the venue continues smoothly, but to support the continued performance, the core team of staff needs to continue to review and grow accordingly.

1.13 The current staffing structure still operates on minimal staff resilience and can be adversely affected through staff sickness and annual leave requirements. The introduction of additional staffing resource will increase the resilience of the structure, but also enable further growth to occur in occupancy. The venue can only operate under health and safety conditions if appropriately trained staff are situated within the building, of which there are a limited number.

3. Duty Manager

- 3.1 To support continued growth and develop business opportunities to work towards being a successful entertainment venue in Rugby, there presents a need to review the staffing structure, utilisation of casual staff and secure committed hours.
- 3.2 Following a review and consideration of potential roles and responsibilities required to continue to deliver the current performance, it is deemed that a 37-hour post is essential to support the specific delivery of private bookings and events.
- 3.3 In previous iterations, The Benn Hall has utilised the role of Duty Manager. This role has been developed over the last 5 years and saw personal and professional development opportunities for existing staff with jobs reevaluated and graded through Human Resources. However, this change in structure has also left a gap at the bottom of the structure, where there is no introductory role to the business.
- 3.4 It is therefore proposed to establish the role of Duty Manager and add it back to the establishment as a junior post, whilst also growing the staffing structure.
- 3.5 A Job Description and Person Specification has been reviewed and revised through Human Resources to ensure it is still applicable.
- 3.6 The Duty Manager role has been evaluated as a Grade C with a salary range of £21,968 - £24,054 per annum for a full time 37 hour per week position. The total cost including National Insurance and pension for mid-point grade C is £31,140 per annum.

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1 The 2023/24 cost of recruiting to this post would be £9,083 if the post is recruited to during December. The post will then provide extra resource to the team resulting in the potential of additional income being made to offset this cost.
- 4.2 The 2024/25 budget will include the full year cost of the post but will be offset by an increase to the income budget of (£31,140) that will form part of the budget setting process for 2024/25.
- 4.3 With the creation of the new Duty Manager post, there will also be a decrease in the reliance and utilisation of casual staff. For 2022/23, the total spend on casual staff was £29,000 against a casual staff budget of £11,000.
- 4.4 In addition to the reduction to casual staff, the new Duty Manager would be trained on Sound and Lighting Technical Support for basic events, reducing the amount spent on external technical support.

- 4.5 With the service growth and the requirements of the touring shows, there has additional requirements for technician support for the operation of equipment. The Duty Manager post would be subject to appropriate training to reduce the requirement and expenditure on external technician costs.
- 4.6 A review of the 2024/25 fees and charges will be carried out to ensure it is made clear that customers can request external technical support above the capacity of the venue and will be subject to appropriate charges.

5. Conclusion

- 5.1 The Benn Hall continues to grow its operations and offer the residents of Rugby a venue to be proud of. It offers residents the opportunity to take part in leisure and cultural activities without leaving the borough.
- 5.2 Following continual review and analysis of business need, it is deemed appropriate to expand the core staff management team and establish the role of Duty Manager with specific responsibility to increase the operational availability of the venue and reduce the reliance upon casual and external staff.
- 5.3 Without the additional role, the venue will be limited to the number of bookings by the sheer volume of hours that staff are physically able to be present and open the building and considerations for the welfare of staff to deliver bookings would need to be further considered.
- 5.4 It is therefore recommended that the establishment of the proposed Duty Manager post be approved.

Name of Meeting: Cabinet

Date of Meeting: 4 December 2023

Subject Matter: Creation of Duty Manager post at The Benn Hall

Originating Department: Leisure and Wellbeing

DO ANY BACKGROUND PAPERS APPLY YES NO

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

Doc No	Title of Document and Hyperlink

The background papers relating to reports on planning applications and which are open to public inspection under Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972, consist of the planning applications, referred to in the reports, and all written responses to consultations made by the Local Planning Authority, in connection with those applications.

Exempt information is contained in the following documents:

Doc No	Relevant Paragraph of Schedule 12A