

OUTSOURCED SERVICES SCRUTINY PANEL

19 OCTOBER 2015

Present: Councillor K Crout (Chair)
Councillor S Counter (Vice-Chair)
Councillors A Joynes, R Martins, S Silver and S Williams

Also present: David Mansfield, Theatre Director
Mike Christofi, Technical and Buildings Manager

Officers: Head of Corporate Strategy and Client Services
Corporate, Leisure & Community Section Head
Democratic Services Manager

17 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/ COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

None were received.

18 DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

There were no disclosures of interest.

19 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 September 2015 were submitted and signed.

20 CONTRACT WITH HQ THEATRES

Following a tour of Watford Colosseum the committee received a report which included contract and performance information and the minutes of the meeting where the HQ Theatre's contract had previously been reviewed. The Head of Corporate Strategy and Client Services introduced the report and asked members for questions.

Councillor Counter enquired whether the KPI's were appropriate, for example the number of dark days, and whether HQ Theatres felt there was anything missing. Mr Mansfield responded that the Colosseum was a receiving venue and much of the programme was dependent upon what was touring and therefore available to present. Figures would vary every year as shows sold different numbers of tickets. He gave an example of Jimmy Carr which had always sold well. However, it was not all about ticket numbers but also having different genres of entertainment for different audiences.

In response to a question from Councillor Williams regarding apprenticeship wages and travel costs Mr Mansfield explained that HQ Theatres adopted the national pay scale. Mr Christofi continued that the apprentice currently employed was paid for every hour they worked and for their travel if they needed to go to meetings in London as part of their role.

Following questions from Councillor Martins, Mr Mansfield explained that competition for the Colosseum varied depending on the programme. As the Colosseum was within the M25 it contractually excluded some touring productions. Some of the shows at the Colosseum also went to Alban Arena in St Albans, however, it was a different type of venue to the Colosseum.

In relation to community hire, Mr Mansfield stated that the Colosseum had commercial and non-commercial rates. Most of the content on the website was for commercial events in order to maximise the programme. There were times of the year when there was a greater amount of commercial product available. At other times of the year it would be quieter so better for community hire. There was some flexibility within the community rate.

The Head of Corporate Strategy and Client Services explained that within HQ Theatre's contract there were some items which allowed for negotiation and for non-commercial hires there was some guidance contained there.

Councillor Martins asked whether there were any facilities within the town which could be improved to help the Colosseum. Mr Mansfield responded that customer expectations were always increasing. Parking was an issue as customers did not want to walk far in order to access the venue.

Councillor Silver commented on the wide variety of content within the programme and enquired how the Colosseum went about attracting a younger audience and whether there was an online/social media strategy. Mr Mansfield explained that different programmes attracted different audiences. They would use social media if the show was targeted at certain audiences. A variety of media outlets were used. When asked, most audience members responded that they saw the show advertised in the brochure. Also, people who booked the tickets were not necessarily those who attended the performances, for example, parents booked tickets for their children.

Responding to a question from Councillor Crout, Mr Mansfield described how despite the recent economic downturn the entertainment sector was doing well. The Colosseum was performing fairly well with a diverse programme but there was scope for improvement.

Mr Mansfield explained that they would be bringing a proposal on their thoughts for the future to the Council in early 2016.

The committee thanked Mr Mansfield and Mr Christofi for their time.

RESOLVED: That the panel note the report.

21

UPDATE ON ACTIONS

Councillor Crout drew the panel's attention to the actions from the previous meeting which were contained in the agenda. It was noted that responses from SLM would be provided at the November meeting of the Outsourced Services Scrutiny Panel.

The panel discussed the planned visit in January to Woodside Leisure Centre for a tour followed by a panel meeting. It was agreed to follow a similar format of starting the tour at 6.30pm followed by the panel meeting at 7.30pm to be held at the Leisure Centre.

RESOLVED: That the update on actions be noted.

Chair

The Meeting started at 7.30 pm
and finished at 8.00 pm