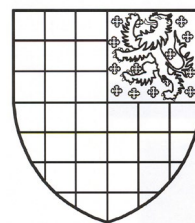


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**LEWES
TOWN
COUNCIL**

MINUTES

of the meeting of the **Malling Community Centre (MCC) Steering Group** held on **Friday 11th June 2021**, online via Zoom meetings, at **11:00am**.

PRESENT Cllrs Dr J Baah; M Bird; S Catlin; J Lamb; M Milner and S Sains

In attendance: S Brigden (*Town Clerk [TC]*); Ms H Roxx (*MCC Manager*); Ms F Willis (*MCC Asst Manager*) and B Courage (*Town Ranger*).

MCCSG2021/01 ELECTION of CHAIR:

Cllr Milner was elected Chair of the Steering Group for the 2021/22 year.

MCCSG2021/02 Appointment of Vice-Chair:

Cllr Sains was appointed Vice-chair of the Steering Group for the 2021/22 year.

MCCSG2021/03 QUESTIONS: There were none.

MCCSG2021/04 APOLOGIES for ABSENCE: Apologies had been received from Cllr Earl, who was on holiday, and Cllr Wood, who had a work commitment.

MCCSG2021/05 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST: There were none

MCCSG2021/06 REMIT of the STEERING GROUP: Members noted the remit of the Group which was set by Council as:

The Malling Community Centre Steering Group is tasked with general strategic oversight of that Centre's operations, meeting ad hoc and formulating recommendations for Council or other committees, functional panels, or working parties as appropriate. This may include scrutiny of current, future and proposed business plans; staff structure and costs; profit and loss; contracting-out; income and expenditure reporting as well as review of booking, operations issues and management plans

MCCSG2021/07 BUSINESS OF THE MEETING:

The Group addressed matters as:

1 *General overview:* TC reviewed the evolution of the project to refurbish the Centre; beginning with the responses to original public consultation on desired facilities and showing the drawings depicting the vision for the wider area and recreation ground, to be funded from planning agreements on development of the North Street Quarter/Phoenix area. For the benefit of Members who had not yet visited the rebuilt Centre there followed a series of photographs depicting the refurbished Centre and the facilities offered, which illustrated how the project had met those requirements as far as practicable. It was noted that the improved space and general amenity value of the building would inevitably alter the usage profiles compared with the previous layout and management model.

TC described the position regarding 'snagging' following the practical completion of building works – photographic examples illustrated some of the elements being addressed. These items were more extensive and complex than indicated in the original list produced at the point of handover by the building contractor. These were progressing steadily, and various sub-contractors were due to visit to complete rectification jobs.

Fire risk assessment had been carried-out and the maximum safe capacity of the spaces was established. Contracts were in place for hygiene services, alarm monitoring *etc* and the ground-source heat pump installation was now accredited with the government Renewable Heat Incentive. This is a financial incentive scheme designed to increase the uptake of renewable heat technologies and reduce

carbon emissions and will return payments to the Council for up to 20 years based upon periodic submission of usage data.

Telephones & data connections were being arranged and the Centre was currently using a mobile number (07708 648028) which would ultimately become the emergency phone. Email was in place and messages could be sent to mallingscentre@lewes-tc.gov.uk. Almost-new office furniture had been obtained free of charge from a charity supplier.

There followed a general discussion on several aspects of the building and prospective operations, including such things as bicycle stands and 'basic' equipment for use by hirers. It was recognized that a new profile of use would emerge once operations commenced.

2 *Prospective re-opening and relaxation of covid-19 restrictions:* TC gave an update on the position regarding allowable events under Covid-19 regulations and noted that it was anticipated that some events should be possible once restrictions eased subject to the government's announcement planned for the 14th June. It was noted that 'headline' information in the media was often not consistent with the actual regulations or government statutory guidance. The appropriate guidance was monitored, and plans adapted as appropriate to any developments in that regard. Re-opening would follow the government programme – anticipated 21st June – although the building would not be fully-equipped. It would be desirable to hold a 'Grand re-opening' to celebrate the project, but this was likely to be later in the year.

3 *Catering:* General licensing was under review as the building had been substantially altered, and it was likely that a new license would be required for all purposes. Specialist advice had been sought as to the practicalities of offering a concession to a professional caterer to equip and operate the café/bar. It was not thought appropriate to allow hirers to use the kitchen, as in the past, and the redesign had anticipated a more professional, managed, service. The facility had been independently assessed as likely to be very attractive to prospective concessionaires, and it should not be necessary to offer a rent-free period in recognition of their initial investment in equipment. It was proposed that a contract be drafted for approval by the Group, with assistance from experienced specialist agents, which could specify requirements for any aspects unique to the Council's policies and overall management of the building. It had been recommended that as the proportions of business rates, utilities consumption *etc* attributable to the café operation were likely to be quite small, an all-inclusive contract was appropriate and this was expected to yield significantly higher income to the Council. When a contract was offered to the market, it should be possible to require a presentation by bidders before a tender was accepted, to assess compatibility with the Council's outlook. The Group agreed the principles of this proposal and work would begin on drafting a contract. Until catering was fully-established at the Centre, small items of equipment for preparing hot and cold beverages (*eg* boiling urns) could be used.

4 *Fees & Charges:* Members considered comparative fees for public rooms and buildings in the area, and there followed a lengthy discussion on an appropriate tariff to reconcile the continuing community focus of the Centre with the acknowledged improvements in facilities that it now offered. The Group also considered a list of previous hirers; the periods hired, the original tariff and the facilities that had been used.

After detailed consideration, it was decided that a fair starting-point would be to copy the tariff offered at the All Saints Centre, with an introductory reduction of 30% applied, and this would be comprehensively reviewed after a year. This would recognize the fact that the Centre would not initially be fully equipped or providing catering facilities, and the profiles of demand and usage would evolve over the first few years.

This tariff was currently, at full rates:

Hourly Rates*

From April 2021

	Main Hall	Small Hall
Mon-Fri to 6pm	£15.00	£10.50
Sat-Sun to 6pm	£22.50	£15.00
Mon-Thurs 6-11pm	£22.50	£15.00
Fri-Sun 6-11pm	£27.00	£17.95

**Not for Profit/
Charity Rate****

Mon-Fri to 6pm	£15.00	£10.50
Sat-Sun to 6pm	£16.75	£11.15
Mon-Thurs 6-11pm	£16.75	£11.15
Fri-Sun 6-11pm	£20.30	£13.30

*Hire fees are subject to annual inflationary increase each April.

**Not for profit organisations may qualify for the discounted hourly rate. Proof of status is required.

5 *Miscellaneous issues:* There followed a general discussion on various general matters before the meeting ended, including signage; principles of hiring by the hour and Value Added Tax, among other things. In answer to a question, TC confirmed that the contract price for the rebuild had not been exceeded, but provisional elements allowing for contingencies had been fully-utilized. Interim payments had been made to the contractors at each milestone subject to validation certificates issued by the Council's managing surveyors, according to the protocol prescribed by the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors. Some Members felt that the contractor should be prepared to disclose their final costs, although TC advised this would be considered commercially-sensitive information.

Members who wished to look around the Centre were asked to contact Hannah or Faye at mallingscentre@lewes-tc.gov.uk or telephone 07708 648028. TC would distribute these details.

MCCSG2021/08

CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS:

It was agreed that council should be asked to note the considerations of the Group and endorse its decisions.

MCCSG2021/09

There being no other business, the Chair declared the meeting closed and thanked everyone for their contribution.

The meeting closed at 12:45pm

Signed

dated