

To: Sport, Leisure and Culture Policy Board

On: 14 May 2015

Report by: Chief Executive

Heading: Completion of Johnstone Town Hall Project

1. Summary

- 1.1. Following a £14.5m construction project, the new Johnstone Town Hall opened its doors to the public on Monday 23rd March 2015, on time and on budget. Under general management of Cultural Services, all co-located services have been re-located to the new building and are now delivering services to local communities. Other co-located services are; Social Work Children and Families Service, Social Work Adult Services, Housing Services, Advice Works and a Customer Service Centre. Our partners Police Scotland and MacMillan Cancer Support are also based in the building
 - 1.2. Throughout the build, Cultural Services kept in contact with local communities through regular focus group meetings, consisting of council officers and community representatives. These meetings helped ensure openness and transparency and provided the opportunity for those communities most likely to use the venue to input to the design and fit out of the community spaces.
 - 1.3. The in-house catering model (as approved by the Sport, Leisure and Culture policy Board, 21st August 2014) is delivering a quality all day cafe service to customers and staff, and plans are well underway to roll out a full banqueting service to customers hiring the venue for events such as wedding receptions, social events and conferences, from Summer this year.
 - 1.4. The new facility has created employment opportunities through creation of catering posts as well as adding to the FTE of existing customer facing and technical staff teams.
 - 1.5. Management of Johnstone Town Hall will transfer to the Leisure Trust on 1st July 2015, while the building will remain a council asset.
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2. Recommendations

- 2.1. It is recommended that the Sport, Leisure and Culture Policy Board note the content of this report.
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3. Background

- 3.1. Under the management of Cultural Services, the new Johnstone Town Hall provides a range of modern community facilities including a library, 300 seat theatre, dance studio, ceremony suite, flexible meeting and conferencing spaces and a full catering service. The building also accommodates several council services including a Customer Service Centre, offices and customer contact rooms for Social Work, Housing and Advice Works staff. In addition Police Scotland also have accommodation within the building and MacMillan Cancer Support delivers a drop in service from specifically designed spaces within the library.
- 3.2. Consultation and communication with local communities has been a priority throughout the project. Cultural Services staff worked closely with existing customers of the old facility to accommodate displaced events and activities within other council venues. The majority of those displaced customers have now returned to the new facility.
- 3.3. Existing customers of the old Johnstone Town Hall were invited to join the Johnstone Town Hall focus group. This group met in Johnstone at least every six months. Membership consisted of representatives from Al-Anon, Campbell Street OAP Club, Christine Aitken Academy of Dance, Johnstone Community Council, Johnstone Phoenix Theatre Group, St. Paul's Drama Group and Renfrewshire Council Officers from Cultural Services and Property Services.
- 3.4. Throughout the build process a temporary library facility was made available to customers in Johnstone town centre.
- 3.5. The new library offers a modern, welcoming and friendly space in which customers can make use of the public PC's and WiFi. Modern kiosks allow customers to issue and self return items, pay library charges and manage their own account. The facility to use these kiosks to pay for other council services will be introduced during 2016/17. Other 21st Century technology includes a touchscreen table available for library customers to download e-books, e-audio books and to view images from the heritage collection. Tablets, within the library, offer access to the library catalogue. MacMillan Cancer Information and Support provides a drop in service from the dedicated space within the library.

- 3.6. Focus group meetings provided the opportunity to up-date the community on the progress of the project and also provided a platform for communities and, crucially, those most likely to be using the new facility, to raise any concerns at an early stage. Information provided by community representatives at these meetings also had a direct influence on the design and layout of the building, in particular with regard to the dance studio and theatre specifications. How the new venue would operate and any cost implications for existing customers was also discussed at focus group meetings. Plans for the in-house catering service and the revised pricing structure were discussed within the forum of the focus group and members were supportive. The last meeting of the focus group took place on 12th March 2015, when group members were given a priority tour of the venue before opening to the public on March 23rd. Focus group members were very enthusiastic and complementary about the new facility and thanked council officers for their work and the continued involvement of the community. A follow up meeting of the group is proposed for autumn 2015 in order to provide feedback on the operation of the building to date.
- 3.7. As part of the community consultation and communication process, priority was given to pre-existing lessees of the old Johnstone Town Hall, and one to one meetings were offered to those existing, displaced customers looking to book the new venue. Pre-existing customers were ultimately accommodated before the diary was opened for general bookings.
- 3.8. Improvements in the new facility include a retractable seating bank in the main hall / theatre, which can accommodate an audience of 264. The electronically operated system allows for quick turnarounds, adding to the flexibility of the space. A tension wire grid system, above the main hall, allows for safe and efficient working for the technical team to rig lighting and sound equipment.
- 3.9. The in-house catering service provides a new strand to Cultural Services and is key to delivering the one-stop-shop service to Johnstone Town Hall customers; particularly those looking for a banqueting service for events such as wedding receptions or conferences. The full banqueting service is not operational but is due to be fully operational by the summer. An all day cafe service is now operating, providing staff and customers with teas, coffees, cakes and snacks. Core opening hours are:
- Monday, Wednesday and Friday 8.00am until 4.00pm
 - Tuesday and Thursday 8.00am until 7.30pm
 - Saturday 9.00am until 4.00pm

In addition to the core opening hours, the service is flexible depending on venue hire demand.

- 3.7 The business model for Johnstone Town Hall has allowed for the creation of posts of Food & Beverage Coordinator and Food & Beverage Assistants. In addition, Cultural Services have reviewed the frontline staff teams to meet the operating requirements of the new building and the needs of customers. Staffing and operational requirements will continue to be monitored and reviewed as the business develops.

Implications of this report

1. Financial Implications

Project completed on time and on budget.

2. HR and Organisational Development Implications

Within existing resources, overtime savings a result of efficiency in working practices and income generation from venue hire.

3. Community Plan/Council Plan Implications

Children and Young People

- To provide and enhance access to cultural and leisure opportunities to support development.

Community Care, Health and Well-being

- A place becomes more attractive when it has a thriving cultural sector, and can provide high quality cultural experiences.

Empowering our Communities

- People's quality of life is improved through participation in leisure and cultural opportunities.

People benefit from the improved condition and usage of community assets and public buildings.

Greener

- The building has achieved a BREEAM (environmental assessment) excellent rating.

Jobs and the Economy

- The new facility has created employment.

Safer and Stronger

- Town centres are safe, attractive and alive by day and night

4. Legal Implications

None.

5. Property/Assets Implications

None.

6. Information Technology Implications

None.

7. Equality and Human Rights Implications

The Recommendations contained within this report have been assessed in relation to their impact on equalities and human rights. No negative impacts on equality groups or potential for infringement of individuals' human rights have been identified arising from the recommendations contained in the report because for example it is for noting only

8. Health and Safety Implications

None.

9. Procurement Implications

None.

10. Risk Implications

None.

11. Privacy Impact

None.

List of Background Papers

None

CE/JL
7 April 2015

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