



To: Executive Councillor for Arts, Sport and Public Places: Councillor Rod Cantrill  
Report by: Head of Arts & Recreation  
Relevant scrutiny committee: Community 11/10/2012 Services Scrutiny Committee  
Wards affected: None

## **CITY CENTRE BOX OFFICE TICKETING SYSTEM**

### **Not a Key Decision**

#### **1. Executive summary**

The Cambridge Corn Exchange Box Office (which also acts as a City Centre Box Office for external clients selling their tickets) currently has a ticketing system that has limited capability for ticket selling, online ticketing, marketing and Customer Relationship Management.

This report is to request permission from Councillors to procure a new Ticketing/CRM system.

#### **2. Recommendations**

The Executive Councillor is recommended:

2.1 To authorise the Head of Arts & Recreation to procure a new ticketing/CRM system for the Cambridge Corn Exchange Box Office.

#### **3. Background**

3.1 The existing Corn Exchange Box Office ticketing system is a software package called Pro Venue Max run by Tickets.com and has been in place since 1997.

3.2 Although various upgrades have been made to the software over the years, it offers limited capability in key areas, most notably: marketing functionality, email marketing; subscription packages (needed e.g. for the Corn Exchange Orchestral series); customer relationship Management? (CRM) and online booking capability. In addition, the

existing software does not currently offer print at home or mobile ticketing.

- 3.3 The current software cannot handle online bookings for the Cambridge Folk Festival due to the complexity of booking combinations. This is currently procured separately and handled by a third party company. The specification for new software would include the ability to bring this functionality in-house.
- 3.4 The Corn Exchange Box office is currently staffed by a Senior Business Manager, 2 x Business Officers and 4 x Business Assistants. The Council's Customer Service Centre is also used to handle non-ticketing related calls.
- 3.5 The procurement of new ticketing software for the Box Office would offer the opportunity for an increased automation of service provision (e.g. by offering a more sophisticated online ticketing service), which as well as offering an enhanced service to customers would allow for a future review of staffing levels.
- 3.6 The Corn Exchange Box Office is also the 'City Centre Box Office' with a sizeable percentage of all tickets bought being for non-Council events. External promoters in the city currently have a choice of city centre box offices, with many choosing to use either the Cambridge Arts Theatre or ADC Theatre to sell their tickets. Investment in a more sophisticated system, particularly with an enhanced online model could result in increased external business for the Box Office and increased revenue.
- 3.7 The proposed procurement will allow for an enhanced customer experience with the Council including an improved CRM system, integration with social media, alternative options on ticketing (e.g. print at home, mobile ticketing) and dynamic ticketing (allowing flexibility of ticket pricing to match customer demand).
- 3.8 The current contract with Tickets.com is set to expire on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2013.
- 3.9 The current market place for Box Office ticketing systems is quite wide with a variety of different technological approaches and business models available to choose from. We propose getting an industry expert to assist in the writing of the specification to ensure that the Council gets best value out of the system as well as a robust model that both meets our existing requirements but that is also 'futureproofed' against likely changing trends in the ticketing sector.

- 3.10 The procurement process will involve James Nightingale, Head of ICT to ensure full compliance with all Council IT requirements.

## 4. Implications

### (a) Financial Implications

The current market place for Box Office ticketing systems is quite wide with a variety of different technological approaches and business models available to choose from. For example, some models will work on a 'per ticket sold' basis; others may license the software. It is therefore not possible to state a contract value at this stage in the process. However we fully intend to work within existing Council budgets for this area and the financial footprint for this procurement is expected to either remain the same or drop.

The specification for the procurement will carry an essential criterion that all public money or monies owed to the Council will be paid directly into the City Council's bank account.

The issue of VAT thresholds has been considered and there are no implications for the City Council.

### (b) Staffing Implications (if not covered in Consultations Section)

The tender will be project managed by the Arts & Recreation Business & Marketing Manager with the support of a project team consisting of officers from procurement, legal, audit, box office, Marketing and ICT. As stated earlier, an external consultant, who will form part of the project team and will also be involved in elements of the evaluation too, will write the specification.

### (c) Equal Opportunities Implications

All tenders shall be dealt with in accordance with the Constitution and shall be subject to a team evaluation. An Equal Qualities Impact Assessment will be undertaken on the tender specification to ensure that the procured software allows full accessibility.

### (d) Environmental Implications

Offering an enhanced automated service from the Corn Exchange Box Office will help reduce environmental impact through:

- An enhanced online service allowing customers greater ease of booking from home
- Reduction of paper ticketing within the box office and a focus on print at home and mobile ticketing.

The procurement will have a +M rating (Medium positive impact).

(e) **Consultation and communication**

Customer market research has already been undertaken and customer requirements from our ticketing system continues to come to us through the Corn Exchange social media channels.

Consultation will be also undertaken with:

- Existing clients of the Box Office
- Box Office staff
- Marketing staff
- Industry experts on Box Office ticketing systems
- Representative from the City Council Legal Team
- Representative from the City Council Accountancy Team
- Representative from the City Council ICT Team

(f) **Community Safety**

All contractors have to meet minimum legal health & safety requirements.

**5. Background papers**

None

**6. Appendices**

None

**7. Inspection of papers**

To inspect the background papers or if you have a query on the report please contact:

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