



To: Executive Councillor for Arts and Recreation  
Report by: Debbie Kaye, Head of Arts & Recreation  
Relevant scrutiny committee: Community Services Scrutiny Committee 14/10/2010  
Wards affected: All Wards

## **CAMBRIDGE CORN EXCHANGE REVIEW**

### **Key decision**

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

On 25th June 2009, the Council approved a report by the Director of Community Services that highlighted recommendations for improvements to the operation and management of the Corn Exchange. Discussion at two officer/member working parties over the autumn period this year has further informed future direction and approach.

#### **2. Recommendations**

2.1 To approve the approach and detailed actions highlighted in section 3.5 of this report relating to governance, management, staffing, programming, marketing, and facility improvement.

#### **3. Background**

3.1 In June 2009 the then Executive Councillor for Arts and Recreation, Councillor Julie Smith, took the following decisions:

- To agree to retain management of the Corn Exchange in-house with operational and efficiency improvements.
- To set up a member/officer working party to consider the detailed recommendations for improvements outlined in appendix 1, section 1.8 of the report.
- To request that the working party draw up an action plan to deliver changes, to be brought back to Community Services Scrutiny Committee for a final Executive Councillor decision.
- To accept the conclusions from the catering review that the daytime café facility is not viable, and to remove the café facility when drawing up the specification for the re tendering of the catering contract.

3.2 The appendix referred to is the report by consultants RGA Ltd, and the recommendations related to governance, management, staffing, programming, marketing, catering and facilities. The RGA report made 36 individual recommendations, some strategic and some relating to operational matters.

3.3 In January 2010, the Council appointed a consultant with extensive experience in the management of cultural venues and activities as the interim Head of Arts and Entertainments. Part of his remit was to review and reflect upon the recommendations of the RGA report and prepare an initial action plan.

3.3 The Council has since restructured its senior management team, and the interim head of service, and the new Head of Arts and Recreation have worked together to propose an approach to deliver short and medium-term service improvement.

3.4 Two working party meetings were arranged<sup>1</sup> for members of Community Services Scrutiny Committee and representatives of other political parties to consider the original recommendations and the views of both the interim and new head of service. The approach now proposed takes into account discussion held at both meetings.

3.5 The recommended approach is outlined below under the original headings suggested by RGA Ltd.

#### 3.5.1 Governance

- In the medium term, the Corn Exchange will continue to be directly managed by the Council
- A Project Management Board comprising the Head of Service, Director of Customer and Community Services and the Executive Councillor for Arts and Recreation will be established to oversee service improvements, set targets and monitor performance
- A Performance Advisory Panel comprising elected members, officers and possibly external expertise will be established to enable oversight of cultural activity in relation to the Corn Exchange, and other arts venues grant aided by the council
- Strategic relationships with organisations such as Arts Council East, and important local providers will be strengthened and others explored
- Ongoing work on the Council's arts strategy will consider the role and direction of future cultural activity at the Corn Exchange

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<sup>1</sup> 6<sup>th</sup> September 2010 and 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2010  
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### 3.5.2 Management

- The Corn Exchange and Guildhall Hall's operations will be run as a stand-alone business unit within the arts and recreation service. The new in-house management structure will be identified as part of a restructure of the arts and recreation service.
- The restructure proposals will be brought forward under the Council's management of change policy in November 2010. It is anticipated that full implementation will be completed by July 2011.
- A clear and strategic three-year business plan with SMART income targets will be produced, overseen by the project management board
- Clearer arrangements for financial management will be put in place. Cost centre management will be reviewed and a profit and loss account developed that directly links to the Council's accountancy system.

### 3.5.3 Staffing

- The new structure will focus on delivering improvements throughout the Corn Exchange and Guildhall Halls business; also strengthening line management arrangements and creating service teams across the arts and recreation section.
- The restructure will provide for specialism where this is needed, consider combined functions where this is beneficial to the business, and highlight opportunities for better investment in people
- The restructure process will consider opportunities for efficiencies, as well as service improvements.

### 3.5.4 Programming and marketing.

- A vision for programming policy will be developed
- This will be informed by research into audience development and improved strategic relationships with other providers and partners.
- The new policy will focus on improving the business, retaining quality and diversity, and a refreshed approach to marketing and branding.
- The project management board, in conjunction with the programme advisory panel, will oversee programming policy.

### 3.5.5 Catering

Recommendations in the June 2009 scrutiny report to withdraw daytime catering arrangements have already been fully implemented and other major improvements to the bar area made.

### 3.5.6 Facilities

- A comprehensive asset management and improvement plan will be prepared for both the Corn Exchange and the Guildhall Halls.
- The business plan will consider how investment in routine and major capital improvements (for example, to air quality, sound and lighting

systems, also an energy audit) can be delivered in the short, medium and longer term

- The Council will consider how strategic relationships and/or partnerships can potentially contribute to facility improvements

### 3.5.7 Timescales

- The review of the Corn Exchange will be implemented in a two phases over 2.5 years.
- Phase 1 will deliver organisational and financial restructure and will be completed by the summer of 2011.
- Phase 2 will focus on improved service delivery and performance and will be completed by March 2013

## 4. Implications

### 4.1 Financial

It is expected that the restructure will deliver savings. However, it is not possible to quantify an exact amount at this stage

### 4.2 Staffing

The restructure will follow the council's management of change policy. Staff will be briefed on the approach and the policy in early October. Early engagement with both Unison and GMB unions has taken place.

### 4.3 Equal Opportunities

The final restructure proposals will be informed by an equality impact assessment

### 4.4 Environmental

An energy audit is identified as a priority within the three-year business plan

### 4.5 Community Safety

There are no community safety implications

## 5. Background papers

The following background papers were used in preparing this report:

- Review of the Cambridge Corn Exchange (June 2009): Richard Gerald Associates Ltd (RGA)  
[http://www.cambridge.gov.uk/public/councillors/agenda/2009/0625cs/18\\_1.pdf](http://www.cambridge.gov.uk/public/councillors/agenda/2009/0625cs/18_1.pdf)
- Corn Exchange Review Report (June 2009): Liz Bisset, Director of Community Services  
<http://www.cambridge.gov.uk/public/councillors/agenda/2009/0625cs/18.pdf>
- Minutes of Community Services Scrutiny Committee (June 2009)  
<http://www.cambridge.gov.uk/public/councillors/minutes/2009/0625CS.pdf>
- Feedback from working group meetings

## **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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