

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

Agenda Item No. 9

meeting date: 10th MARCH 2020
title: PLATFORM GALLERY AND VISITOR INFORMATION CENTRE – SUNDAY
OPENING
submitted by: JOHN HEAP, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES
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MANAGER

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To inform Committee about Sunday opening of the Platform Gallery and Visitor Information Centre (Gallery/VIC) during the summer period and determine if this arrangement should continue.
- 1.2 Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities:
 - **Community Objectives** – To encourage economic development throughout the Borough with a specific focus on Tourism.
 - **Corporate Priorities** – to ensure a well-managed Council, providing efficient services through identifying customer need and maximising use of resources.
 - **Other Considerations** – none identified.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Platform Gallery is normally open every week from Monday to Friday (10am to 5.00pm) and Saturday (10am to 4.30pm). Additionally, during December, the facility has also opened on Sundays (11am to 4.00pm) in the run up to Christmas, as this is traditionally a busy period and customer sales have supported Sunday opening during previous years.
- 2.2 Sunday opening over the summer was first introduced in 2015, when it was available to the general public for a period spanning May-August (11am-4pm). In keeping with the normal operating procedures two members of staff are required to operate the facility on a rota basis, with at least one of these being a permanent employee.
- 2.3 The original idea behind the decision to open on a Sunday was to contribute to the Town as a destination for Sunday visits. It was hoped that some of the shops that traditionally closed would follow suit, although it is acknowledged that for some being family businesses, a Sunday is their only chance to get a weekend day off.

3 ISSUES

- 3.1 Visits and income generation on Sunday's are lower than the rest of the week, this has been consistently the case since the site was first opened on a Sunday in 2015. This is largely due to the limited retail offer to attract people to the town on a Sunday, which has not grown as hoped over the past 4 years. Visitors have generally have sought information about places of interest, and walking/cycling related enquiries, plus a small number of purchases.
- 3.2 Opening on Sundays during the summer months is more costly than other days of the week, in terms of income against expenditure. And other than a few days which

coincide with other events such as Art Walks or Craft Fairs, numbers visiting and income generated is significantly below other days of the week.

4 RISK ASSESSMENT

The approval of this report may have the following implications:-

- 4.1 Resources** – The working arrangement involves all permanent staff sharing Sunday working on a contracted rota basis, this means each of the 5 permanent members of staff contributed towards the additional opening times. In addition; the availability of four casual members of staff enabled the Sunday opening to operate smoothly. The expenditure attached to staff covering Sunday opening times was £3573 in 2019.
The gross income generated over the 17 occasions that the Gallery opened was £2083 and the net income with the artist share and VAT deducted was £837.
- 4.2 Technical, Environmental, Legal** – None identified
- 4.3 Political** – None identified
- 4.4 Reputation** - Additional opening may enhance the Council's reputation by assisting visitors, especially those who are not familiar with the area. However, this also needs to be considered in the context of the Council demonstrating cost effectiveness in utilisation of resources, and the extent to which customer need exists in supporting Sunday opening.

Equality and Diversity - Service provision is available to everyone

5 RECOMMENDED THAT

- 5.1 Committee considers whether to continue the Sunday opening of the Gallery.

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Ref: Community Services Committee 1.10.16 Colin Winterbottom /IW