

## Town Clerk's Report to The Watermark Committee

January 2021

### **Current Situation**

All coffee shop and catering in The Watermark ceased again on 24 December. No other activity is taking place with the exception of:

Exempt activity – eg education, health care, court mandated contact sessions

Library access – libraries are allowed to operate limited services

This activity is now greatly limited due to the rules of this lockdown and other impacts such as the cancellation of exams.

All Watermark staff have been flexibly furloughed. Supervisors are working sporadically to facilitate the above and carry out other tasks around the building such as safety checks and administration related to postponed and future activity.

Short date stock continues to be donated to the Food Bank wherever possible, or we have offered click and collect discounted sales on short dated non-Food Bank items such as alcohol.

Top floor tenants are still working where homeworking is not possible, and so a level of heat and a suitable cleaning regime are in place.

### **Financial results to Month 9**

The figures demonstrate how we have worked to minimise the expenditure in The Watermark as much as possible and this will continue.

Thankfully this commitment has kept our deficit under control and we look like we are on track to be significantly under the £140k deficit we first feared.

We received a £2668 Local Restriction Support Grant via South Hams District Council in respect of the November lockdown in December 2020.

The salary figures include the Job Retention Scheme (Furlough) claims and reflect our ongoing commitment to staff by making up the wages, as well as pension and National Insurance as is required by the scheme.

Following our application to the 'BFI Culture Recovery Fund for Independent Cinemas in England' for a Business Sustainability Grant, we have been awarded £6413. This is yet to be received and so is not shown yet. This is to support our expenditure on the keeping the cinema ready to reopen as soon as we can. At the time of application this was estimated to be February. There is now another round of funding available which will be investigated due to the ongoing situation meaning reopening will be later than planned.

A claim for the Local Restrictions Support Grant (for open businesses) Scheme is to be submitted but it is not known how much we would qualify for yet. This scheme to support those open, but restricted by Covid-19 rules.

### **Future plans**

The coffee shop will most likely be the first area to reopen. However, we will have to balance rules and public confidence to pick a time that is right for financial viability. With the furlough scheme extended to 31 April 2021, there is some support there to help ensure we get the balance right.

It is increasingly looking like live events will be challenging for some time, but we will continue to monitor predictions, industry best practice and plan as best we can.

Cinema should be more achievable and sustainable once rules allow and the content is available to show. Again there could be as little as a 2 week turn around to get things up and running again when the circumstances are right.

### **Staffing**

Due to the re-lockdown, recruitment has not commenced for a Watermark Manager as they are not needed at present and also offers us the opportunity to reduce expenditure in the short term.

The three supervisors are covering the day to day excellently and I am available to them when a decision needs to be made. They will also be the best people to get the building open again when the time comes. Given any reopening will be gradual, that will give us time to recruit at that point.

Jonathan Parsons

Town Clerk