

## Town Clerk's Report to The Watermark Committee

March 2021

### **Current Situation**

As previously advised, all coffee shop and catering in The Watermark ceased on 24 December 2020. 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 and Census 2021 support

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. The Finance Officer has experienced reduced workloads due to the closure of The Watermark and so is covering too, further minimising when supervisors are needed to work.

Short date stock continues to be donated to the Food Bank wherever possible.

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 10**

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

We have received a further grant from the Local Restrictions Grant for the lockdown to 16 February, which totalled about £15,000. We are due a further payment to take us to the end of March. This could be another £4,192 (to be confirmed). There are other smaller items such as the annual licence fee being refunded.

We have also applied to the second round of the 'BFI Culture Recovery Fund for Independent Cinemas in England', but this will be for the period from April to June 2021.

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.

### **Future plans**

The coffee shop and cinema are allowed to reopen fully on 17 May 2021 (coffee shop could operate outdoors only from 17 April 2021.)

However, there are other factors other than lifting of restrictions to take into account such as:

- Public confidence/level of custom
- Film availability for the cinema
- Changes to distancing rules making them more or less constrained
- Continuation of the availability of furlough scheme and other grants

Indoor entertainment events seem to be a way off still, so the focus will be on room hire for organised meetings, coffee shop and cinema.

The situation and guidance will be monitored and a business based decision on reopening should be made by the Town Clerk due to the ever-changing situation.

### **Staffing**

One team member is now on Maternity Leave. All other team members are ready to return when allowed.

### **Ticketsolve Box Office Contract**

The box office software and online booking system was a 3 year contract which ends this month.

The contact is based on a per ticket fee, with an annual minimum charge. Ticketsolve have renegotiated this year's minimum payment in our favour.

However, it would not be beneficial to renegotiate a long term contract at the moment as there is no capacity to specify and go out to quotes or tenders and no certainty as to future operating requirements. We have however renegotiated a one year contract extension on significantly better terms than we have now. This will tide us over until a full assessment of our needs and requirements for a box office system can be identified later this year for a new contract to be in place in March 2022.

It is **recommended** that the Committee delegate the decision on a reopening plan and the dates of that reopening to the Town Clerk.

It is **recommended** that the Committee agree to extend the Ticketsolve contract by one year on the new improved terms.

Jonathan Parsons

Town Clerk