

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL
REPORT TO COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

DECISION

Agenda Item No. 5

meeting date: TUESDAY, 11 OCTOBER 2016
title: SUNDAY OPENING AT PLATFORM GALLERY AND VISITOR INFORMATION CENTRE
submitted by: JOHN HEAP, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES
principal author: COLIN WINTERBOTTOM
COMMUNITY LEISURE AND SPORTS DEVELOPMENT MANAGER

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To inform about the impact of summer Sunday opening at the Platform Gallery and Visitor Information Centre (Gallery/VIC).
- 1.2 To request a decision as to whether summer Sunday opening should continue in 2017-18, based upon the information contained in this report.
- 1.3 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). In addition 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 over previous years.
- 2.2 It was decided by Community Services Committee that the facility should open for on a Sunday spanning the summer period, to determine if there is a need for visitor information and any interest in the Gallery exhibition / shop service.
- 2.3 Sunday opening over the summer was first introduced last year (2015-16), when it was available to the general public from 3 May-30 August 2015 (11am-4pm). Two members of staff were available on each occasion. Committee decided to continue opening the facility over the same period this year and, on completion, to evaluate how effective it has been.

3 ISSUES

- 3.1 The number of visitors recorded over the 18 occasions that the Gallery/VIC opened to members of the public on Sundays over the summer period during 2015 was 1,578, an average of 87 per Sunday.
- 3.2 The number of visitors was recorded over the 16 occasions that figures were counted; (the infra-red counter did not provide figures on 2 occasions due to a malfunction of the equipment). Over a similar period this year the number was 993, an average of 62 per Sunday. By far the highest number of visitors (164) was recorded on Sunday 1 May, the bank holiday weekend. However, the Sunday of the weekend prior to the late May bank holiday recorded only 63, and the late August bank holiday weekend recorded 75. A similar figure (66) was recorded on the Sunday

of the Food Festival, so there is no consistent evidence to suggest visitor numbers increase over the weekends of bank holidays or special events.

- 3.3 The working arrangement involved all permanent staff sharing Sunday working on a contracted rota basis; this meant that each of the 5 staff contributed towards the additional opening times. The involvement of all the permanent staff, and availability of casual staffing, enabled the Sunday opening to operate smoothly.
- 3.4 Feedback from staff indicated that the majority of visitors sought information rather than purchases or to spend time at the facility, and this is supported by the modest level of sales that were generated, compared with Saturdays.
- 3.5 The retail offer in Clitheroe on a Sunday is minimal and there has been no change to this situation since the Platform Gallery began opening two years ago. There are cafes and bars but very few other shops open and the main function of the Gallery is to signpost visitors to places of interest in the Borough, this is particularly requested by walkers and cyclists. However, there have also been occasions when people have specifically visited to purchase something from the shop/exhibition because they have not been able to visit during the week.

4 RISK ASSESSMENT

4.1 The approval of this report may have the following implications;-

- Resources – The staffing cost implications of opening on Sundays on 18 occasions over the 4 month period incurred expenditure of £1982.27. There is also heating and lighting expenditure and promotional costs attached to on site and media advertising.

The income generation in terms of gross sales totalled £1,120. The net income to the Authority on all Sales was £557 (£475 being the artist share and £88 VAT).

- Technical, Environmental, Legal – None identified.
- Political – None identified.
- 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 COMMITTEE

5.1 Consider the visitor figures over the period of Sunday opening this year and determine if it is an initiative that you wish to see operate in 2017.

COLIN WINTERBOTTOM
LEISURE AND SPORTS
DEVELOPMENT MANAGER

JOHN HEAP
DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES

For further information, please contact Colin Winterbottom 01200 414588