

## G Live Annual Report Presentation meeting Thursday 29 November 2018 at 14:00

### Present;

From GBC:

Cllr Nikki Nelson-Smith (NNS)

Cllr Matthew Sarti (MS)

Cllr Tony Phillips (TP)

Peter O'Connell (POC)

Jonathan Sewell (JS)

Charlotte Cox (CC)

From HQ Theatres;

Alvin Hargreaves (AH)

Derek Aldridge (DA)

ITEM		ACTION
<b>1.0</b>	<b>Apologies for absence</b>	
1.1	Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Nils Christiansen, Cllr Pauline Searle and Kevin Hopkins (GBC).	<b>Info</b>
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Presentation of the Annual Report by Alvin Hargreaves</b>	
2.1	AH began by welcoming everyone to the meeting and introducing Derek Aldridge, who will be starting on 7 January 2019 as Venue Director.  AH provided an overview of HQT and G Live's staffing structure and then went on to explain the contents of the Annual Report, which builds on the reporting that is discussed on a monthly basis with GBC. The Annual Report sets out G Live's performance for contract year seven (covering 1 <sup>st</sup> October 2017 to 30 September 2018).	<b>Info</b>
2.2	<b>Programme</b> AH first provided an overview to the programme for the period. There were 423 performances and events in the main hall, which is 60% higher than the Key Performance Indicator (KPI) of 265. It is important to recognise that when the KPI's were set in 2010, they were based on industry knowledge at the time and using other venues as a benchmark, however it is difficult to predict how a new venue like G Live would evolve. G Live is very reliant on the product that is available i.e. it cannot control or create the product. It is therefore reactive to the market and to what is touring. This is not something that could be predicted at the time the KPI's were set. AH explained that G Live is different to traditional theatres and so the programming is typically more varied as a result. AH highlighted the various performances that take place at the venue (refer to pages 8 and 9 of the Annual Report); from family shows, such as Pepper Pig to classical music concerts e.g. St Petersburg Orchestra. Comedy is also a continuing success, with acts such as Sarah Millican and Jimmy Carr. Music continues to be the mainstay of G Live's programme, with a number of highlights including performances from Tom Jones, Marc Almond and The Stranglers. The number of Main hall community events was also at its highest	<b>Info</b>

	<p>yet, with 173 in total, which is 158 more than the KPI of 15. Hillsong Church takes up a large percentage of these, however other events include school concerts, prize giving and graduations as well as Police dog training and Boogie Pumps (see page 9 for full list of community events). AH feels the venue works well in terms of being able to offer a good commercial/ community mix. This might not have been achieved if the venue was different i.e. if it had fixed seating. AH responded to a question about meet and greet events and confirmed that these are not classed as an event as only the event itself is counted.</p> <p>AH then went on to summarise the Studio and Glass room activity (information can be found on page 10), with a record 1,194 performances taking place in total. AH explained that the flexibility of these spaces allow HQT to host various events and activities which means that G Live is able to cater for many different audiences. The location of the rooms within the building also means that they are fairly visible to the high street.</p> <p>AH reported that there were 67 dark days which is slightly up against last year but still a strong figure (a significant improvement against the KPI target of 80).</p>	
2.3	<p>Main hall attendances were also at their highest ever at 246,492 which is 15,965 up against last year and 85,235 higher than the KPI. AH was asked whether the increase in attendances was down to new customers or whether it was returning customers. AH believes it to be a mixture and is happy to analyse the figures further if required. The meeting referred to the graph on page 23 of the Annual Report where it shows the steady increase of G Live's 'active customers' over the years. 98% of survey respondents rated their access to information about shows and events as Very Good or Good.</p>	<b>Info</b>
2.4	<p>Each contract between the operator and promotor is different and the arrangements relating to when and where the same performances can be performed at other venues is agreed. The arrangements vary depending on the level of demand and the type of performance which will impact various factors such as customer travel time/ distance.</p> <p>AH/ DA explained that it is in everyone's interest to ensure the performances are appropriately situated and diarised so that it is a success and any potential future bookings are not impacted.</p> <p>AH was asked whether the venues communicate with one another. AH confirmed that HQT do and that they are aware of the programming at other venues such as Woking. AH commented that each HQT site programme is established locally at the site, rather than other operators who tend to dictate the programme from head office such as ATG.</p>	<b>Info</b>
2.5	<p>The meeting agreed that customers generally tend to go wherever their act is showing rather than being loyal to that venue and choosing from what is available there. The meeting discussed the change in accessibility to music and viewing performances online and how this could impact on entertainment venues. Although this is the case, there is still very much a need for live entertainment and the many enjoy having the opportunity to 'be there' rather than listening/ watching via a device. DA referred to the increasing popularity of Podcasts and YouTube videos but how there is a large demand for being able to meet/greet and be in the presence of the</p>	<b>Info</b>

	Podcaster/blogger. DA is looking forward to seeing how this can be achieved at G Live but outlined the importance of getting the offering right so that it is a success.	
2.6	<p><b>Hospitality</b></p> <p>AH then went on to summarise the significant work that has been put in to improve the hospitality provision at G Live. HQT wants G Live to be seen as not just an alternative place to eat but to show that it would add to the overall theatre experience. New menus have been rolled out and have been linked with the brochures and website. The pre- dining mobile application is also continuing to be a success; HQT is now looking at the next stage, which is to provide a service of delivering drinks to customers in their seats. HQT has also put a lot of work in to improving its banqueting offering and have looked at a variety of things such as the menu (to ensure it is suitable for large numbers) and also the interaction with the hirers whereby they can meet prior and agree the dining arrangements, timings and quantities. They would also discuss other factors such as lighting and music, all of which contribute to the overall success and enjoyment of an event. AH confirmed that G Live have maintained their 5 star hygiene rating.</p>	<b>Info</b>
2.7	<p><b>Sustainability</b></p> <p>AH then went on to explain what HQT have been doing as part of their commitment to sustainability (ref. pages 12 and 13 of the Annual Report). This has been applied to all sites, but is specifically tailored to suit each venue. The councillors shared their appreciation of what HQT are doing. AH was asked how easy this has been to do and how other businesses could be encouraged to follow suit. AH commented that HQT wanted to be pro-active rather than taking action following comments from customers. HQT is willing to share their practices with other businesses if this might help others. AH added that HQT may have some advantages over smaller business such as purchasing power. This may impact on businesses decisions if it is not financially viable for them to make certain changes.</p>	<b>Info</b>
2.8	<p><b>Customer satisfaction</b></p> <p>AH then went on to present the customer satisfaction scores for the period (see page 20 of the Annual Report). AH is pleased to report that customer satisfaction for 2017/18 has remained consistently high, at 98% of customers rating 'the enjoyment / quality of the event/ performance' as very good or good. 95% of customers believe the 'facilities at the venue' are very good or good, with 93% of customers considering the 'Staff service and Ease of booking/ access to information' to be very good or good.</p> <p>The meeting discussed the 'quality of the catering and hospitality' scores, of which 66% of customers considered this to be very good or good. AH/DA expect this score to increase following the significant amount of work that has been put in to this area (as discussed earlier in the meeting). It is important to recognise however that catering and hospitality is not the primary reason for the visit although it is an important element of the business. It was agreed that this figure requires looking in to further as the score reflects a range of aspects including queuing times, drink prices and service during peak periods such as short intervals and the rush immediately prior to a show. Customers are always more likely to score these areas lower than perhaps the quality of the show, AH recognises that these are</p>	<b>Info</b>

	important and HQT have been looking at various other areas that could be introduced to speed up service at the busiest times, such as installing a draught beer point at the Front of House Café-Bar in order to alleviate queuing and therefore waiting times. Other aspects are also looked at on an ongoing basis, such as staffing levels and structure, number of tills, technology etc.	
2.9	<p><b>Customer service</b></p> <p>AH provided an overview to the Four pillars training programme (see pages 20 and 21 of the Annual Report), which is has recently been introduced and looks at various aspects of customer service such as personalised customer interaction and product knowledge. AH is really pleased with how successful this programme has been so far and that it has been very well received by staff. AH recognises the importance of investing in staff and how having a strong culture with happy staff will have a positive effect on customers and therefore their enjoyment and likelihood of returning and speaking positively about the venue to others. Although G Live is heavily reliant on casual staff, by investing in these staff and providing them with good quality training, they are more likely to return and develop their career with their employer.</p>	<b>Info</b>
2.10	When questioned about page 29 of the Annual Report where it stated 80% of customers felt the 'ticket value for money' was very good or good, AH/DA stated they are pleased that 80% of their customers feel this. AH added that the producer will not under-price and that generally HQT have limited control over the ticket price.	<b>Info</b>
2.11	<p><b>Creative Learning</b></p> <p>AH then took the meeting through the Creative Learning section of the report (page 14). AH is pleased with last year's performance but is also looking forward to seeing what the new Creative Learning Manager, Fiona Moon, will deliver. AH referred to the various activities that have taken place in year 7 and the schools partnership programme with Gosden House School. The creative industry week continues to prove a success, with students able to spend time in various departments and learn about the industry. AH explained that creative learning also looks at tackling various local authority objectives, such as the loneliness agenda, adult social care and ageing population. The meeting shared their views and experiences of projects that have been looking at integrating the young and old and how positive exercises like this can be for both participants. AH is currently looking at improving the access for ticketing for those that require a companion. This is on trial currently, however it is things like this that HQT want to improve as much as possible so that the venue is accessible as possible to the broadest cross-section of the community regardless of their access requirements. .</p>	<b>Info</b>
2.12	<p><b>Finance</b></p> <p>Page 18 of the Annual Report looks at G Live's financial performance - G Live's overall profit was its highest yet, at £315,440 of which the Council's 20% share will be £63,088. G Live's subsidy per attendee and subsidy per population have reduced as a result. AH is pleased with the financial performance and now feels HQT generates a reasonable level of return from a commercial perspective. AH was asked if HQT expects these figures to continue to grow in a linear fashion. AH responded by referring to external factors that could affect HQT's</p>	<b>Info</b>

	<p>financial performance, such as rising utility costs and the increased national living wage. HQT is also reliant on the availability of what is touring. Maintenance costs will also increase as the building (and plant &amp; equipment) ages. AH does recognise the opportunities for growth, such as the improvement of hospitality and believes the investment through staff via their training will also impact on the business (as discussed earlier). AH has been looking at the budgets for 2019/20 where the growth target will be between 5 and 10 %.</p>	
<b>3.0</b>	<b>AOB / Any further questions</b>	
3.1	<p>POC asked whether G Live is constrained in any way and whether the Council could assist. AH commented that GBC is engaged and HQT/GBC meet regularly as required. There has always been a good channel of communication since the beginning and so AH does not have any concerns or requests. AH has been in conversation with GBC recently about potentially arranging for their utilities to be organised differently to take advantage of possibly lower rates through a local government purchasing scheme.</p>	<b>Info</b>
3.2	<p>AH was asked what the biggest challenge ahead is. AH believes the last 6 months have been particularly challenging following various staff re-structuring, however AH looks forward to the venue settling down following these changes. This will also be made smoother with Derek Aldridge in post. AH will be looking at the programme and ensuring it maintains momentum so that it is not impacted by previous months.</p> <p>AH has already seen the hospitality offering improve and referred to a recent event (Surrey Property Awards Dinner) whereby 400 people attended and were catered for and there were no reported issues and the service ran smoothly. AH wishes to build on this so that this area can achieve its potential, particularly at this time of uncertainty. The meeting briefly discussed the potential impacts BREXIT may have in relation to disposable income and all aspects of labour and programme availability.</p>	<b>Info</b>
3.3	<p>AH was asked about the new curtains. AH confirmed that these will allow some of the performances to be better presented and will improve the aesthetics generally. Although the opportunity for diversity of operation will not be greatly increased, the new curtain does present some creative opportunities which would not have been able to be achieved before.</p>	<b>Info</b>
3.4	<p>Everyone was thanked for their attendance and the meeting closed.</p>	<b>Info</b>