

PETERSFIELD TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Public Halls Committee held in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Petersfield, on Monday 19 April 2010 at 6.30 p.m.

PRESENT: Cllr K Hick (Chairman), Cllr P Aiston, Cllr V Clarke (Deputy Chairman), Cllr P Molloy, Cllr Ms M Vincent and Cllr G Watkinson.

Also in attendance: Mr N Hitch (Town Clerk), Mrs S McMorrان (Deputy Town Clerk and Mr J Tucker (Festival Hall Manager).

PH 0702 **CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS**

The Chairman had no comments.

PH 0703 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies for absence.

PH 0704 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No interests were declared.

PH 0705 **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Public Halls Committee held 15 March 2010 be approved.

PH 0706 **PUBLIC REPRESENTATION**

No questions or topics had been tabled.

PH 0707 **FESTIVAL HALL MANAGER'S REPORT**

Members received and noted the Festival Hall Manager's report, a copy of which is attached at Appendix A for information.

PH 0708 **PETERSFIELD MUSICAL FESTIVAL - GRAND PIANO**

Members received correspondence from the Petersfield Musical Festival regarding the Grand Piano which was noted.

PH 0709 **SAVE THE CHILDREN - HIRE OF CHANGING ROOM**

Members received a report from the Town Clerk, copy attached at Appendix B for information.

Following consideration it was

RESOLVED that a dressing room would not be made available to Save The Children but that the Green Room be offered at £108.50 per day or free use of the Box Office.

PH 0710

ACCESS ADVICE REPORT FROM HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Members received an access advice report from Hampshire County Council regarding disabled access to the Festival Hall, copy attached at Appendix C for information.

The Town Clerk reported that there had been complaints from a small number of hirers that access was not available to the stage by the disabled.

The Festival Hall Manager advised that a lift was available to give access to the stage but that this lift was very large to store and would not fit through a normal door opening. The Flexi-step mentioned in the access report was not portable but fixed permanently in place (he had checked with the manufacturers). The Deputy Town Clerk suggested that hirers could be advised that a lift could be hired if it was required.

RESOLVED that the Town Council ensure that hirers were informed about the restricted access to the stage area so that hirers can make a decision whether the venue would be suitable and also Officers to explore the costs of hiring in the portable lift if required by hirers.

Members were reminded that care must be taken to not be discriminatory. Discussion took place regarding ear marking the funds which had been set aside for the purchase of the lift for funding any necessary hires of the lift.

RECOMMENDED that the funds set aside for the portable lift be earmarked for the hire of a portable lift, if required.

PH 0711

FESTIVAL HALL SOLAR ROOF PANELS - WORKING PARTY REPORT

Members received and noted a report from the Solar Panel working party held 10 March 2010, copy attached to these minutes at Appendix D.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 7.15 pm

Festival Hall Manager's Report

For Public Halls Meeting 19 April 2010

Forthcoming events

- 18-25 April Winton Players.
- 26th April-1st May Save the Children Clothes Sale
- 6-7 May General Election
- 8 May Petersfield Town Juniors Awards Day
- 9-16 May Petersfield Theatre Group

Other Bookings

- Rose Room 18 bookings.
- Council Chamber 16 bookings.
- Green Room Theatre Bookings.

General Maintenance

- Air Conditioning has been serviced (nothing to report)
- Portable Appliance testing has been carried out.
- The signs at the front and rear of the building have been replaced.

General

- The Music festival Seating was inspected by Zurich Insurance and has been passed as in "a satisfactory condition"
- The annual Fire lecture was held on the 29th of March with all members of PTC staff that were available and a number of Festival Hall users in attendance.

Jonathan Tucker

Festival Hall Manager

12 April 2010



Appendix B

PUBLIC HALLS COMMITTEE

Festival Hall Changing Rooms Hire

Members will probably recall considering a request from Save The Children in January 2010 to hire the Green Room free of charge (Minute reference PH 0562 (d) refers) for the purpose of counting their takings during the hire. At present, I understand their practise is to use the meeting room for this purpose. I also understand that they wish to use the meeting room in future as a restaurant or refreshment area (currently done in the Rose Room), thereby freeing up the Rose Room to expand the sales area.

At the meeting, discussion focused on the possible use of the Green Room and changing rooms for this purpose, but members did not consider it appropriate to hire out these rooms without charge because of the potential impact such an action may have on other hirers who currently pay for the Green Room for precisely this purpose. As a compromise, members offered free use of the Box Office instead.

Save The Children have now come back to me asking again whether they could hire a changing room instead and what the cost would be. They seem to be unhappy with the use of the Box Office as it is too small for their purposes.

Whilst the minutes of the January Public Halls Committee do not specifically mention that the hire of the changing rooms was discussed, I recall that this was the case.

In conclusion:

- 1 After the last committee decision, are members willing to re-consider the issue of hiring a changing room to Save The Children?
- 2 If members are willing to hire a changing room to Save The Children, what charge is to be levied?

Neil Hitch
Town Clerk
12th April 2010

Petersfield Town Council - Festival Hall

1. Introduction

The purpose of this report is to provide access advice regarding access to the stage/ raised performance area within the Festival Hall for Petersfield Town Council. This report was written after one visit to the Festival Hall on the afternoon of 17th February 2010 accompanied by Jon Tucker, the areas visited included the back stage and adjoining rooms to assess. This report will cover:

- A description of the physical feature/ barrier that exists
- A description of how the space is used
- The legal duties of the landlord or owners of the property (service providers) under the Disability Discrimination Act 1994
- The options available to alter, remove or avoid the barrier.
- Where to obtain further advice from disabled people.
- Other related issues to consider

2. Physical features/barriers

The existing stage area at the front of the auditorium stands approximately 1200mm above the main auditorium floor and is accessed by 2 sets of movable timber steps. The areas back stage are all accessed via stairs, and therefore there is no access to this area for wheelchair users and people who cannot manage steps. Having visited the back stage areas and adjoining rooms it was apparent that access to the stage from an adjoining room was impractical due to the changes in level in various locations.

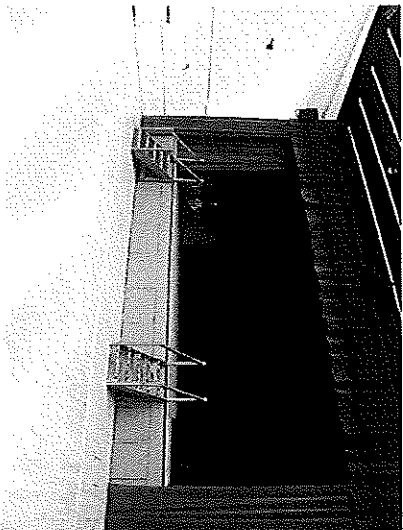
3. Use of the space

The stage area is not just used for performances but is also regularly used for exhibitions and fairs and each exhibition can be set up differently depending on the needs of the exhibitors.

4. Legal position

The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) gives disabled people rights in the way they use services or receive goods.

It is unlawful for service providers to treat disabled people less favourably because of their disability, and service providers must make 'reasonable adjustments' for disabled people, such as giving extra help or changing the way they provide their services. Following changes to the law in 2004, service providers must consider making changes to physical features of their premises so that there are no physical barriers which prevent disabled people from using their services, or make it unreasonably difficult for them to do so.



A service does not have to be impossible to use before a service provider has to make changes it just needs to be unreasonably difficult. Service providers need to consider whether any inconvenience, effort, discomfort or loss of dignity could be experienced in using the service, and whether this would be considered unreasonable by other people, if they had to endure similar difficulties.

There is not a clear answer that can be given to the question 'what is reasonable'? The law uses this phrase to allow different solutions in different situations, and it is ultimately up to the courts to decide in each situation. However, what is reasonable may vary according to the type of service and the nature of the service provider, its size and resources.

Some of the factors that service providers might have to take into account when considering adjustments may include;

- how practicable it is to take these steps
- the financial and other costs involved and other resources they have available
- how disruptive it would be
- how much they have already spent

If a service provider does nothing until disabled people are unable to use their services, they could well be in breach of the law. A service providers duties are anticipatory and continuing so service providers should be thinking ahead and regularly looking at the way they provide services, the physical features of their premises and services, and how they can make improvements for disabled people.

Once a service provider has identified the physical features that may make it difficult for disabled people to use their service, then the law gives them a choice. They can remove that feature, alter it, find a way of avoiding it or provide the service another way. Service providers should consider the full range of access needs of disabled people and the ways in which their services may be difficult to use.

It is recommended that service providers first consider removing the physical feature or altering it. This is often the safest option because it is more likely to make the service accessible, meaning that you receive the services in the same way as other customers. This is called an 'inclusive' approach. Where a service provider does decide to avoid a feature or provide the service another way, then the service must not be unreasonably difficult to use.

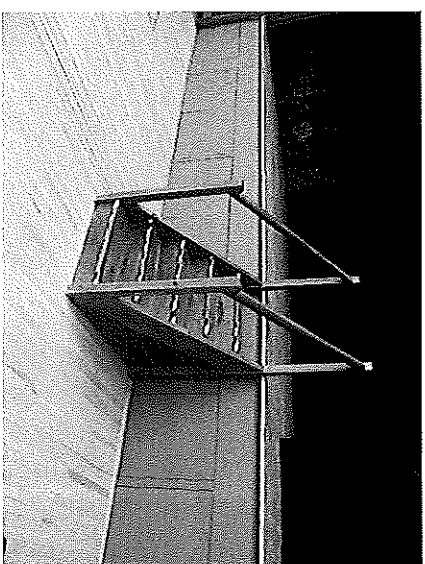
There is however a further duty on the person or organisation hiring the facilities. As the landlord or the owner of the facilities you need to have fulfilled your duties as described. But the duty also extends to the person or organisation hiring the facilities in that they need to ensure that the venue is the most suitable venue for the people likely to be attending. So for example if there was a more accessible venue but it was slightly more expensive then the hirer could be in breach of his duties if he did not try to find the most accessible venue.

4. Options

a. **Remove** - to remove the stage would be unrealistic.

b. **Alter** – In the short term, ensure that the information that you provide to hirers includes a short statement about the restricted access to the stage area, so that hirers can make a decision whether the venue will be suitable.

It would also be useful to put together an Accessibility Action Plan, detailing and access improvements that you feel are necessary or desirable, how much you expect them to cost, when you anticipate being able to carry out the works. This can be as simple as a table or spreadsheet, but shows that you are taking accessibility issues seriously and are fulfilling your duties to anticipate the needs of disabled people and are looking to continually improve.



Another option to alter means to access the stage may be by the use of a platform lift which would allow wheelchair users on to the stage. Most of portable varieties have a maximum rise of 1000mm or are not portable and therefore may not be suitable for the flexible way in which the stage is used.

There are two products on the market that might be able to meet your needs:

Mobilift Portable Wheelchair Lift that can lift up to a height of 1520mm. There is a 'narrow door' version of this product which allows it to fit through a 36" door opening, by removing a handrail.

Link to web site: <http://www.bentleyfielden.co.uk/>

Link to product specific information: http://www.bentleyfielden.co.uk/mobilift_portable_wheelchair_lift.php

Flexi Step - This step solution is flexible in that it could be located anywhere along the stage front. The staircase is easy to transport, since the turn able wheels underneath become active when the staircase is moved to bottom level, and fits through a 900mm door opening. If this product was chosen it could replace one of the standard sets of steps located within the auditorium and the need to move it would therefore be reduced.

Link to web site: http://www.accessplatformlifts.co.uk/flexistep_lifts.htm

Link to video of product: <http://www.enablesupplies.com/keyproducts.phpcategory=accessibilitysubmenu=Flexi%20Stepvideo.php>

- c. **Avoid** – the simplest option would be not to use the stage area at all for exhibitions and fairs, but this has a financial implication in terms of the available floor space that could then be rented/used.

Alternatively the stage could still be used, but exhibitors could bring exhibits down to the auditorium level for wheelchair users and any one who cant manage the steps, could view items, although this solution should be approached with caution. (The Disability Rights Commission (DRC) supported the case of a wheelchair-user (Mr. Jackson), who was suing Debenhams because he has been denied access to a section of the menswear department in the Derby store which was located on a mezzanine floor accessed only by a set of steps and therefore was being denied the same service as other shoppers.)

5. Further advice consultation with local disabled people

If you feel that you are still unable to come to a decision about the most effective solution for you, then you could contact some local disabled people to ask them what they think is the most acceptable solution, as it is those local disabled people that this is likely to affect. East Hampshire Disability Forum are a local group of disabled people who the Access Team at Hampshire County Council have worked with for a number of years and they have always offered very intelligent and practical advice. They can be contacted at East Hants Disability Forum, Sue Williams (Chair person) The Ottery, High Street, East Meon, Petersfield, Hampshire, GU32 1NW, 01730 823664, <http://www.ehndf.org.uk/>

6. Other related issues to consider

Testing and inspection of lifting equipment - It is essential that you inform your insurers about any equipment that is used to lift or hoist people and also that the correct testing/inspection and maintenance regimes are followed to comply with the relevant legislation such as the Lifting operations and lifting equipment regulations 1998 (LOLER) and Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974.

Edge protection – If you are using the stage for events other than performances you may need to consider carrying out a risk assessment for everyone using the stage as there is no protection from falling at the edge of the stage.

Emergency or fire evacuation - The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 - replaces or amends all previous fire regulations and laws, if disabled people are going to be accessing the stage then you must also provide safe means for them to leave if there is a fire. Some pieces of equipment have a battery back up or manual override to allow decent in an emergency situation, but consideration should be given to how disabled people will be evacuation from the stage area. Emergency evacuation plans for disabled visitors may need to be re-written or amended to include the stage area.

Festival Hall Solar Roof Panels – Working Party 3rd Meeting.

1. The third meeting of the Festival Hall Solar Roof Panels working Party was held on Wednesday 10th March 2010. The following were in attendance: - Cllr's Hick (KH), Clarke (VC) Watkinson (GW), Town Councils Contracts Manager (CM), Mr Mike Lovelace and Mr Geoff Townly from Commercial Gas.
2. Mr Lovelock and Mr Townly had viewed the Festival Hall Roof and Boiler Room to investigate whether or not it would be possible to connect the proposed roof mounted solar panels to the hall heating system and if so to propose what work was necessary and an order of costs.
3. After some discussion as to the proposed type of solar panel and its expected output and that one of the aims was also to provide a heat sink when the Pool was emptied each March for cleaning. Mr Townly stated that it would be possible to connect the panels to a thermal store and then for the store to be connected to the present heating system. Due to the boiler room entrance and space he stated that 3 stores each of 400 litres would be needed and that stainless steel pipe work would be required for the linking. In order to ensure that the thermal stores only added heat to the system depending on the overall temperature picture a new set of controls would have to be fitted to ensure optimum heating. The cost of such an installation would be £19,000.
4. Mr Lovelace stated that as with any system it was the payback time that was the important question. If the priority was to make huge cost savings then fitting new modern boilers was the answer, but as the boilers had an estimated 20 years further life this was not a viable action. Now that he had been given current gas costs and projected solar panel output on return to his office he would calculate what the possible gas cost savings would be thereby allowing the council to make an assessment as to payback time and the value of proceeding or not. This data would be forwarded to CM in the near future, after which a further Working Party meeting would be called



M G Watkinson

Distribution:

Town Clerk
All Town Councillors