

## **DIGITAL CINEMA – MILL HALL**

### **1 SUMMARY**

- 1.1 To provide Members with information concerning the future marketing of the cinema.

### **2 INTRODUCTION**

- 2.1 The first six months of the operation of the cinema at Mill Hall is coming to a close. To date, attendances have been disappointing and at a meeting of the Leisure Sub Committee on 11 September 2001, Members requested details of the proposed future marketing of the project.

### **3 USES SO FAR**

- 3.1 As Members are aware, the equipment installed in Mill Hall is capable of much more than just screening films. So far, it has been used for a variety of initiatives which are listed below. Where available, the number of people who have benefited from the equipment is shown in brackets.

- Adult cinema club ( 47 members)
- Children's Friday cinema club (12 child members)
- Children's Saturday morning cinema (46)
- Sports presentation held 16<sup>th</sup> May 2001 (13)
- Awards for All presentation held 19<sup>th</sup> July 2001 (80)
- Rayleigh Chamber of Commerce Race Night held 31<sup>st</sup> August 2001
- Video production course – 11 weeks commencing 24<sup>th</sup> September 2001. (16)
- Schools video production projects with Great Wakering Primary, Rayleigh Primary, Barling Magna Primary, Doggetts Primary and Holt Farm Junior Schools. (730)

### **4 CINEMA**

- 4.1 The cinema mainly operates as a club due to club screenings costing less than public screenings. Within the club there is the facility for guest tickets to be purchased. Currently the practice is to allow non club members to purchase tickets in the hope that they will become future members.
- 4.2 The cinema is managed and operated by the Council and the person who operates the equipment is employed by the Council . Limited resources prevent anyone else being employed to collect tickets on the door and manage those people entering or leaving the room while the film is being shown.

- 4.3 There have been three Saturday morning screenings of children's films held in May, June and July. The maximum attendance at any one film was 24. No more dates have been booked to date, however, it has been suggested that screenings should also take place on a Sunday.
- 4.4 The Friday children's screenings have been very disappointing with a few being cancelled due to lack of interest. To date, no more of these have been booked but it is thought that more unusual films could be screened to generate some interest.
- 4.5 The adult cinema has had a mixed success so far with the most people, 31, attending the screening of Billy Elliott on Monday 1<sup>st</sup> October.
- 4.6 The teenage cinema was cancelled half way through the six months due to a complete lack of interest. No interest was generated in this among young people at all.

## **5 CINEMA CLUB MEMBERS**

- 5.1 As attendances at all of the screenings have been disappointing, members of the club were invited to a meeting to discuss the future operation of the club. Although only a few people attended, the ideas and suggestions put forward were very positive. As a result of those discussions, a questionnaire, a copy of which is appended, was sent to all cinema club members. Once the responses have been analysed, the next series of films will be chosen and booked.
- 5.2 The parents of all child members were contacted and asked to comment on the days and times films were shown as well as the actual films. The response to this was also disappointing as only one response was received.

## **6 MARKETING**

- 6.1 There is no allocated budget for marketing the cinema facility and the only suitable source of funding has been the arts budget. However, this cannot support the cinema long term. With the lack of resources, more comprehensive publicity has been difficult.
- 6.2 The first months of operating the cinema has been a learning process in that it was hard to understand the market. It wasn't until a membership base had been established that views could be sought on the type of films to be shown. Therefore, the first series of films were chosen because they were popular and that they would hopefully generate interest.

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- 6.3 When the cinema leaflets were originally printed, we did not have the film catalogue, which includes reviews of all of the films available. As a result, the leaflets were printed without descriptions of the films. Future leaflets will be printed with reviews included.
- 6.4 Leaflets will be sent out to all members of the cinema club and where appropriate, schools. There will also be leaflet displays in the Council Offices in Rochford and Rayleigh, libraries, leisure centres and shops. Posters will be produced for display on parish Council noticeboards in addition to all of the above. Rochford District Matters will be used to advertise the club as well as the Council's web-site. The media will also be approached to assist in spreading the word, in particular the Evening Echo, the Rochford and Rayleigh Standard and BBC Essex On-Line.
- 6.5 Discussions are taking place with Leisure Connection with regard to the equipment being used to screen major sporting events with the venue possibly being more popular with families.
- 6.6 Schools in the District are being canvassed to ascertain whether they could use the facility for history or literature projects.

## **7 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 The operation of the cinema is not without cost. Members have previously been advised that the average cost of hiring a film is approximately £70. On top of this is the cost of room hire and the cost of employing someone to operate the equipment. This brings the total cost of each screening to approximately £125. So far, all of the screenings have operated at a loss.
- 7.2 To date the costs of the cinema club have been met from the grant that was awarded to the Council by the former East England Arts Board for arts development in the District. However, there is now very little of this remaining and if Members want to continue with the cinema, it will be necessary to allocate a budget for its operation up to the end of the current leisure contract in March 2002. After this date, the operation of the cinema will be included within the new leisure contract. The cost of continuing with the adult and children's cinema clubs and a monthly Saturday morning public cinema is expected to cost Approximately £2,000.
- 7.3 The cost of printing 1,000 of each leaflet is estimated to cost in the region of £350 based on 3 leaflets being produced (adult cinema club, children's cinema club and Saturday morning public screenings)

**8 RECOMMENDATION**

8.1 It is proposed that the Sub-Committee **RECOMMENDS**

- (1) To agree the proposed marketing plan for the future operation of the cinema.
- (2) To allocate a budget of £2,350 for the period up to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2002. (CD(FES))

R Crofts

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