
CASTLE HALL UPDATE REPORT (Min 117 (c) / 01)

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform Members of the current situation regarding the bookings at Castle Hall and the potential noise nuisance and customer complaints that have been received.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 The operation of Castle Hall is undertaken by Leisure Connection as part of the current Leisure Management Contract. This has involved taking a wide range of bookings for the venue, including children's birthday parties, wedding anniversaries and other special occasion celebrations. There have also been a number of other daytime bookings, including group meetings and playgroups.
- 2.2 The venue is situated in the middle of a residential area and as a result, complaints have been received from local residents following some of the functions that have taken place.

3 NATURE OF COMPLAINTS

- 3.1 The complaints received have been of a noise nuisance variety and have therefore been dealt with initially by the Housing, Health & Community Care's Service.
- 3.2 These complaints have essentially fallen into two categories. Firstly residents have been disturbed by the music levels from discos, particularly when either windows or doors of the hall have been open to gain fresh air into the building.
- 3.3 The second nature of complaint has been from the disturbance caused by "partygoers" who congregate in the car park area of the site at some time during a function. This has seemed to be a particular concern to residents when the function has been a children's birthday party (5 - 14 age group) and with the shrill tone/volume of these children.

4 CURRENT SITUATION

- 4.1 Since the discussions that took place at the previous meeting of this committee on 11 September, there have been further noise nuisance complaints received. This is in spite of the fact that the level of bookings has been low and with the autumn now upon us, there has not been as great a need for people to either open windows/doors or congregate in the car park area.

- 4.2 From their previous visits, Environmental Health Officers have stated that there is the potential of a noise nuisance being created, particularly by the music level when windows are open and if patrons are allowed to congregate outside the building due to the proximity of some of the houses.
- 4.3 At present there have been a number of management measures implemented to control the situation. These have included signs within the hall, requesting windows and doors remain shut, the “rules and regulations” of the site have been re-emphasised in the hire information given to customers, an increased staff presence at the start and finish of a function and no 21st or late teenage birthday party bookings.
- 4.5 However, in addition to these measures it is intended to consider each function separately and where there is a disco type event, the Head of Housing, Health & Community Care's view is that staff should be on site for the duration of the function, to ensure that no noise nuisance is generated.
- 4.5 In addition to controlling the level of the music and ensuring that patrons do not congregate outside the building, it is also essential for the on-site supervisor to ensure that all windows and doors remain closed. This is possible during the winter, but as the weather gets warmer it will be difficult to ensure that all the windows and doors remain closed without some form of mechanical ventilation or air conditioning. Otherwise, it may not be possible to hire the hall for party functions during warm weather.
- 4.6 Minute 322 instructs Leisure Connection to install a noise limiting device which will automatically cut the music off when the level goes above a pre-set level. These are useful devices to help the person managing the event but the level set is dependent on the windows and doors remaining closed. There are also other automatic devices to assist the on-site manager which will cut the power when windows and doors are opened.
- 4.7. The Head of Housing, Health and Community Care also considers that the Regulations and Conditions of Hire are an integral part of controlling the alleged disturbance, but they do require strengthening to make them effective.
- 4.8 These issues have been discussed in depth with Leisure Connection and will also be further considered within the tendering process for the new Leisure Management Contract, to ensure that any operation of this venue avoids creating any justified customer / resident complaint.

5 CONCLUSION

- 5.1 Noise nuisance complaints about the operation of this venue will continue to be investigated by the Head of Housing, Health and Community Care's Service and Officers of the Leisure Division, to ensure that excessive noise / disturbance is avoided. Leisure Connection are also monitoring their operation with particular regard to staffing and the potential fitting of a noise level-limiter in the hall.

6 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 If complaints of disturbance were upheld, then this would result in Environmental Health Officers having to issue Leisure Connection with a Section 80 Abatement Notice, under the Environmental Protection Act of 1990.

7 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 If excessive noise / disturbance was generated from functions at this site, it would be detrimental to the wellbeing of local residents.

8 RECOMMENDATION

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

That Members note the contents of this report and: (CD(FES))

- 1) Require Leisure Connection to have a person present on site for the duration of all disco type events.
- 2) Require Leisure Connection to ensure that all windows and doors remain closed during a disco type event. The main entrance door may be open only for access.
- 3) Install a noise limiter set at a level which ensures that the music noise level does not cause a nuisance.
- 4) Investigate the cost of installing an air conditioning/mechanical ventilation or not to hire the hall during warm weather for disco type events.
- 5) Defer any decision on summer event bookings until discussions with the new Leisure Contractor about future use of this hall, taking into account the issues in this report.
- 6) Authorise the review and strengthening of the Regulations and Conditions of Hire.

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