

Committee(s):	Date(s):
Epping Forest and Commons	November 2015
Subject: Permission to perform Civil Marriages and Partnerships at The Temple and The Temple Enclosure	Public
Report of: Superintendent of Epping Forest SEF 44/15	For Decision

Summary

This report outlines the opportunity to utilise the licensing regime under the Marriages Regulations 1995 to generate future income by permitting the use of The Temple and The Temple enclosure for Marriages and Civil Partnership ceremonies. The significant heritage of the listed building and the idyllic surroundings of the Forest make the building very desirable as a venue for these ceremonies.

In order to use The Temple as a venue for ceremonies, a licence must be granted by the local authority, London Borough of Redbridge, at a cost of £600 for a 3 year licence, together with appropriate public advertising costing £2,340. It is estimated that a net income of £7,760 in the first year will be generated after these costs are deducted. However this income should rise considerably in subsequent years.

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

- Approve submission of an application to London Borough of Redbridge to licence The Temple to be a host for marriage and civil partnership ceremonies.
- Approve the use of The Temple and The Temple enclosure for marriage and civil partnership ceremonies, for the licence period of 36 months.

Main Report

Background

1. The Temple, Wanstead Park is a Grade II building, within a Grade II* Registered Park and Garden of Special Historic Interest, constructed in 1760 in the Tuscan-style as a folly and exotic poultry house, which was originally surround by a menagerie garden. The building was extensively restored by the City of London during 1995/96 at a cost of £320,000.
2. It is proposed to use The Temple and The Temple enclosure for marriages and civil partnerships, both as a source of income and to raise the profile of this building and parkland surround the venue.
3. This is an opportunity to generate income and attract more visitors to Wanstead Park and The Temple.
4. A licence for Marriages and Civil Partnership ceremonies is already held for the Queen Elizabeth Hunting Lodge.

Current Position

5. The Temple is open at weekends and Bank Holiday Mondays and is a free venue for the general public. During the weekend, Epping Forest visitor services team staff the building from 12pm – 5pm during the summer period (April – Sept), and from 10am – 3pm during the winter months (Oct – March). The building also houses the southern Forest Keeper team in the self-contained office space at the rear of the building. The Temple has previously hosted numerous private functions, such as the Venison supper and has a seated capacity of 40 and standing capacity of 60.
6. The building has two floors; both are accessible to the public. The Temple has two public toilets inside that are accessible during opening hours, as well as a ladies and gentlemen toilet outside, which is accessible out of hours.
7. When hired for exclusive use, the building has been used successfully for externally catered events. These have included sit down meals, drinks/canapé service and wine tasting events.
8. In addition to numerous in-person enquiries, Epping Forest members of staff have received in excess of 15 written requests for ceremonies, as well as a venue to host private parties, such as wedding receptions and blessings.

Options

9. **Option 1** – Approve the outlined proposal to request a licence and, subject to the licence being granted by the London Borough of Redbridge, to use The Temple and The Temple enclosure as a wedding and civil ceremony venue to generate income for Epping Forest. **This option is recommended.**

10. **Option 2** – Do not approve the application or use of The Temple and the Temple enclosure as a wedding and civil ceremony venue. This option will prevent additional income generation for Epping Forest. **This option is not recommended.**

Proposals

11. Option 1 seeks approval from your Committee to apply to the local authority, London Borough of Redbridge (LBR), for a three-year licence to hold weddings and civil partnership ceremonies at The Temple. The location, aesthetics and history of the building, make it desirable as a licenced wedding venue.
12. It is proposed that the licence be sought to cover all four rooms over the two floors. The conditions of the venue licence include an assessment on accessibility, fire risk and health & safety. A review of these aspects of the building management will be required in preparation for a licence application submission. The wedding and civil partnership venue licence fee is £600 for a three year licence.
13. LBR stipulates that a three week Public Notice will be posted in a local newspaper, as part of the licence application, at cost to the applicant. It is expected that this will incur a cost of £2,340 to City of London.
14. Hire of the temple for weddings will be restricted to occasional mid-week and Saturdays so that the building will remain open as a free historic visitor attraction on its highest day of footfall on Sundays. Planned closures of The Temple, as a result of a ceremony, would be advertised in advance, both at The Temple and online as is the case with current private hire arrangements.
15. Initially, ceremonies will be charged from £400 for 2 hours mid-week, rising to £2,000 for a date on Friday and Saturday. Additional income will be raised through a charge on the sale of packages for drinks reception. The hire fee will include exclusive use of the enclosure for erection of small marquees/ gazebo or similar for the period of the hire only. Packages include the exclusive use of The Temple, staff attendance and a licence to take photographs. Where packages apply the total cost would be subject to VAT.
16. A conservative estimate of income in the first year could provide:
6 x peak hire 2 hr = £550x6 = £3,300
3x peak hire day = £2,000x 3= £6,000
6x off peak 2 hr hire =£400 x 6= £2,400
Total in first year potential = £11,700
17. A non-refundable deposit will deter people from cancelling booked dates. This will prevent potential loss of income from another hirer. Bookings will only be confirmed once the deposit has been received and the terms and conditions agreed by both the hirer and City of London.

18. A tour of the building, prior to hire, would ensure hirers fully understand the complexities of hiring a Grade II* listed building, as well as signing up to rigorous terms and conditions.
19. Vehicles have limited access to the site and exclusive car parking will not be provided for guests. There is open parking access on Warren Road and exclusive car parking for the bridal party can be arranged. As we currently host parking for disabled customers during events, this can also be arranged.
20. Staffing cost is estimated at £100 per ceremony based on 5 hours at £20 per hour. Investment in chairs will be an upfront cost of £1000, although these could be rented initially.
21. Catering will be through a City of London approved supplier and will provide an additional 10% commission fee.
22. It is the responsibility of the couple to arrange the legal formalities of the ceremony and the registrar fee is not included in the venue hire.
23. Booking capacity and fees will be reviewed annually by this Committee.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

24. Open Spaces Business Plan (2014-17): This proposal links to the Open Spaces Business Plan strategic objective (2014/15) to generate income. 'Improving our use of resources through increased income generation and improved procurement'

Implications

25. **Financial** - An initial outlay of £2,940 will be spent on the wedding licence application and associated advertising as well as £1000 on chairs. Spend will be taken from local risk funding.
26. **Legal** - The Marriages (Approved Premises) Regulations 1995 allows civil marriages to take place regularly in hotels, stately homes, civic halls and similar premises without compromising the fundamental principles of English marriage law and Parliament's intention to maintain the solemnity of the occasion.
27. Section 76(1) (g) of the Public Health Acts Amendment Act 1907 (applied to Epping Forest by Section 4 of the City of London (Various Powers) Act 1933) gives power "To provide and maintain anybuildings....and to charge for admission thereto".
28. The proposals do not offend the prohibition against alienation in section 7 of the 1878 Act, and section 5 of the 1880, or any other requirements, subject to the arrangements, including the frequency of the events, being managed so

as to preserve the primary purpose of The Temple for recreation at all reasonable times during the day.

29. **HR** - Additional staffing requirement will utilise existing casual staff working at The Temple. There are no other HR implications to report.
30. **Property** - An increase in visitor numbers and movement of furniture (to create a wedding ceremonial area) will cause extra wear and tear on The Temple's structure, which may have cost implications.
31. The maintenance costs of the property will need to be closely monitored and if a significant increase is identified, there may be a need to review the business plan to include provision for repair and renewal.

Conclusion

32. The Temple is a desirable venue for weddings and civil partnerships and offers the opportunity to generate income from the building.
33. By carefully managing the booking arrangements it is possible to offer couples the opportunity to hold a ceremony in this special venue whilst avoiding a conflict of use with new and existing public visitors.
34. Income from venue hire will contribute to savings required as part of the service based review, with the initial outlay offset by the potential income weddings or civil ceremonies could generate for Epping Forest.
35. The demand for ceremonies has been frequent, evidencing a desire and need for the service. To be able to offer this service will help promote our services and the City of London's Open Spaces as a whole.

Appendices

- None

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