

Committee(s): Resource Allocation Sub-Committee	Date(s): 26 July 2012
Subject: Guildhall Art Gallery and Guildhall Yard	Public
Report of: Director of Culture, Heritage & Libraries and Director of Public Relations	For Information
<p><u>Summary</u></p> <p>This report provides an update, as requested, on progress with encouraging visitor footfall to both Guildhall Art Gallery and Guildhall Yard since the Sub-Committee's Awayday in July 2011. Positive developments and improved statistics can be reported in both areas and plans are in hand to build further on this success.</p> <p>Recommendations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members are asked to note and approve the contents of this report. 	

Main Report

Background

1. A review of the City's library, archive and art gallery services presented to the Resource Allocation Sub-Committee Awayday in July 2011 led Members to ask for two particular issues to be reported back on in July 2012:
 - "The Director [of Culture, Heritage & Libraries] was asked to advise the Sub-Committee of any improvements for usage of the Art Gallery and on visitor issues in general
 - Members felt that more use should be made of [Guildhall] Yard and asked the Director of Public Relations to look into the matter."
2. This report provides updates in these two areas as requested.

Current Position

Guildhall Art Gallery

3. The question about Guildhall Art Gallery was prompted by the observation that its annual attendance figures were low and in need of improvement if the ongoing investment in the Gallery could be justified. Visitor numbers for 2010/11 were 33,000.
4. It is well known that there is a longstanding tension around the prioritisation of the various functions of the Art Gallery, between corporate

hospitality space and public facility, and in the past the focus on hospitality has been felt to hold back the Gallery's opportunities to promote itself to the public. Current policy in Culture, Heritage & Libraries is that this debate is unnecessary as both purposes can coexist, and that while the hospitality and corporate function side of the Gallery's life must be respected, the public side can work around that. It is therefore a strategic objective of the Department to increase the Gallery's profile and footfall.

5. Excellent progress has been made during 2011/12, as the following statistics show:
 - Visitor numbers for the year were 75,038, a **127% increase** on the year before
 - There was a corresponding increase in income from admissions and Gallery Shop sales; the income target of £51,000 was exceeded by £60,000 (total income £111,000).

6. These results have been achieved via a number of changes and initiatives:
 - In April 2011, the entrance charge tariff was changed; instead of charging £2.50 for entry, entrance to the main galleries became free, while a charge of £5 is now levied for special exhibitions
 - Also in April 2011, the Gallery was rehung, moving popular Victorian and pre-Raphaelite paintings onto the main floor in place of royal and corporate portraits; at the same time, one of the lower rooms was dedicated to London paintings
 - A new and more dynamic Gallery website was created in 2011, in advance of the main City website redevelopment (it has now been absorbed into the new City site)
 - The corporate reorganisation of October 2011 brought the new Visitor Development and Services team into the Department, with its experience of running very successful visitor attractions at Tower Bridge and the Monument. Drawing on their experience has helped the Gallery to develop its marketing, particularly by using external media consultants for some exhibitions as is done at Tower Bridge
 - A new programme of occasional evening openings at the Gallery, with a bar and live music, has proved popular, with the first event attracting over 500 people and the second one over 1000
 - A number of other collaborations and special events took place, including with the Museum of London's Gladiator show in July 2011 (2100 visitors) and the first public display of the City's Magna Carta as part of Open House weekend in September 2011 (7200 visitors)
 - Special exhibitions are a major part of the visitor draw for the Gallery and the Atkinson Grimshaw exhibition (September 2011-January 2012) proved one of the most popular exhibitions ever mounted (over 16,000 visitors in all)

- A number of school, family and youth forum activities have been developed, targeted in some cases at “hard to reach” groups of young people from neighbouring boroughs; for example, an event involving the *Dr Who* episode set in Pompeii, with its scriptwriter, held in the Amphitheatre, proved memorable.
7. 2011/12 has therefore been an excellent year for the Gallery, and these achievements will continue to be built on during 2012/13:
- Marketing has always been a weak spot for the Gallery, as there is little dedicated resource for this either in staff or monetary terms. As part of the ongoing development of Visitor Development and Services, a new central departmental marketing post is being created, which will take over the lead on Gallery marketing
 - The desirability of creating a suitable display facility in the Gallery for iconic City documents and artefacts (e.g. Magna Carta) has long been discussed and proposals for delivering this have been worked up with the help of suitable expert consultants. These will be progressed via presentations through the City Committee structure during autumn 2012
 - The profile of the Roman Amphitheatre will be raised through a strategy for promoting interest in Roman London more generally, working in partnership with the Museum of London and their new Roman galleries, and including a bid for external funding.

Guildhall Yard

8. The Guildhall Area Strategy was approved by the Policy & Resources Committee in July 2011 (revisited, and confirmed, in September 2011). This set out a number of plans to enhance the identity, welcome, function and appearance of the Guildhall area, including better signage and wayfinding, seasonal seating, and a temporary coffee facility.
9. Progress was delayed by the St Paul’s occupation, which created a temporary need to erect barriers, but a number of recommendations have now been implemented, including the placing of banners outside the Gallery and the repainting of its external lettering, new signage in parts of the Guildhall complex, and the return of the moveable chairs and coffee cart.
10. The Yard has been animated during summer 2012 with City of London Festival concerts and outdoor activities in the usual way, but the most successful example has surely been the Celebrate the City weekend in June, when a number of innovative and popular events were staged which transformed its atmosphere. The 1812 Overture concert on 21 June brought in ca.1500 people, while the Guildhall Market on 23rd attracted nearly 8000 visitors. Many of these people also attended events taking place in

Guildhall Library, the Art Gallery, and St Lawrence Jewry Church, thus bringing the whole complex to life. The weekend received a lot of positive feedback and provides a model to be built on; it shows that occasional planned events with multiple things happening in and around the Yard can be very successful and can be staged without disrupting the regular pattern of life or ceremonial activities.

11. The Guildhall Area Strategy is led from within the Department of the Built Environment but it includes provision for the Visitor Development and Services team in Culture, Heritage & Libraries (who co-ordinated Celebrate the City) to develop an outreach plan to attract more visitors to the Yard and its surrounding buildings. This is an integral part of the CHL departmental business plan and will be progressed once the immediate priorities around the Olympics and Paralympics are over.

Visitor Issues in General

12. The corporate restructuring of October 2011 and the creation of the Visitor Development and Services section within Culture, Heritage & Libraries has provided a concentrated focus for policy and activity in this area which has widely been felt to be beneficial. Tower Bridge and the Monument (previously within Environmental Services) have continued to flourish (Tower Bridge's visitor numbers exceeded 500,000 for the first time in 2011/12) and the City Information Centre saw a 14% increase in visitor numbers, and a 22% increase in income, during the year just ended. The CIC has also increased its emphasis on promoting the City's own attractions, without unduly diluting its ability to provide tourist information on London and the UK more broadly.
13. During the first half of 2012, much of the activity of the VDS team has been focused on work associated with the Olympics (including Celebrate the City). After September, as noted in 11 above, the team will be able to move on to other strategic priorities including the revision of the corporate Visitor Strategy, the development of a City Visitor Trail, and the increased promotion of the Guildhall complex.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

14. The importance of welcoming and encouraging people into the City's unique, diverse and nationally important visitor attractions is recognised both in the corporate plan and in the new Cultural Strategy which is being presented to Committees during summer 2012. It is also a policy which supports the priority in the 2012/15 Communications Strategy around the Corporation's work in supporting London and the nation's heritage. Visitors bring economic benefits both to the attractions themselves and to the surrounding local economy, and their impressions enhance the reputation of the City. Encouraging them gives a positive message that the City is open and welcoming, and allows the various venues and locations to develop their civic and cultural potential.

Conclusion

15. Since the Committee's Awayday in July 2011, excellent progress has been made in developing visitor footfall both in Guildhall Art Gallery and in Guildhall Yard. Plans are in hand to continue building on this success. These various achievements have all been made possible by the dedication, imagination and hard work of all the staff involved, whose efforts are greatly appreciated.

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