

Committee: Barbican Centre Board	Date: 21 March 2018
Subject: Barbican Centre Board Annual Dinner	Public
Report of: Managing Director (Barbican Centre)	For Information
Report author: Sir Nicholas Kenyon – Barbican Centre	

Summary

Each year, the Barbican Centre Board hosts an annual dinner as a networking and cultivation event for the City Corporation and the senior arts community with whom the Barbican is engaged.

Prior to this year's dinner, the Board endorsed the adoption of a more informal approach to the event. This report provides a brief summary of the changes and outcomes observed, as well as an outline of the process through which the event is organised, for Members' information.

Recommendation: That Members note the contents of the report and the continuation of the more informal approach to the dinner moving forwards.

Background

1. The Barbican Centre Board dinner is an annual event which forms part of the regular cycle of City Corporation committee dinners. It is co-ordinated and organised jointly by the Barbican and the Remembrancer's department, with the date set (as with other Committee dinners) by the Chairman of the Barbican Centre Board, the Chief Officer/Managing Director, and the Remembrancer's department.
2. Given the nature of the Barbican as an arts centre, the primary focus of the dinner is as a networking and cultivation event for the City and the senior arts community with whom the Barbican Centre is engaged. In recent years, the format of the dinner has therefore departed in some respects from other such City Corporation events.

Process

3. The intention, where possible, is to avoid clashes with other major dinners in the City, including banquets, committee dinners, and significant external events. Work is undertaken with the Remembrancer's Office to this end.
4. Whilst the Remembrancer's staff previously managed the invitations and guest list (and therefore used to attend the dinner to manage arrivals), from 2017 onwards the Barbican has taken over responsibility for this area of activity.
5. The costs of the dinner are strictly budgeted and provided in line with the City Corporation's agreed funding approach in respect of the annual dinner cycle, supplemented where necessary by the Centre's own hospitality budget for engagement and cultivation.

6. Availability of the Barbican Centre spaces, viz. the Garden Room, Conservatory and (if included) Gallery for a Private View for guests are ascertained by the Barbican Managing Director's office. The suitability of available dates is then discussed with the Chairman and the Remembrancer's office, with the latter having responsibility for checking the City Events diary to ensure there is no significant clash (or, if a clash is unavoidable, to highlight this so appropriate handling can be put in place).
7. The organisation of the dinner is undertaken primarily by the Barbican Managing Director's office (BC) with support and collaboration from Remembrancer's Office (RO) and Town Clerk's Office (TC). The relevant responsibilities include:
 - Barbican Room and Gallery availability (BC)
 - Invitation to guest speaker by Managing Director of the Barbican Centre, on behalf of the Chairman (BC)
 - Choice of guests, checking of their roles and addresses (BC)
 - Up-to-date information on Member personnel and roles (TC)
 - Designing and printing distinctive invitations in line with Barbican brand (BC)
 - Sending invitations and collating replies, dealing with queries, dietary requirements, etc. (BC)
 - All dealings with the selected catering company for the evening (BC)
 - Facilities, room layout, and other in-house and Front of House arrangements (BC)
 - Advising on protocol in arrangements for Ambassadors and Diplomatic representatives, politicians, and Members (RO)
 - Preliminary and final work on the seating plan, using knowledge of communities of interest, management team responsibilities and Barbican Board and Trust placements (BC)
 - Advice on particular areas of the seating plan (e.g. etiquette concerning Ambassadors or relevant dignitaries) (RO)

The Town Clerk's Office also provides assistance as required, either to act as a conduit for information, or to sense-check and modify information (given the appreciation of the distinction between the Barbican's position and approach, and the more traditional approach adopted by the Remembrancer's Office).

2018 Dinner: Changes and Outcomes

8. At the January 2018 Board meeting, the Chairman sought Members' views as to the adoption of a more informal format for the 2018 dinner and moving forwards thereafter. Members endorsed this approach.
9. In view of the nature of the event, in recent years there have been different formats, including for example a pre-dinner performance (sometimes by

creative learning), or a pre-dinner private view of a current exhibition. There have also been different dress codes, usually in the direction of business attire and lounge suit.

10. In view of these variations, the Chairman's proposal was to strengthen the appropriateness of the event to the Barbican by adopting a more informal format. The changes included:
 - No Toastmaster was employed, with the Managing Director instead personally introducing guests to the Chairman and Deputy Chairman
 - The role of drawing the guests to their tables was undertaken by the appointed caterer
 - The Chairman opened the proceedings by welcoming the guests
 - No Grace was said at the beginning of the meal
 - Toasts were limited to two, i.e. to the Queen and to the Lord Mayor and City Corporation
 - Speeches were limited to two, by the Chairman and the Guest speaker
 - Although the evening was in honour of the past Chairman, and he was acknowledged in the Chairman's speech, he did not make a speech.
11. The feedback from these innovations has been positive and it is proposed to use this outline template in the future, subject to necessary or desired variations in particular years.
12. These collaborative aspects of event planning between the Barbican and Remembrancer's Office also worked extremely well in 2018. Some 344 guests were invited, 193 accepted, 170 attended and 23 cancelled in the run up to the dinner. The dinner was arranged on tables of 9 or 10 people, each led by a member of the Barbican Management Team and a Member of the Board, Trust or Common Council.
13. The Barbican Centre believes that the dinner represents exceptional value for money. Not only does the event provide an unparalleled opportunity to gather key influencers and decision-makers within the arts world for networking and cultivation purposes, but holding the event at the Barbican with a Private Viewing also exposes them to the Centre itself and the innovative installations within the Galleries. The cost to the City Corporation is also significantly reduced through the discount obtained through the use of the Barbican Centre's resident banqueting caterer and the absence of room hire charges for the Conservatory and Garden Room.

Conclusion

14. The nature of the Barbican Centre means that a more relaxed and informal approach is desirable for the annual dinner. We believe that the approach adopted this year was highly successful and will continue to utilise and refine this for future years.

Sir Nicholas Kenyon

Managing Director, Barbican Centre