

**Report of the Head of Neighbourhood Development**

**THE CASTLE – PERFORMANCE INDICATORS**

**1 Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 This report seeks to demonstrate, through the provision of arts and cultural facilities at The Castle, how the following Council objectives have been met:
- a) Improving the life chances of young people;
  - b) Delivering efficient and responsive services.
- 1.2 The report will look at the performance statistics for The Castle for the period 1 January 2010 to 31 March 2010.

**2 Executive Summary**

- 2.1 This report discusses the performance indicators for The Castle and includes statistics from 1 January 2010 to 31 March 2010, as well as the full year, and compares these against target figures. It also looks at some of the initiatives and projects that have taken place over this period and at future plans by The Castle to encourage further use of the various facilities and to develop the programme of activities.

**3 Appendices**

There are no appendices to this report.

**4 Proposed Action**

**The Committee RESOLVES:**

- 4.1 **to note the report detailing the performance of the Castle during the last 12 months.**

**5 Background**

- 5.1 The Castle (Wellingborough) Ltd has now been running The Castle as a Company Limited by Guarantee, under Contract with the Borough Council, since January 1995. The current operating contract was agreed in 2002, and ran through to March 2007. Since that date the contract has been extended twice, and is now undergoing a review and tendering process.

5.2 As part of the Council's regular monitoring of the contract, a wide range of attendance, participation and financial figures are measured. This report looks in more depth at the figures for the last quarter of 2009/10, under section 6 below, and the various factors that have influenced them are discussed.

## 6 Discussion

6.1 Current Performance Indicators include targets for performances, income, capacity, subsidy and participation.

6.2 The 2009/10 targets have been seasonally adjusted per quarter to represent a more accurate reflection of The Castle's business.

### 6.2.1 Performances

This performance indicator totals the number of performance events that are staged in the Main House and Studio Theatre spaces each year. It includes live work (both professional and community hires) and the presentation of films.

Ref.	Description	2009/10 annual target	2009/10 year end	2009/10 4th Quarter	Against 4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter	
					08/9	target
C1	Target performances (productions) per year	420	375	109	107	102

**Comment:** The fourth quarter of the year is always busy with the programming of popular activities and the numbers of performances stabilised for this quarter, equaling the previous year. However, looking at the year as a whole there has been a planned and significant reduction in the number of shows programmed, in order to concentrate on the most profitable work, and the most commercial time periods. This has helped to increase the overall profitability of The Castle – see the summary at 6.5 for further details.

### 6.2.2 Subsidy & Income

This set of indicators comprises 4 inter-related targets driven by the number of tickets sold. Therefore, an underlying target is that by maximising the number of tickets sold, the Borough Council subsidy per seat sold, (for performances only) and tickets sold (including workshops and classes) is reduced.

Ref.	Description	2009/10 annual target	2009/10 year end	2009/10 4th Quarter	Against 4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter	
					08/9	target
C2	Minimum number of seats sold pa	75000	65867	18147	17612	18150
C3	Minimum income per seat sold pa	£6.00	£8.11	£8.86	£7.17	£6.00
	Max Borough Council subsidy per seat sold (performances)	£5.16	£5.87	£5.32	£5.85	£5.33

<b>C4</b>	only)					
<b>C5</b>	Max Borough Council subsidy per seat/ticket sold (performances, workshops and classes)	£4.33	£5.01	£4.53	£4.81	£4.25

**Comment:** The final quarter again reflected the more popular programme with seats sold meeting the target and increasing over the same quarter in 2008/09. This positive figure led to the rest of the figures in this section being above target for the quarter, and above those for the equivalent period in the previous year.

For the year in total the audience numbers remained below those for the previous year, reflective of the change to the programming policy, and this adversely affected the subsidy figures.

### 6.2.3 Capacity

The capacity of the Main House is generally 503 seats, with 427 for a film set up. In the Studio it is 84 seats. The number of seats sold as a percentage of capacity gives another view on the success or otherwise of The Castle's programming.

Ref.	Description	2009/10 annual target	2009/10 year end	2009/10 4th Quarter	Against	
					08/9	target
<b>C6</b>	Percentage of house capacity	60%	57%	57%	52%	60%

**Comment:** This is the key statistic that underlines the return to profitability of The Castle. Both the fourth quarter figure and the total year figure of 57% capacity were a significant improvement on the previous year, and justified the decision to prioritise programming of popular work, and concentrate the programming into the most commercial time slots.

### 6.2.4 Participation

The main target here is to maximise the numbers of workshops and classes, and their participants. In addition, targets relate to participation onstage through hiring, participation of young people under the age of 16 years, and general attendance for meetings, events and conferences.

Ref.	Description	2009/10 annual target	2009/10 year end	2009/10 4th Quarter	Against	
					08/9	Target
<b>C7</b>	Number of participants: a) involved in artistic participatory activities run at or by The Castle	14300	11823	3187	3825	4576
<b>C8</b>		7000		1213		

	b) involved in amateur and schools performances		4241		4017	1750
<b>C9</b>	c) under the age of 16 yrs	40000	37939	6228	7834	10000
<b>C10</b>	Number of participants in general activities (meetings, conferences, Waendel Walk etc)	11900	13709	1754	2838	1800

**Comment:** The Castle continues to run a series of 23 regular in-house classes per week, in addition to a further 7 in partnership with external providers. Attendances for these are slightly down on the previous year, however the overall figures are down largely reflecting attendances for two 2009 projects that did not happen in 2010.

Of great success in January was the second annual Regional Youth Theatre Festival, which attracted 14 Youth theatres from Northampton, Leicester, Nottingham and Peterborough as well as from Wellingborough. Successful funding applications allowed a large number of professional workshops from experienced companies in this area of work covering subjects such as stage combat, play writing, mask making, and improvisation. In addition to this there were 11 performances from the young people themselves. The total number of young people involved in this project rose from 270 in 2009, to 444 in 2010.

The family day concept is now fully embedded into The Castle's programme during each half term, with the February event attracted 298 participants.

In March the entire Youth Theatre performed a devised piece of work called Hush in the Studio Theatre, exploring the themes of listening and communicating in a busy world.

The first major participation project of 2010/11 was DAPA, The Castle's Disability and Performing Arts Festival, which took place during the week commencing 17 May, featuring a full week of workshops and a Community showcase.

The increase in numbers of general participants over the year was mainly due to the success of the 30<sup>th</sup> Waendel Walk in May 2009. However, other areas of general activities participation such as business meetings and seminars have been particularly hard hit by the recession.

### 6.3 Artistic & Community Programme

There were many artistic highlights during in the fourth quarter, including the visits from Oddsocks, Opera Della Luna, 2 Faced Dance Company, "Jus Like That" (a tribute to Tommy Cooper), a half week of Dinnerladies, and Lesley Joseph appearing in "Hot Flush." Three local groups put on week-long productions of Mother Goose, Gigi, and the Gang Show, and in addition 20 films were shown in the quarter.

A further highlight of the quarter was a week-long run of *"The World Goes*

*Round*", directed by Nik Ashton (The Castle's Artistic Director). This production brought top quality professional singers to Wellingborough, to perform a celebration of the music of Kander and Ebb, the writers behind musicals such as Cabaret and Chicago. The production was generously supported by The Friends of the Castle.

As can be seen from these programme highlights, whilst changes have been made to programme more popular works, the quality of the programme has been maintained. There were also a number of excellent participation projects that continued to enhance the reputation of The Castle throughout the region.

#### 6.4 **Future Initiatives**

Highlights of the forthcoming summer programme include the Community Production of "*A Midsummer Nights Dream*", performances of "*Dangerous Liaisons*" and "*The Caretaker*", and a 15<sup>th</sup> birthday celebration concert to be directed by Nik Ashton. Promotion has also started for the 2010 Christmas production of Robin Hood.

Over the past three months team of Officers from both the Borough Council and The Castle have been working together on a proposal to bring in Cultural Olympiad funding for a Wellingborough-wide outreach project. Should this application prove successful this project would take place over the summer of 2011 culminating with a large outdoor celebration.

At this stage it should be noted that the Corby Cube, offering a community theatre programme, will be opening later this year and this may impact on the audience and attendance figures for The Castle.

#### 6.5 **Summary**

Summing up the financial year, The Castle achieved a positive turnaround of over £100,000, from a loss of £77,800 in 2008/09 to a profit of £37,000, for 2009/10. This is despite the reduction in audiences, and ticket sales. The reasoning behind the positive changes to the programme has been documented in previous reports throughout the year, and it is particularly pleasing to be able to record that the progress was maintained for the full 12 months.

These figures are taken from the informal Management Accounts for the 12 months to 31 March 2010. The formal, audited accounts will be available to the Borough Council at a later date.

Looking ahead to 2010-11, the challenge continues to be that of maintaining quality and increasing the artistic output in order to maximise profitability. Budgets will be set to realise a profit of £15,000 for 2010/11. This realistic target is set within the context of reduced funding from the Northamptonshire County Council.

## 7 **Legal Powers**

Local Government Act 2000.

## 8 Financial and Value For Money Implications

- 8.1 A sum to cover the management fees has been included within the estimates for 2010/11. The tendering process for contract renewal is ongoing.
- 8.2 The Castle Ltd has experienced some cash flow difficulties during the previous and present years owing, principally, to the effects of the economic downturn. The management of these issues has been the subject of a series of reports to the Resources Committee.

## 9 Risk Analysis

<b>Nature of risk</b>	<b>Consequences if realised</b>	<b>Likelihood of occurrence</b>	<b>Control measures</b>
Facilities and management not provided as per contract specification	Unsatisfactory service to the public	Low	Development of robust and appropriate monitoring systems
Inappropriate development of programme	Public dissatisfaction	Low	Development of evidence-based programme responding to needs of the community
Breakdown of relationship between Borough Council and contractor	Contract not delivered in line with Borough Council objectives	Low	Regular progress meetings and discussions between the 2 parties. High level of communication
Decisions made about the future of the castle based upon insufficient knowledge	Poor decision making	Medium	Frequent briefings with Members and Officers
Inability to plan for the future	Possible legal challenge to organisational sustainability	Medium	Castle Advisory Panel to work with The Castle Board to agree action plan

## 10 Implications for Resources

Monitoring of contract has been absorbed into the work of the Neighbourhood Development Service.

## **11 Implications for Stronger and Safer Communities**

Arts and cultural facilities provide a safe and controlled environment in which the community can undertake healthy and social activities. Arts programmes can also assist in providing diversionary activities and reduced anti-social behaviour.

## **12 Implications for Equalities**

The Castle has policies in place to ensure equality of opportunity, ensuring that activities and employment opportunities at their sites are accessible to the whole community.

## **13 Author and Contact Officer**

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## **14 Consultees**

Terry Wright, Corporate Executive; Carole Stephenson, Head of Neighbourhood Development; Paula Armstrong, Arts Development Officer; Michael Quinn, Management Accountant, Ishmail Saccoh, Management Accountant.

## **15 Background Papers**

Monthly PIs and other correspondence held on Cultural Development files.

