

# **CORPORATE MARKETING**

REVIEW



**2011/12**

## **CONTENTS**

---

- 1. Introduction – p. 3**
- 2. Remit of Review – p. 4**
- 3. Current Marketing and Promotional Operations – pp. 5-9**
- 4. Challenging the Current Service – pp. 10-13**
- 5. The Action Plan – pp. 14-17**
- 6. Conclusions and the Way Forward – p. 18**

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

---

At the Policy and Resources Committee meeting of the 31<sup>st</sup> October 2011, Members requested that a panel be set up to look at marketing of the Council's services with a view to boosting its income and making the public more generally aware of its services. The Council was keen to emphasise that the review should not be as in-depth or as detailed as a former 'Best Value' review, but rather make recommendations to improve the service generally.

The Review Panel has met on four occasions between December 2011 and June 2012 and has consisted of the following personnel:

- ◆ Councillor Roy Abraham - Chesham Town Council
- ◆ Councillor Jane Bramwell - Chesham Town Council
- ◆ Councillor Patricia Cherrill - Chesham Town Council
- ◆ Councillor Peter Hudson - Chesham Town Council
- ◆ Councillor Fred Wilson - Chesham Town Council
- ◆ Bill Richards – Town Clerk, Chesham Town Council
- ◆ Kathryn Graves – Policy & Projects Officer, Chesham Town Council

The panel has also been assisted by Mark Barnes, Elgiva Centre Manager; Mick Carling and Trevor Pilling, Elgiva Board of Management; Danny Essex, Chesham Moor Gym & Swim Manager; Sue Hutcheson, Friends of Chesham Moor Gym & Swim and Maria McGwynn, Administration Manager.

While not all the Panel members have been able to attend all the meetings, the mixture of Members, section heads and 'Friends' has played an important role in drawing together a coherent plan to improve marketing across the Council in the panel's opinion.

## **2. REMIT OF REVIEW**

---

The panel identified three major areas for review: the Elgiva, Chesham Moor Gym & Swim and the Town Hall. It was noted that Councillor Hudson was currently working with the Friends of Chesham Moor Gym & Swim to review their marketing arrangements and that the Elgiva Board of Management is also reviewing the Elgiva's marketing strategy. It was therefore suggested that these reviews should feed into the work of this panel in order to avoid duplication. This review would be able to have input into the individual centres' reviews, but would be carrying out a top-level review to create a strategy for Chesham Town Council as a whole.

It was also accepted that it is important that the review did not become an exercise in micro-managing, but that the panel should be able to question and constructively challenge the current marketing arrangements.

Other specific areas such as use of the Council's arch and 'virtual' mediums for general promotions such as social media sites were also agreed to be considered.

### **3. CURRENT MARKETING AND PROMOTIONAL OPERATIONS**

---

#### **1. Town Hall**

The Town Hall has a small advertising budget of £200. This year, the Administration Manager has focused on promotion of the Lowndes Suite as a wedding venue due to the decline in bookings in recent years. £190 was spent on placing a 1/8<sup>th</sup> advert in “Celebrating Buckinghamshire”, which is a glossy brochure supplied to all prospective brides and grooms who have contacted the Bucks Registry Offices.

£375 was spent on a ½ page advert for the Town Hall in the Town Guide, as a good-will gesture to support the production of the Town Guide.

All other promotion is conducted in-house, in the form of leaflets and posters, which are displayed in the Town Hall and on the Council’s notice boards. The Town Hall facilities are detailed on the Town Council web site.

#### **2. Elgiva**

##### **(a) School book bags**

Agreements made with surrounding schools for flyers for selected children’s shows to go home via the school bag system. This is to be expanded to schools in Hemel Hempstead, particularly where we already have a relationship via panto group bookings. Postage costs will continue to be carefully monitored and flyers are delivered by hand where appropriate. Nursery schools will now be included where appropriate.

##### **(b) Leaflet displays**

Literature holders have been purchased at low cost and supplies of “What’s On” guides distributed to the shops that have agreed to accept them. A list is held to ensure that they are kept up to date. This will be regularly reviewed.

##### **(c) Library displays**

Staff have started utilising display space free of charge in Chesham Library. So far this has been generally used to promote children’s shows and cinema but can be used to promote other forthcoming events and will be useful for panto. Officers will discuss with Amersham Library if a similar display space is available.

##### **(d) General box office marketing**

Full use of the marketing package to promote forthcoming shows. Cinema listings regularly produced; to be included again in the Bucks Examiner listings. New poster displays units purchased. Publicity material kept up to date on displays through the town. Shows/films advertised in the foyer. Stewards requested to hand out flyers after performances. Generic banner installed on display outside the theatre to advertise cinema, café, etc. Excellent relationship restored with local press with significantly more coverage now being given.

Theatre web site kept up to date; income regularly in excess of 30% seen from on line bookings.

(e) Town Hall

A large display area is offered to The Elgiva in the Town Hall Reception area.

(f) External web sites

Providing weekly updates of Elgiva information to various web sites, including Ents 24, Netmums, Info@berko, etc.

(g) Web Site

Web site hosting, service agreement and domain name cost £54.97 per year. Staff time for maintaining the web site is not recorded.

(h) What's On guides

Three annual issues of 156,000 copies. Costs cover design, print, Royal Mail door to door, postage for other mailing list. Revenue realized for advertising in all copies to offset costs. This equates to 17.9p per brochure.

(i) Panto advertising

The panto has its own budget for advertising which is outlined later in the report.

### 3. Chesham Moor Gym & Swim

Advertising for the Gym & Swim centre is based upon the placement of adverts and the production of timetables and flyers. Advertising is largely organised by a volunteer from the Friends of Chesham Moor Gym & Swim. The centre has its own web site, recently redesigned, which is managed in-house with the help of the web designer.

### 4. Cemetery

There is no active marketing of the Cemetery, although details regarding the procedure for interments and fitting headstones are provided on the Town Council web site. A leaflet is available from the Town Hall by request.

### 5. Lowndes Park

A marketing strategy for Lowndes Park was devised in 2011, acknowledging that the park has no marketing budget and limited staff resources. The marketing of the park is currently largely dependent on an in-house leaflet and map and information on the Town Council web site. The Friends of Lowndes Park also contribute to the promotion of the park through their activities and web site [www.lowndespark.org.uk](http://www.lowndespark.org.uk).

There is now the potential to market the park as a venue for hire now that the Council has set a new hire fee for the park.

The Bands in the Park concert season has its own small marketing budget of £100, which is spent on the production of flyers and posters.

## **6. Football Pitches**

There is no active marketing of the football pitches. Information is provided within the Town Guide each year and provided on the Town Council web site.

## **7. Town Council Publications**

### **(a) Town Crier**

The Town Crier is a four-page A4 insert into the biannual Town Talk magazine, which is delivered door-to-door in Chesham and is also available from the Town Hall and the Library. Each issue costs the Council £790. A PDF is made available on the Town Council web site.

### **(b) Council Newsletter**

The Council Newsletter is produced biannually, although the schedule has been irregular and the delivery has been patchy, with the main method of distribution being collection from the Town Hall. A PDF is made available from the Town Council web site. Discussions have been held with the publisher to improve distribution and timeliness of publication.

### **(c) Town Guide**

The Town Guide is a c.80-page glossy A5 publication, produced in conjunction with the Chesham Chamber of Trade and Commerce by BPC/Exclusive Magazines. Produced annually, with a variable publication date, the guide is distributed door-to-door in Chesham and contains editorial information about the Town Council's services and facilities. The Town Guide is produced free-of-charge, although historically we have purchased a half-page advert to support the publication.

### **(d) yourChesham**

Each month the Town Council provides a c.550 word article on Council matters for this monthly publication, which is delivered free-of-charge throughout Chesham and the surrounding villages and is also available online.

## **8. Town Council Web Site**

The Town Council web site contains information on all the Town Council services and facilities, with links to the Elgiva and Chesham Moor Gym & Swim web sites.

Over the last 6 months, the web site has received 15,355 visits, which averages out at 2,559 visits per month. The costs for the web site are as follows:

Hosting - £400 per year

Support Contract - £100 per year

Domain name registration - £75 every two years

We are in a three year contract with E-Mango, which expires in 2013.

## 9. Local Produce Market

The majority of advertising for the local produce market is achieved free of charge through local web sites, the Town Council web site and in-house produced flyers and posters. All other activities that have costs associated with them, e.g. the re-usable banners and signs, are paid for out of the pitch fees collected from the market traders. The organisers are currently looking to develop an independent web site for the market.

### Budgets and Expenditure

The main expenditure for the current year is outlined below and split between departments. However, there is some expenditure on marketing activities that is not recorded and allocated to marketing, e.g. cost of in-house photocopying of flyers, posters, some staff time on marketing activities, staff time on web site maintenance, some postage costs, etc.

#### Civic

Budget 2011/12 = £2,070

Expenditure:

Newsletters	£1,580
Town Guide Advert	£375

#### Town Hall

Budget 2011/12 = £200

Web budget = £500

Expenditure:

Advert	£190
Web	£500

#### Pantomime

Budget 2011/12 = £5,100

Expenditure:

Primary Times	£75
Bucks Examiner Adverts	£540
Banners	£295
Car magnets	£85
Flyers/Posters	£800
Press night	£1,000

#### Elgiva

Budget 2011/12 = £25,625

Postage budget = £8,700

Expenditure:

Web site	£54.97
What's On	£23,635
What's On delivery	£8,700

**Gym & Swim**

Budget 2011/12 = £5,500

Expenditure:

Adverts	£1,146.50
Timetables & price lists	£1,284
Posters and flyers	£529

**Local Produce Market**

No formal budget.

Expenditure:

12 signs & 4 banners	£330
----------------------	------

**Bands in the Park**

Budget 2011/12 = £100

Expenditure:

Flyers	£115
--------	------

## **4. CHALLENGING THE CURRENT SERVICE**

At the panel meeting held on the 9<sup>th</sup> February 2012, the service heads of the Elgiva, Chesham Moor Gym & Swim and the Town Hall, together with representatives from Friends group who assisted with marketing, were asked to give presentations on their existing marketing initiatives and challenged as to whether these could be improved or indeed were necessary.

### **Town Hall**

The Administration Manager explained that the marketing objectives were defined as:

- ensuring that all Chesham people are aware of the services that are offered
- maximising the use of the Town Hall (particularly weekends and weddings)
- covering the running costs
- reducing the 'subsidy'

One of the panel members questioned why the Town Council has a Town Hall as the level of use for council purposes is limited and the building costs money to run. The panel member suggested that an alternative would be to sell the Town Hall and rent office space, whilst holding Council/Committee meetings at venues around the town. Part of this line of reasoning also requires us to consider whether the Council should be providing subsidised facilities for community groups as it currently does through its room hire. The panel agreed this was a legitimate question but one that the Town Council, rather than the panel should be addressing and making recommendations upon.

In respect to the cost of room hire, the Administration Manager stated that the hire fees were competitive with other comparable venues in town, particularly when the 25% discount for block bookings was claimed. However not all the panel agreed.

In order to maximise the number of bookings, the Administration Manager is overseeing the standard of maintenance of the Town Hall with on-going work to replace the carpets, decor and furniture. Wi-fi has been introduced to the Town Hall to facilitate conference and business bookings at a one-off cost of £200.

Future plans for advertising and increasing revenue include the addition of adverts to the Town Council web site following a site re-design, social networking, featuring the regular bookings at the Town Hall in a 'What's On' section of the Town Council web site and creating a leaflet targeting small businesses. The Administration Manager has included a 'Where did you hear about us?' section on the booking form to find out about what advertising methods are working. Currently the most common response to this question is 'word of mouth'.

## The Elgiva

The Theatre Manager reported that it has a comparatively large marketing budget, which is mainly spent on the production of 53,000 'What's On' guides produced three times a year. 47,000 of these are sent by Royal Mail to 16 postcodes; reports indicate that the Elgiva gets the most uptake for shows from these areas. The cost for the 'What's On' is 17.4 p per brochure. The 'What's On' is also available on [www.elgiva.com](http://www.elgiva.com). Paper 'What's On's are delivered to all the local community centres.

The panel questioned whether it was necessary to have such a wide distribution and whether it was necessary to have three editions per year when electronic marketing was becoming more prevalent. The Manager replied that while advertising through e-mails was undoubtedly the way forward, he pointed out that the Elgiva holds 28,851 customer client cards, but only circa 8,000 email addresses, which have taken a long time to collate. Therefore, it will be a few years before it will be possible to email out the brochure. He further advised that he has considered reducing the number of 'What's On' per year to two, but it is not possible to programme that far ahead to accurately include all the shows and films in the guides.

Questioned by the panel on advertising revenue to reduce costs, the Manager reported that he has looked at increasing the amount of advertising in the brochure, but selling advertising is very difficult in the present economic climate. Also, increasing the number of pages will increase the brochure weight which could increase delivery costs. He reported he has decided against putting premium adverts in between the first page and the shows in the past, but this is open for discussion.

The panel then asked about progress with other forms of advertising. It was reported that Mick Carling, who has a professional marketing and promotions background, has offered to help with social networking. The former editor of the Bucks Examiner is also volunteering an hour a week to help with social media in relation to Twitter. The Manager further advised that email marketing is good for targeting specific shows, but there is a cost associated with this form of marketing, which he is looking at. He also maintains a separate email list for promoting films. SMS marketing costs 8p per text, so this is not used. The web site is proving popular with circa 30% of bookings now made online. It is planned to start taking paid advertising on the web site. Elgiva shows are also promoted on a number of external web sites.

One of the panel members stated that he did not find the web site user friendly for finding out what shows are on and suggested that the navigation could be improved. It was also recommended getting volunteers who have not used the site before to look round the site and provide feedback.

In regard to the media, the Elgiva has a good relationship with the Bucks Examiner, who is the pantomime sponsor. The Manager usually gets show adverts for free in the What's On section of the paper. The coverage in the Bucks Free Press is considered poor, but good in the Hemel Gazette.

The Manager then advised on other advertising as follows:

- Children's shows and the pantomime are promoted to primary schools.
- The Elgiva has a ticket and restaurant deal with the Chesham Tandoori.
- There is exit targeting with leaflets after shows.
- The banners outside the Elgiva are only useful during the day and will require lighting to make them visible at night.
- Future plans include the possible installation of an LED sign in the town centre, increasing email marketing, the development of a loyalty scheme, chargeable school tours of the theatre and promoting the Elgiva as a film and TV location.

Having noted that data from the booking system shows that the behaviour of customers is changing, with a tendency towards last minute purchases, a panel member suggested that this could be capitalised upon by providing content for 'YourChesham', which goes door-to-door for free each month.

It was also suggested that the pool's swimming timetable could be sent out with the Elgiva's material.

## **Chesham Moor Gym and Swim Centre**

Councillor Hudson explained that the centre is now in its first year of having a structured marketing plan. The Friends committee are doing the bulk of the advertising, PR and day-to-day marketing tasks. The marketing plan aims to increase general awareness of the centre, to increase footfall and to develop a customer relationship database with regular communications to current and potential users.

The web site has been reviewed to improve functionality and search visibility. There is a lot of visitor traffic, with 10,500 visitors between April and August. The marketing plan is focusing on email marketing with regular email alerts and links to web sites. A database of email addresses is being built up, with circa 800 addresses at present. Facebook and Twitter are also being used.

The Friends will focus on a small number of key events or days over the next year to maximise promotion for the pool.

A basic marketing kit will be put together, including leaflets, posters and car stickers.

The panel then enquired about promotion of the gym. The Manager explained that they are developing unique selling points to make them stand out from other gyms locally, including new marketing deals such as the 10-session gym card. Wi-fi has been installed to encourage people to stay at the centre for longer and increase their secondary spend.

The centre is developing links with the Bagnall Centre in Waterside, which will cater for people with low mobility, who will ultimately move on to regular gyms.

One of the panel members suggested that local slimming groups could be targeted with special promotions.

The panel then briefly discussed other corporate and niche marketing opportunities such as the town arch and town centre LED sign and requested that they also be included in an action plan along with promotion of the Local Produce Market run jointly with Transition Town Chesham.

## 5. THE ACTION PLAN

---

The Panel, together with the service managers and associated 'Friends' have put forward a number of suggestions for an action plan designed to lead to improvement to both general and specific service marketing and income generation.

### General

PROPOSAL	RECOMMEND FOR ADOPTION?	TIMETABLE
Establish meetings between the people responsible for marketing the three facilities to ensure cross-promotion and sharing of ideas	<b>YES</b>	July 2012 onwards twice yearly.
Consider installation of a town centre LED sign	<b>To be determined. Initial estimates suggest £15-20k, so external funding will be required. It was agreed that a local bus company be approached to see if some joint system can be implemented.</b>	Initial discussions with possible supplier have commenced and enquiries made with the Public Transport section of Bucks County Council.
Improve town arch and its uses for publicity	<b>YES - A local produce market banner has been permanently erected on the arch. It was agreed to investigate the feasibility of hanging a banner horizontally across the arch, which would include the need to pay a staff member a retainer to be on call 24-h-a-day in line with Transport for Bucks' requirements.</b>  <b>The arch will be washed by the Parks department when the jubilee bunting is erected.</b>	Arch to be cleaned early June 2012.  Transport for Bucks have been asked for feasibility and safety requirements for permanent banners erected across the arch.  The arch was cleaned in June 2012.
Refresh Council's web site as current design over 4 years old.	<b>YES – with possible paid advertising.</b>	Discussions started with Council's web site company, to gain some examples of current town council web site designs.
Develop a marketing strategy for the town.	<b>YES – achieve via a short, facilitated workshop using local expertise.</b>	From August 2012.

Promote Lowndes Park as a venue for hire	<b>YES</b>	Winter 2012
--	------------	-------------

### The Elgiva

<b>PROPOSAL</b>	<b>RECOMMEND FOR ADOPTION?</b>	<b>TIMETABLE</b>
Look at a web site redesign	<b>YES</b>	The Manager has begun the process with help from Elgiva Board member
Start paid advertising on <a href="http://www.elgiva.com">www.elgiva.com</a>	<b>YES</b>	A free advert for Chesham Moor Gym & Swim has been created for the web site as an example for potential advertisers.
Review how frequently the What's On & other literature are delivered to town centre outlets	<b>YES</b>	'What's On' and other literature is now being delivered round the town on a weekly basis.
Installation of lighting for external banners	<b>YES – subject to costs</b>	The Manager hoping to have something in place before clocks go back in Autumn 2012 subject to costs.
Change the shape of the banners and invest in a large sign to emphasise the theatre, film & cafe elements of the facility.	<b>YES – monies in budget</b>	New generic banner now on display.
Provide monthly content for 'YourChesham'	<b>YES</b>	The Manager to set up meeting with editor in next two months.
Theatre & restaurant deal to be extended to other restaurants in town.	<b>YES</b>	The Manager to begin discussions with other restaurants .
The development of a loyalty scheme	<b>YES</b>	Proposed 'Elgiva Elite' package to be consulted on Elgiva Board June 2012 .
Promotion of the Elgiva as a film and TV location	<b>YES</b>	To begin with help from Elgiva Board - Autumn 2012 .
Chargeable school and other group tours of the theatre	<b>YES</b>	Early 2013.

## Chesham Moor Gym and Swim Centre

PROPOSAL	RECOMMEND FOR ADOPTION?	TIMETABLE
Investigate wi-fi installation for public/business use	YES	Installed April 2012.
Develop links with Slimming World/Weight Watchers	<b>NO - Slimming World and Weight Watchers are not allowed to promote specific businesses, although the Gym &amp; Swim is promoted by word of mouth by attendees at these classes.</b>	
A basic marketing kit to be put together, including leaflets, posters and car stickers	YES	On-going.
Focus by Friends on a small number of key events or days over the next year to maximise promotion for the pool.	YES	Friends organised very successful Centenary Event at centre in May.

## Town Hall

PROPOSAL	RECOMMEND FOR ADOPTION?	TIMESCALE
Sell the Town Hall and rent office space, whilst holding Council/Committee meetings at venues around the town thus negating need to market venue	<b>NO – such a decision to be made by Council as a whole.</b>	
Development of a “What’s On at the Town Hall” page on <a href="http://www.chesham.gov.uk">www.chesham.gov.uk</a>	YES	Initiated April 2012.
Inclusion of “Where did you hear about us?” section on the Town Hall booking form	YES	Completed April 2012.
Investigate the addition of adverts to the Town Council web site	YES	Currently being investigated though agreed web site should be re-designed first (see general marketing above).
Creation of a banner advert for the Town Hall on the Local Chesham web site	YES	Autumn 2012.

Investigate the development of a discounted wedding package with local service providers	<b>NO - as the Council could not be seen to be favouring certain businesses. However, it was suggested that Town Hall could create a brochure of its wedding services and invite local providers to include offers and adverts. The fact that the premises' current licence for civil ceremonies ends in 2013 may have a bearing on the decision to progress this.</b>	
Provide daily posts on Twitter and Facebook of the day's activities at the Town Hall.	<b>YES – The Facebook account has 27 followers and the Twitter account has 284 followers.</b>	Initiated May 2012.

#### Local Produce Market

<b>PROPOSAL</b>	<b>RECOMMEND FOR ADOPTION ?</b>	<b>TIMESCALE</b>
Improve signage.	<b>YES - four new town centre banners and 12 new lamp post signs that will be put up across town and taken down each month have been commissioned. These supplement the four stand alone signs used at the main entrances into Chesham</b>	Implemented April 2012.
Open designated Twitter and Facebook pages	<b>YES - The Twitter account currently has 164 followers and the Facebook page has 59 followers.</b>	On-going.
Develop a web site for Chesham Local Produce Market	<b>YES</b>	By Winter 2012.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS AND THE WAY FORWARD

---

The panel confirmed that they were happy with the direction that the review has taken and agreed that this document be presented to the Policy and Resources Committee as a working document with cross party support. However it was also agreed that marketing updates should continue to be reported, either through emails or by report to a committee. The updates will enable councillors to be kept regularly informed as well as encouraging continued activities in this area.

The panel was of the view that if the improved marketing efforts have seen an increase in income to the extent that the service areas have come under budget, it would be good to have the flexibility to reward the service area with funds that could be used for marketing in its broadest sense. It was noted that there was some precedent for this at the Elgiva when the Elgiva Board of Management had been allowed to ring-fence monies, provided the use of the money is signed off by the Policy and Resources Committee. It was agreed to include this as a recommendation within the final document.