



**Date:** 16 April 2018

**Title:** Online payments, bookings and ticketing

**Purpose of the Report:** To provide the Committee with an update in respect of Objective 8 in the Town Council's Three Year Plan (2015-2018).

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<b>Corporate Objective/s</b>	8: investigate and develop online payments and bookings for all Council services.	
<b>Implications:</b>		
<b>Financial</b>	X	
<b>Human Resources</b>	X	
<b>Operational/Service delivery</b>	√	
<b>Procedural/Legal</b>	X	
<b>Risk/Health &amp; Safety</b>	X	

## 1.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

1.1 To note the report.

## 2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 At its meeting on 27 April 2015, the Town Council adopted a Three Year Plan containing 33 objectives for the period 2015-2018.

2.2 At a subsequent meeting of the Town Council on 25 January 2016, it was agreed to update the Three Year Plan to include a number of residual objectives contained within the parish plan, "Big Plan II".

2.3 Committee work streams since 2015 have therefore had a keen focus on achieving the objectives agreed by Council within the Three Year Plan.

2.4 Objective number 8 within the plan was as follows: to investigate and develop online payments and bookings for all Council services.

### **3.0 ONLINE PAYMENTS**

- 3.1 At its meeting held on 18 September 2017, the Committee received a report with various project updates. This included confirmation that the Council was now accepting payments by WorldPay.
- 3.2 On receipt of a request to pay by this method, details are sent out using an email link. Alternatively if the customer is present, payment can be taken there and then via the internet or for Astral Park, via a portable terminal (card reader).
- 3.3 In the period 1 February 2017 – 31 January 2018, a total of 213 card transactions were processed at Astral Park using the portable terminal, plus 8 online payments. In addition, 61 payments were taken at the White House for other bookings or services.
- 3.4 Costs for use of the WorldPay service include a monthly service fee, a monthly rental fee for the portable terminal and a percentage transaction fee. However, these costs are offset by savings in officer time and bank charges for processing cash and cheques. The number of transactions over the past year clearly demonstrates the customer need for this service and allows the Town Council to collect payments in a more timely fashion.
- 3.5 In addition to the WorldPay service, the Town Council has seen a marked increase in the number of automated credits direct into the bank (for example, from event exhibitors, hall hirers, cemetery customers, allotment holders). As well as representing a saving in officer time in processing cash and cheques, this change has also resulted in more payments being received in a timely fashion and therefore a reduction in time spent on chasing outstanding payments.

### **4.0 ONLINE BOOKINGS**

- 4.1 On the opening of Astral Park in 2014, a software package was purchased for the processing of bookings. One of the primary factors in the choice of system was compatibility with the Council's financial software and therefore the ease of generating invoices and processing hire payments.
- 4.2 The bookings software is now used to process all facilities bookings including meeting rooms, pavilions and sports pitches.
- 4.3 At the time of developing the Three Year Plan and Objectives for 2015-2018, it was envisaged that rather than staff having to manually process all bookings, it might be feasible to move towards an automated process of booking online via the websites.
- 4.4 As reported to Committee on 18 September 2017, officers have reviewed potential for online bookings. Due to the complexities inherent in the booking of both meeting spaces and sports pitches, it was agreed that processing by officers was essential, enabling a "sense check" to take place and allowing an amount of flexibility in determining the right solution for each booking. This applies equally to sports pitches, for example when weather conditions might impact a decision

on which pitch to use, or for pavilion bookings, particularly in the case of Astral Park with its variations of room configurations.

- 4.5 At the present time therefore, there is no intention to progress the potential for online bookings any further.
- 4.6 Should it be the case, in future, that online bookings appear to be more feasible – for example with development of the websites or any potential change in software – then this will be re-examined.

## **5.0 E-TICKETING**

- 5.1 During the review of online bookings, it was agreed that there was merit in trialling e-ticketing on a limited basis, for Mayoral events or other activities.
- 5.2 An account has now been set up with website Eventbrite to trial e-ticketing for the Mayor's James Goff concert in April 2018. It is envisaged that we will try this again for future Mayoral fundraising events to see whether the convenience factor helps ticket sales.
- 5.3 Although there is no cost to set up, Eventbrite charges a percentage of ticket sales. This is usually covered by the event organiser by adding a "booking fee". While this results in a slightly higher cost to the purchaser, they are able to benefit from the convenience of booking at any time and of paying by card, rather than having to go to a specific place during set times to pay by cash or cheque.
- 5.4 E-ticketing for other Council activities such as the holiday activities offered by TACTIC and Astral Park is also under consideration. A number of factors will be taken into account including the cost of the activity and likely type of customer. E-ticketing will not be appropriate in some cases.
- 5.5 Encouraging third parties providing activities on our behalf to offer e-ticketing could also be beneficial in some circumstances. Booking direct with the provider would avoid the necessity for Town Council staff to process people's personal details or handle monies for those bookings.
- 5.6 It is envisaged that a further report will be brought back to Committee towards the end of the year to provide an update on any e-ticketing trial activity.

**End.**