

Decision under Delegated Powers

Officer Requesting Decision

Nigel Strong, Town Hall Manager

Officer Making the Decision

Geoff Parker, Chief Executive

Recommendations

- That the post of Visitor Service Centre Assistant L413 is deleted, 92.5hrs
- That a new post of Box Office Assistant Scale 3 is created (three posts each with 18.5hrs a week)
- That the post of Art Gallery Assistant Scale 3 is created (one full-time post)

Reasons

To ensure that the service provided by the Town Hall's Visitor Service Centre delivers the needs of the customers and also comes within the required budgets.

To ensure that the venue's Art Gallery continues to develop and expand allowing it to generate a profitable income stream and subsequently reducing the subsidy required by the venue.

Authority for Decision

The Council's Constitution includes a delegation to the Council's Chief Executive as Head of Paid Service to: agree changes to the establishment, within budget and without major service or policy implications, affecting no more than five posts (irrespective of their post number) in any single case (item 6 on page 3-25).

Decision and Date

Background

The Chief Executive has stated that he wishes the organisation to be more dynamic and more responsive to changing national circumstances such as the economic climate, government policy and models of service delivery.

Loughborough Town Hall has recently undergone major changes in its service delivery ensuring that it is competitive with other leisure facilities within the Borough to provide quality affordable services for the residents and visitors. The results of these changes have seen a 50% reduction in costs over the past four years.

The Visitor Service Centre within LTH primarily operates as a Box Office for the venue taking approximately £800,000 a year selling 86,000 tickets and associated products. For the past eight years, the service has been using a software package which has now grown out of date and following a tender process a new software package will be introduced on the 1st August 2012. This new software will utilise current IT techniques efficiently in all areas including marketing information and techniques. One specific area of improvement will be the growth in online sales which is expected to rise from the current 12% to an estimated 35%.

The new software will open the opportunity for other venue staff to be able to complete sales transactions for incoming telephone enquiries. Historically a licence fee was paid per user and so it restricted the number of selling points that could be available in the venue. This problem will be removed with the new software as there are no licence restrictions. This will mean that other staff with knowledge of the shows and events will be able to assist with the sales volumes at busy times. This will also greatly improve the venue's ability to answer incoming telephone calls improving the customer service and ensuring we deal with them at the first point of contact. See appendix 1 Flow chart of the phone system.

With the increase in online sales and the flexibility over telephone answering an opportunity has arisen to review the existing staffing structure for the service. The service currently has four contracted employees (92.5hrs a week in total) and a pool of casual assistants. The standard existing rota has two employees on the counter at any one time and increases to three at peak periods, such as during the pantomime. These changes and the drop in customers purchasing tickets at the counter will allow the number of staff to be reduced. See appendix 2 staffing structures.

In April 2011 the venue closed the café service, returned the bars service to an 'in house' operation and opened a new Art Gallery. This change in service has proved to be a great success in supporting local artists with a place to display their works, providing a vibrant space for customers attending events and also improving the venue's income streams. Sales transactions for the gallery items in the first year have mainly been completed by the existing VSC staff. It was expected that sales within the first year would not warrant a dedicated employee although a trial period of a dedicated gallery assistant was undertaken for three months. Customer interaction within the gallery increased with this dedicated post allowing for improved customer learning which directly resulted in increases in sales volumes. When customers can find out more information about the product and the artist they tend to be more inclined to make a purchase. The business plan for the gallery is now

being expanded following a successful first year to further develop the art range and also the income opportunities.

The reduction in contracted hours required by the Box office will allow for the creation of the contracted hours required by the Gallery. Both the Box Office posts and the Gallery post would have the relevant skills and training to allow cross working so they fully complement each other. Both roles would also continue with the Tourism work which is currently provided offering a service promoting local attractions.

Comments from HR

HR Advisor: Amy Mansfield

Summary of Comments from HR: The organisational change policy has been followed to implement these changes.

Financial Implications

Staff member 'A' redundancy costs £22,636
Staff member 'B' reduction in hours costs £ 5,809
Total costs £28,445

This would be repaid over four years at a figure of £7,000 per year (starting with this current year 2012/13)
Through the new working systems and patterns money would be saved from the following budgets;
T120 A0101 casuals £2k
T130 A0101 casuals £1k
T140 A0101 casuals £2k
T170 A0101 casuals £2k
Total annual savings £7k.

This would repay the costs over four years and then would be a £7k on going saving.

Risk Management

Risk Identified	Likelihood	Impact	Risk Management Actions Planned
Redundancy costs arising from the review	Medium	Medium	Redundancy costs to be funded by savings generated through the new working systems.
Front line staffing moral during the consultation process	Medium	High	The service Manager will closely monitor the moral of staff to ensure the service remains high for the external customer.
That the review is not completed by	Low	High	Timeframe showing key dates for both projects is shown as

Risk Identified	Likelihood	Impact	Risk Management Actions Planned
the time the new software training and implementation takes place.			appendix 4

Key Decision: No

Background Papers: None

Appendix 1 – Telephone system review

Town Hall ticket selling software

Existing

Incoming telephone review for Loughborough Town Hall. The change in the ticket selling software at the Box Office gives the idea opportunity to also review how incoming telephone calls are also dealt with. The number 01509 231914 is advertised as the Box Office and also the Tourism for Charnwood, there is no data on how many calls are for which department.

Existing

In the last financial year there were 19,080 answered calls at the Box Office and 1565 calls which went unanswered (7.5%) making a total of 20,645 incoming calls. The average time it has taken to answer a call was 16 seconds and the average call duration was 1min:39sec.

The system is currently set up as follows;

1. Call comes in to the first desk and rings up to 3 times, if unanswered goes to
2. desk two where again it rings up to three times, if unanswered goes to
3. desk three where again it rings up to three times, if unanswered goes to
4. answering machine where there is an information message and the customer has the option to leave a message should they wish
5. Voice messages are dealt with during less busy times, hopefully within the hour.

Staff who are on duty on desks two or three can retrieve the call from desk instead of waiting for it to come along the route.

If staff are dealing with a customer who is at the counter then that customer takes precedence and the phone is left to ring and ultimately drop onto the answer phone.

The current ticket selling software is on a licence per user agreement which restricts the number of users who can complete transactions at anyone time. Each phone rings for 10 seconds – a total of 30 seconds before the answer phone kicks in.

How the phone is answered at the moment it would depend on which member of staff picks up the phone – there should be one consistent way of answering the phone.

Summary

The number of calls going to the answer phone (7.5%) is not acceptable and we should be aiming towards a 100% rate of answering and dealing with incoming enquiries by telephone. The new systems should look to make full advantage of the venue's resources and the opportunities made available by the new software.

Proposal

Incoming telephone number remains the same at 01509 231914.

The first point of call will be desk one as the existing set up which will be the primary location for the Box Office staff. This will ring for up to five times to allow it to be answered at that point.

If unanswered then the call will be diverted to a mobile handset where it will ring for a further five times. This mobile phone will, during opening hours, be with a trained member of staff who will be able to deal with the sale transaction or enquiry. The list of staff who can hold this handset are, in this order;

Second box office assistant who is on duty	If there is a second Box Office assistant they will take the handset, if they leave for a break or end of shift then they pass on
Gallery assistant	If there is only one Box Office Assistant on duty the Gallery Assistant will take this handset. If the Gallery assistant is busy doing admin duties that means they cannot deal with enquiries they may pass on
Box Office Manager	If both scenarios above cannot deal with the enquiries then this post should take the handset. Should they also be busy ie banking then they may pass to the marketing dept
Marketing team 3 staff	The marketing dept will be the last resort for taking the handset. It is likely that it may be the end of day slot or lunchtime cover where they will need to cover.

This way the mobile phone should always be with a member of staff who is free to answer the call which will result in the unanswered proportion being greatly reduced. The aim will be for a 99% rate of answered calls.

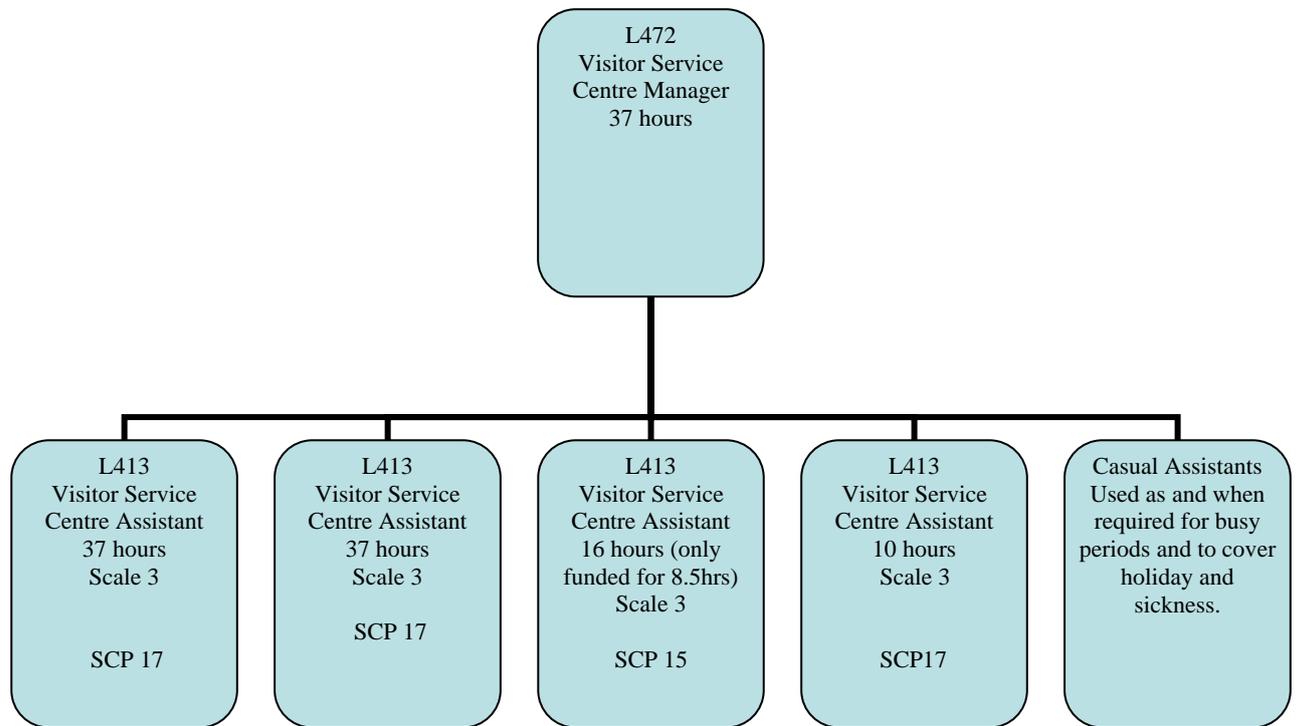
If the mobile handset is not answered or the incoming call is outside opening hours then it will be diverted to the answer phone.

Currently each Box Office phone rings for 10 seconds totalling 30 seconds before the answer phone drops in. This is CBC customer charter and we will need to ensure we match this with the new system.

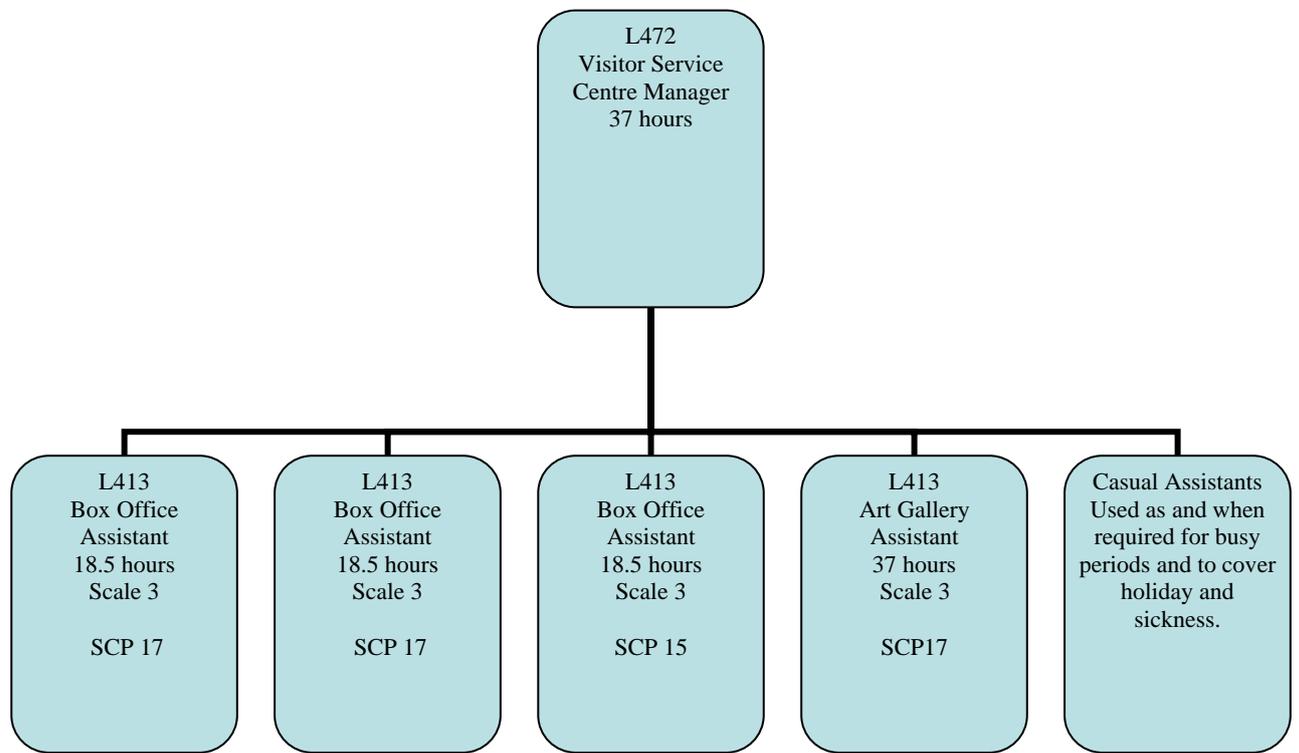
Actions

- Need to investigate handset options to overcome the issues with selling whilst holding a phone.
- Need to purchase the handset
- Need to ensure all staff named above have the ability and training to sell.

Appendix two – Staffing structures
Existing Box Office Staffing Structure



Proposed Box Office Staffing Structure (Summer 2012)



Appendix three - Time line

Event	Timescale / Proposed Date
❖ Start of formal consultation period	Tuesday 3 rd July 2012
❖ Meetings to take place	Team meeting Tuesday 3 rd July 2012 Individual meeting at any point following this date as requested by staff. Mid point meeting Wed 11 th July 2012
❖ Deadline for comparability challenges	13 th July 2012
❖ End of consultation period	Friday 31 st August 2012
❖ Job preference forms to be completed and returned	Friday 10 th August 2012
❖ Selection	Interviews Monday 13 th August 2012
❖ Implementation of new structure	Monday 31 st November 2012

Appendix 4 – Proposed Job Descriptions and Person Specifications

Job Title: Box Office Assistant	Grade: Scale 3
Division: Town Hall	Accountable to: Box Office Manager
Current Postholder:	Responsible for: Nil Staff
Post No: L413	

Purpose of Job:

To be the first point of contact for Loughborough Town Hall providing excellent customer care standards for the user.

To accurately complete sales transactions for the venues products and services ensuring the customer receives excellent care at all times.

To positively promote the venue to all users passing on knowledge and information as and when appropriate.

Duties and Responsibilities

1. To deal with telephone, in person and postal ticket bookings and reservations during scheduled hours, by using the specialised computerised booking system, in an efficient and accurate manner.
2. Keep up to date with our artistic programme so as to effectively advise and sell shows to customers.
3. Maintain customer databases ensuring customer records are kept up to date and within all data protection policies.
4. To complete gallery sales transactions for exhibition pieces and merchandise, by using the specialised computerised booking system, in an efficient and accurate manner.
5. Ensure all products are suitably packaged before leaving the premises and that all the appropriate paperwork has been completed, this may include follow up phone calls to customers to arrange collection of exhibition pieces.
6. Keep up to date with the gallery exhibitions and merchandise and where appropriate provide customers with knowledge of current exhibition and merchandise providers to enable them to gain a deeper understanding of the works and the products available.

7. To actively promote Charnwood as a tourist destination by developing a solid base of general local and tourism knowledge and experience in order to advise the customer including maintaining tourism literature and use of local DMO.
8. Maintain accurate banking records of all cash, cheques and all Credit/Debit card payments. Balance individual daily banking accounts against computerised reports.
9. Keep up to date with all outstanding items that fall within the responsibility of the Box Office. This includes checking all reservations procedures are followed up on a daily basis and will include contacting all customers with outstanding payments due on their accounts.
10. Follow all Venue Procedures at all times as instructed.
11. Attend regular Box Office meetings to gain relevant knowledge and provide valuable feedback on services.
12. To provide reception duties to all customers, staff and visitors. Including administration duties for internal departments and assist with the requirements of external Hirers.
13. To take in, check, sign for and store deliveries and then informing the relevant department.
14. Positively promote the Venue and its program, services and products at all times. Maximising up selling opportunities for the venue. This will include contacting all users and non-users of the Venue either by phone or Email and results to be recorded.
15. Provide marketing assistance to other departments and services including data collection, mail outs and contacting customers.
16. Assist in ensuring all Gallery sale items and all relevant leaflets, posters etc are kept well stocked at all times and everything advertised within the venue is kept up to date and the area is kept clean, tidy and fit for purpose.
17. Assist the theatre FOH department in the maintenance of all necessary fire and Health and Safety regulations and to take emergency action as required in the event of an evacuation or similar event within the venue.
18. To deliver an effective and appropriate service to all customers, fairly and without discrimination.
19. To contribute to the delivery of quality services that are considered 'Best Value' by supporting the monitoring and evaluation of customer satisfaction, user levels and other key performance criteria.

20. As a term of your employment you can be required to undertake such other duties commensurate with your grade, and/or hours of work, as may reasonably be required of you at your initial place of work or at any other of the Authority's establishments.

Note:

This job description outlines the main duties and responsibilities of the position and is designed for the benefit of both the postholder and the Council in understanding the prime functions of the post. It should not be regarded as exclusive nor exhaustive as there may be other duties and requirements associated with and covered by the grading of the post.

This job description is current at May 2012

Management have the right to vary the duties after consultation with you.

Agreed

Human Resources Advisor

PERSON SPECIFICATION

POST: L413 Box Office Assistant

GRADE: Scale 3

DIVISION: Leisure and Environment

CRITERIA	ESSENTIAL	DESIRABLE	HOW IDENTIFIED
Experience	<p>Relevant experience in working with the public in a front-line service environment.</p> <p>Previous sales experience.</p> <p>Previous experience in cash handing and a knowledge of reconciling shifts.</p>	<p>Experience of dealing with a variety of people at different levels in many organisations</p> <p>Experience of working with a complex computerised box office ticketing system.</p> <p>Background of working towards and understanding business targets.</p> <p>Understanding the importance of why Upselling Merchandising experience.</p>	Interview / Application Form
Specialist Knowledge/ Skills	<p>Excellent customer care skills. Must be able to deal with people with empathy, tact and patience.</p> <p>Good standard of IT literacy including a good working knowledge of MS windows.</p> <p>Must have the ability to use the internet effectively and resourcefully.</p>	<p>Knowledge of working with a computerised database.</p> <p>Knowledge of a foreign language.</p> <p>Local knowledge Good UK knowledge</p> <p>Knowledge of the Data Protection Act.</p> <p>Knowledge of the Art industry</p>	Interview / Application Form
Qualifications	GCSEs or equivalent including Maths and English Language	<p>Qualification in customer services e.g. Welcome Host</p> <p>Qualification in Tourism</p>	Certificates

<p>Interpersonal Skills</p>	<p>Able to work cooperatively and supportively as part of a team.</p> <p>Able to work under pressure. Able to cope well with rapid change and difficult customers</p> <p>Excellent organisational skills and the ability to Manage own time efficiently and prioritise work load. Including times when lone working and when working within a team.</p>		<p>Interview</p>
<p>Disposition/Attitude</p>	<p>Essential that the person is of a positive nature.</p> <p>Reliable</p> <p>Flexible and adaptable approach to work, must be able to work at very short notice</p> <p>Must be able to communicate clearly and concisely over the telephone, and face to face in a professional manner.</p> <p>Willingness to undertake training and develop new skills</p>	<p>Resourceful and able to show initiative</p>	<p>Interview</p>
<p>Personal Circumstances</p>	<p>Must be able to work flexible hours, including evenings, weekends and bank holidays</p>		<p>Interview / Application Form</p>

Job Title: Gallery Assistant	Grade: Scale 3
Division: Town Hall	Accountable to: Hire and Special Events Manager
Current Postholder:	Responsible for: Nil Staff
Post No: L413	

Purpose of Job:

To be the first point of contact for Loughborough Town Hall providing excellent customer care standards for the user.

To accurately complete sales transactions for the venues products and services ensuring the customer receives excellent care at all times.

To positively promote the venue to all users passing on knowledge and information as and when appropriate.

Duties and Responsibilities

1. To be the first point of contact for customers to the Galleries ensuring a warm and welcoming greeting is given to all customers. Also that both galleries are suitably presentable at all times including flowers, publicity material, labels and general ambiance.
2. Where appropriate provide customers with knowledge of current exhibitions to enable them to gain a deeper understanding of the works and the products available.
3. Complete sales transactions for exhibition pieces and merchandise, this is to include follow up phone calls to customers to arrange collection of exhibition pieces or specially commissioned work.
4. Ensure all products are suitably packaged before leaving the premises and that the all appropriate paperwork has been completed, this including paperwork for commission of large pieces of work.
5. Liaise with the artist to ensure that where possible any gaps within an exhibition derived from sales are filled with a new product.
6. Where appropriate maximize 'upselling' opportunities through verbal discussion with customers but also through marketing promotions.
7. Assist the H&S Events Manager in promoting the Gallery and its events (inc. the annual Open Exhibition). This through varying forms of marketing including, website, press, flyers and Emarketing techniques.

8. Give assistance towards the website ensuring it is up to date and informative for customers.
9. Give assistance towards the profile of the galleries specifically that it appears on external websites, industry magazines and relevant complimentary venues.
10. Gain information to specific shows/fairs that it would be appropriate to attend to gain knowledge of the industry and products available. This will include attendance at these events.
11. Provide support to the Box Office at peak periods dealing with telephone, in person and reservations by using the specialised computerised booking system, in an efficient and accurate manner.
12. Liaise with potential artists who come into the venue informing them of the policies and procedures should they wish to apply to exhibit.
13. Attend the selection panel meetings and be involved in the selection process and calendar planning of future exhibitions.
14. Attend the meetings with artists, prior to the exhibition, to gain knowledge of their genre, style and as much detail as possible.
15. Assist the Hire and Special Events Manager with incoming artists and exhibitions to ensure: Their inventory matches their exhibition pieces and merchandise supplies agree this with the artist using a consignment form, type up the final inventory to create a sales log for the box office sales, produce display cards for each exhibition piece, create artist profile "takeaway" sheets, create the requisite signage for the coming exhibitions.
16. Provide assistance in organising and delivering the Private views including setting dates, sending out invitations and liaising with FOH.
17. Provide post exhibition support with the outgoing artists including: liaising with the artist for collection and dismantle, stock take and outgoing consignment forms.
18. Keep up to date with our artistic programme so as to effectively advise and sell shows to customers.
19. Maintain accurate banking records of all cash, cheques and all Credit/Debit card payments. Balance individual daily banking accounts against computerised reports.
20. Follow all Venue Procedures at all times as instructed.

21. Attend regular Box Office meetings to gain relevant knowledge and provide valuable feedback on services.
22. To provide reception duties to all customers, staff and visitors. Including administration duties for internal departments and assist with the requirements of external Hirers.
23. Assist the theatre FOH department in the maintenance of all necessary fire and Health and Safety regulations and to take emergency action as required in the event of an evacuation or similar event within the venue.
24. To deliver an effective and appropriate service to all customers, fairly and without discrimination.
25. To contribute to the delivery of quality services that are considered 'Best Value' by supporting the monitoring and evaluation of customer satisfaction, user levels and other key performance criteria.
26. As a term of your employment you can be required to undertake such other duties commensurate with your grade, and/or hours of work, as may reasonably be required of you at your initial place of work or at any other of the Authority's establishments.

Note:

This job description outlines the main duties and responsibilities of the position and is designed for the benefit of both the postholder and the Council in understanding the prime functions of the post. It should not be regarded as exclusive nor exhaustive as there may be other duties and requirements associated with and covered by the grading of the post.

This job description is current at May 2012

Management have the right to vary the duties after consultation with you.

Agreed

Human Resources Advisor

CHARNWOOD BOROUGH COUNCIL

PERSON SPECIFICATION

POST: L413 Gallery Assistant

GRADE: Scale 3

DIVISION: Leisure and Environment

CRITERIA	ESSENTIAL	DESIRABLE	HOW IDENTIFIED
Experience	<p>Relevant experience in working with the public in a front-line service environment.</p> <p>Previous sales experience.</p> <p>An organised and well managed approach to administration</p> <p>Previous experience in cash handing and a knowledge of reconciling shifts.</p> <p>Experience of dealing with a variety of people and artists at different levels in many organisations</p>	<p>Experience in working in a gallery environment.</p> <p>Already well networked with positive existing relationships with artists and makers.</p> <p>Experience of working with a complex computerised box office ticketing system.</p> <p>Background of working towards and understanding business targets.</p> <p>Understanding the importance of why it is important to Upsell</p> <p>Merchandising experience.</p>	Interview / Application Form
Specialist Knowledge/ Skills	<p>An understanding of technical skill to produce a variety art forms.</p> <p>Excellent customer care skills. Must be able to deal with people with empathy, tact and patience.</p> <p>A keen interest in the visual arts and current trends associated.</p> <p>Good standard of IT literacy including a good</p>	<p>Experience of strands of social networking, in particular in a professional environment.</p> <p>Knowledge of working with a computerised databases and maintaining them.</p> <p>Local knowledge Good UK knowledge</p> <p>Knowledge of the Data Protection Act.</p>	Interview / Application Form

	<p>working knowledge of MS windows.</p> <p>Must have the ability to use and update the internet effectively and resourcefully.</p>	Knowledge of the Own Art Scheme.	
Qualifications	GCSEs or equivalent including Maths and English Language	Qualification in the visual arts	Certificates

Interpersonal Skills	<p>Able to work cooperatively and supportively as part of a team.</p> <p>Able to work under pressure.</p> <p>Able to cope well with rapid change and difficult customers</p> <p>Ability to make people feel comfortable and engage about the exhibitions too visitors of all levels of understanding.</p> <p>Excellent organisational skills and the ability to Manage own time efficiently and prioritise work load. Including times when lone working and when working within a team.</p>		Interview
Disposition/Attitude	<p>Essential that the person is of a positive nature.</p> <p>To have a subtle but approachable manner.</p> <p>Reliable</p> <p>Flexible and adaptable approach to work, must be able to work at very short notice</p>	Resourceful and able to show initiative	Interview

	<p>Must be able to communicate clearly and concisely over the telephone, and face to face in a professional manner.</p> <p>Willingness to undertake training and develop new skills</p>		
Personal Circumstances	Must be able to work flexible hours, including evenings, weekends and bank holidays		Interview / Application Form

DATE: Compiled by