

ASSEMBLY ROOMS PANTOMIME

Report of the Director of Development and Cultural Services

SUMMARY OF REPORT

- 1.1 An opportunity exists for the Assembly Rooms to stage a Christmas Pantomime in 2003 as a result of the Playhouse decision to produce an alternative Christmas show.
- 1.2 The report outlines the process which needs to be followed to secure a pantomime for Derby.

OPTIONS CONSIDERED

2. It is an option should the business case be considered unsustainable, not to present a pantomime at the Assembly Rooms, but to look at alternative programme options.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To receive a verbal report on the results of presentations from potential production companies and agree recommendations from the Panel on the selection of a preferred producer.
- 3.2 To authorise the Department of Development and Cultural Services to enter into negotiations/clarification with the preferred producer.
- 3.3 To authorise the Director of Corporate Services to enter into a formal contract with the preferred producer subject to the satisfactory conclusion of negotiations/clarification with the preferred producer.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

4. In order to secure a quality pantomime production for the people of Derby for Christmas 2003.

MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION

- 5.1 Members may be aware that Derby Playhouse has decided to pursue alternative programme options next Christmas to their in-house produced pantomime. Whilst the Playhouse will stage a Christmas play this leaves the opportunity for the Assembly Rooms to continue the tradition of staging pantomime in the City building on the hit success of the first Christmas entertainment staged, Boogie Nights Christmas 2002.
- 5.2 Although the Assembly Rooms team has experience of staging a very wide range of entertainments, it does not have a track record in the field of long running shows – particularly pantomime. As we have no in-house production staff we would need to look to a specialist national company with whom we would contract to stage the show.
- 5.3 The costs of securing the show will be significant and we need specialist help in negotiating with prospective producers. Roger Edwards has recently resigned from his position as General Manager at the Assembly Rooms. Acknowledging the recruitment period for a new Manager, and being aware of the very short timescale to secure a production for this year, Roger's services have been secured by freelance agreement to negotiate this important contract. In the event a new Manager has been appointed and should be in post in time to take over the process from the stage of signing of contracts.
- 5.4 From his market knowledge Roger Edwards drew up a list of nine possible producers; they deliberately covered a range from "cheap and cheerful" to the "ultimate production".
- 5.5 These nine producers were written to, inviting them to submit an indicative proposal including:
 - examples and details of past productions
 - type of production which think works best at the Assembly Rooms together with on going annual strategy
 - financial terms
 - whether seeking commitment for more than one year
 - and asking them if they wished to visit and inspect the Assembly Rooms.
- 5.6 Of the nine:
 - two made no response to the invitation
 - two visited but submitted no proposal
 - five submitted proposal (of which four had made visits; the other one had already had a production at the Assembly Rooms).
- 5.7 Roger Edwards drew up a schedule summarising the five proposals received by the following categories:
 - panto subject for first year

- proposals for following two years
 - term agreement
 - no of weeks performance
 - production cost split
 - an indicative illustration of possible level/type of star casting
 - number of shows in 2002
 - added value
 - finance
- 5.8 The summary was considered by Roger Edwards, myself, the newly appointed Assembly Rooms Manager and the Assembly Rooms management team on 3 March 2003, and three producers have been chosen to make a presentation to a Panel of Members and Officers. These are:
- The Hiss and Boo Company
 - UK Productions
 - Qdos
- 5.9 In addition the new Assembly Rooms Manager, Peter Ireson proposed a further producer (Christopher Lillierap – “The Real Pantomime Co Ltd”). It was agreed that they would invite him to visit and submit a proposal.
- 5.10 A Panel of Officers and Members meets on 26 March 2003 to consider the presentations from the four producers. Roger Edwards has prepared a list of issues from each producer’s proposal and given them to Panel Members in advance, together with a summary assessment and a background note on “things to consider”.
- 5.11 The Panel is made up of:
- Councillor Martin Repton
 - Councillor Philip Hickson
 - Councillor Maurice Burgess
 - Jonathan Guest
 - Peter Ireson
 - Paul Dransfield
 - Stuart Leslie
 - Assembly Rooms staff representing Marketing and Operational responsibilities with Roger Edwards advising
- 5.12 The Panel will choose a preferred producer to recommend to Cabinet.
- 5.13 A draft business case will be prepared for the Panel’s consideration summarising the main cost elements and potential income. This will need to be refined in due course for the selected production.
- 5.14 A letter will be sent to the preferred producer informing him of Cabinet’s decision.

5.15 Roger Edwards will then enter into negotiations with the preferred producer to produce agreed Heads of Terms for incorporation into the model contract.

5.16 A contract will then be drawn up and signed by Legal Services by May 2003.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6. The cost of buying in a pantomime will be significantly higher than any show to date at the Assembly Rooms. A draft business case will be prepared outlining the key costs and potential income in order for the commercial risk to be assessed before a contract is signed.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

7. The selected producer will be required to enter into a formal contract.

PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

8. The show will be managed by the Assembly Rooms but the need for additional temporary staffing support will be assessed and costed into the production.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

9. None.

EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

10. A marketing and pricing policy will be developed which aims to attract customers from all sections of our community.