

**COMMUNITY COMMISSION
28 NOVEMBER 2007**

Present: Councillors Bayliss (Chair), Gerrard, Jackson, Jennings, R Khan,
Redfern and Troup

Also present: Councillor Graves

50/07 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Berry.

51/07 Late Items Introduced by the Chair

There were no late items.

52/07 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Jackson declared a personal interest in Item 55/07 as Mr Jagers was a friend.

53/07 Call-in

There were no call-in items.

**54/07 Responses of the Council Cabinet to any reports of the
Commission**

There were no items.

Items for Discussion

55/07 Community Theatre

The Commission received a petition from the Derby New Community Theatre Association regarding access to suitable venues by community theatre groups.

The Commission received representations from the lead petitioner Mr Briers from the Derby New Theatre Association and Mr Jagers. They stated that there were 25 Societies who performed in the Derby area of which had a total of 1160 adult members that 840 lived in the city of Derby. A comparison with similar sized authorities of membership carried out four years ago showed that Derby had one of the highest proportion of people involved in community theatre. However, the groups were facing difficulties in giving performances due to suitable venues being too expensive and/or not accessible during certain times of the year. They explained that the hire charge including extras in 2007 at the Assembly Rooms was £16,500 and a further 7%-10%

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Commission on tickets. The charges at the Guildhall range from £2060 to £2695. The Playhouse charged £15,855 plus £800 in extras. These charges were considerably higher than those charged by theatres in other cities and towns. The Association also stated that the Locum Report jointly commissioned by the City Council and the Arts Council recommended a steering group be established to look at performance space in the city. This group had last met in 2006 and requested it be reconvened.

Peter Ireson, Head of Service at the Assembly Rooms stated that the Assembly Rooms was largely run on a commercial basis and provided a mixture of programmes ranging from internationally acclaimed performances to dramas performed by local community groups. It has annual running costs of approximately £1m and challenging income targets are set by the Council in order to meet most of the costs. Amateur groups are offered discounts of up to 20% at the discretion of the manager. The Guildhall with 242 seats is primarily used by amateur groups and the charges equate to £1.10 per seat during weekdays and £1.49 at the weekends meaning that they would need to sell 27 and 37 seats respectively to break even.

Councillor Graves, Cabinet Member for Leisure and Direct Services stated that Derby provided substantial political and officer support to the amateur theatre groups alongside the discounted rates at the Assembly Rooms and the Guildhall. It has also ring-fenced £45,000 in the budget of the Derby Playhouse support to amateur groups.

The Commission also heard about the importance of the Hippodrome Theatre to community groups. There were strong feelings towards the Hippodrome and many people felt that this historic building should be brought back into use for arts and theatre.

Resolved to recommend to Cabinet that:

- 1. The Commission does not to support the request for reductions in hire charges at the Assembly Rooms and the Guild Hall than currently being offered by the Assembly Rooms Manager**
- 2. The £45,000 included in the Derby Playhouse budgets earmarked for community theatre should be made available directly to the amateur theatre groups either in cash or in kind following discussions with the stakeholders.**
- 3. The Steering Group recommended by the Locum Report should be reconvened as soon as practicable and include within its agenda amongst others the following items for discussion:**
 - How £45,000 could be best used to support Amateur theatre**
 - Derby Playhouse**
 - Hippodrome Theatre**
- 4. Support be given to the Derby New Age Theatre Association to access Capital funding and bring the Hippodrome Theatre back into use on condition that future running of the Hippodrome should be cost neutral to the Council Tax payers of the city.**

56/07 Retrospective Scrutiny

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There were no items identified.

57/07 Council Cabinet Forward Plan

There were no items identified.

58/07 Matters referred to the Commission by Council Cabinet

There were no items.

59/07 Responses of the Council Cabinet to any reports of the Commission

There were no items.

MINUTES END