

Cultural Offer and Assembly Rooms Update

SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Assembly Rooms has been closed since a major fire destroyed its plant room in March 2014.
- 1.2 The Assembly Rooms was Derby's largest and most popular performing arts and entertainments venue, hosting hundreds of events and attracting attendances in excess of 200,000 each year. With a range of seating/standing formats and capacities ranging from 300 to 2,000, the closure of the venue has had a detrimental impact on the cultural offer, vibrancy and night-time economy of Derby.
- 1.3 Since the closure , Derby LIVE has worked hard to reschedule and relocate a significant number of the Assembly Rooms' performances and events to maintain as vibrant as possible a cultural programme for the city centre.
- 1.4 The Council has now started consultation on a new 'Derby City Centre Masterplan 2030' which describes how the vision for a vibrant city centre can be realised.
- 1.5 In light of the Masterplan ambitions, the Council does not believe that the high costs associated with the refurbishment or repair of the current Assembly Rooms building presents value for money for local people. Hence the consultation includes whether the Assembly Rooms site should be marketed for uses including retail, restaurants, bars, cafés and residential including a cultural offer.
- 1.6 The Masterplan includes the ambition for a new cultural venue for the city centre, with some potential sites identified. Work is progressing to scope the project requirements.
- 1.7 The opening of Derby Arena in March 2015 has provided Derby with a new large scale venue in which to present a cultural programme. In addition, Derby LIVE is continuing to deliver an interim programme and is exploring options for developing this further, during the absence of a large scale cultural venue in the city centre.

RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 To note the contents of this report and provide comments for officers to consider during the development phases of this project.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 The Regeneration and Culture Overview and Scrutiny Board requested an update on the cultural offer/Assembly Rooms and feedback provided at the meeting could assist the development of this project.
- 3.2 Two of the Council's priorities are "an active cultural life" and "a thriving economy", the successful delivery of this project contributes to achieving both of these for Derby.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 4.1 Following the announcement of the closure of the Assembly Rooms, dozens of events and performance had to be cancelled. Within days, all ticket holders were contacted and, within weeks, all customers were refunded. Despite the enormity of the challenge in refunding thousands of tickets, the overwhelming feedback from customers was one of support and appreciation for the level of communication and efficacy of the refund process.
- 4.2 Derby LIVE worked with a range of partners to relocate and reschedule as many performances and events as possible. Shows have been re located to venues around the city including the Silk Mill, the Spot, Derby Theatre, and the Old Bell Hotel.
- 4.3 Some performances, events and festivals have been held in a marquee in the Market Place. Examples have included the Comedy Festival, the CAMRA Beer Festival and the Derby Folk Festival, both of which saw an increase in attendance. Sinfonia Viva's classical concerts were relocated to Derby Cathedral with Derby LIVE providing marketing, technical and event management support for these concerts.
- 4.4 A further example of where events have been retained in the city was the Next Gen Conference, a national, renewal energy conference which was to have been held at the Assembly Rooms. This was relocated to the Silk Mill with additional accommodation provided by a marquee on Cathedral Green. Derby LIVE provided the technical, catering and events management support to help ensure that this important high profile conference stayed in Derby.
- 4.5 The opening of Derby Arena has provided Derby with a prestigious new venue. The cultural programme already announced includes Jimmy Carr as part of Derby's 2015 Comedy Festival, a schools concert by the BBC Symphony Orchestra and Aladdin, Derby LIVE's celebrity pantomime, which is expected to attract an audience of 50,000.

- 4.6 The Council has started consultation on a new 'Derby City Centre Masterplan 2030', which describes how the vision for a vibrant city centre can be realised. This includes the ambition for 'a thriving cultural quarter, anchored by a new cultural venue, the established Quad arts centre, the Joseph Wright and Silk Mill museums and a vibrant programme of indoor and outdoor events.'
- 4.7 A range of potential sites for a new cultural venue are included in the new Masterplan and work is now commencing to scope the project requirements including:
- to review all relevant data and research carried out to date
 - identify any further research and data required
 - agree the consultation process
 - identify key stakeholders and partners
 - identify the optimum cultural venue for Derby
 - review potential locations
 - identify key milestones and timelines
 - identify the indicative costs
 - create a funding strategy
- 4.8 Derby LIVE has investigated a number of models for continuing to provide an interim programme during the closure of the Assembly Rooms. The option of a temporary pavilion-style theatre tent has been identified as likely to be the most feasible and the logistics and business model around this option is to be explored further.
- 4.9 Whilst a new cultural venue in the city centre remains a necessity if Derby is to achieve its cultural and economic ambitions, It is also the case that a city benefits from having a diverse cultural ecology, with a programme which happens across a range of scales and art forms. Derby does benefit from a programme which continues to be delivered by a range of organisations and venues, including the Guildhall Theatre, Derby Theatre, Déda and QUAD, as well as at commercial cinemas and music venues.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 5.1 No other options relating to the recommendation of this report were considered.

This report has been approved by the following officers:

Legal officer Financial officer Human Resources officer Estates/Property officer Service Director(s) Other(s)	Janie Berry - Director of Legal and Democratic Services Mandy Fletcher - Head of Finance - Neighbourhoods Diane Sturdy - Acting Head of Service - OD, Employee Relations and Pay and Reward Strategy Alistair Burg - Interim Head of Strategic Asset Management and Estates Claire Davenport - Director of Leisure and Culture Nick O'Reilly – Director of ICT
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	Ann Webster – Equality and Diversity Lead Wendy Johnson - Head of Occupational Health and Wellbeing Richard Boneham - Head of Governance & Assurance
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For more information contact: Background papers: List of appendices:	Peter Ireson 01332 255441 peter.ireson@derby.gov.uk None Implications
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IMPLICATIONS

Financial and Value for Money

- 1.1 None from this report

Legal

- 2.1 None from this report

Personnel

- 3.1 None from this report

IT

- 4.1 The needs for IT systems and network connectivity at any new temporary or permanent venue will be considered as such proposals are developed.

Equalities Impact

- 5.1 It's important that the Council's Diversity Forums are consulted over the Derby Masterplan.

Health and Safety

- 6.1 None from this report

Environmental Sustainability

- 7.1 None from this report

Property and Asset Management

- 8.1 There are two main Property and Asset Management issues:

- Up to now the day to day management of the building has been undertaken by Derby Live staff based in the building. However, these members of staff will be vacating the building in June 2015. It is therefore essential that, a health and safety plan is put in place to ensure the premises are made secure, inspected on a regular basis and that protocols are in place to restrict/control access to the premises. A project team has been formed to manage the close down of the building and develop and put in place the necessary protocols for the short term management of

the building pending the full appraisal of its future.

•Any potential disposal of the Assembly Rooms will require detailed option appraisals and cash-flow modelling to ensure that all the Council's requirements are reflected in the terms of any sale. Further options including re-use/refurbishment will require similar modelling including factors relating to the Council's Cultural, Regeneration and Housing agendas. The final solution chosen will be likely to need to balance the various objectives of regeneration/cultural or housing benefits with capital cost or receipts, recurring revenue cost or income and time. These will also be assessed in the context of the city Masterplan.

Risk Management

9.1 None from this report

Corporate objectives and priorities for change

- 10.1 The city's cultural programme and the future of the Assembly Rooms has a direct impact on the following two Council priorities.
- An active cultural life
 - A thriving sustainable economy