

TUESDAY, 2 JULY 2019

REPORT OF THE PORTFOLIO FOR HERITAGE AND GROWTH**PROGRESS REPORT ON TAMWORTH ASSEMBLY ROOMS****EXEMPT INFORMATION**

None

PURPOSE

To provide members with a further comprehensive update in respect of the Assembly Rooms project.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. Members endorse the update as detailed within the report.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The Project in its entirety is progressing well in part, the previous health and safety issues concerns regarding the condition of high level lime plaster in the main auditorium has been resolved.
- Both internal and external Project Teams meet regularly to monitor progress, resolve issues and provide regular updates to the Executive Leadership Team.
- The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) continues to support the Project with regular project meetings and is due to visit next on 15th July 2019.
- Plans for the Official opening on 22nd November and a 'soft' launch are underway with details to be confirmed.
- A further update will be brought to Cabinet in March 2020 following the first quarter after reopening.

BACKGROUND

On 21st March 2019 Cabinet considered an update with regards to the Tamworth Assembly Rooms, at that time:

- The Arts & Entertainment Manager left the authority.
- A new organisational restructure had been announced for the whole Council.
- HLF agreed the release of their contingency and subsequent processing of payments.
- Two externally appointed Project Managers now delivering the completion of the build project.
- The issue of the risk / safety of plaster (previously referred to) was being resolved.
- The Contracts Manager for Novus was working hard with the project team to identify any further potential areas where time allocated within the programme could be reduced.

- A further issue was identified with historical water ingress into the building from the adjoining private car park.
- The BT broadband line was inadvertently 'cut through' during the earlier construction stage and needed to be repaired as a matter of some urgency.
- Value engineering continued to ensure costs remain stable and/or reduced further where possible.
- With regards to the public realm works, we were awaiting final confirmation of timelines from SCC.
- Both the Communication and Marketing plans are already well developed and making use of a 'whole Council' approach to utilise skills and knowledge throughout the organisation. Work on the website, products, bookings, facilities and the 'What's On' guide are all key activities in order to achieve the aspirations of the business plan.
- Programming is well underway with the aim to maximise sales, as well as leading entrance fees and delivery of community and conference facilities. Acts are now being confirmed including 'trial and tested' old favourites.
- The fees and charges had been reviewed and market tested against our local competitors as well as giving consideration to the enhanced offer of both the Theatre and its conference facilities. The revised fees and charges reflect both a full commercial rate and a reduced community rate.
- Site visits and hard hat tours have commenced for Members, Theatre Ambassadors and Community Champions/Groups as well as a general offer to all members of the public.
- The oral history project had commenced together with the 'Assembly Rooms' on tour.
- Operational procedures are being developed and will be finalised in the next few months prior to building handover.
- Staff were to be mentored by Birmingham Hippodrome to assist with the programming strategy.
- Work has begun on developing an associated schools programme.
- New IT Systems are in development:
 - Wi-Fi for staff and visitors
 - Facilities for conferencing
 - EPOS system for Lounge and Bar area
 - On-line booking for tickets

Since the last update was considered and endorsed:-

- A new Theatre, Artistic and Events manager has been appointed and commenced with the authority on 24th June.
- All heritage plaster works are complete and all health and safety concerns have been addressed.
- The ceiling decoration and lighting installation is well advanced (**Appendix 1** refers).
- HLF payments have been processed and grant funding has been received.
- The external Project Team is working well to deliver the build project
- The glass curtain walling is next to being installed, once the scaffolding in the main auditorium has been removed.
- Luma glass (LED lit translucent glass) for green room has been installed.
- The kitchen design is complete and the installation to both that area and the toilets to the rear of it have commenced.
- The historical water ingress has been resolved and the necessary works are underway.

- The glass roof is in manufacture, bridging the old building to the new extension areas.
- Programming is proceeding well with old favourites and some new names booked.
- Tickets for all shows are now on sale.
- The first 'What's on' guide for the New Tamworth Assembly Rooms is now out (**Appendix 2** refers).
- It is proposed that the Tamworth information Centre be relocated to the foyer to the theatre. This relocation will allow the TIC to open not only in the daytime but also when shows are booked further enabling all users' full access and use of the café and toilet areas (**Appendix 3** details the foyer design plans).
- There are currently delays to the proposed public realm works; Staffordshire County Council are undertaking these works as part of the wider Cultural Quarter project and are currently re-evaluating the works that will be undertaken due to potential budget overspends.
- Staffordshire County Council is currently consolidating their property portfolio and wishes to relocate children's services to the library. They have asked to use the area between the Carnegie Centre and the Assembly Rooms to drop off/collect vulnerable young people; we have indicated this is not a viable option going forward.
- It has been proposed that an area within the Assembly Rooms be dedicated to Cllr Steve Claymore and as such, it is proposed that the main bar will be named the 'Claymore Lounge' in his memory.
- The food and beverage provision is currently being developed in order to ensure the "offer" meets all needs both now and for further events. An external catering consultant is supporting the project team with the menu design.
- A waiver of Financial Regulations was approved in respect of the appointments of Penny Banks Ltd., Inox Equip Ltd. and Midlands Electrical Services Ltd.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

A total of £435k has now been allocated from the additional budget of £500k approved by Cabinet on the 20th December.

REPORT AUTHORS

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1
Appendix 2
Appendix 3

Photographs of ceiling area
What's On guide
Foyer design plans