



Report of Cabinet Member for Investment, Regeneration and Tourism

Cabinet – 19 March 2020

Cultural and Digital Hub at Grand Theatre

Purpose:	To seek approval to grant a Lease to Race Council Cymru, and Create a Cultural and Digital Hub in the Swansea Grand Theatre Arts Wing, for community use.
Policy Framework:	Well-being of Future Generation (Wales) Act 2015 & Swansea Council Policy Commitments Statement 2017 - 2022 (A City of Cohesive Communities; A More Equal Swansea; A Cultural Capital)
Consultation:	Access to Services, Finance, Legal.
Recommendation(s):	It is recommended that: 1) Cabinet approves the granting of a management agreement and 5-year lease to Race Council Cymru, with an option to renew for a further 5 years at the Councils discretion. 2) Cabinet delegate authority to Director of Place and Chief Legal Officer in conjunction with the relevant Cabinet Member to negotiate the final Heads of Terms and to enter into any documentation necessary to finalise the transaction.
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1. Introduction

- 1.1 During budget setting for the previous MTFP, the Council agreed significant cuts across its services alongside a driver for greater commercial activity. In this context, a proposal to lease the Arts Wing was put forward and accepted, entailing a significant income target of £135,000 being built into the theatre budget. This income target has to date, failed to be met, due to the nature of the venue and options for occupancy being

limited. There has been a lack of interest in a previously advertised commercial opportunity in 2017. Therefore, a partner organisation appeared to be a credible solution, for the reasons highlighted below.

- 1.2 In understanding the wider context for the partnership approach, as part of the UK City of Culture consultations in 2017 with third Sector organisations, it was identified that many small Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) run arts organisations had difficulty affording rehearsal and production space, creating barriers to develop their own creative cultural work. It was also identified that this was a barrier to audience development and increasing participation and ticket sales, as participation in developing work was low.
- 1.3 At this time, Swansea Council, via its Cultural Services, also entered into an agreement with United Cities and Local Government, to participate in a Pilot Cities programme to develop cultural participation as part of a sustainable city making. This programme of work is now complete but uncovered an under representation of protected groups, in our audiences in arts generally, resulting in a work stream and pledge to enhance diversity.
- 1.4 Swansea Council have a long standing collaboration with Race Council Cymru following extensive research that high-lighted under representation across cultural venues in Swansea and nationally. Creating the Culture and Digital Hub addresses ambitions for co-production and collaboration with the voluntary sector, but also contributes to the implementation of the National Arts Policy, based on research that shows that the arts across Wales (and the UK) are not reaching and involving enough people with Protected Characteristics. The gap is particularly apparent in the very low number of disabled people and those from BAME backgrounds. In response, Arts Council of Wales is developing specific initiatives to address these gaps. The Cultural and Digital hub whilst recognising the separate needs of some groups specifically will actively support and promote cross sectional engagement in which all members of the community will be encouraged to participate. This includes recognising the interconnected, interdependent nature of social categories whereby individuals and groups do not experience their diversity/protected characteristics in isolation, but as a set of interrelated situations and conditions.

2. Current Position

- 2.1 In a recent review of the Grand Theatre's long-term viability, taking into account current and future pressures to revenues, it was recognised that the environment, commercial opportunities, partnerships and programme all need to significantly improve, if it is to broaden its audiences and drive up income, as well as sustain current audiences in a climate of significant change in the city centre. This includes acknowledging the impending presence of a new Arena, so clearly targeting local audiences and establishing a point of differentiation, better utilisation of its community,

catering and ancillary spaces, in needed. Addressing the impact of the 'under-performance' of these spaces, given current and future income requirements is at the heart of the proposed lease, investment and partnership arrangements.

- 2.2 In considering where and how local and new audiences could be generated, it is worth noting the theatre does not attract its nearest neighbours from Castle Ward into the Venue. This area has a high population of 16-44 year olds; non-white ethnic groups and long-term illness or disability, with an average income below the Swansea median. This data is a consideration in our business planning, as the Arts Wing audiences have been in decline for some time. There is capacity to develop more community work and engage with our neighbours alongside increased hires, rehearsal and co-production activity, without displacing our current users.
- 2.3 As part of the collaboration and partnership approach, the Service has had a long collaboration with Race Council Cymru {RCC}, who specialise in Race Equality and have agreed to be a partner agency on behalf of the wider BAME community. The strategy entails conversion of some of the Arts Wing into community learning/digital space, which is facilitated through a £250,000 capital investment, obtained by RCC from Welsh Government. The partnership means both parties will jointly programme and share income through co-produced multi-cultural programming, room hires and a catering offer to deliver multi-sector community and multi-agency services. The capital investment will result in an improved public asset to be used by our communities across a spectrum and for the benefit of our current and future citizens generally.
- 2.4 RCC have already secured funding for programming, digital equipment, digital trainer and a hate crime officer. Their community partners have secured further funding for rental and other cultural programmes to be developed, produced and showcased in the Grand Theatre Arts Wing. Swansea Council have issued a Letter of Intent to enter into the relevant commercial documentation, subject to necessary approvals from Cabinet and the Landlord and RCC understand that progressing with the project at this stage i.e. without the consent in place, is at their risk.

3. Next Steps

- 3.1 It is proposed that the Council formalise its collaboration with RCC by entering into a management agreement and lease for specific areas in the Arts Wing in order to increase income, use, ownership, vibrancy and sustainability for the venue within its community and city location. The proposal also supports our commitment to the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act and consolidates partnerships with other community services focusing on promoting intercultural and cohesive communities. This includes having a presence from other services who can offer advice and support on hate crime, SCVS, safeguarding and equalities.

- 3.2 RCC will facilitate the community relationships, including three strategic partners and over twenty community organisations. The focus is on learning and training for digital skills, and health and well-being services.
- 3.3 Due to the unique opportunity presented by working with RCC, in particular the ability to secure investment and improvement in a public asset for the benefit of current and future citizens of Swansea and having regard to the lack of commercial interest when this opportunity was previously advertised, the Director of Place confirms that it is prudent and appropriate to dispose of this asset to RCC. This facility will contribute to the promotion, usage and economic improvement for the Grand Theatre. Along with improving the social and environmental well-being of groups with protected characteristics, benefiting the local area, the city, and its citizens generally.

4. Equality and Engagement Implications

- 4.1 The Council is subject to the Public Sector Equality Duty (Wales) and must, in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to:
- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimization and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
 - Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
 - Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

Our Equality Impact Assessment process ensures that we have paid due regard to the above.

- 4.2 An EIA form was completed for the Community Cultural and Digital Hub (Appendix B).
- 4.3 The Arts wing is a previously underused aspect of the Theatre. It is not believed the development of the Arts wing will result in a negative impact upon those limited users who previously used the space, or for users of the main auditorium, as the programming will grow in the Arts Wing and remain as current for the main house. It is believed the impact will be positive overall by increasing footfall and audience numbers and therefore attracting more touring events alongside home grown productions. The way the theatre is presented will improve, with better layout and signposting for our customers and the project will create services for our communities where previously there were none. In this respect, it is believed that the project will be an overall benefit and provide the Council with access to its communities' needs in a way that could not be fulfilled previously.
- 4.4 The Culture and Digital Hub programming will have a positive impact on the following protected groups.**

Children & young people (age 0 -18)

The diverse communities, who inhabit the hub, bring along children and plan activities for children at the hub, for example, the Chinese in Wales Association have close links with the Confucius Institute and will host Chinese new year performances at the small Arts Wing theatre during rehearsals.

Celebrating, collaborating and promoting diverse cultural stories and heritage will support young people generally to understand one another's cultures and backgrounds, but also assist young people to make an active contribution to their communities through understanding their own heritage and place in the world, fostering strong relationships and wellbeing.

Characteristic groups:

The various dimensions of the project will also create access routes to creative programming and skills in creative and cultural industries, opening up employment opportunities for young people who may not have the opportunity otherwise, including those in our Care system. Cultural Services has responsibility for Objective Six of the Corporate Parenting Strategy, which is a commitment to ensure young people in care and those in transition to independent living are not disadvantaged from participating in leisure, cultural, creative and recreational activity due to changes in their circumstances. Officers have developed a targeted work stream and relationship with caseworkers to ensure we can account for the opportunities and participation, and are embarking on a pilot project to open up employability in the theatre/cultural sector for young people in care. This is focusing on work experience in customer service and technical theatre at first, with the aim to expand into cultural venue administration. The hub will offer a wider range of opportunities to engage with the voluntary as well as public and private sectors as a result.

The project also creates a platform for these new skills to be shared and celebrated amongst the wider community, creating strong social bonds intergenerational and intercultural.

The diversity of the programme will also be attractive to schools and groups that support young people, such as young carers, disability groups such as Rising Stars; we will ensure the programming is inclusive and celebrant of diversity in its widest sense, not restricted to race or religion. Strong governance and scrutiny, challenge and performance monitoring will also mitigate against risk of exclusion on factors of cultural difference/ religion, helping young people to gain confidence and a voice through creativity and support networks in a supported environment;

Older People

All the partners will be working with their community all of whom straddle protected characteristics including older people. Members of the BAME 50+ scheme will have activities at the hub, the residents of the Swan Gardens, which is largely Chinese elders only groups will take tai chi lessons at the hub, as well as participate in IT classes and digital inclusion classes.

As with the opportunities for young people, the opening up of previously underused or closed spaces in the theatre provides significant opportunity for a

range of groups to find a place to meet and share creative ideas and social experiences, which did not exist previously due to the lack of reason to spend time in the theatre if you were not an audience member.

Any other age groups

The focus of the project is to form social bonds across generations; cultural heritage; and other socio-economic factors/ demographics, challenging stereotypes and developing an inclusive, social hub open to all.

Disability

The Chinese in Wales Association run a well-established autism project for their children and young people and this is open to all children who are disabled across their communities and presented in the Hub. Our Hynt National Theatre access scheme also helps over 1000 carers attend main house theatre events free and this will be expanded on through programming at the Hub. The project will improve physical access and facilities generally, and the diversity of the programme will enable people of all abilities to participate, whereas they may feel unable to with mainstream programming in the auditorium because of wider factors. Facilitated programming and interpretation will also be extended, including signing; translations; informal and quiet performances due to the flexibility of the new space, and mixture of ages, backgrounds and abilities, which will be significantly more visible than currently.

Race including Refugees

Race Council Cymru are Race Equality experts. All the 24 community groups are diverse minority ethnic groups but wish to operate in an inclusive manner opening their doors to all from diverse ethnic and Welsh British backgrounds without exception. The project will intensify and amplify their ability to achieve this, engendering a cohesive and inter-cultural approach in the heart of the city, with networks across the region and nationally.

Asylum seekers

At least 5 hub partners deliver services to asylum seekers and refugees and are based at the Hub, including Women's Group – Asylum Support services, Swansea Bay Asylum Seekers Support Group. City of Sanctuary will also utilise a hot desking facility at the premises and meetings for The African Community Centre, Welsh Refugee Council and Displaced People in action will be held there.

Religion or non-belief

Most of the hub partners are from Christian, Muslim, Hindu, Jewish, Daoism, Confucius, Sikh, Pagan, Druid and other faith and non-faith systems. They are committed to work alongside one another. The purpose of the Hub is to engender cohesion, and connectivity, understanding and support amongst our communities, supported by the Council and its cultural and other relevant services. Governance will be in place to ensure this principle is maintained in all decision-making and future planning.

Welsh Language

Fostering and celebrating the Welsh language is a priority to all hub partners and Welsh lessons will continue to be delivered at the hub by Race Council Cymru for all communities to attend.

Race Council Cymru have included a special partnership with Welsh Connections (a music promotion company for Welsh talent both Welsh and English speaking) and Swnd, a production and distribution company offshoot). This also expands out to Swansea Music Hub and other partners involved in developing music platforms for the city. Amateur theatre, music and dance companies will continue to work with the Council as before and will be better networked in with Welsh promoting arts organisations because of the partnership and Hub work. For example, we will see events in and around major dates/ festivals for all cultures that celebrate diversity, cultural heritage, Swansea and the Welsh Language – as host city and Nation.

Poverty Social Exclusion

It is clear that many of the hub partners live in socially deprived parts of Swansea (the former community's first areas). As such, many of them and their members are affected by the impact of poverty. The hub partners will work closely with colleagues in the Council, including Poverty and prevention, adult and children's services, to deliver our agreed priorities and make a strong contribution to this agenda. This includes providing free and subsidised travel where relevant and integrating our various strategies for participation e.g. Active and Healthy Swansea; Corporate Parenting; Poverty Prevention; Lifelong Learning.

Community Cohesion

This is a fundamental element of the work of the hub as described above. The partnership and delivery of the agreed plans will be closely monitored and governed with outcomes that are transparent and open to challenge. The programming and partnerships will be accessible to all in the community; providing the much needed opportunity for people from diverse ethnic backgrounds to collaborate and work together.

Due to the current profile of audiences, it is believed there is low/neutral risk impact to other protected characteristics, as the current service delivery model will continue. This includes specific partnerships with ABMU and our contribution to Active and healthy lifestyles; Ageing Well; dementia awareness; autism friendly accreditation; safeguarding; LGBTQ celebrations; City of Sanctuary and so on. Officers will be monitoring and undertaking further investigation to monitor and identify any impacts on other communities, in terms of their representation and ability to make best use of the facilities on equal terms. This will include consultation events and reviews, with stakeholder communities invited; surveys; data analysis on bookings; programming reviews and audience snapshots. Officers will oversee this with a governance board focused on continuous service delivery improvements via key performance indicators, Contract Management, compliance and adherence to the Councils (and funding bodies') Equality Policies that will form part of the Management Agreement.

Officers will, in particular, ensure that there are no perceived barriers, e.g. through cultural / religious profiles that appear to exclude or discourage sectors of our communities at risk of exclusion. This will also reach out to financial and geographic exclusion in terms of the groups we work with, transport and promotional activities that may be supported. Marketing and programming, times of day, pricing strategies will all form part of the scrutiny and review of the board and operational management and deliver of the Agreement with RCC and partners.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 The proposals set out options, which include capital investment of £250,000 from Race Council Cymru, which is already secured from Welsh Government, alongside rental income (to cover the rest of the spaces) to relieve the Council's revenue pressures. There is no clawback on this grant.
- 5.2 Race Council Cymru will fund and deliver the full capital refurbishment by summer 2020. There are no financial capital implications for CCS of the proposals.
- 5.3 There are no additional resource requirements, no revenue implications for additional revenue or management costs.
- 5.4 Whilst there is no rent income from RCC for floors 1 & 2, additional income raised by RCC and the communities will be used to fund the co-produced creative programme of works. This is a significant benefit as currently the Council has limited and exhausted all other strategic funding streams. The £250k investment in lieu of rent for floors 1 & 2 of the Arts Wing will be reviewed at the end of the 5-year contract period.

6. Legal Implications

- 6.1 The Council must comply with the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. It requires the Council to consider the long-term impact, work better with people, communities and each other, look to prevent problems and take a more joined up approach.
- 6.2 The Local Government Act 1972 section 123 gives a local authority the power to dispose of land held by it in any manner it wishes if the local authority achieves the best consideration that can reasonably be obtained except where the disposal is for a short tenancy i.e. the grant of term not exceeding seven years or the assignment of a term which has not more than seven years to run. The Council is proposing to grant a Lease on a 5-year term therefore the requirement to achieve best consideration does not apply.
- 6.3 RCC will have to spend the Welsh Government capital grant by 31st March 2020. The Council and RCC are therefore in the process of negotiating a management agreement on a 5-year term with an option to renew for a

further period of 5 years. It is proposed that RCC will occupy the premises under a 5-year lease, which will be renewed in the event that the management agreement is renewed. A letter of intent has been issued to RCC to allow them to proceed at risk and subject to the granting of all approvals and consents. If they occupy the premises prior to the granting of any Lease then the occupation should be regulated via a licence until final terms are agreed and formal documentation is in place.

- 6.4 If there has been no marketing of the land or only one person has indicated an interest to purchase then the Council's Land Transaction Procedure Rules state that the Director of Place or his nominee must determine that only one party could acquire the interest because of the physical, legal or other characteristics of the land and that it is appropriate to sell by private treaty. For this particular transaction it should be noted that little interest was generated in a previous marketing exercise. Having regard to the benefits that a disposal to this tenant could bring together with the significant capital investment and income opportunities it could be determined that in all the circumstances it is prudent and appropriate to sell by private treaty.

Background Papers: None

Appendices:

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| Appendix A | Plans |
| Appendix B | Equality Impact Assessment |