

To:
Councillor Robert Francis-Davies
Cabinet Member for Investment,
Regeneration and Tourism

Please ask for:
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Overview & Scrutiny

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23rd March 2021

BY EMAIL

Summary: This is a letter from the Development and Regeneration Scrutiny Performance Panel to the Cabinet Member for Investment, Regeneration and Tourism following the meeting of the Panel on 2nd March 2021. It covers the presentation from the Ambassador Theatre Group, as operator of the Swansea Arena.

Dear Councillor Francis-Davies,

The Development and Regeneration Scrutiny Performance Panel met on 2nd March 2021. We would like to thank all of the officers who attended. We also extend our thanks to Stuart Beeby and Claire Dixon who attended on behalf of The Ambassador Theatre Group (ATG). We greatly valued everyone's engagement and input.

Stuart Beeby, ATG Group Operations Director, and Claire Dixon, ATG UK Business Manager, presented an overview of ATG. We heard that ATG is a vertically integrated business; operating venues, producing shows and selling tickets for iconic venues such as the Savoy Theatre in London, The Colonial in Boston, and the Smart Financial Centre in Houston.

We heard that, regarding the content of shows, ATG works with some of the best producers and talent. The ATG productions team and producing partners, Sonia Friedman Productions, have between them won sixty Tony and Olivier awards collectively. High profile partners, such as Disney, work with ATG to deliver products and shows, for example the Lion King.

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We heard how the design and construction teams will be handing over a fully functioning unit to the Business Manager to create a commercial business. It was explained that construction work had progressed well despite challenges posed by pandemic restrictions.

We heard that the next focus will now be on fitting theatre technical equipment such as sound, lighting and IT infrastructure. ATG are also preparing and aligning suppliers ready for commissioning of systems.

We heard that over one hundred expressions of interest were received in response to a call for local suppliers. The sifting and questionnaire process is now part of progression and due diligence; and ATG expect to appoint building services, such as security and food/beverage suppliers, through this exercise.

We heard that ATG had appointed a specialist marketing company to work on PR, Sundae Communications, achieving regional coverage and a national impact. ATG also maintain a close link with the Council-appointed PR agency for Copr Bay, Swansea based Kneath associates, working closely with them to plan and implement a strategy around launching the Arena.

We heard that ATG recruitment is underway, the first appointment being that of Lisa Mart, General Manager. It was pleasing to hear that there are a number of key positions to recruit over the coming months, including a Conference and Events Manager, ATG being keen to utilise local talent pools. ATG anticipate twenty full time staff as well as one hundred estimated casual staff, with the aim of seventy per cent recruited locally.

The panel queried aspirations regarding events and conferencing. ATG expect a mix across the two areas; between 100-125 scheduled entertainment performances, and circa 60 conferencing events. ATG emphasised that this is a very flexible venue, encompassing different layouts and design of seating, rather than a fixed design. Many different facilities mean programming will not be confined to 1-2 particular genres. We look forward to hearing further updates regarding the programming of events to come.

We hope you find this letter useful and informative. We would welcome your comments on any of the issues raised, but in this instance no formal written response is required.

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Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "J. Jones", written over a light blue horizontal line.

Councillor Jeff Jones
Convener, Development and Regeneration Performance Panel
✉ cllr.jeff.jones@swansea.gov.uk

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