

Supplementary Officers Comments & Observations

Introduction – It's Now or Never

COVID-19 has brought its own problems and opportunities to every community, and in a number of instances, we are aware that some theatres will not be re-opening their doors again. There could be a number of reasons for these closures, but we know that one common theme is where the complex has been primarily a theatre with fixed seating. This factor has reduced the possibilities of using the space, and limited the number of seats that can be used would mean running performances at a loss.

In contrast, the Festival Hall is a non-fixed seated area which can be utilised in a multitude of ways. This could be key to the success of Petersfield Festival Hall becoming one of the main centres in the area, putting on drama, tribute bands, comedy, community events, digital events and other retail and performance events.

The current climate could be the most significant time in the Festival Halls history and future, in propelling forward the varied opportunities that it could offer and realise.

Festival Hall Vision & Strategy Statement

Whatever option is chosen, it is vital that a Vision and Strategy is set, so that whatever direction the project takes and whatever the Festival Hall becomes, it is held accountable to the vision and strategy agreed.

Minutes of open meeting with ACL (Chris Moore) Resolved at Public Halls meeting 9th September 2019 PH0328 and attached to the minutes as appendix G included....

Vision

- The Festival Hall Complex in Petersfield exists to offer a programme of quality professional and amateur arts and cultural opportunities to the people and communities of Petersfield and beyond.
- To become the local and sub-regional venue of choice for participants, audiences and other stakeholders, offering high quality and accessible spaces and facilities for the widest variety of uses, responding dynamically to change and attracting more residents and visitors to Petersfield Town.

Festival Hall Working Party



Strategy

- Change the footprint, configuration and finish, gradually and progressively, providing the flexibility and direction, modernising and optimising better to meet local community wants and needs, providing value for money both for users and for taxpayers and so securing the Festival Hall complex's future for the next generations
- Broaden the programme of activities from a simple 'halls for hire' model to a proactively created and driven programme that balances income generating work with that requiring targeted subsidy
- Develop services, buildings and facilities to meet modern user expectations and to reflect a wide range of interests, skills, learning/training opportunities, participation, viewing and listening opportunities
- Aim for a cost-neutral operation, providing targeted subsidies whilst also reducing the reliance on local authority subsidy (by creating more effective opportunities for income generation through hire revenues, for example)
- Adopt a long-term, strategic approach to building a broad programme and an attractive complex that provides more than one reason for more than one demographic to come, linger, take part and spend. This approach will reflect key strategic developments (such as the move to Unitary)
- Stimulate and co-produce / co-promote events elsewhere in the area (such as the South Downs National Park) with appropriate partners
- Undertake development projects (buildings and programmes) as cost- and time-effectively as possible, with a key ambition to minimise and reduce the period of any disruption

Comments relating to slides

History of Delay

It is interesting to note that 30 years have passed since a first set of drawings was produced to address the single storey extension with a replacement two tiered building. These drawings cover requirements very close to the requirements that are being considered today. This would suggest that if we only implemented the two tier storey building, we would only be addressing the requirements that were identified 30 years ago, and would not address any of the further requirements that need to be addressed to catch up with the present day needs, or address the future strategy and vision set out.

Festival Hall Working Party



Refurbishment Priorities

The priority zones identified are supported by all of the working group (members and officers) although it is recognised that Priority Zone 6 Town Hall Offices may require some essential work carried out if further office space and facilities are required in the near future.

1. Maintain Status Quo

To maintain the Status Quo would suggest that something that was recognised 30 years ago is something that can wait. With the evidence that we have had in recent times regarding the ingress of water, would suggest that we are way past the point of just maintaining the Status Quo, and it is unlikely that the budget currently put aside of £215,00 per year would not maintain the Status Quo, and this figure would need to be reviewed as the facilities became in more need of repair and replacement.

2. Dispose of the building

This would be a major loss of arguably one of the most significant landmarks of Petersfield, second only to the Heath Pond. Through this facility, we have been able to support the town in ways that would otherwise be difficult without such a facility. This would mean a potential loss of the Amateur Dramatic heritage of the town as groups would have no other similar venue from which to perform. Yes, we could sell it and provide a limited amount of money to the arts of Petersfield, but it could become limited to just finance, whereas at this moment in time, we have the ability to shape the offering of events and performances in Petersfield, as well as providing a space for local organisations and charities. This also provides us with the opportunity promote our own events for and on behalf of the town, providing support and growth to our local economy.

3. Refurbish to ~2m

4. Refurbish to ~4m

Both of these options would save on the amount of spending but would restrict on the opportunities we could realise. If we really want to provide Petersfield and the surrounding area with an outstanding and diverse venue of events and performances, and where people from all walks of life will want to come and be entertained, then it is very likely that we will need to spend more than 4m.

Full refurbishment to ~8.7m

If we go with the full refurbishment, members and officers will need to be fully committed to ensuring that every effort is made to change the direction of the Festival Hall, maximising the use of space, and providing events and entertainment for the widest audiences in our locality. If this decision is made, we all need to fall in line and recognise that this will represent a number of years of hard work and focus, keeping every eye on

Festival Hall Working Party



every ball to accomplish the end goal. We will all need to live and breathe the vision and strategy of this project, irrespective of our own views, to make it a success, and more importantly, a place where our community want to meet.

If the full refurbishment was to be agreed, officers would ask that members also consider including the Festival Hall Chamber Offices as part of RIBA 3, exploring ideas of utilising the central office as an upstairs foyer area and staircase from ground floor, as well as utilising the rest of the first floor area as rehearsal rooms/dressing rooms and other hire uses.

In terms of converting the FRRME office back to a Small Hall, this requires further careful consideration, as this could create significant building management issues, and in any case may be required for further office space in the future for the Town Council.

In a similar project undertaken by Fernham Hall in Fareham, they are spending in excess of 13m to remodel with an 808 seated main auditorium. Executive member for leisure quoted "These plans will totally transform Fernham Hall and it is an exciting time for the venue. Once reopened, the remodelled venue will provide a great choice of entertainment as well as first class community facilities."