

**Decision Session - Executive Member for  
Culture, Leisure and Communities**

16 March 2020

Report of the Assistant Director (Communities and Culture)

**York Theatre Royal Capital Funding**

**Summary**

1. This report sets out how capital funding allocated by the council is to be used by York Theatre Royal.

**Recommendations**

2. The Executive Member is asked to approve:
  - The partnership aims set out in paragraph 6.
  - The application of the funding as set out in paragraph 9.

Reason: To ensure that York Theatre Royal continues to play a significant role in York's vibrant cultural offer.

**Background**

3. Budget Council on 27 February 2020 allocated £500k of capital funding to the York Theatre Royal subject to a report to this decision session with regard to how this funding is to be used. The Council has provided funding to the Theatre Royal going back to a time before the establishment of the current unitary authority. In recent years this revenue funding was enshrined in a funding agreement covering a four year period. In 2016 the Council wrapped up its funding for the following four years in a single capital grant. The grant was £770k. By making the grant in this way it enabled the council to make an annual revenue saving £124k (net of the £50k annual cost of borrowing to fund the capital grant).
4. The Theatre used this grant as a contribution to the refurbishment scheme that was ongoing at that time. The funding was particularly focussed towards the development of facilities capable of generating new revenue schemes. Wrapping the council's funding up into a capital grant enabled the theatre to receive the full amount at the start of the four year period and to direct the funding in a planned

and strategic manner. This £500k capital grant will build on the previous support, increasing the theatre's accessibility, environmental sustainability and financial resilience, improving the theatre's long-term sustainability. The approx. £35k annual cost of borrowing to fund the grant will still facilitate a significant saving to the council compared to the previous level of support.

5. The theatre is operated by a charity: York Citizens' Theatre Trust Ltd. It is an Arts Council England (ACE) National Portfolio Organisation (i.e. regularly funded) and currently receives £587,254 p.a. from ACE.

### **Partnership Aims**

6. The following aims for the partnership between the council and the Theatre Royal are proposed as a basis for the funding:
  - a) To enhance and diversify York's economy (especially the twilight and evening economies) by maintaining a thriving producing theatre at the heart of the community for both residents and visitors.
  - b) To contribute to the wellbeing of York's citizens by providing more opportunities for creative participation in performances and workshops.
  - c) To create opportunities for all ages to learn and develop skills and use the entire theatre building and organisation as a resource.
  - d) To offer the building, and the Theatre staff's knowledge, skills and experience as a resource to local people, schools, universities and colleges.
  - e) To continue to develop the infrastructure of York Theatre Royal to ensure the building is fully accessible and to raise the quality of the facilities provided for all audiences and visitors.
7. The Theatre Royal will:
  - a) Provide a year round programme of work which will include in-house productions, including a pantomime, youth theatre productions, touring drama productions, and opportunities for local amateur companies.
  - b) Ensure that all publicity material, brochures and print acknowledge the support of the Council.

- c) Report twice a year to the Children, Education and Communities Scrutiny Committee on the theatre's work.
8. In respect of this partnership agreement the City of York Council will:
- a) Facilitate effective working relationships with all council departments and ensure access to potential partnership and stakeholder groups.
  - b) Seek ways to continue to strengthen the role of the Theatre in civic and cultural life of the city.
  - c) Provide two representatives to serve as observers on the Board of Trustees.

### **Application of the Funding**

9. This grant, which can only be used for capital expenditure, will be used by the theatre as match funding towards the theatre's existing capital expenditure plans. It will allow for:
- disabled access improvements across the site.
  - green initiatives in respect of theatre lighting.
  - improvement to energy efficiency of the theatre's heating system.
  - investment in box office software and equipment to ensure that the theatre is best-placed to maximise ticket revenue as public funding declines in real terms.
  - improvement of office accommodation in order to improve the efficiency of working practices and communication.
  - improvement of IT provision to help customer service, working practices and data security.

### **Options and Analysis**

10. The Executive Member is invited to agree the basis for the funding or to suggest an alternative basis.

### **Implications**

11. The report has no additional Financial, HR, Equalities, Legal, Information Technology, Property or other implications beyond those highlighted in the report.

## Council Plan

12. The proposals in this paper further a number of the Council Plan themes, notably *Safe Communities and Culture for all, Well-paid Jobs and an Inclusive Economy* and *An Open and Effective Council*.

## Risk Management

13. In compliance with the Council's risk management strategy the main risks that have been identified associated with the proposals contained in this report are those which could lead to the inability to meet business objectives and to deliver services, leading to damage to the Council's reputation and failure to meet stakeholders' expectations. The level of risk is assessed as "Low". This is acceptable but means that regular monitoring is required of the operation of the new arrangements.

## Contact Details

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### Chief Officer Responsible for the report:

Amanda Hatton  
Director of Children, Education & Communities

Report  
Approved



Date: 2 March 2020

### Specialist Implications Officer(s):

Wards Affected:

All



For further information please contact the author of the report