



Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot
Neath Port Talbot Council

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Democratic Services Committee

17th February 2025

**Report of the Head of Service for Property & Regeneration
Simon Brennan**

Matter for Information

Wards Affected:

All Wards

Extension, refurbishment and re modelling work at The Princess Royal Theatre and external work enhancements to the Civic Square Port Talbot.

Purpose of the Report:

To inform Members of the proposed works to the Theatre and Civic Square and advise of the likely disruption to Members during the construction contract together with an explanation of the measures that are being put in place for Members during this period.

Background:

Levelling Up Grant Funding

On 29th June 2022, the Cabinet approved the submission of a Levelling Up Fund grant application for the refurbishment of the

Princess Royal Theatre, along with external enhancement works to the Civic Square and Riverside Walk area of Port Talbot.

On 20th November 2023, the Council received a grant offer of £14,835,600 from the UK Government Levelling Up programme towards a predicted project cost of £16,484,000.

In December 2023, the Council appointed a contractor to progress a Pre-Construction Services Agreement for the design, cost planning, and programming of the project.

Design work is nearing completion, and a fully priced cost schedule is expected to be available late February. If this tender is acceptable, we should be in position to exchange contracts and be ready to start work on site in April 2025.

Explanation of the Theatre Work

One of the main priorities of the project is to transform the Theatre side of the building to make it more sustainable and energy efficient. This will involve the complete separation of the Theatre's mechanical, electrical and data services from the civic offices so that the Theatre will stand alone in terms of its operational costs and management. Additionally, a front extension will provide identity and some prominence for the Theatre whilst a rear extension will help to make the stage area more practical for performances.

The Theatre needs a robust business plan and to achieve this it is necessary to improve secondary spend opportunities by establishing larger bar and front-of-house sales areas on the ground and first floors.

The existing Theatre will be completely refurbished and extended with new services, new theatre sound and lighting, new seating, a new stage area, refurbished toilets and changing areas, a new theatre entrance foyer, and a rear stage extension to facilitate better

stage access and crossover for the theatre technical team and performers.

The new bar areas established at ground and first floor levels can also be flexible spaces that can be used for meetings and other events at times when the theatre is not in use.

Overlap of construction work with the Civic Offices

The theatre construction work is largely confined to the Theatre side of the building, but work will affect the Mayor's Parlour on the first floor and the Members' Room and Committee Rooms on the second floor. Additionally, the refurbishment of toilet facilities in the Theatre wing, will be impacted.

To facilitate the works for the Theatre, it will be necessary to temporarily relocate the Mayoral Suite and Members' Room and take the Committee Rooms out of use for the duration of the contract, which is anticipated to commence mid-April 2025 for approximately 60 weeks.

The Mayoral functions will be temporarily relocated to the Mayoral facilities at Neath Civic, while also retaining a small office area on the ground floor at Port Talbot Civic in existing room No 149.

To accommodate a larger bar area on the first floor, it is suggested that the existing Mayor's Parlour be remodelled and reduced in size. It will encompass the existing secretary's office and kitchen areas, providing a room suitable for many of the Mayoral functions. Should larger Mayoral groups need to be accommodated, there is the option of using the new executive meeting/function room, which will be established on the second floor by remodelling the Members' Room and Committee Rooms.

To establish two large flexible meeting and function rooms on the second floor, it is necessary to remodel the Members' Room and

Committee Rooms. As a result, the kitchen area of the Members' Room will be demolished, and the area will become part of a smaller Members' Room (noting that drinking water and other such elements will be provided).

During the works, Members will be able to use as a substitute, the existing Legal library room or book meeting rooms at the Civic offices if they wish to work at Port Talbot. Additionally, the ground floor area of The Quays is being remodelled to establish a few larger meeting rooms and flexible touchdown work areas that Members will also be able to book. An office wing on the second floor of The Quays is also being prepared for members and offices to use as a workspace area should they wish to move from Port Talbot Civic offices on occasion. The coffee shop within the foyer of the theatre will not be available but an alternative provision will be established in room 110 on the ground floor.

Council Chamber

The Council Chamber is not directly affected by the works. However, due to its proximity to the Theatre, it will be impacted by construction noise and highly unlikely to be suitable for use on a full time basis. However there is a statutory duty to broadcast the full council meetings and the Chamber is currently the only area with webcasting facilities, so the contract has been structured so that the contractor will be required to stop work during these full council meetings. The remodelling of the chamber to address DDA compliance issues will be looked at as a later phase of works.

To help facilitate meetings that would usually be held in the Chamber, in addition to the above, the presentation room on the Ground Floor of Port Talbot Civic Centre will be utilised and adapted to accommodate, these will host cabinet, all other regulatory meetings and scrutiny meetings. A suitable room is also being prepared in Neath that could also be utilised if so required.

Political Party Officers

The Labour Party office will be relocated to room 131b on the ground floor directly opposite the presentation room which is also the location for Labour Group Meetings. The Cabinet Member Room and other current rooms will remain in place.

Car parking arrangements.

Due to the restricted site area, the main contractor will establish site offices and welfare accommodation within the existing car park. However, there is a contract requirement to provide twenty-four parking spaces for use by Members, Chief Officers and blue badge holders. This parking area will be controlled by a relocated barrier which will be managed from the civic offices as existing.

The nearby multi-storey car park will also be available for use by Members and staff, with parking permits provided as necessary.

Six parking spaces are also being retained for use by Ebenezer Chapel.

The current visitor parking spaces outside the barrier near to the main road will remain accessible for visitors throughout the project works.

External Work and enhancements to the Civic Square.

The Civic Square will be completely transformed and remodelled with a combination of new hard and soft landscaping, new street furniture, new public lighting, and CCTV, with the intention to make the outdoor space much more flexible and suitable for events such as exhibitions, markets, food fairs, etc.

This work will involve substantial excavation to the existing Civic Square and to ensure that access to the Civic Offices is always maintained, the work will be carried out in phases.

This phased approach will also allow emergency services to access the Square, Ebenezer Chapel, Aberavon shopping centre, and the residential flats above. It will also ensure that any planned services in the chapel can proceed as usual.

While access can be managed during the work in the Civic Square, it is not possible to prevent noise disturbances. It should be assumed that noise will affect work within the offices, especially those that front onto the square. As mentioned previously, the ground and second floors at The Quays are being remodelled to provide additional meeting areas and flexible working areas for staff should they find that the noise from the work in the square is too disruptive.

Financial Impacts:

The Council has accepted Levelling Up Grant funding in the sum of £14,835,600 towards a previously anticipated project cost of £16,484,000. This funding offer included for a section of upgrading work to the Riverside Walk however this has been omitted to reduce the overall cost of the project.

Despite removing this element of the project, the latest market testing intelligence suggests the project cost is likely to rise beyond the grant funding offer so there is likely to be a requirement for the Council to increase its match funding contribution.

Integrated Impact Assessment:

A first stage impact assessment has been undertaken to assist the Council in discharging its legislative duties (under the Equality Act 2010, the Welsh Language Standards (No.1) Regulations 2015, the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Environment (Wales) Act 2016.

The first stage assessment has indicated that a more in-depth assessment is not required. A summary is included below.

In line with Neath Port Talbot IIA screening form guidance, it has been determined that a full assessment is not appropriate in this instance, as the scheme will have a low impact on protected characteristics.

IIA is at **Appendix 2**.

Valleys Communities Impacts:

There is no impact on the Valleys Communities.

Workforce Impacts:

Existing Theatre staff are being temporarily relocated for the duration of the contract works so there is no implication on existing staff.

Legal Impacts:

There are no legal implications of this report.

Risk Management Impacts:

Failure to deliver this project would result in the Council having to return the LUF grant funding and the condition of the theatre building and its mechanical and electrical services will continue to deteriorate.

Consultation:

There has been extensive public engagement in respect of these proposals which have been on display in Aberavon Shopping Centre, and within the foyer areas of the Theatre and Port Talbot Civic Offices.

There has also been consultation carried out as part of a successful planning application which has also been widely reported in the local press.

The contractor has prepared a communication plan and is liaising with the Councils comms team to consult with those directly affected by the works.

Recommendations:

This report is for information only.

Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Plans to show the alternative location of rooms affected by the works

Appendix 2 - First Stage Integrated Impact Assessment

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