

ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY REGENERATION CABINET BOARD

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT – GARETH NUTT

26th February 2015

PART 1

SECTION A – MATTER FOR DECISION

WARD AFFECTED: PORT TALBOT

PLAZA ARTS AND CULTURE HUB

Purpose of Report

1. To obtain Members approval of the Business Plan for the redevelopment of the former Plaza Cinema
2. To approve the strategy for securing match funding from numerous grant and loan options identified in the Funding Opportunities section of the Business Plan
3. To consider the transfer of the entertainment programme from the Princess Royal Theatre to the new Plaza venue and the closure of the Princess Royal Theatre once the Plaza refurbishment is in place.
4. To approve the appointment of consultants to develop detailed design, fit out and pre-construction cost estimates

Background

A Business Plan, prepared by external consultants, sets out the proposed vision and sustainable operations for The New Plaza. The project proposes to develop the former Plaza cinema building, which is located in the centre of Port Talbot, into a sustainable, multi-purpose cultural venue and hub for creativity and enterprise, whilst retaining the original listed facade. It will include a modern, well-equipped flexible space auditorium for hosting mid-scale touring live music, theatre productions, events and performance of all types; gallery and exhibition areas; and a high quality café/restaurant space. The new building at the rear of the retained façade will also provide Grade A office space targeted towards the creative industries, with an emphasis on film, television and theatrical production companies, with the potential to create new production facilities and space for learning in the performing arts.

The New Plaza plans to remove the existing ‘shell’, and wrap three floors of lettable space around a central core. This will create a large auditorium with an intended capacity of up to 800 with optimum capacity between 600-700 standing and 400-500 seated. This auditorium will be designed and equipped to provide a venue for live popular music and theatre with a flexible stage area. It will be equipped with appropriate sound and lighting facilities and have fully retractable seating to enable the whole space to be used flexibly.

It is estimated that the auditorium would initially be used for live music and theatre on two to three nights per week, and recognising the need for economic viability, it is therefore essential that it can be operated flexibly and welcome other uses. These complementary uses may include conferences, exhibitions and civic functions as well as private hires for large-scale weddings and other community celebrations.

The plan was developed following a detailed options appraisal stage involving the Plaza Working group, comprised of representatives of local arts based groups, council members and officers. This was followed by a local competitor analysis and market analysis informing development of a preferred option. This option advocates the relocation of the current Princess Royal theatre based in the town to a new home at The New Plaza, providing greater scope for developing the range of arts offering provided locally, but still providing access for touring acts and local people to high quality theatre space.

The projections outlined in the plan identify that it will be able to operate independently of council support. The plan is intended to help inform applications for capital funding from Welsh Government, Heritage Lottery Fund, the Arts Council and other potential sources. A management and governance options appraisal outlined in the plan suggests the New Plaza, subject to appropriate procurement procedures being applied, is potentially managed and operated by a not for profit organisation.

As outlined, the Business Plan is predicated on the transfer of the entertainment programme from the Princess Royal Theatre to a regenerated Plaza. The consequence of this proposal is that when funding is obtained and the Plaza re-opened, the Princess Royal Theatre will close as a theatre. This will also have implications upon the future of the Civic Centre, as there will be a considerable void in the Civic Centre going forward.

Financial Implications

The total area of the building associated with this option is approximately 2,100m². On this basis an initial cost appraisal would suggest a total development cost of around £7.5 m including all fees but excluding VAT. More detailed costs will need to be prepared as part of the design development stage.

Funding Opportunities

There will be a Presentation at the meeting

Funding Secured

Vibrant and Viable Places

Possible sources of funding

EU Structural Funds (ERDF)

Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF)

Arts Council Wales (ACW)

Community Facilities Grant (WG)

Others

Recommendations

It is recommended that:

1. the council pursue the redevelopment of the Plaza as a sustainable multi-purpose cultural venue and hub for creativity and enterprise, which includes a flexible space auditorium, gallery, exhibition space, café, office space and production facilities in the creative industries. This will require the relocation of the Princess Royal Theatre on the opening of the redeveloped Plaza.
2. The grants and loans applications are made to meet the funding gap
3. Consultants are appointed to develop detailed designs, fit out and pre-construction cost estimates.
4. A further report is presented in due course

Reasons for Proposed Decision

1. To develop the proposals and implement the Business Plan.
2. To secure the necessary funding and long term management of the Plaza
3. To protect a Listed building and iconic symbol of Port Talbot and provide a 21st Century performance space fit for purpose
4. To ensure a sustainable, well designed, cost effective project

List of Background Papers

Draft Business Plan September 2014

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COMPLIANCE STATEMENT

PLAZA ARTS AND CULTURE HUB

(a) Implementation of Decision

The decision is proposed for implementation after the three day call-in period.

(b) Sustainability Appraisal

Community Plan Impacts

Economic Prosperity	Positive
Education & Lifelong Learning	Positive
Better Health & Wellbeing	Positive
Environment & Transport	No impact
Crime & Disorder	Positive impact

Other Impacts

Welsh Language	No Impact
Sustainable Development	Positive
Equalities	No Impact
Social Inclusion	Positive

(c) Consultation

This item is not subject to external consultation.