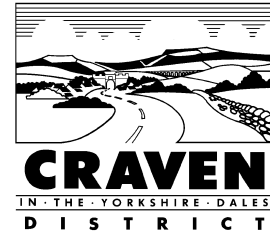


Policy Committee – 13th Sept 2016

SKIPTON TOWN HALL



Report of Director of Services

Lead Member; Councillor S Myers

Ward(s) affected: All Wards

1 Purpose of the Report

To inform Members of findings from the feasibility study commissioned on the restoration of the Concert Hall and agree next steps in Skipton Town Hall's development.

2 Recommendations

Members are recommended to:

- 2.1 Note the findings from the feasibility study commissioned on the restoration of the Concert Hall within Skipton Town Hall and welcome the receipt of the Arts Council England funding of £250,000.
- 2.2 Request a detailed business case for the refurbishment of the Concert Hall, improvements to the back stage rooms and a rear extension be produced and approve a supplementary revenue estimate of £35,000 funded from in-year revenue budget savings to undertake the work.
- 2.3 Request the business case for the refurbishment of the Concert Hall, improvements to the back stage rooms and a rear extension is presented to the March 2017 Policy Committee.

3 Introduction

- 3.1. Skipton Town Hall is of significant historical importance, located in a prominent position on the High Street in Skipton and restoring the Hall as a sustainable and vibrant community venue is a key priority in the Council Plan. When all the plans have been implemented the Town Hall will be a destination for the use and enjoyment by the whole of the Craven District, improving the economic and social vitality of the area.
- 3.2 To achieve the Council's aims for the Town Hall the 'Skipton Town Hall Business Plan' was approved by Policy Committee in November 2013 (POL.556). The plan

established a phased approach for refurbishment with some initial urgent works followed by a phase 1 project to improve accessibility and create commercial units leading to a phase 2 of longer term aspirational works including an application to the Heritage Lottery Fund for a new Museum.

- 3.3 Much of the phase 1 work has now been completed with improved and enhanced public access to the building, new heating installed, refurbishment of some of the windows, Skipton Camerata in residence featuring internationally acclaimed performers. Commercial units in the building, are being let and have attracted an anchor tenant, who is intending to take up occupation in April 2017.

A start on the longer term aspirational works of phase 2 have also been made with the Council being successful with the first stage of an HLF funding application for a £2m major upgrade of the Museum.

- 3.4 Phase 2 of the re-development of Skipton Town Hall also seeks to significantly upgrade the Main Concert Hall and backstage rooms to re-invent the Hall as an Arts and Community Venue and to explore the potential to extend the rear of building to provide additional accommodation either to supplement the Concert Hall and the Museum or be used as potential additional commercial letting units, animating the rear of the Town Hall and the ginnell leading from Jerry Croft.
- 3.5 It is anticipated, when complete, this element of the Town Hall's development will provide wider benefits for Craven District as a whole by re-developing the Town Hall to form a centre which supports smaller arts and heritage organisations and groups across the district with access to professional advice and support and digital live-streaming to village halls.

Phase 2 will also provide additional income streams to ensure the Town Hall's viability continues for future generations.

- 3.6 An important first step in the re-invention of the Main Concert Hall is to establish whether a refurbished Concert Hall could attract sufficient audience numbers to generate the economic and social benefits that would justify any investment. A feasibility study was therefore approved by Members of Policy Committee (POL.676) to assess the demographics of existing and potential new audiences, establish whether the Town Hall could become a financially sustainable building and show how the space could be restructured to maximise income.
- 3.7 This report presents the study's findings and proposes the next steps in the continued development of Skipton Town Hall to create an exciting and vibrant Arts Hub that serves the whole of Craven.

4 Feasibility Study Findings

- 4.1 Following a tender process, Business of Culture and Theatreplan were appointed joint consultants for the feasibility study. They offered technical, business, organisational management and research services and have a wealth of experience in the cultural sector.

4.2 Specifically the feasibility study assessed;

- Audience Potential: To understand the level and types of audience in the Town Hall's catchment area, how to increase audience numbers and satisfaction levels and increase the diversity and quality of community and professional events.
- Venue Development: The extent of the refurbishment of the Concert Hall that would be required to improve the range and quality of the programme to meet the potential demand.

Audience Potential

- 4.3 The study found that Skipton Town Hall has the capability to become a primary cultural venue not only for Craven District but for the wider Dales hinterland evidenced by potential audience numbers of 993,000 currently attending arts and cultural activities and who are within 45 minutes of Skipton Town Hall (273,198 within 30 minutes). Further these figures contain a significant proportion (95,000) who attend events regularly and have a strong preference for mainstream arts.
- 4.4 The potential audience of 273,198 within a 30 minutes' drive time of Skipton Town Hall is considered to be more realistic to base projections on. The 45 minutes' drive time catchment would increase the numbers of potential audiences by nearly 400% but these audiences will have stronger pulls to the offers of larger cultural centres within the Yorkshire region and for the purposes of assessing potential audiences for Skipton Town Hall the study errs on the conservative estimate side.
- 4.5 The potential audience numbers could also be increased if the Town Hall works as a cultural hub serving the rural catchment area using digital technology to broadcast live events for example from the Royal Opera House, National Theatre etc. and workshops from the Town Hall to a wider audience, including village halls - particularly in the north of the district, via superfast broadband.
- 4.6 In determining likely attendance figures for an annual programme it is necessary to apply a confidence factor to the 273,198 catchment audience figure. Using Arts Council England established confidence figures an estimate of 102, 896 potential attendances per annum is established which is enough to draw sufficient audiences to the Town Hall to support a programme of up to 150 performances per year.
- 4.7 The potential attendance of 102, 896 is then plotted against the proposed 150 event programme at the Town Hall and based on an average seating availability of 260 seats per event. The breakdown of the estimated potential attendance for the Town Hall across the range of programme genres is then shown at Appendix A. This indicates a potential annual audience catchment of 39,000 to which a conservative confidence factor on tickets sold is then applied to indicate an income from ticket sales of around £270,000 per annum can be generated
- 4.8 The extent of the potential audience participation is important in determining the beneficial economic, social and well-being impact from enhancing the cultural offer. Increasing audience numbers brings in benefits to the Council in other ways other than financial sustainability for the Town Hall e.g. combatting social isolation and

loneliness through live-streaming events to venues in remoter parts of the district, improving social and well-being by enhancing local esteem and pride, better community cohesion and improved partnership working with schools. The cultural hub could also provide a place for creative people working on their own to meet, share skills and equipment and collaborate on projects, stimulating jobs and apprenticeships.

- 4.9 Of course, a detailed and accurate impact study and evaluation is only possible after any refurbishment project is complete however the beneficial impacts from cultural projects have been extensively researched. If Skipton Town Hall becomes a cultural destination it will bring about an increase of visitors, audiences, touring artists and their entourages and commercial hires boosting the local economy.

In research commissioned by Arts Council England it was found that for every £1 spent on arts and culture additional spend of £1.43 is generated locally. If therefore Skipton Town Hall generated the income of £270,000 projected in Appendix A this could benefit the local economy by £386,100 per annum.

- 4.10 The demand if a vibrant Arts destination is created is certainly there. As well as the audience projections outlined above there is a an abundance of opportunities the Hall can capitalise on e.g. National Portfolio Organisations such as Northern Broadsides, Northern Ballet, Opera North wish to perform in Skipton but there is currently no appropriate venue. There is also a growing demand for a better cultural offer coupled with a rise in visitors to the district and local creative and arts organisations need somewhere to network and showcase their work.

Improving and Updating the Facilities

- 4.11 For the Town Hall to capture the benefits available by increasing audience participation the study identified a number of improvements needed to modernise the Concert Hall to meet up to date standards and audience and performers expectations. Limited investment over recent years has meant the Town Hall is unable to attract a wider range of performers and consultation with users and non-users of professional events highlighted in particular the ageing equipment and inadequate, inaccessible facilities currently in place.

- 4.12 The main improvements required identified by the feasibility study are;

- i) Modern lighting, sound system and digital projection facilities
- ii) Improved acoustics
- iii) Flexible seating arrangements
- iv) Bar and catering for pre/post performance and intermissions
- v) Separate changing facilities and improved back stage accessibility

- 4.13 The services infrastructure is in need of attention. The electrical and production lighting installations are very old (some circa 1950) and in need of modernisation to meet current standards. The sound installation is basic and not adequate for larger events and acoustics are not ideal.

- 4.14 The audience seats are not user friendly, narrow without any armrests and there are no facilities for suspending scenic or technical items above the stage.

- 4.15 There is limited bar and catering provision which is only provided if requested by the hirer. Its current location is not ideal and the provision of permanent pre/post and intermissions bar and catering facilities are considered pivotal to the future sustainability of the Hall both in terms of a boost to earned commercial income and to create sufficient break out/reception space for the anticipated audience numbers.
- 4.16 Backstage facilities are rudimentary and in need of improvement to meet modern audience and performers expectations. Neither the stage nor any of the backstage accommodation is accessible to wheelchair or other disabled performers and the only disabled toilet is in the foyer. There is no hearing loop or other system for the use of audience members with hearing impairment.
- 4.17 At the same time as undertaking the feasibility study an opportunity arose for capital grants funding from Arts Council (England) to address some of the issues being identified. Whilst the timing was not perfect given the Council was still undertaking its feasibility work, opportunities of this nature are few and far between and the Council was able to extract sufficient information from the study to submit a funding request to refurbish facilities in the Concert Hall.
- 4.18 Despite strong competition, Arts Council England awarded the Council £250,000 to improve the lighting and sound systems, acoustics and seating, three of the five required improvement areas identified by the feasibility study. Once complete these improvements will enable the Council to be more ambitious in its programming; improve artistic quality; live-stream national performances; broadcast performances to remoter, rural communities and widen the range of people engaging with the arts.
- 4.19 The success of this grant application cannot be understated. The grants were prioritised for the Arts Council's National Portfolio Organisations which represent some of the best arts practices in the world and the Council was one of only two Councils in the whole of the North region to receive funding in this round.
- 4.20 The Council's success in achieving this funding is recognised as a step change in how the Arts Council regard Craven Council as a deliverer of arts with the potential of accessing further investment in the future. This was further confirmed in a recent visit to Skipton by the Chief Executive of the Arts Council of England, Darren Henley who stressed his excitement about the project and looks forward to seeing how the Council supports arts across the district in the future.

5 Next Steps

- 5.1 The feasibility study has established that if the Council proceeds with its aim of creating an Arts destination for Craven the audience demand is there and the Town Hall can be that venue. To capture the demand the current programme will need to be expanded with the number and quality of events increased in order to raise awareness of the Town Hall regionally and change perceptions of what the Town Hall can offer.
- 5.2 Before expanding the programme however it is important to ensure the infrastructure is in place to support it. This includes upgrading the sound, lighting,

acoustics and seating to meet modern standards and extending the back stage area to improve accessibility. There is the space at the rear of the Town Hall for a back stage extension where there is also scope to create additional space either for the Museum or for commercial lets to generate income to help offset any investment.

- 5.3 The justification for the investment that will be required, to put the infrastructure in place, requires a detailed business case setting out the design of any rear extension, how the improvements to the back stage areas and rear extension complement the major refurbishment of the Museum recently funded by the Heritage Lottery and the detailed financial information.
- 5.4 To ensure consistency with the design work for the refurbishment of the Museum it is recommended the design work for the refurbishment of the Concert Hall and the rear extension be carried out by the same architect and design team appointed for the Museum refurbishment. The design work for the Museum is funded by the HLF and, subject to Member approval, there is an option to include the additional design for the Concert Hall and associated areas in the existing contract award.
- 5.5 The Council would need to cover the additional cost of the design element relating specifically to the Concert Hall and associated areas. A budget estimate for this non-related HLF design work to the RIBA Plan of Work stage 3 (concept design and cost information) is £35,000 being the minimum charge for a project with a projected total construction cost of between £750,000 - £1,250,000.
- 5.6 The Craven Museum and Gallery Stakeholder Group established as part of the HLF project and on which Cllr Simon Myers represents Craven District Council will be included in the consultations throughout the development of the business case. The business case will be then be brought to Policy Committee in March 2017.
- 5.7 The Council also needs to consider whether it retains the existing vacant front corner unit in the Town Hall to provide the bar and catering facilities as recommended in the feasibility study. The study recommends any bar / catering provision should be considered in addition to existing front of house space which is under pressure and proposes the front corner unit of the Town Hall which is currently to let is retained by the Council to create a crush bar and daytime café. This unit is in an ideal position and would complement the flow throughout the building, relieve the pressure on the narrowness of the entrance hall which would need to manage audiences of around 280 and could be designed as a crush bar, café, meeting space where creative people could meet and network, or provide more intimate performances when the Concert Hall is not in use – this not only encourages creative development and nurturing of new artistic talent in the area, but also provides further secondary spend opportunity.
- 5.8 If the front corner unit was to be retained by the Council the rental income of around £15,000 per annum projected in the original Skipton Town Hall Business Plan could still be generated either by renting the unit to a third party catering provider or by the Council generating sufficient income from sales to cover the lost rental income.
- 5.9 There are five potential models with varying degrees of risk ranging from a wholly Council operation with the Council taking all the risk and all the surplus to a full

outsource. A business case to help Members consider whether the unit is retained by the Council to be used as integral to the Concert Hall together with an appraisal of the delivery model options will be presented in a separate report to Policy Committee on 1st November 2016.

6 Financial Implications

- 6.1 There is a requirement for an additional supplementary revenue estimate of £35,000 to produce concept design and cost information for the refurbishment of the Concert Hall, improvements to the back stage rooms and a rear extension. The supplementary revenue estimate will be funded from in-year revenue budget savings.
- 6.2 At this stage it is difficult to estimate the cost of any refurbishment and extension to the Town Hall. This will be addressed in the business case being prepared for March 2017 Policy Committee. If a business case is proven and Members wish to proceed a capital budget request will be required for inclusion in the 2017/18 programme.
- 6.3 Additional expenditure may be incurred in the installation of the Arts Council funded new seating, sound and lighting systems in particular to the ceiling area. Once the specifications for the new systems have been confirmed and the method of installation determined if there are additional costs over and above the amount funded by the Arts Council a report will be brought to Members requesting a supplementary revenue estimate. Any additional expenditure required will be identified in 2016/17 financial year as the terms of the Arts Council grant require the equipment to be purchased by 31st March 2017.
- 6.4 The proposed report to Policy Committee in November on the options for bar and catering facilities will include all financial implications.

7 Legal Implications

None arising directly from this report.

8 Contributions to Corporate Priorities

The development of Skipton Town Hall into a vibrant cultural community venue is a key action in the Council Plan and contributes towards the objective to improve the economic vitality of Craven's market towns and villages under 'Enterprising Craven'.

9 Access to Information: Background Documents

Skipton Concert Hall Feasibility Study

10 Author of the Report

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- 11 **Appendices** - Appendix A – Estimated audience size / ticket income across programme genres.

Appendix A					
AUDIENCE ESTIMATE ACROSS PROGRAMME GENRES					
Event	No of Performances per annum	Potential Audience (catchment)	% Tickets Sold (based on max 250 per performance)	Seat Price (£)	Net Income* (£)
Theatre	36	9 360	60% (5 610)	10	56 100
Popular Music	24	6 240	75% (4 680)	8	37 440
Jazz	9	2 340	80% (1 872)	12	22 464
Classical Music	24	6 240	75% (4 680)	12	56 160
Opera	5	1 300	65% (845)	20	16 900
Dance	9	4 420	70% (3 302)	15	54 522
Live Broadcast	15	3 900	45% (1 755)	7	12 285
Film Showings	20	5 200	40% (2 080)	5.50	11 440
Total	150	39 000			267 311

*Net income is calculated by multiplying the number of tickets sold by the number of performances by the ticket sale price.