

FAREHAM

BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to Leisure and Community Policy Development and Review Panel

Date: 25 July 2018

Report of: Head of Leisure and Corporate Services

Subject: FERNEHAM HALL

SUMMARY

On 9 July 2018, the Executive approved a vision to remodel Ferneham Hall into a new entertainment venue. This report updates Members on the proposals and outlines the next steps for the project as well as the role of the Leisure and Community Policy Development and Review Panel.

RECOMMENDATION

Members are invited to note the contents of the report.

INTRODUCTION

1. Ferneham Hall is becoming dated and tired, and its operating costs are escalating. A new approach is needed. At 9 July meeting of the Executive, a vision to remodel Ferneham Hall into a new community entertainment and arts venue was agreed. This report outlines the main proposals for the future development and operation of the venue that were agreed by the Executive. It also outlines the role of the Leisure and Community Policy Development and Review Panel during the project.

2. Agreed Proposals

3. The following part of the report outlines the main proposals agreed by the Executive.

4. A Vision: Fareham's New Entertainment Venue

5. The approved document sets out the Council's 'Vision' for a new arts and entertainment facility in Fareham town centre to replace Ferneham Hall. The vision focuses on:

- Providing a busy community arts and entertainment centre which includes daytime and evening activity, seven days a week.
- The provision of smaller, flexible, meeting spaces, improved catering areas and possibly a dance studio and secondary, smaller performance space.
- Ensuring the stage and seating in the main auditorium are the right size and design to attract a good range of touring productions as well as being available for hire to local amateur groups.
- Offering a more dynamic and innovative approach to programming to attract a wider range of customers to the venue.
- Retaining and developing the annual pantomime.
- The interior and exterior of the building being attractive, modern and welcoming, and complementary to the other new buildings within the Civic Quarter.
- The venue being more commercial in its outlook, with the expectation that the annual operating costs will be low, with the ultimate aim of breaking even.

6. Updated business plan

7. AEA Consulting had previously been commissioned by the Council in partnership with Hampshire Cultural Trust to conduct analysis of the market, options for development and a future business case for a new venue. The use of the Ashcroft Arts Centre was also considered as part of this work.

8. The Executive agreed that the business plan undertaken by AEA be refreshed and updated, excluding details of the Ashcroft Arts Centre, to ensure that all of the relevant data is available to make an informed decision going forward.

9. Procurement of a Leisure Trust operator

10. It is likely that other Leisure Trust operators will be interested in the scheme. It was therefore agreed that a procurement exercise be undertaken with Leisure Trust operators to identify a development partner prepared to manage the new facility in the future as well as making a financial contribution towards the capital costs of remodelling Ferneham Hall and creating a new, fresh arts and entertainment venue. This would, of course, not preclude Hampshire Cultural Trust from putting forward a proposal.

11. Location of the new venue

12. It was agreed that the new venue would remain within Ferneham Hall's current location within the Civic Quarter.

13. Phasing of construction works

14. It was agreed that Ferneham Hall would be closed in late 2019 for a two year period to enable construction works to be undertaken. These works could be undertaken in three phases. The first phase would include the remodelling of Ferneham Hall, demolishing the Octagon Lounge and opening up the foyer area. The second phase would focus on the secondary theatre. The third phase would be the dance studio. Options for the possibility of developing all three phases will also be explored with the agreed operator.

15. If the remodelling work does take place in three phases, it is proposed that Fareham Borough Council would fund the first phase; a Leisure Trust would fund the second phase; and the third phase would be subject to a joint fund-raising campaign at a later stage.

16. Project Funding

17. It was agreed in principle, that the costs of phase one of the project be funded from the Community Infrastructure Levy and external funding where possible, with the full project cost to be reported to the Executive later this year. Funding of the latter phases of work would be subject to a further report, once an operator has been selected.

18. Preparation work

19. It was agreed that delegated authority be given to the Director of Finance and Resources, following consultation with the Executive Member for Leisure and Community, to utilise an initial sum of £100,000 to enable expenditure on fees covering aspects such as surveys, building redesign, further market research; the preparation of a planning application and project management.

20. Naming of the new venue

21. It was agreed that options for naming the new venue be presented to a future meeting of the Executive.

22. Member Working Group

23. It was agreed that a member working group be established to oversee the design and construction of the project, chaired by the Executive Member for Leisure and Community, Cllr Miss S Bell, and to include four other members: Councillors T Cartwright, M Ford, T Davies and Mrs K Trott. The final design and costs will require the approval of the Executive prior to seeking planning permission.

24. It will be important for the Working Group to ensure that Ferneham Hall customers and, in particular, regular hirers are consulted as part of the overall design process. For example, the amateur theatre groups will be able to make a valuable contribution to the discussion on the mix of facilities within the venue.

25. Officer working group

26. An officer working group will also be formed, and report to the Member Working Group at regular intervals. The Project Lead will be Lindsey Ansell, Head of Leisure and Corporate Services, and Project Sponsor will be Andrew Wannell, Director of Finance and Resources.

27. Role of the Leisure and Community Policy Development and Review Panel

28. The Leisure and Community Panel will receive reports at key stages of the project allowing effective scrutiny of the process and the decisions taken by the Member Working Group. The provisional key project stages are highlighted in Appendix A.

CONCLUSION

29. Ferneham Hall is becoming tired and dated, and its operating costs are escalating. Wide ranging proposals to remodel the venue were agreed by the Executive on the 9 July 2018. The Leisure and Community Panel will receive reports at key stages of the project allowing effective scrutiny of the process and the decisions taken by the Members Working Group.

Background Papers: None

Reference Papers: Ferneham Hall Report to the Executive for Decision 9 July 2018

Enquiries: For further information on this report please contact Lindsey Ansell, Head of Leisure and Corporate Services (Ext 4567)