
South Somerset District Council

Thursday 25th March 2021

6.30 pm

A virtual meeting using Zoom meeting software

All members of Council are requested to attend this meeting.

Any members of the public wishing to address the virtual meeting at Public Question Time need to email democracy@southsomerset.gov.uk by 9.00am on Wednesday 24 March 2021

The meeting will be viewable online by selecting the meeting at:
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCSDst3IHGj9WoGnwJGF_soA

For further information on the items to be discussed, please contact
democracy@southsomerset.gov.uk

This Agenda was issued on Wednesday 17 March 2021.

Alex Parmley, Chief Executive Officer

**This information is also available on our website
www.southsomerset.gov.uk and via the Mod.Gov app**

South Somerset District Council Membership

Chairman: Paul Maxwell
Vice-chairman: Jenny Kenton

Jason Baker	Henry Hobhouse	Wes Read
Robin Bastable	Ben Hodgson	David Recardo
Mike Best	Charlie Hull	Paul Rowsell
Neil Bloomfield	Kaysar Hussain	Dean Ruddle
Dave Bulmer	Val Keitch	Gina Seaton
Hayward Burt	Andy Kendall	Peter Seib
Tony Capozzoli	Tim Kerley	Garry Shortland
Martin Carnell	Mike Lewis	Alan Smith
Malcolm Cavill	Mike Lock	Jeny Snell
John Clark	Pauline Lock	Andy Soughton
Nicola Clark	Tony Lock	Mike Stanton
Louise Clarke	Kevin Messenger	Rob Stickland
Nick Colbert	Graham Oakes	Lucy Trimmell
Adam Dance	Tricia O'Brien	Gerard Tucker
Sarah Dyke	Sue Osborne	Linda Vijeh
Karl Gill	Tiffany Osborne	Martin Wale
David Gubbins	Robin Pailthorpe	William Wallace
Peter Gubbins	Oliver Patrick	Colin Winder
Brian Hamilton	Clare Paul	
Mike Hewitson	Crispin Raikes	

Information for the Public

The meetings of the full Council, comprising all 60 members of South Somerset District Council, are held at least 6 times a year. The full Council approves the Council's budget and the major policies which comprise the Council's policy framework. Other decisions which the full Council has to take include appointing the Leader of the Council, members of the District Executive, other Council Committees and approving the Council's Constitution (which details how the Council works including the scheme allocating decisions and Council functions to committees and officers).

Members of the Public are able to:-

- attend meetings of the Council and its committees such as Area Committees, District Executive, except where, for example, personal or confidential matters are being discussed;
- speak at Area Committees, District Executive and Council meetings;
- see reports and background papers, and any record of decisions made by the Council and Executive;
- find out, from the Executive Forward Plan, what major decisions are to be decided by the District Executive.

Meetings of the Council are scheduled to be held monthly at 7.30 p.m. on the third Thursday of the month (unless advised otherwise). However during the coronavirus pandemic these meetings will be held remotely via Zoom video-conferencing. For more details on the regulations regarding remote/virtual meetings please see the Local Authorities and Police and Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 as part of the Coronavirus Act 2020.

The agenda, minutes and the timetable for council meetings are published on the Council's website – <http://modgov.southsomerset.gov.uk/ieDocHome.aspx?bcr=1>

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Public participation at meetings (held via Zoom)

Public question time

We recognise that these are challenging times but we still value the public's contribution to our virtual meetings. If you would like to participate and contribute in the meeting, please join on-line through Zoom at: <https://zoom.us/join> You will need an internet connection to do this.

If you would like to view the meeting without participating, please see:
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCSDst3IHGj9WoGnwJGF_soA

The period allowed for participation in Public Question Time shall not exceed 15 minutes except with the consent of the Chairman and members of the Committee. Each individual speaker shall be restricted to a total of three minutes.

If you would like to address the meeting at Public Question Time, please email democracy@southsomerset.gov.uk by 9.00am on Wednesday 24 March 2021. When you have registered, an officer will provide the details to join the meeting. The Chairman will invite you to speak at the appropriate time during the virtual meeting.

Virtual meeting etiquette:

- Consider joining the meeting early to ensure your technology is working correctly.
- Please note that we will mute all public attendees to minimise background noise. If you have registered to speak during the virtual meeting, the Chairman will un-mute your microphone at the appropriate time.
- Each individual speaker shall be restricted to a total of three minutes.
- When speaking, keep your points clear and concise.
- Please speak clearly – the Councillors are interested in your comments.

South Somerset District Council

Thursday 25 March 2021

Agenda

1. Apologies for Absence

2. Minutes

To approve and sign the minutes of the previous meeting held on Thursday, 25 February 2021.

3. Declarations of Interest

In accordance with the Council's current Code of Conduct (as amended 26 February 2015), which includes all the provisions relating to Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPI), personal and prejudicial interests, Members are asked to declare any DPI and also any personal interests (and whether or not such personal interests are also "prejudicial") in relation to any matter on the Agenda for this meeting.

Members are reminded that they need to declare the fact that they are also a member of a County, Town or Parish Council as a Personal Interest. Where you are also a member of Somerset County Council and/or a Town or Parish Council within South Somerset you must declare a prejudicial interest in any business on the agenda where there is a financial benefit or gain or advantage to Somerset County Council and/or a Town or Parish Council which would be at the cost or to the financial disadvantage of South Somerset District Council.

4. Public Question Time

5. Chairman's Announcements

Items for Discussion

6. Octagon Theatre Development (Pages 5 - 76)

7. Appointment of an Interim Section 151 Officer (Pages 77 - 79)

8. Report of Executive Decisions (Pages 80 - 82)

9. Motions

There were no Motions submitted by Members.

10. Questions Under Procedure Rule 10

There were no questions submitted under Procedure Rule 10.

11. Date of Next Meeting (Page 83)

Members are asked to note that the next scheduled meeting of Full Council will take place on **Thursday 15 April commencing at 6.30pm.**



Octagon Theatre Development

Executive Portfolio Holders:	Cllr Mike Best, Health and Well-Being Cllr Peter Seib, Finance and Legal Services
Strategic Director:	Clare Pestell, Commercial Services and Income Generation
Service Manager:	Adam Burgan, Lead Specialist, Arts & Entertainment Venues Manager
Lead Officer:	Adam Burgan, Arts & Entertainment Service
Contact Details:	Adam.burgan@southsomerset.gov.uk or 07971 111 951

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to seek full Council approval to refurbish and develop The Octagon Theatre and underwrite the full value of the project, up to £23.01 million (excluding VAT that is recoverable in respect of this project), subject to the successful application for various forms of grant funding which would partially offset the overall project costs.
2. The aim of the proposal and funding is to ensure that the development would:
 - a. Provide a significantly enlarged and much improved facility, enabling a more varied selection of shows and acts with added commercial areas. This would in turn bring new revenue streams to pay back the costs of the works, which would benefit audiences, artists and visitors and include additional facilities and services to those currently provided.
 - b. Eliminate the need in future for SSDC to subsidise the theatre, at best Year 6 of the development, by generating an overall profit and increasing the contribution to the ticket levy, at a prudent rate.
 - c. Generate additional revenue benefits in future for SSDC that will support the development of our Arts Engagement and Outreach work, covering the areas of health and education.
 - d. Resolve accessibility issues around the venue making Front Of House (FOH) and backstage areas accessible for wheelchair users and those with limited mobility, to ensure inclusivity of all
 - e. Meet the highest modern environmental standards, contributing to our net zero target
 - f. Maximise opportunities for energy efficiency and use of renewable/low carbon energy, also contributing to our net zero targets

Forward Plan

3. On Thursday 4th March 2021 the District Executive resolved to:
 - a. note the confidential appendices, including the report by Charcoal Blue and associated business case documents, to refurbish the existing site and facilities;



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and to extend the site with both additional educational and income earning facilities, which will assist in repaying the costs of the proposed project over time.

- b. recommend to Full Council to approve the underwriting of the total project costs by SSDC, of up to £23.01m, to be partially offset by successful future grant funding applications, yet to be applied for; with the remainder of the capital sum to be repaid as proposed in the business plan attached to this report.
- c. recommend to Full Council to give delegated authority to a Project Board that consists of the Portfolio Holder for Health & Well-Being (Chair), the Leader of the Council, the Portfolio Holder for Economic Development, the Portfolio Holder for Finance & Legal Services, the Director of Commercial Services and S151 Officer to progress the project, take appropriate decisions for the project governance set up and reporting arrangements to District Executive on project progress.
- d. recommend to Full Council to approve the cash-flow forecast in the business plan.

Reason: To recommend to Full Council the proposal to refurbish and develop The Octagon Theatre and underwrite the full value of the project, up to £23.01 million (excluding VAT that is recoverable in respect of this project), subject to the successful application for various forms of grant funding which would partially offset the overall project costs.

4. This report has now been brought forward following the completion of SSDCs retained VAT consultants that the project would be able to be accommodated within our partial exemption; and VAT on the project could be reclaimed. All the financial implications for proceeding with the project have now been confirmed and SSDCs capital accountant has assessed the project proposals and business plan (Appendix 2 – Confidential).
5. SSDCs capital accountant has also prepared a matrix (Appendix 3 – Confidential) that explores the difference scenarios for paying back the loan; this includes 180 different scenarios based on interest rates, annuity length, ticket levy usage and up-front capital spend. The outcome of this shows that the project is viable in all scenarios; ranging from a surplus of £42.8m down to a surplus of £5.2m.
6. The Government's Budget announcement on Wednesday 5th March included an allocation of £10 million to support this project and the development of The Octagon Theatre. The funding will be managed by Arts Council England. Terms and conditions for this allocation of grant funding are yet to be received.
7. Charcoal Blue was commissioned by the Arts & Entertainment service, with support from Senior Leadership Team to provide a detailed and comprehensive appraisal of the existing building, the economic potential, proposed development and costings. The full report is available to Members upon request but an Executive Summary of the report has been compiled to highlight the key matters and conclusions (Appendix 1 – Confidential).



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8. The business plan (Appendix 4 – Confidential) covers the first 10 years of operation based on the proposed designs and facilities. The existing operation, actual figures and programme from 2019/20 are used as the basis for the plan.
9. This proposed project supports the themes and priorities in the Corporate Plan in terms of healthy communities, regeneration of our towns, protecting core services and improving our environment.

Public Interest

10. This report considers the proposal to refurbish/develop The Octagon Theatre, Yeovil including:
 - the construction of a fly tower
 - a circle in the main auditorium that would take the seating capacity from 622 to 900
 - two new smaller cinema/studio spaces
 - a dance studio
 - a community studio
 - a café bar and restaurant
 - improved front of house and customer facilities
 - an educational outreach arts facility
11. This follows a review led by Charcoal Blue consultants of the existing facilities and an appraisal of the current performance and use of the theatre, regional competition and assessment of the potential opportunities that such a development could bring to the area, as well as added footfall to a cultural area of the town centre.
12. The Charcoal Blue report, appendices and background papers are confidential as they contain commercially sensitive information on future charges, estimated procurement costs in a competitive market situation for construction and other costs, as well as proposed artists market fees and forecast sales.

Recommendations

13. That the Council:
 - a. Note the confidential appendices, including the report by Charcoal Blue and associated business case documents, to refurbish the existing site and facilities; and to extend the site with both additional educational and income earning facilities, which will assist in repaying the costs of the proposed project over time.
 - b. Approve the underwriting of the project costs by SSDC, of up to £23.01m, to be offset by grant funding applications, yet to be applied for; and £10million of government funding already allocated in the March 2021 budget, (subject to accepting and meeting terms and conditions, which are yet to be received).



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- c. Delegate authority to a Project Board that consists of the Portfolio Holder for Health & Well-Being (Chair), the Leader of the Council, the Portfolio Holder for Economic Development, the Portfolio Holder for Finance & Legal Services, the Director of Commercial Services and S151 Officer to progress the project, take appropriate decisions for the project governance set up and reporting arrangements to District Executive on project progress.
- d. Approve the cashflow forecast in the business plan.

Background

14. South Somerset District Council (SSDC) own, manage and fund The Octagon Theatre, the Council's flagship arts venue for the district as part of The Arts & Entertainment Service that aims to provide access to high quality cultural events across South Somerset. For a detailed report on the operation and achievements of the service please see the Arts & Entertainment Annual Service Report 2019/20 that is included as Appendix 6.

Report Detail

15. Attendance at the theatre has increased from 78,546 in 2009/10 to 125,331 in 2019/20, with an average attendance of 83% across the year that is significantly above the industry average of 50-60%. Of the 250 performances the theatre stages each year 100 of those were sold out or over 90% of capacity. Therefore, the theatre is often oversubscribed.
16. The Octagon Theatre and Arts Development is subsidised by South Somerset District Council by £298,780 per annum (budget 2019/20). Between 50-70% of the population of South Somerset use the theatre throughout the course of the year and satisfaction levels are consistently high (80-90%).
17. The venue is suffering from the increased level of use and does not meet environmental or accessibility standards. There is poor access backstage with no access for wheelchair users to the stage and difficulty for disabled audience members, staff and artists or those with limited mobility. The front of house areas are looking tired and often feel cramped, dated and lack air conditioning. The popular and profitable café bar is hampered by the small kitchen that restricts the menu and number of covers while tables are placed around the outside of the auditorium, with diners' meals interrupted by the arrival of other audience members.
18. The popular Octagon Academy classes take place in a small studio that is obstructed by a supporting pillar in the middle of the room, with no windows, no air cooling and a lack of ceiling height for dance classes.
19. The majority of patrons travel to the theatre by car, parking in Petters Way Car Park and then taking a short walk down a steep sloped path and steps to reach the main entrance. The route is not accessible for those with limited mobility and the path becomes slippery when wet or during icy conditions.



20. The stage does not currently have a fly tower (used for flying scenery and a requirement for most touring musical, plays and pantomime). The auditorium and stage has a metal roof and drainpipes in the walls of the auditorium that means that when experiencing heavy rain or hail it can be heard during the performance. There are no sound lobbies or sound proofing around the auditorium which means during quiet shows and classical music concerts audiences can hear doors closing or staff preparing for the interval. The site lines are generally very good, with good leg room; and artists like the intimacy of the space. However, the current auditorium looks very tired and dated and the seats are in need of replacement. Therefore, a significant amount of refurbishment and expenditure is required in any event, whether or not this proposal proceeds.
21. The theatre is well placed geographically to serve the south west and build on the success of the existing operation. There is relatively little competition in the region with the nearest venues in Weymouth Pavillion (29.3 miles) to the south, Exeter Northcott (49.6 miles) to the east, the Playhouse Theatre Weston-Super-Mare (40.1 miles) to the north and Salisbury Playhouse / Town Hall (47.1 miles) to the west. Of equal distance or further would be Poole Lighthouse, or theatres and concert halls in Bath and Bristol. There is some crossover with audiences for The Brewhouse Theatre in Taunton (27 miles west) but the theatre is smaller – seating 350.
22. The future success of The Octagon Theatre, despite the current limitations of the building, are down to the ongoing support and use of the facilities by patrons and customers, the strong and experienced leadership from the management team, with the support of the Commercial Services Director, Chief Executive, Portfolio Holder and Leader of the Council.
23. The report was commissioned to provide an options appraisal and needs analysis for the Octagon Theatre. It was led by Charcoal Blue consultants working with architects, catering consultants and business planners. The feasibility study for the development of the theatre, shows that the proposal will resolve the current and dated issues holding back the Theatre noted above. The proposal will also take the theatre to a different level to create a truly regional destination. This proposal would benefit the towns economy, footfall, environment and wellbeing for communities locally and across the region for decades to come.

Summary of Charcoal Blue (Consultant) Report

24. The full report, including architects plans and drawings, is available to members upon request. A summary has been included as Appendix 1 – (Confidential).
25. The report from the consultants note:
- The scale of overall audience is impressive with consistent growth in tickets over a ten year period.
 - Catering and trading performance is strong but there is significant potential to drive up average spends per visitor, increasing profitability.
 - Analysis of the current programme and market competition shows that there is significant demand already for new and extended facilities



- There is a clear and evidenced demand for all aspects of the preferred scheme in the existing and extremely strong performance of the Octagon.
- There is a substantial and under-served population, already partly being reached by the venue, but with potential to attend in much greater numbers, in a 60 minute catchment in which there is limited competition for the interest of any particular audience.
- This population has a strong propensity to enjoy and consume culture and in particular to demand the genres of activity, which the extended and improved Octagon will be particularly well placed to grow – for instance in musicals, drama and film.
- There is strong evidence, in part from exemplar projects around the country that this strong market potential for performing arts programmes can be matched and in turn supported by the market for, and new provision of, cinema and food and drink offers.
- In addition, the evidence shows this type of project can be a catalyst for regenerating a town, bringing further investment, footfall, improving the economy, as well as increased health and wellbeing opportunities.

Benefits of the Proposed Development

26. The enhanced auditorium would see the addition of a circle that will increase the capacity to 900 seats whilst retaining excellent site lines and similar leg room. A well-equipped stage, with flexible Orchestra Pit, and full flying facilities will be suitable for a wide-range of arts and entertainment events. The additional capacity and facilities will open up to a new range of companies and events to our programme from larger orchestras, leading theatre companies, touring musicals to offer a much improved experience for existing popular shows and our thriving amateur and community companies. Improved acoustics and sound lobbies will give audiences, performers and stage crew a much improved experience that is accessible both front of house and backstage. The developed auditorium will allow us to 'step up' our programming and bring a new range of shows to South Somerset.
27. The extension to the front of the building would see two additional theatres with seating of 124 and 64. These spaces are designed to predominantly screen films (with the film programme moving from Westlands Ballroom to purpose built spaces) showcasing Live Events (National Theatre Live, Royal Opera House Live etc.) and the best of mainstream films, British, independent and foreign language films. The auditoriums will house luxury seating, Dolby 5.1 sound and purpose built facilities that are fully accessible and offer an enhanced film experience. The larger space will also be suitable for comedy events, acoustic live music, with both spaces designed for lectures, conferences and spoken word events that host Yeovil Literary Festival events. The smaller Film Theatre will be a luxury boutique cinema with sofa seats, foot stools that is a 'destination cinema' offering an exceptional experience.
28. The participatory programme 'The Octagon Academy' would expand with two studios that will be available for hire, in addition to staging our own classes and workshops.



29. The Dance Studio is a large fully equipped dance studio with a sprung dance floor, mirrors, sound equipment and full ceiling height that will become a creative hub for dance in the region.
30. The community studio offers an alternative space for classes and rehearsals including our popular choir, theatre groups, writers circle and arts and craft workshops. Our participatory programme brings communities together, improving the health and well-being of residents. They are also key to our engagement programme where workshops can be delivered by the companies performing in the Main Auditorium.
31. The proposed development of Front of House (FOH) will offer attractive foyers for use throughout the day with excellent supporting bars and eating opportunities. Customers would now enter on the first floor level with Petters Way Car Park with no need to use the sloped path or steps.
32. The development of the venue will also seek to enhance the gateway to Yeovil Country Park, providing the link from the town to Ninesprings. The development will give the opportunity to architecturally mark the gateway and create a more attractive building that is sympathetic to the surrounding area. Audiences on the night will have a well-lit route to Goldenstones car park, as an alternative to Petters Way Car Park, in addition to covered bike shelters.
33. The Front of House areas will be fully accessible with accessible toilets on every level and an adult changing facility (the first one in Yeovil Town Centre – the nearest being in the supermarket ASDA, Yeovil). The venue will offer views of the town and the country park from two complementary food areas. On the first floor, directly in front of the main entrance and at the 'heart' of the new venue would be a relaxed café bar. This would be open throughout the day for hot and cold food options, barista style coffee, cakes and open to the public to meet friends and family whether attending a performance, film screening, arts or dance class, or the free Wi-Fi for an informal meeting. This hub will be a valuable income source for the venue and create a destination in its own right. On the second floor would be a formal dining restaurant, away from busy congregation areas. We will continue to use local and regional food and drink producers and will seek to expand this approach highlighting the excellent food and drink producers in the South West and directly supporting the local circular economy.
34. When developing The Octagon Theatre, improving environmental standards will be at the forefront of the work, building a venue that is greener and puts sustainability at the heart of how we operate. Utilising modern building approaches that will reduce our carbon footprint through construction. The intention is that some grant funding could be used for some of these improvements.
35. The redeveloped venue will be fully accessible, addressing and resolving the current access inadequacies and offering much improved facilities for those with physical disabilities including visual and audio impairments.



36. The venue will be a flagship arts venue for the south west where inspiration and creativity can be found every day. It will create a 'cultural quarter' for Yeovil with new opportunities for residents that will help raise aspirations, and attract new businesses and investment to the area, driving new job creation and building the local economy. The report from Charcoal Blue (appendix. 1) states that:

'Even after cautiously discounting for effect that could have happened anyway, for leakage from the local economy, and for 'optimism bias' – so that the forecast is conservative - we can see that the renewed Octagon will generate at least £9.3m of locally retained activity per annum'.

37. The theatre will generate additional income for local car parks, hotels, restaurants, and attract visitors to the town.

Summary of Business Plan

38. The business plan (Appendix 4 – Confidential) covers the first 10 years of operation based on the proposed designs and facilities. The existing operation, actual figures and programme from 2019/20 are used as the basis for the plan. All income and expenditure has been adjusted in line with income and trading assumptions with premises and operating costs increased in line with the enlarged building. Operating staff, marketing and house management have been increased.

39. The full forecasts are set out in the business plan, but in summary, the subsidy currently required by the Octagon Theatre and Arts Development Service (£335,832 budgeted for in 2019/20) is estimated to be reduced and no longer required in later years (potentially by year 6 of operation) after completion of the works. The forecast then shows that the service should then return a small surplus to the Council in years to follow after this time.

40. There is potential to match additional investment made by the Council from the new income streams generated by the project with investment by other organisations. Commitment to a significant growth in participation and engagement not only has the potential to significantly improve quality of life, wellbeing and life chances for citizens of the District, and particularly young people, but also to enable the case to be made for substantial investment by Arts Council England in the capital costs of making the new facilities.

Additional Financial and Well Being Benefits

41. Following this, there is also the potential for regular funding that will support the development of the existing Arts Development Service year after year. This would lead to an expanded Arts Engagement and Outreach Service that will serve the district with an extensive range of projects, activities and events, designed to broaden the experience and enjoyment of seeing and creating.

42. We will work with individuals, communities, and educational groups across South Somerset with a commitment to entertain, enlighten and inspire our current and future residents and visitors.



43. The Arts Engagement & Outreach Service plan is laid out in more details in appendix 5. In summary the aims of the service are linked to the Council Plan focusing on supporting our residents leading happy and healthier lives using the arts to increase engagement and participation in activities that support their physical and mental well-being. Working with leading arts organisation and local community artists we will focus on issues of child poverty, rural isolation, supporting elderly residents to live independent lives, raising aspirations and increasing skills and training for young people.
44. Our programme would attract national funding into South Somerset to deliver an innovative programme that will address the challenges our district faces. The combination of a developed Octagon Theatre and Art Engagement and Outreach service would see increased engagement in the arts and significantly increase opportunities for residents to benefit.
45. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a severe impact on the global economy and theatres have been severely affected. The need to substantially renew, theatres like The Octagon will urgently increase the imperative to deliver the most sophisticated environmentally controlled theatre, with greater generosity of space in both auditorium and public areas. When the pandemic has been brought under control the need for venues like The Octagon will see an even greater need to bring communities back together and arts events that will help with improving health and wellbeing.
46. The financial impact of the pandemic is likely to see an economic recession. However, theatre and cinema admissions do not tend to be affected by economic recessions and usually an increase in attendance occurs, as audiences seek affordable means of entertainment and escapism. Cultural developments have also been a highly effective means of regeneration for town centers looking to attract new businesses to their area.

Project Management Board

47. To take the matter forward it is proposed to set up a Project Management Board that consists of the Portfolio Holder for Health & Well-Being (Chair), the Leader of the Council, the Portfolio Holder for Economic Development, the Portfolio Holder for Finance & Legal Services, the Director of Commercial Services and S151 Officer and other officers as required and deemed necessary by the Project Management Board. The detailed governance and reporting arrangements of this board are to be approved by the SLT. The Board will be tasked with the development of the project plan and the overseeing of the tendering/procurement arrangements. The planning and delivery of this project will take approximately three years to the point of practical completion.

Financial Implications

48. In support of this report a **confidential** Capital Appraisal is included as Appendix 1 compiled by lead consultants Charcoal Blue. Appendix 4 provides a **confidential**



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10 year detailed business plan that estimates the SSDC Revenue Budget implication written by DCA consultants. A detailed appraisal of the Capital Proposals and Business Plan has been completed by SSDC's Capital Accountant (Appendix 2 – **confidential**). The appraisal assesses the impacts of three possible outcomes for the catering income stream. The report also details options for funding the capital development and the outcome matrix (Appendix 3 - **confidential**) presents the various impacts on loan variables (interest rate, length of term), and the ticket levy contribution. The outcome of this shows that the project is viable in all scenarios; ranging from a surplus of £42.8m down to a surplus of £5.2m.

49. Confidentiality is important at this time, as the plans contain commercially sensitive information regarding the cost estimates for the project which will be subject to competitive procurement. Elements of the Appraisal relate to the funding of the project and the anticipated revenue benefits are included in this part of the report for clarity of the estimated budgetary impact on SSDC.
50. It is expected that, if the proposal is approved, a 12-month period would be required to appoint and procure project management specialists and contractors before building work would actually commence. The Octagon Theatre would be closed for the build period that is likely to require 18-24 months of works. During this period the majority of programmed events and activity can be staged at Westlands Entertainment Venue that is managed within the service. This will bring benefits to the development of Westlands Entertainment Venue and the management team will work to retain audiences, artists and provide performance opportunities for amateur and community groups.
51. Consideration will be given to balance the long-term needs of both venues particularly over the busy Christmas season when The Octagon Theatre stages the popular annual pantomime and Westlands is busy with Christmas parties. A separate financial plan will be written for the closure period when it is determined the point at which The Octagon Theatre will need to close for works, which is not yet known precisely and dependant on approval of this proposal.
52. The revenue impact / costs will vary greatly dependent on when the period of closure falls; for example, whether this means that The Octagon is closed for one or two festive periods. We are confident that a worst case scenario (two Christmas closures) would require less than the current cost of service. A temporary staffing structure will be required to ensure we operate efficiently and retain key skills and knowledge to develop the project. This will be developed and implemented alongside the financial plan once the closure period has been established.
53. The recommendation within this report is to agree to the proposals and proceed with a £23.01m capital budget provision for investment (excluding VAT which is recoverable in respect of the project) to refurbish and develop the facilities at The Octagon Theatre. This will require funding for up front capital costs being provided by SSDC, and includes a contingency element for unforeseen costs.

Legal implications (if any) and details of Statutory Powers



54. Statutory Authority S.145 Local Government Act 1972 Provision of entertainments

Under the above provision the Council has the power to arrange or finance the doing of anything necessary or expedient for the provision of entertainment of any nature or the provision of a theatre, concert hall, dance hall or other premises suitable for the giving of entertainments or the holding of dances.

Council Plan Implications

55. This project will contribute towards the following council aims;

- To deliver high quality cost effective services
- Actively manage assets and resources to ensure the best financial or community return.
- Healthy, Self-reliant Communities
- Contribute and support to the refresh of Yeovil Town Centre
- Develop proposals to support struggling families and help address child poverty and low rates of social mobility in the district
- Work with partners to achieve economies, resilience and influence.

Carbon Emissions and Climate Change Implications

56. The development of the building will seek to incorporate state of the art, efficient building processes and environmentally efficient operating practices that will have a very positive effect on recycling, carbon emissions and pollution levels.

Equality and Diversity Implications

57. Access throughout the building and to access the site will be significantly improved. An Access consultant has worked on the initial designs and will be employed as part of the project team to maximise opportunities for improvements to create a more accessible and welcoming venue. A full equality assessment report will be undertaken as part of the planning and build process.

Privacy Impact Assessment

58. There are no adverse personal data implications to this report.

Background Papers

- Octagon Theatre Development Proposal January 2021 District Executive Report

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

Document is Restricted

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Arts Engagement & Outreach Service Proposal

This proposal is linked to the proposed capital development of The Octagon Theatre, the funding generated by the redeveloped theatre and new facilities in the development are imperative to the proposals laid out here for a successful arts engagement and outreach service to be created.

Background

The Arts Development Service is based at The Octagon Theatre with an annual budget of £57,180 (2020/21). The majority of the budget is used to support one part-time member of staff and to make annual grants (£19,000) to four key arts organisations who deliver work across South Somerset – Take Art, Somerset Art Works (SAW), Somerset Film and Actiontrack. The work delivered by these organisations include the Village Performance Scheme (Take Art) and Somerset Arts Weeks (SAW). The remaining resources are used to support arts projects and activities around the district with recent recipients including Wassail Theatre Company, OD Arts Festival and artists who live and work in the district. With recent appointments to the service this has expanded to take on outreach projects that were previously led by the Arts and Entertainment Venues Manager. This includes funding from Arts Council England and Yarlington Housing Group to support the dance based ‘Move To Improve’ project (£55K) and led the applications for the Cultural Recovery funds with £333K awarded from Arts Council England. The service co-ordinates the Octagon Theatre participatory programme – The Octagon Academy – that hosts 17 classes per week, co-ordinates community shows like SHiNE and A Festival of Song. The service also programmes the visual arts exhibitions at The Octagon Theatre and provides advice and support for artists and arts organisations in the district.

Report

The redevelopment and extension of The Octagon Theatre offers the opportunity to develop the Arts Engagement and Outreach service with increased funding and improved facilities that will:

- Deliver an innovative and creative programme of arts engagement and outreach work that will focus on helping to achieve SSDC’s priorities as laid out in the Council plan
- Support the business plan and development of audiences at the redeveloped Octagon Theatre
- Attract additional funding and investment into the district from trusts, foundations and bodies including the Arts Council
- Raise the profile of arts in South Somerset and offer increased opportunities for artists working in the district and for residents to engage regularly with arts activity benefiting from an improving quality of life

An innovative programme of Arts Engagement and Outreach work would be an innovative way help to address SSDC priority areas:

- High rates of children growing up in poverty and poor social mobility
- Large numbers of struggling families
- Growing numbers of older people who are increasingly living in poor health

- The climate emergency
- Homelessness and the lack of genuinely affordable housing
- The economy including productivity, skills and wage levels

Projects and initiatives based in the creative arts that focus on raising aspirations, building self-confidence, improving mental and physical well-being, developing skills and supporting community cohesion will help us support our communities and develop audiences for events at the theatre. We will seek additional funding from trusts, foundations and other sources using our core and project funding from SSDC to leverage external funding. We will look to make our Arts Engagement and Outreach Service an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation receiving annual funding on the three year basis. The NPO goals from ACE align very well with the priorities for SSDC and the aspirations of the organisation.

ACE NPO Goals 2018-2022:

Goal 1: Excellence is thriving and celebrated in the arts, museums and libraries

Goal 2: Everyone has the opportunity to experience and be inspired by the arts, museums and libraries

Goal 3: The arts, museums and libraries are resilient and environmentally sustainable

Goal 4: The leadership and workforce in the arts, museums and libraries are diverse and appropriately skilled

Goal 5: Every child and young person has the opportunity to experience the richness of the arts, museums and libraries

With the commitment to redevelop the Octagon Theatre, accompanying business and need for capital funding from ACE to support the project, we will develop an Arts Engagement and Outreach Strategy with a 10 year business plan that includes a revised staffing structure and delivery plan. It is anticipated that the Arts Engagement and Outreach Service budget would increase to £150,000 per year that would be paid for by increased income generated by The Octagon Theatre. It is also projected that as audiences/users and income develops the theatre will be generating enough income that it will be able to invest further income into the Arts Engagement and Outreach Service to deliver additional projects and be used as 'seed funding' to attract additional investment. The amount of money available for these projects will depend on the financial performance of the theatre and this approach will limit financial risk to the authority. With the increased core funding and ambitious plans in place we would be applying to become an NPO for the Arts Council and our application would be in the region of £125,000 per year to support our core programme.

Core activity we are already exploring as part of this plan would include:

- Supporting artists and arts activity across the district by providing advice, support and grant funding to Arts Organisation(s) who deliver work that meets our objectives.
- To provide advocacy, support and leadership for the arts in South Somerset
- Deliver an innovative and creative programme of arts engagement and outreach work that ties in with the programme of events taking place at The Octagon Theatre, Westlands

Entertainment Venue and other events taking place across the district that supports audience growth and the understanding and appreciation of the arts.

- Support artists, graduates and those seeking a career in the creative arts with advice, support and networking opportunities.
- Raise the profile of arts in South Somerset and offer increased opportunities for artists working in the district and for residents to engage regularly with arts activity benefiting from an improving quality of life
- Developing our relationship with Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra (BSO) to commit to three public concerts per year when the redeveloped Octagon Theatre opens. An education project giving schools access to specially curated concerts to introduce children to a live orchestra.
- Develop a programme linked to Yeovil District Hospital (YDH) and the Somerset NHS Foundation as part of an 'arts on prescription' initiative, to improve the health and wellbeing of residents across South Somerset, and to reduce hospital admission rates e.g. falls prevention
- Building on the success of our Octagon Academy we would like to expand the range of classes providing new opportunities for participants and employment for teachers. We would like to expand our range of music, dance and drama classes with satellite classes setup across the district.
- Build on the success of our 'Move To Improve' Dance Development projects to develop audiences and appreciation for dance, provide opportunities for professional dance artists. It is widely acknowledged that dance can reduce loneliness and alleviate depression and anxiety.

To complement our core work would be an exciting and ever changing range of projects centred around the creative arts, using our venues as a creative hub to deliver excellent opportunities across the district and extend to the region.

Arts and Entertainment Service Annual Review 2019/20



Welcome...



I am delighted to be sharing with you a glimpse into the work the Arts & Entertainment Service at South Somerset District Council has delivered through the financial year from 1st April 2019 to 31st March 2020. It has been a fantastic year of performances, exhibitions, events and creativity bringing many superb artists to South Somerset, supporting local artists who live in our district and providing opportunities for residents and attracting visitors into the area.

As part of South Somerset District Council our Arts & Entertainment Service makes a significant contribution to our vision for South Somerset: a place where businesses flourish, communities are safe, vibrant and healthy; where residents enjoy good housing and cultural, leisure and sporting activities.

We continue to transform the authority ensuring we put our customers first and building the Council of the future - a modern and efficient council able to deliver better services and outcomes for South Somerset in the context of significantly less funding. We have been redesigning the way we work to ensure we remain financially secure, protect the services that make South Somerset a great place to live, play and work, and deliver for our communities. We want to build healthy communities that are cohesive, sustainable and enjoy a high quality of life supporting people in improving their own physical and mental health and wellbeing. I hope you will always feel 'welcome' at our venues and my thanks go to our dedicated staff and volunteers who work incredibly hard to make your experience excellent and enjoyable.

Our venues remained at the forefront for providing quality arts and culture in the region and once again we have presented a broad range of high calibre productions with something to appeal to everyone. Audiences have enjoyed the very best in touring drama, musicals, opera, comedy, music, dance and ballet and our spectacular pantomime has again proved to be a massive hit!

The huge efforts and commitment displayed by each and every one of the hard-working members of staff and volunteers throughout our venues has again been recognised with the team winning TripAdvisor Awards. A richly deserved award and one which reflects the positive feedback shared by our loyal customers on a daily basis.

Sadly, this year has already been adversely affected by Coronavirus since March; and like all venues in the UK has had to close due to central government guidance. However, we are already working hard and planning to offer even better venues when we reopen and to deliver a superior programme of events and performances to our customers.

I hope you will share my pride in this fabulous team and the following brilliant set of achievements over the last year and I am certain that this will grow in the future when we are able to entertain you all again!

Cllr. Mike Best

Portfolio Holder for Health and Wellbeing,
South Somerset District Council



The past year has been a time of consolidation for The Octagon Theatre and Westlands Entertainment Venue as we looked to maintain and develop our strong audience figures by offering the best entertainment, events and an ever improving service to our guests. As we moved into our third year managing two large-scale vibrant venues, I am pleased to report that business is booming - we are trading ahead of budget, and our programme of development continues apace.

The final two weeks of the year both of our venues were closed, following the advice from government to help prevent the spread of the Covid 19 virus. In an unprecedented move, all theatres and venues were closed throughout the UK and around the world as places that bring people together had to stop and find new ways of reaching people. Westlands Entertainment Venue has been turned into a 'Well Being Hub' with many staff seconded into supporting the effort to ensure food parcels reach our most vulnerable residents. The Octagon Theatre continues to engage with our audiences sharing work on a digital platform that audiences can enjoy from home, free of charge to keep their spirits high. We are sharing work from Motionhouse, BalletBoyz and the National Theatre. I am exceptionally proud that our venues and staff are playing their role in helping the most vulnerable at this time and our venue can be a beacon of hope in the darkest of times. As I write this we don't know when our venues will be able to resume their normal operation - but we know that audiences are keen to return and their appetite for live entertainment will be bigger than ever. When it is safe for people to come together our venues will have a vital role to play in the healing process.

The Octagon Theatre retains its position as 'Somerset's Premier Theatre' with a dynamic programme that offers 'something for everyone'. Our blockbuster pantomime set a new attendance record and 'Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs' was crowned 'Queen' of the Box Office.

We've enjoyed stirring performances from Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra and BBC Proms sensation, Jess Gillam. We have brought laughter with so many sold out comedians and four sold out preview shows from Russell Howard. Our audiences have enjoyed superb drama and classic thrillers with 'The Lady Vanishes' and the triumphant return of Agatha Christie's 'The Mousetrap' that was seen by 4,917 people. From the grace and beauty of ballet to introducing 'little ones' to the magic of live theatre with 'Stickman' there has been so much to enjoy. Our stage has been home to vibrant community and amateur societies - a place where local talent is nurtured and shines bright. Music legends have graced our stage from Lulu to Fisherman's Friends - there are so many memorable performances and moments.

I am very proud of our engagement and participatory work and we have cemented our plans to develop this work further - investing in local artists and companies creating work in South Somerset. We also work to provide opportunities to learn skills, make new friends and find joy and expression through the creative arts. The arts have the power to transform people's lives - and they do so every day in our venues.

My thanks go to my brilliant team of staff, volunteers and supporters. Let's look back and celebrate what we've achieved over the last 12 months and look forward to our venues bringing people together once more.

Adam Burgan

Arts and Entertainment Venues Manager,
South Somerset District Council

2019/20 - Key Achievements

Facts and Figures

	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Attendance (Total number of tickets sold)	78,546	88,334	93,519	90,149	101,634	119,366	123,339
No. Of Performances	260	239	244	235	242	259	264
No. Of Screenings (Westlands)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Gross Box Office Income	£1,098,093	£1,233,074	£1,362,419	£1,335,182	£1,549,590	£1,844,455	£1,843,064
Annual Income - Excluding Box Office	£359,367	£344,452	£364,735	£410,600	£477,181	£560,951	£610,876

The cost of running the Arts and Entertainment Service and operating The Octagon Theatre and Westlands Entertainment Venue in 2019/20 was £452,706. This means the service and venues cost each resident in South Somerset £2.69 for the year or 11p per household per week.



You obviously noticed the audience was made up of a bunch of 'wrinklies', but by the end we had all shed the last sixty/seventy years and stood at least a foot (not 30 cms!) taller as we walked out on air. Thank you so much.

Angela and Mac Grant - On 'Buddy the Musical'



Visually spectacular, hilariously funny, top class pantomime fun. We wouldn't go anywhere else for panto now and that's after trying Bath and Bristol too, Octagon is by far the best.



	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Attendance (Total number of tickets sold)	133,295	116,227 (O) 24,937 (W) 141,164 (T)	116,927 (O) 35,133 (W) 152,060 (T)	125,331 (O) 36,612 (W) 161,943 (T)
No. Of Performances	290	248 (O) 42 (W) 290 (T)	242 (O) 49 (W) 291 (T)	259 (O) 55 (W) 314 (T)
No. Of Screenings (Westlands)	-	74	204	277
Gross Box Office Income	£2,196,389	£1,888,223 (O) £354,501 (W) £2,242,724 (T)	£1,986,342 (O) £500,754 (W) £2,487,096 (T)	£2,776,610 (T)
Annual Net Income - Excluding Box Office	£770,627	£710,629 (O) £510,623 (W) £1,221,252 (T)	£666,276 (O) £850,298 (W) £1,516,574 (T)	£739,536 (O) £751,432 (W) £1,490,968 (T)

O = Octagon, W = Westlands, T = Total



On 16th March both The Octagon Theatre and Westlands Entertainment Venue were closed following the government advice to reduce the spread of Covid 19. Despite the loss of two weeks of events, performances and meetings we end the year having exceeded the figures set by the previous year showing excellent growth across both venues. A further 4,322 tickets had already been sold for the two weeks the venues were closed at the end of the financial year – 3,096 for performances at The Octagon Theatre and 1,226 at Westlands Entertainment Venue – these figures are not included in the table.

The figures for Westlands Entertainment Venue does not include the tens of thousands of guests at conferences, meetings, trade fairs, weekly ballroom sessions, banquets and parties. Westlands is ahead of the targets for year two of our business plan.

We estimate that the Octagon receives over 200,000 visitors a year who come to see a show, visit the gallery, dine in the café bar, use the venue for meetings and conferences or take part in a class or perform in a show. Our pantomime production of 'Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs' broke the Box Office record set by 'Cinderella' and was seen by over 29,800 people.



Westlands has received a 'Certificate of Excellence' from Trip Advisor for achieving consistently excellent reviews on the website. The Octagon Theatre has qualified for the 'Certificate Excellence Hall of Fame' after achieving a 'Certificate of Excellence' for the past five years.

The Octagon Theatre is listed on Trip Advisor with a 4.5★ rating out of 265 reviews. Westlands Entertainment Venue is catching up at No. 6 on the list and a 4.5★ rating out of 36 reviews.

You are a great asset to Yeovil & the surrounding areas. It is always a pleasure to visit. As a wheelchair user I appreciate all the assistance you give, especially being able to book parking!
Feedback from the Annual Survey

64% of all ticket were purchased online.

Website stats...

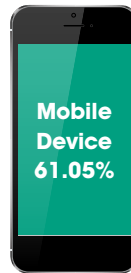
	Individual Website users	Individual Page Views
Octagon	257,369	1,808,355
Westlands	139,915	671,655
Total	397,284	2,480,010



For our Social Media channels Facebook remains the most popular with over 21,000 people liking our pages.

On Facebook The Octagon Theatre is rated 4.7 out of 5 with 1,087 reviews.

How customers access our websites...



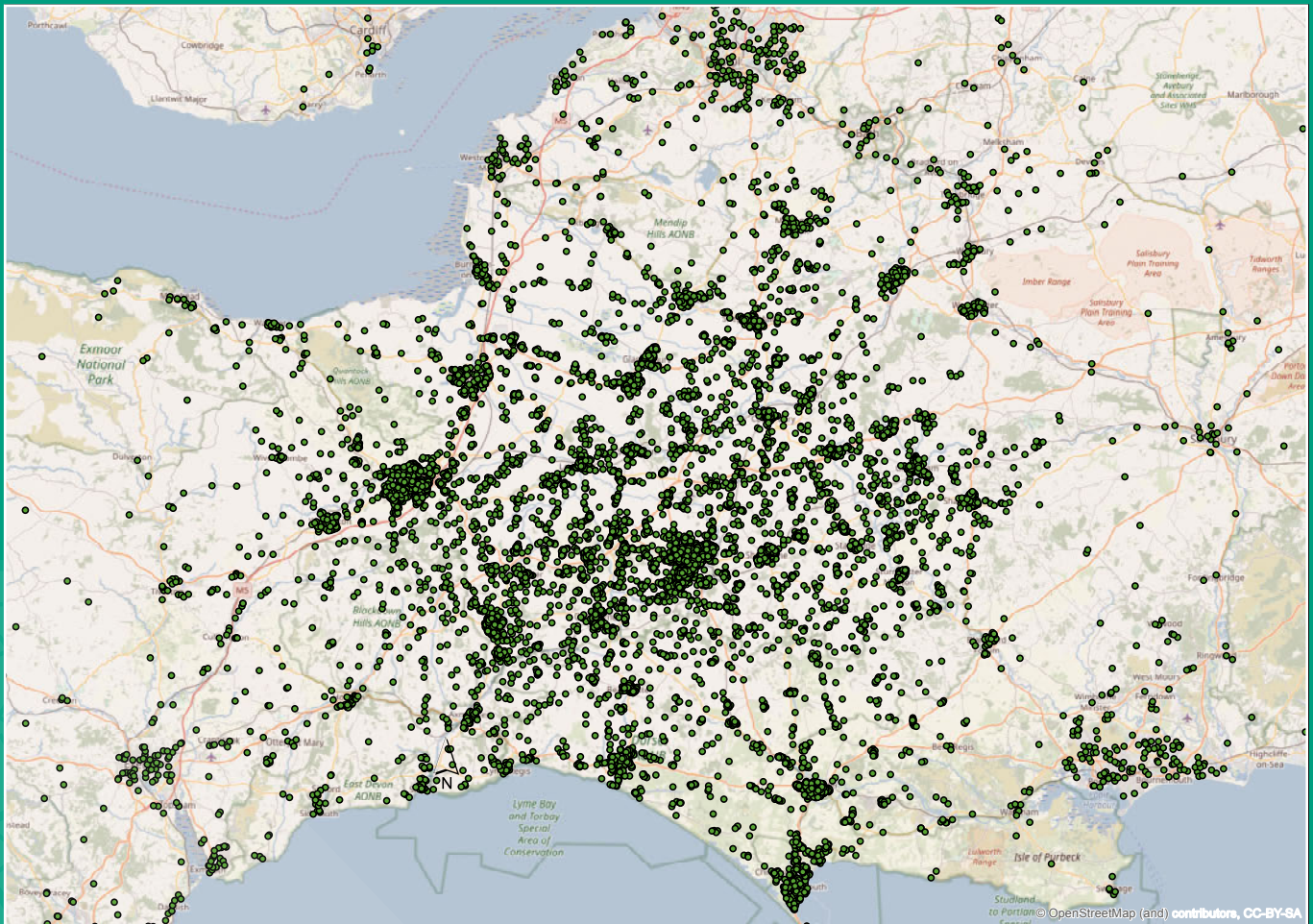
We had a wonderful afternoon and the three male leads were a triumph of the traditional pantomime art - a brilliant introduction to live theatre for our grandchildren! Thank you.
Sarah Cuff

Where Do Our Customers Come From?

Each dot represents a customer who made a booking for an event at The Octagon Theatre or Westlands Entertainment Venue that took place from 1st April 2019 - 15th March 2020. It does not reflect how many tickets they purchased or how many times they bought tickets within that period. There were a further approx. 1,000 booking records that could not be included as the postcode was incomplete.



My grandson who had come from Mexico and this was his first ever pantomime was so excited that his name was mentioned and he was wished merry Christmas and happy New year in Spanish!



What's On? At The Octagon Theatre...

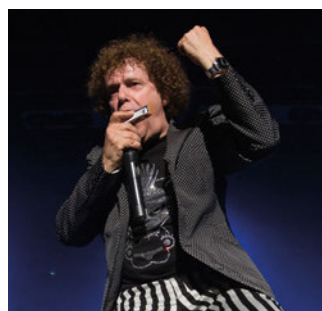
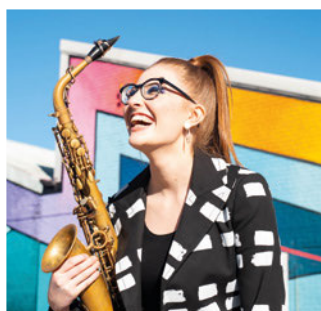
Over the twelve month period for the financial year 2019/20 The Octagon Theatre has enjoyed superb performances from a diverse range of artists and companies.

We've enjoyed live music from The Black Dyke Band, Marty Wilde, Leo Sayer, Ukulele Orchestra of Great Britain, Paul Young, the Chris Barber Band, Joe Brown, 'That'll Be The Day', Lulu, Mugenkyo Taiko Drummers, Turin Breaks, Fascinating Aida, Phil Beer and Fisherman's Friends.

Outside of the Yeovil Literary Festival we have enjoyed fascinating and entertaining talks from Geoff Hurst, John Challis and Doug Allen.

Our audiences have enjoyed sublime classical music from Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, Armonico Consort, Craig Ogen, Jess Gillam, Elin Manahan Thomas, Tasmin Little, Emma Johnson and BBC Concert Orchestra who performed two free concerts for primary school children.

We have also staged thrilling operas from Welsh National Opera (WNO) with 'Don Pasquale' and The Russian State Ballet and Opera House and their production of 'Aida'.





Our stage has been home to superb dance productions from Motionhouse, James Wilton Dance, and we've welcomed the stars of 'Strictly' with Aijaz, Giovanni, Gorka. Some of our ballet highlights include The Russian State Ballet and Opera House with productions of 'Nutcracker' and 'Don Quixote'.

Comedy remains one of our most popular performance strands with performances from Mark Steel, Paul Merton, Rich Hall, Julian Clary, Reginald D Hunter, Al Murray, Gill Sims, Jethro, Griff Rhys Jones, Dave Gorman, Mark Watson, Ed Byrne and four sold out performances from Russell Howard - seen by 2,488 people at The Octagon with all tickets selling out in 24 hours.

We have enjoyed some of the finest plays and musicals including London Classic Theatre - 'No Man's Land', New Old Friends - 'Crimes on the Coast', Blackeyed Theatre Company - 'Jane Eyre', Bill Kenwright's production of 'The Lady Vanishes', 'Buddy - The Buddy Holly Story' - enjoyed by 2,897 people, 'The Mousetrap' - selling 4,917 tickets, 'Round the Horne' and 'Eric and Ern'.

Some of our highlights for children include 'Stickman', 'The Tiger Who Came To Tea' and Milkshake Live!



What's On? At Westlands Entertainment Venue...



Westlands Entertainment Venue has welcomed Henning Wehn, James Acaster, Jack Dee, Martin Kemp, Richard & Adam, Dave Pearce, Andy Parsons, Mark 'Billy' Billingham, Stewart Francis, Show of Hands, Russell Kane, Ben Fogle, Neil Oliver, Gordon Buchanan, Toyah, Ardal O'Hanlon, Blake, Tony Blackburn, 5ive/911/Damage, Joel Dommett, Dick and Angel Strawbridge, Harry Redknapp, Francis Rossi, Merrill Osmond and Strictly's Graziano Di Prima.

Our monthly Comedy Club, quiz Nights, Open Mic Nights, Ballroom events and jive and swing events, alongside a large number of conferences and large scale events including Yeovil Beer Fest, Somerset Gin Festival, Cider and Cheese Festival, Silent Disco, Party! By Order of the Peaky Blinders and many more.





Our programme of screening films and live events continues to grow in popularity showing the best of mainstream films, independent and foreign language films from the comfort of our leather sofas. We showed 79 different films and screened 30,963 minutes of film.

We have hosted numerous conferences, banquets, balls, trade fairs, family celebrations and wakes. Seasonal arts and crafts fayres, Funtasia's Charity Ball, Election Counts and our Holistic and Wellbeing Fayre.



yeovil literary festival

The Seventh Chapter



2019 saw our seventh Yeovil Literary Festival take place over five days in October and November. The festival offers an exciting programme of literature and arts events from well-known literary figures, comedians, celebrities and exciting local and emerging writers. The festival is a not-for-profit partnership between The Octagon Theatre (South Somerset District Council), Waterstones, Yeovil Community Arts Association and Somerset Library Service and the headline sponsor was Battens Solicitors.

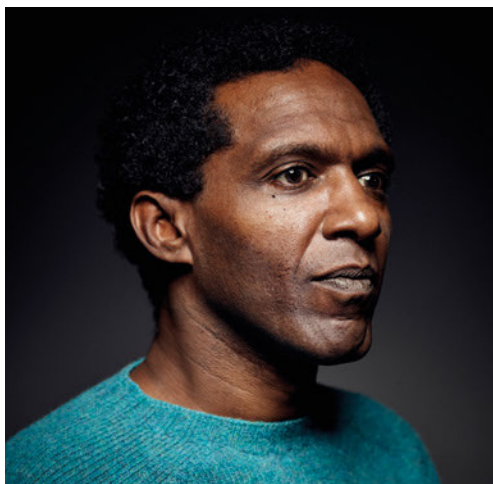


It's such a cosy, friendly and clean theatre, with easy parking and the added enjoyment of a restaurant and bar. A good choice of entertainment throughout the year, what else could anyone want.





Pre-festival events included Robert Harris and David Suchet. The festival welcomed 800 patrons for events including David Laws, Terry Waite CBE, Brett Anderson, Raynor Winn, Michael Eavis, Prue Leith, Anton Du Beke, Mark 'Billy' Billingham, Clare Balding, Adam Kay and many more.



'Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs' Pantomime crowned 'Queen' of the Box Office!

Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs' broke all box office records becoming the highest attended pantomime in the history of The Octagon Theatre selling 29,800 tickets.

Panto Fun Facts:

- 63 sound effect cues per show
- 223 sound cues per show

Through the 53 show run we saw:

- Over 200 Pyrotechnics
- 12,480 Lighting cues
- 53 Royal weddings
- 988 Scene changes
- 66 People working per performance
- 884 Songs (17 per show)
- 1,924 Fruit/veg puns in the cart scene
- 312 Panto thigh slaps
- 364 Ghosts
- 520 Dame costume changes
- 135 Costumes per show

The panto Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs was amazing, I take my three kids every year and it never disappoints. It just gets better and better, the cast are amazing and plenty of laughs. Kids absolutely loved it and had such a fun evening. Would highly recommend!"

Adele Norie



Gallery

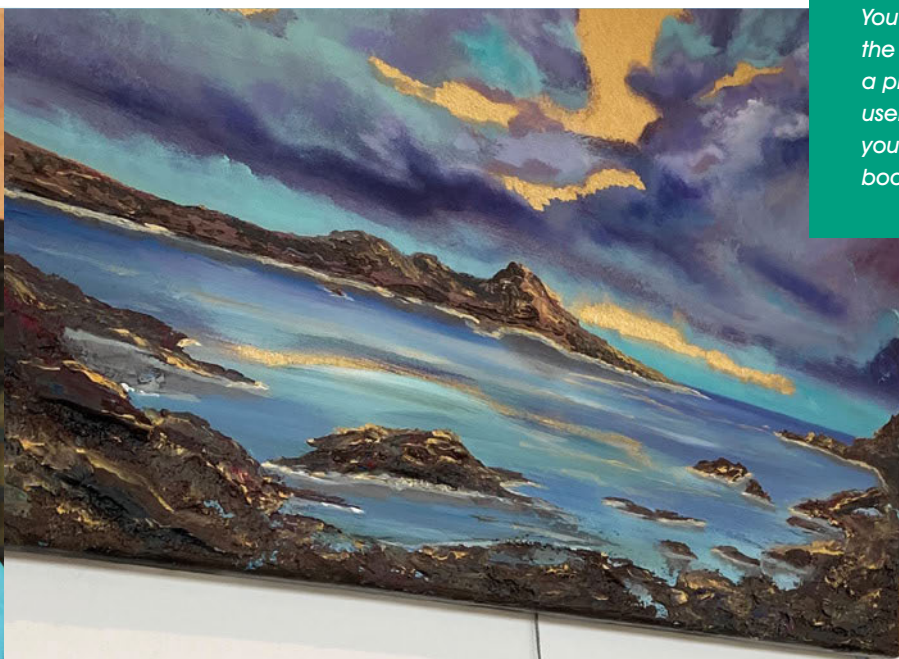
The Gallery at the Octagon continues to focus on local talent from the surrounding areas, promoting groups & artists whose main motive is to share the pleasure of art.

This year's programme supported a range of works from independent artists to local groups such as South Somerset Monochrome Art Group. The Octagon continues to support annual exhibitions from Yeovil Art Group and Somerset Art Works as a participating venue in the Arts Week programme.

The programme also included an exhibition that invited 30 young artists from 10 secondary schools and colleges across Somerset, to exhibit three pieces of artwork in an exhibition designed to display the extraordinary works of art created by students. The exhibition displayed artwork from students at Preston Secondary School, Bruton School for Girls, King Arthur's School, Swanmead Middle School, Whitstone School, Sexey's School, Stanchester Academy, Perrott Hill, Blue School, Huish Episcopi Academy, and Fairmead School.



You are a great asset to Yeovil & the surrounding areas. It is always a pleasure to visit. As a wheelchair user I appreciate all the assistance you give, especially being able to book parking!



Venues at the Heart of the Community...

We are proud that our venues are at the 'heart' of the community in South Somerset. Many local groups and societies stage performances and events including Motiv8 Productions, Yeovil Amateur Operatic Society, University College Yeovil (Graduation), Helen Laxton School of Dance, Beatnik Productions, The Dance Factory, Castaways Theatre Group, Yeovil Amateur Pantomime Society, Yeovil Youth Theatre, Yeovilton Military Wives, Project Play and many more.



First time visiting The Octagon last night to see 42nd Street. Brilliant experience! Easy to park as large car park nearby. Great view of the stage, comfy seats, nice bar area. We really enjoyed the performance and should definitely go to The Octagon again.

Liz Farmer



Join In

The Octagon Academy was launched in 2010 following a grant from SSDC Area South Forum. We now have over 18 weekly classes for all ages and abilities. Over 400 people aged from 15 months to 73 are taking part in classes at the Octagon and Westlands in singing, dancing and drama every week.

Our venues are home to Somerset Youth Theatre and Castaway Theatre Group and classes from The Helen Laxton School of Dance, The Allen School of Dance and many more.

The Johnson Studio is also the home of Yeovil Community Arts Association, Yeovil Art Group and University of the Third Age local history group.

Through 2019/20 we held 622 classes and 86 meetings in the Johnson Studio at The Octagon Theatre.



The Octagon Choir has been my second 'family' for the last five years. Great friendship; love & support whenever needed and singing is so good for my mind & body.

Audrey Haskell





Supporting Roles...

The Octagon Theatre and Westlands Entertainment Venue serve thousands of customers each week and are proud to use local suppliers where possible to support the local economy and to source the best quality products that showcase Somerset producers. Whether it is ice cream from near Bath, meat from the butchers in Crewkerne, Glastonbury water, bread from Mortimers in Yeovil or local ales and cider, we are proud to share the 'taste of Somerset'.

- Mortimers Bakery
- Marshfield Ice Cream
- A & J Winters, Butchers, South Petherton
- Barrett Bros, Butchers, Crewkerne
- Glastonbury Spring Water Co
- Coffeeworks, Exeter
- Wild Puddings, Ilchester - supplying freshly baked cakes

We also support local companies who we partner with to provide goods and services. In addition to the advertising in local magazines, newspapers and printers, here are just some of the other local suppliers benefitting from our venues.

- Ever So Clean Supplies
- Inno Fire & Security
- Atlas Security
- The Cloth Shop, Crewkerne (re-upholstery)
- Dataweigh Systems Ltd, Yeovil
- Perrys Recycling
- Greenstock Refrigeration

If you like the idea of going to the cinema but find the reality rather disappointing with noisy kids with popcorn and ear splitting soundtracks then this is for you. Enjoy a drink before you go in or indeed take it in with you in a real glass, sit on a nice settee or armchair and not be deafened by the soundtrack. A lovely way to enjoy good films, couldn't be better, well done Westlands.

Claire Wynne-Riley



THE CLOTH SHOP - SEATON

Dataweigh Systems

PERRYS RECYCLING

In the last year, the Octagon alone served more than 15,000 freshly prepared meals and more than 37,000 tubs of ice cream. We also handed out almost 9,000 packets of sweets and 425 flashing red roses (for Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, naturally).



A Helping Hand

Our venues are supported by a team of 100 volunteers - The Foyer Club, who undertake Front of House duties (taking tickets, showing customers to their seats, selling ice creams, confectionary and merchandise, helping with mailings). They donate approximately 15,800 hours per year!

Without these volunteers it would cost us an additional £153,000 to operate.

Fundraising

The Foyer Club gained charitable status in 2014 and work with our staff to raise money to purchase new equipment and support the theatre. The Foyer Club are currently fundraising to support our 'Name A Seat' campaign that will replace the auditorium seating in The Octagon Theatre.



Best thing about The Octagon is the size of the venue. No matter what seats you have you can see everything on stage so clearly. Had a great evening.

Glenda Sherwood Wright

Raising Money For Local Charities

Each year we receive hundreds of requests to support local school fetes, raffles and many other fundraising events that we support where possible. We also support many local charities with Bucket Collections and other fundraising events throughout the year. Here are just a few from the last twelve months...

- The Panto Bucket Collection during 'Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs' and the 'Christmas Celebration Concert at Westlands raised £12,194 that was split equally between the Foyer Club and Yeovil District Hospital Breast Cancer Unit Appeal.
- A Raffle was held for Somerset Mind Charity £80.00.
- Raffle held for Guide Dogs for the Blind £317.00.
- Yeovil Beer Festival 2019 raised £14,227 that was divided between Yeovil District Hospital Breast Cancer Unit Appeal, St Margaret's Hospice, Yeovil Round Table, Yeovil Lions Club and Yeovil Opportunity Group.
- Motiv8 Production's 'Starlight Express' raised £1000 for Yeovil District Hospital Breast Cancer Unit Appeal and £500 for In The Bag charity for testicular cancer.
- Yeovil Youth Theatre raised £515.60 during their production of 'Chicago'.
- YAOS's production of 'Chitty Chitty Bang Bang' raised £640.63 while their production of 'The Sound of Music' raised £295.83 for Fiveways School Playground appeal.
- Barry & Jean Brewster, who are members of the Foyer Club sold poppies at multiple performances and raised £2160.00 for the Royal British Legion.
- YAPS production of 'Wizard of Oz' raised £367.42 for the Lily Foundation.
- Party! By Order of the Peaky Blinders raised £9,500 for the Yeovil District Hospital Breast Cancer Unit Appeal. It was organised by Funtasia, Santiago Productions and Westlands Entertainment Venue.

Arts Engagement and Outreach in South Somerset

A key part of the Arts Entertainment Service is to develop opportunities for community engagement across the district and offer cultural experiences for all ages and abilities. The ambition throughout the year has been to collaborate with the community, to create and develop projects that are accessible to all and celebrate the vibrant cultural life of South Somerset. To achieve this we work with individual artists, art groups and organisations from both the professional and voluntary sectors.

Over the year, we have extended our support to local arts organisations such as, OSR Projects, Wassail Theatre Company and artist, Angela Blackwell. The projects we have supported include Od Arts Festival, Somerset Emergency Theatre, and the Blind Painter Project. These projects celebrate the achievements of local artists, bring communities together where they live, and put South Somerset on the map for high quality arts and culture. Whilst some of these projects may be put on hold temporarily as a result of the pandemic, much of the work continues behind the scenes; Wassail Theatre Company have moved their community engagement online, with an offer to commission Somerset based artists and graduates to produce new work which will connect our communities during the lockdown.

One of our main priorities is to support our community and offer cultural experiences for all ages and abilities. Through providing arts and cultural opportunities, we hope to nurture, inspire and empower local artistic talent and enrich our community. Over the past year, our focus has led us to strengthen our relationship with The Hub in Yeovil and Somerset Secondary and Primary Schools. We have explored ways we can make the arts more accessible for people with disabilities, and how we encourage young people to access local arts and cultural opportunities. To achieve this we partnered with Somerset County Council to deliver 'TalentEd Academies' at the Octagon and Westlands, to provide young people interested in the arts with a high quality workplace experience. The 'TalentEd Academies' offer participants an insight into a career in the arts and as an artist. The sessions were successfully delivered to students from Preston Secondary and Westfield Academy, with plans to expand and develop our reach in the coming year.

To enable us to extend our reach within the community we continue to fund four key arts organisations, Take Art, Somerset Art Works, Somerset Film and Actiontrack, who help us to deliver a cross section of art projects to our communities.



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Take Art

takeart.org

Take Art aim to promote performance and participation in the arts across Somerset, supporting professional artists and arts in the community. Over the last year, Take Art delivered a total of 10 projects in various locations across South Somerset, engaging a total of 2,925 residents as either participants or audience members. Projects include Spring Forward, Rural Touring, InspirED, Word/Play, BARN, and the SoundWaves Network. Projects delivered supported a range of art forms from dance to music and provided access to the arts for all ages and abilities.

Take Art’s rural performance scheme continues to bring professional, high quality music, theatre, dance and performance to village halls, churches & pubs across Somerset. The Rural Touring scheme plays a vital role in uniting communities and keeping villages’ alive, the

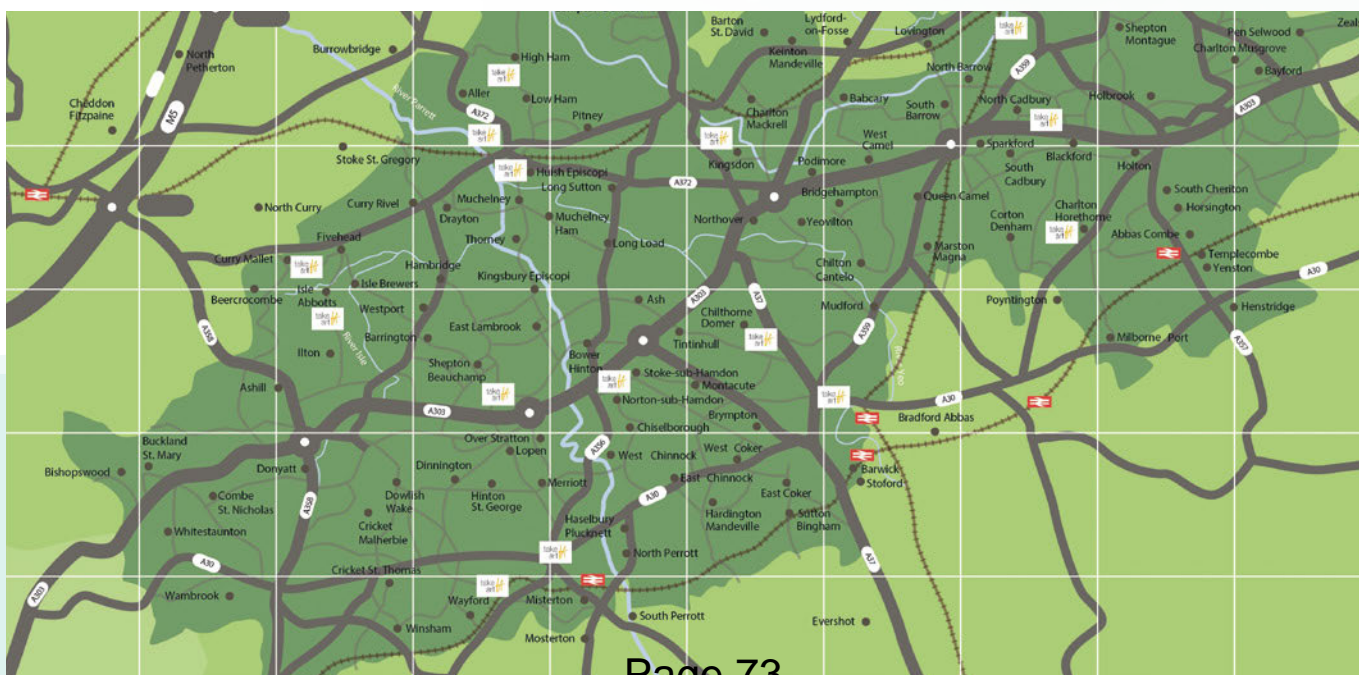
scheme allows people living in rural areas access to live art at an affordable price. In the last year, the scheme has engaged over 1,960 audience members across South Somerset.

Somerset Art Works

somerseartworks.org.uk

Somerset Art Works aim to develop opportunities for artists to work here in Somerset and for the community to experience high quality visual arts at a local level. Since its inception in 1994, Somerset Art Weeks have become an important date in Somerset’s calendar, delighting art lovers near and far. In 2019, Somerset Art Works celebrated 25 years of Arts Weeks, and featured over 300 artists in 135 venues.

Last year, Somerset Art Works produced an exhibition titled ‘Quiet Places for Unquiet Minds’ at the Octagon Theatre. The Somerset Art Works project with Mind in Somerset, aimed to help people to stay well, express themselves, to feel more engaged in their communities and experience a better quality of life. The exhibition displayed artwork produced by Yeovil Mind Community Day, Art and Poetry Groups and the Minehead Mind Art Group working with artists’ Simon Ripley and Megan Players.



Continued: Arts Engagement and Outreach in South Somerset

Somerset Film

www.somersetfilm.com

Somerset Film are dedicated to empowering individuals and communities through the use of film and digital technology. Somerset Film offer a programme of outreach activity and projects that encourage and facilitate the use of digital media by all sectors of the community. They provide learning opportunities through schools based projects, bursary schemes and training for all abilities.

Successful projects include the BBC New Creatives project, designed to signpost and support emerging talent. Through this scheme, Somerset Film supported an emerging artist from Langport to produce a programme on demystifying 'dadhood', which received positive feedback from the BBC. Somerset Film have also been busy this year working on 'Change Step' a film shot in Yeovil to help raise awareness about the Armed Forces Covenant. The film presents life after the military and encourages ex-military personnel to seek help with their transition.



Actiontrack

www.actiontrackperformance.co.uk

Actiontrack works collaboratively to deliver opportunities for individuals and groups to access practical involvement in music, drama, dance and the visual arts. The organisation develops and delivers wholly accessible projects, predominantly with children and young people and often with marginalized groups.

They have delivered an exciting range of projects throughout the year, including the delivery of several World Music Residencies for education groups in Langport, Crewkerne, and Chard, plus the MyTunes project. MyTunes is part of Actiontrack's regular delivery, the music-making project works in and alongside Pupil Referral Units and other agencies of Alternative Provision with vulnerable young people at risk. Work takes place in centres across the county and in Actiontrack's recording studio, ranging from instrumental tuition, through group playing to song-writing, recording and even instrument making.



MOVE TO IMPROVE



Move To Improve - Dance Development Project

We are pleased to announce the Move To Improve dance project. The project will build engagement in the arts amongst members of our community, provide support for young people or graduates beginning a career in the arts, and offer opportunities for artists and dance companies to perform their work on a regional stage.

Earlier this year the Arts Engagement team at the Octagon were successful in their bid for funding from Arts Council England and Yarlington Housing Group, allowing us to deliver the first strand of the project. The first strand will enable residents from rural and deprived areas access to local cultural opportunities, introduce communities to high quality dance where they live and build a local appreciation for dance. We will be delivering a series of affordable contemporary dance performances as well as taking high quality performance art to local festivals, supporting and nurturing local talent, and working in partnership with new and existing audiences.

Through this project our aim is for The Octagon to become a 'Hub' for dance; a place where professional dancers, companies, dance students, dance graduates, dance enthusiasts, community dance groups and more will come together with a shared passion for all things dance. It is our hope that, in light of the pandemic, the first strand of the Move To Improve project will have a positive impact on our community and industry, and go a long way in re-engaging people with live performance art.



This project is funded by:



Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**



**South Somerset
District Council**
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Came here to celebrate The Chinese New Year. The acts were simply amazing! We really enjoyed the Hat Jugglers and the Contortionist (and the pandas, who came on during the show). The theatre staff, as always, were so friendly and helpful, and their attentiveness cannot be faulted. We had fantastic seats with a great view of the stage. Thanks to everyone for a lovely evening!

Tripadvisor Review Feb 2020



Went to see Hormonal Housewives this evening with my mum and sister. It was bloody hilarious. The three ladies bounced off each other perfectly but the Julie character was hilariously funny... had tears streaming. Such a great show.



Yet another great night at the Gin festival. A good atmosphere with local musicians performing in the lounge bar and the ballroom.

A good menu was on offer for the evening. We had the falafel & spinach burger with skinny fries and a side salad. It was very tasty, the fries were crisp on the outside and soft in the middle. It was all very well presented.

Well done to all the staff who work so hard and make these events a pleasure to attend.

Jane B, Tripadvisor Review



Box Office: 01935 422884 octagon-theatre.co.uk westlandsyevovil.co.uk

The Octagon Theatre | Hendford | Yeovil | Somerset | BA20 1UX
Westlands Entertainment Venue | Westbourne Close | Yeovil | Somerset | BA20 2DD



/TheOctagonTheatre



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Westlands Entertainment



Appointment of Interim S151 Officer

Executive Portfolio Holder: Peter Seib, Finance and Legal Services
Director: Nicola Hix, Support Services
Contact Details: nicola.hix@southsomerset.gov.uk or 01935 462612

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to seek approval for the interim appointment of one of the Council's Statutory Roles, the Section 151 Officer.

Forward Plan

2. This report did not appear on the Full Council Forward Plan as the need to make an interim appointment arose after the date of the last meeting

Public Interest

3. There is a legal requirement on the Council to designate three "Statutory Officers". These are the Head of Paid Service (Chief Executive), the Monitoring Officer and the Section 151 Officer / Chief Finance Officer. The Section 151 Officer has a number of statutory duties and responsibilities relating to the council's financial strategy and the arrangements for effective governance.

Recommendations

4. That Council formally appoint Karen Watling as Interim S151 Officer with immediate effect, for an initial period of up to 6 months.

Background

5. The Local Government Act 1972 requires every local authority to appoint a suitably qualified officer responsible for the proper administration of its financial affairs. This role is commonly referred to as the Section 151 officer. The term S151 Officer has been used as a short form expression to refer to the role and duties of the 'Responsible Financial Officer' as defined by The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) (the function of the most senior finance officer employed by an organisation).
6. Section 113 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 requires that the officer appointed as the Chief Finance Officer (CFO) must be a member of a specified accountancy body.
7. The role of a CFO lies at the heart of any effective and well governed organisation. The over-riding duty of this officer is to fulfil the statutory responsibilities attached



South Somerset District Council

to the position in a manner that enhances the overall reputation of the Council. The CFO has a statutory duty under Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 to ensure that there are proper arrangements in place to administer the Council's financial affairs. Section 114 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 requires the S151 Officer to report to the full Council, the District Executive and the External Auditor if the authority or one of its officers:

- has made, or is about to make, a decision which involves incurring unlawful expenditure
- has taken, or is about to take, an unlawful action which has resulted or would result in a loss or deficiency to the authority
- is about to make an unlawful entry in the authority's accounts.

Selection of Interim S151 Officer

8. Following the resignation of the permanent S151 Officer, Joanne Nacey, from this role in February 2021, the Chief Executive and Director of Support Services and Strategy, interviewed four potential candidates for the S151 Officer role.
9. As a result of these interviews, and subject to Council approval, an interim S151 officer role, was offered to, and accepted by, Karen Watling. Karen is an experienced S151 Officer and is a full member of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance & Accountancy (CIPFA), with a wealth of experience in local government, having previously worked within a number of District and City Councils.

Financial Implications

10. The financial implications associated with agreeing the recommendation can be covered from within the existing revenue budget for 2020/21 onwards.

Legal implications and details of Statutory Powers

11. It is a statutory requirement for local authorities to have a Section S151 Officer in place, in order to ensure that their necessary roles and functions are delivered effectively.

Council Plan Implications

12. None associated with this report.

Carbon Emissions and Climate Change Implications

13. None associated with this report.

Equality and Diversity Implications

14. None associated with this report.



South Somerset
District Council
Privacy Impact Assessment

15. None associated with this report.

Background Papers

Appointment of S151 Officer



Report of Executive Decisions

Executive Portfolio Holder: Val Keitch, Leader of Council, Strategy and Housing
Director: Kirsty Larkins, Director (Strategy & Commissioning)
Lead Officer: Angela Cox, Democratic Services Specialist
Contact Details: angela.cox@southsomerset.gov.uk or (01935) 462148

Purpose of the Report

This report is submitted for information and summarises decisions taken by the Chief Executive and District Executive Committee at their meeting on 4th March 2021.

Members are invited to ask any questions of the Portfolio Holders.

Background Papers

All Published

Appendix A

Portfolio	Subject	Decision	Taken By	Date
Health and Well-Being	District-wide Strategic Grants - funding arrangements with CASS and SPARK 2021/2022	<p>That District Executive:-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> agreed to a further one year core funding agreement for the period April 2021 to March 2022, for Citizens Advice South Somerset and Spark Somerset; agreed to a one-off uplift of £11,335 for CASS to fund an additional 22.5 hours a week Adviser to support the significant increase in service demand due to Covid19 for the period April 2021 to March 2022; agreed to a one-off inflationary uplift of £1,500 for Spark Somerset for the period April 2021 to March 2022; agreed that the funding of CASS for 2022/23 and beyond will be subject to the outcome of the package of support work described in paragraph 8.1.3 of the report; agreed that the future funding of Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) infrastructure for 2022/23 onwards will be subject to the outcome of a commissioning process, based on an updated assessment of the future needs of the VCS post Covid. 	District Executive	04/03/21
Economic Development including Income Generation	The Martock Parish Neighbourhood Plan Referendum	<p>That the District Executive:-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> agreed the Examiner's report and accepted in full her recommendations for Proposed Modifications to the Martock Parish Neighbourhood Plan; agreed to officers organising a referendum later this year for local people on the Electoral Register. The aim of the referendum is to ascertain whether local residents want South Somerset District Council to use the Neighbourhood Plan for Martock to help it decide planning applications in the neighbourhood area; delegated responsibility to the Director for Strategy and Support Services to make any final minor text amendments to the Neighbourhood Plan, in agreement with the Martock Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group. 	District Executive	04/03/21

Portfolio	Subject	Decision	Taken By	Date
Strategy and Housing	Private Sector Housing Grant Policy	That District Executive agreed the amendments to the existing policy concerning the provision of financial assistance for private sector housing and associated matters, including disabled facilities grants, to be adopted as the future policy of the Council. The changes are highlighted in yellow in the Policy document Private Sector Housing Grants/Loans and other Financial Assistance.	District Executive	04/03/21
Economic Development including Income Generation / Finance and Legal Services	Investment Assets Quarterly Update Report	That the District Executive:- a. noted the resilience of the property investment portfolio thus far in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic; b. noted progress made to date in acquiring new commercial investments and the asset management following acquisition; c. noted continued rent collection averaging in excess of 95% over the last three Quarters despite the pandemic; d. noted the return being achieved across the portfolio which is slightly below the Council's target of 7% as a result of lease renewals, securing the future of the asset; e. noted progress being made in securing income from our existing assets and the contribution to the revenue budget towards the revised £3.35m target.	District Executive	04/03/21
Health and Well-Being	Octagon Theatre Development	This report appears elsewhere on the Agenda.	District Executive	04/03/21



Date of Next Meeting

Members are asked to note that the next scheduled meeting of the Full Council will take place on **Thursday, 15th April 2021** as a virtual meeting using Zoom meeting software **commencing at 6.30 p.m.**
