



WORTHING BOROUGH
COUNCIL

Worthing Joint Strategic Sub-Committee
12 September 2023

Key Decision [Yes/No]

Ward(s) Affected:
Cabinet Portfolio:

Worthing Theatres & Museums - Annual Review 2022/23

Report by the Director for Place

Officer Contact Details

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Executive Summary

1. Purpose

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to present the Worthing Theatres and Museum Trust Annual Review 2022/23.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. That the Sub-Committee acknowledge and welcome the achievements of Worthing Theatres and Museum over the year, in particular the focus on working with local communities to promote engagement in cultural activities;
- 2.2. That the Sub-Committee refer the report and the accompanying Annual Report to the Joint Overview & Scrutiny Committee for noting.

3. Context

- 3.1. Members of the Sub-Committee will recall that Worthing Theatres & Museum (WTM) was established as an independent charitable trust at the beginning of November 2019 and less than 5 months after it was formed, in March 2020, the Covid-19 Pandemic meant that each of the venues closed for an extended period.
- 3.2. 2022/23 was the Trust's first full year of operation since the Pandemic. Over the year, more than 300,000 people attended an event or visited the Museum & Art Gallery.
- 3.3. With the benefit of the whole year of trading, ticket income overall showed a 39% increase; and 29,000 tickets were sold for the popular annual pantomime.
- 3.4. The 2022/23 Annual Review acknowledges that the recovery is not complete, albeit the Acting Chair points toward an organisation that is more resilient, creative and connected to the people of Worthing.
- 3.5. Social Impact
 - 3.5.1. The Trust's focus on communities is very clearly stated in the 2022/23 Annual Review. This is supported by the separate [Social Impact Study](#).
 - 3.5.2. The Report highlights those charitable organisations the Trust has supported as well as 40 local community groups.
 - 3.5.3. 23 free outdoor shows were delivered during July and August 2022 and the Trust worked with local organisations to provide 326 pantomime tickets and for families who would not otherwise been able to attend; and 679 cinema tickets as part of Warm Spaces.
 - 3.5.4. The Trust's Creative Director & CEO and Executive Director state that:

“We have dramatically increased our participation programme with 66 workshops giving people the opportunity to experience the joy of creativity and a sense of connection.”
 - 3.5.5. The Annual Review draws particular attention to the *We Are Here* strand of programming that actively sought work from artists with protected characteristics.
- 3.6. Programme Development
 - 3.6.1. The Review records 3,491 events and activities over the course of the year; 326 of which were live events. The programme included the full range of theatre, comedy, dance, music and circus; and highlights included Othello by Frantic

Assembly; comedy featuring Tom Allen and Jason Manford; and dance with good sales figures for BalletBoyz and Giovanni Pernice.

3.6.2. The Review indicates that in line with national trends around home screening, film attendance has been slower to return to pre-pandemic levels. 2,893 screenings took place and 89,000 tickets were sold.

3.6.3. The Review highlights a dramatic increase in the number of people visiting the Museum & Art Gallery. 83,000 people visited during 2022/23 - a 68% increase on the pre-Pandemic level. The Museum has continued to open on Thursday evenings and on Sundays and has hosted school visits on Mondays and Tuesdays. 17 temporary exhibitions were curated over the year and the Autumn lecture series and archaeology walks were sold out.

3.7. Buildings and Sustainability

3.7.1. Among the improvements delivered and funded by the Trust are the new seats for the Pavilion Theatre; fully accessible dressing rooms and stage access at the Connaught Theatre; and automatic doors installed at the Studio Theatre.

3.7.2. The Trust is working in partnership with the Borough Council to become carbon neutral by 2030. The Council has installed solar panels on the roof of the Assembly Hall and begun the process of replacing the Connaught windows to improve energy efficiency. The Trust has replaced much of the lighting across the venues with LED and reduced its heating and electricity use through proactive management

3.8. Financial Performance

3.8.1. The Annual Review reflects upon the challenges presented by the first full financial year without the COVID-19 specific financial support received in the previous 2 years; and the impact of the cost of living crisis; high inflation; and soaring energy costs.

3.8.2. Whilst the original forecast for 2022/23 was a trading deficit of £70k, the actual deficit was £37k. Allowing for the movement of reserved funds to support investment in the venues, the overall deficit amounted to £90k.

3.9. Key Performance Indicators

3.9.1. Supporting the Annual Review, the Trust has supplied the key results that are being monitored as part of the overall performance of the contract. These can be found in the

[background appendices](#), as well as a supporting [Economic Impact Report](#) for the same period.

3.9.2. The highlights include 1,274 tickets provided free, low cost or sponsored to vulnerable people (target 500 tickets), 24% transactions from first time bookers (target 8%), 29,465 pantomime tickets sold (target 27,000) and finally, 307,709 attended an event or show (target 275,000). The key performance indicators are regularly reviewed and have been reset for 2023-24, in line with the contract.

3.10. Looking forward

3.10.1. The Trust is required to prepare a Business Plan for the period 2025-30 - the next 5 years of the 25 year contract with the Council. The Review indicates that the Business Plan will prioritise serving the community and developing the programme of events and activities while remaining a viable concern.

3.10.2. The Review highlights priorities around maximising ticket income and venue hire; prioritising audience development and engagement; further accessibility improvements and a new website.

4. **Financial Implications**

4.1. The Council's contract payments are set out in the contract and the payment to the Trust for 2022/23 was £1,466,290, reducing by £42,560 to £1,423,730 in 2023/24 and a further £23,470 to £1,400,260 in 2024/25.

4.2. Contained within the contract is a clause governing how any profits made by the Trust will be treated. The contract allows for the Trust to retain the first £750,000 of any accumulated profits made in a risk reserve to provide the Trust with financial stability in the longer term. At the end of the contract 50% of this reserve will be returned to the Council.

4.3. Elsewhere on the agenda is a report concerning the future pension arrangements for the Trusts.

Emma Thomas

1st September 2023

5. **Legal Implications**

5.1. The Council entered into a Management and Operation Agreement

with WTM on 19th September 2019. WTM is obliged to provide an annual report to update Members under the terms of that Agreement.

- 5.2. Under Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972, the Council has the power to do anything that is calculated to facilitate, or which is conducive or incidental to, the discharge of any of their functions.
- 5.3. Section 3(1) of the Local Government Act 1999 (LGA 1999) contains a general duty on a best value authority to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.
- 5.4. s1 of the Localism Act 2011 empowers the Council to do anything an individual can do apart from that which is specifically prohibited by pre-existing legislation.
- 5.5. At clause 2.5.1 of the Scheme of Delegations the Director for the Economy has a delegated authority to manage the relationship between Worthing Borough Council and WTM.

Andrew Mathias

10 August 2023

Background Papers

- [Annual Review 2022-23](#)
- [Key Performance Indicators \(KPI\) Review 2022-23](#)
- [Economic Impact Report 2022-23](#)
- [Social Impact Report 2022-23](#)

Sustainability & Risk Assessment

1. Economic

Culture is of vital significance to our local economy, employing a growing number of people across a range of skilled activities. A vibrant cultural offer is a significant consideration for businesses seeking to attract new employees and helps to support our visitor economy.

2. Social

The contractual relationship with the Trust is predicated on a formal expectation of extending the scope and range of work with our local communities. This includes working with our schools and colleges to support the development of new skills valued by the creative sector.

2.1. Equality Issues

The Council's contract with WTM includes a formal commitment to inclusive programming which includes youth theatre; signed and audio described screenings and autism and dementia friendly screenings.

2.2. Community Safety Issues

As is the case with any venue offering public performance and participative programming, careful attention is paid to ensuring that safeguarding remains a priority and that the safety of customers/participants is paramount.

2.3. Human Rights Issues

Matter considered and none identified.

3. Environmental

The Trust is expected to embody a commitment to sustainable procurement and to pay close attention to minimising waste and its use of resources.

4. Governance

WTM is a charitable company limited by guarantee.