



ADUR & WORTHING  
COUNCILS

Joint Strategic Committee  
13 July 2021  
Agenda Item 17

Joint Overview & Scrutiny Committee  
15 July 2021  
Agenda Item ....

Key Decision [~~Yes~~/No]

Ward(s) Affected: n/a

## **Worthing Theatres and Museum - Annual Review**

### **Report by the Director for the Economy**

#### **Executive Summary**

##### **1. Purpose**

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to present a review of the first full year of operation of Worthing Theatres and Museum Trust.

##### **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1. That the Committee acknowledge and welcome the achievements of Worthing Theatres and Museum over the year, mindful of unprecedented operating conditions and the severe impact of the Pandemic on the creative industries.
- 2.2. That the Committee refer the report to the Joint Overview & Scrutiny Committee for noting.

### 3. Context

#### 3.1. *An unprecedented year*

- 3.1.1. Members of the Joint Strategic Committee will recall that Worthing Theatres & Museum (WTM) was established as an independent charitable trust at the beginning of November 2019, following the Council's decision to lease its cultural venues to a single body offering a single focus on fostering and developing the cultural offer of Worthing and helping it to flourish over the longer term.
- 3.1.2. Less than 5 months after it was formed in March 2020 the Covid-19 Pandemic meant that each of the venues closed and along with it, the opportunity to raise income through its core businesses of shows, events and exhibitions.
- 3.1.3. In line with the terms of its contract with the Council WTM, presents operational and financial reports at quarterly review meetings chaired by the 'Council Officer' (the Director for the Economy). At these quarterly meetings, WTM is required to provide qualitative evidence and quantitative measurements in relation to Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) set out in the Contractual Agreement with WTM.
- 3.1.4. In such an exceptional year, it quickly became apparent at the review meetings that KPI's around aspects such attendance; occupancy rates; venue hire; and ticket income could not be achieved. Unsurprisingly, projected annual income from ticket sales and event hires of over £3.5m of income became only £128k in reality.
- 3.1.5. The WTM Annual report (Appendix 1) highlights the significance of the financial support offered by Worthing Borough Council through its contracted service payment; central government support via the Cultural Emergency Funding; and Arts Council support in the form of Cultural Recovery Funding.
- 3.1.6. All WTM staff were furloughed at some point during the year and the percentage of contracted hours furloughed across the whole WTM team for the year was 44%. Sadly, 25 members of staff were made redundant during the year and many of the contracted hours that WTM offers in association with events and shows were not available.

#### **4. Contractual Key Performance Indicators (KPI's)**

##### **4.1. Programming, events and audiences**

- 4.1.1. Over the year, 144 socially distanced events took place across the venues; 8,150 people attended a ticketed event at one of the venues; and 31,369 people attended digital events and exhibitions.
- 4.1.2. Over the initial period of 'lockdown' when audiences were simply unable to attend events, WTM developed a digital offer which included a series of Museum exhibitions (Ladies Paradise, A Walk around Cissbury Ring with Emily Jolley and A Strange and Familiar Sea with Mandy Williams); Worthing Creates, a creative project pack in conjunction with local artists, makers and creatives; and weekly links to online performances by the National Theatre and Sadlers .
- 4.1.3. Once outdoor work was permitted, WTM delivered performances from TRIBE// Dance Company and Dizzy O'Dare's 'Giant Balloon Man' outside the Pavilion Theatre; presented Mandy Williams's exhibition 'A Strange and Familiar Sea' on the exterior of The Pavilion; and supported the Digital Photographic OPEN21 with an exhibition of young photographers works displayed in the windows of the Pavilion Theatre.
- 4.1.4. In October WTM was able to open the Pavilion Theatre (at 30% capacity) for a live comedy season and family theatre show sold out at Christmas for a 12 show run and was very well received. WTM also supported Colonnade House and the Borough Council to deliver the Laser Light City event and lit the theatres in red as part of the Light It Up campaign.

##### **4.2. Community development and inclusion**

- 4.2.1. Working with the support of Arts Council England, WTM launched Worthing Creates, a project designed to support local people to explore new ways of self-expression through arts and heritage. In conjunction with local artists and makers across Worthing and the surrounding area, WTM developed a pack of creative projects for people to try at home.
- 4.2.2. WTM worked with two local secondary schools and the charity 'Superstar Arts' on the ground-breaking 'Cutting Edge' project to identify and source clothing items that had the greatest impact on fashion during the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s. Funded by Heritage Lottery Fund.

- 4.2.3. WTM's bi-annual Open exhibition invites amateur and professional artists from Worthing and the wider Sussex community to submit their work to the Museum and Gallery, for the chance for their artwork to be displayed in the galleries. 'Open20' became 'Digital Open20' and 76 artists submitted works which attracted over 7,500 online votes.
- 4.2.4. WTM took an active role in the community using the venues to support the foodbank, the PPE collection centre, blood donor sessions, providing extra teaching space for GB MET college, supporting Chichester University to complete the performing arts students' final practical exams.
- 4.2.5. WTM was unable to appoint any apprentices during the year, although 12 kickstarter trainees will be joining the team in September, as well as a full-time technical apprentice.

#### 4.3. ***Stewardship of the venues***

- 4.3.1. WTM had to close its venues again after Christmas; and during this time, worked closely with the Borough Council team to deliver maintenance and building improvements; preparing the Pavilion Atrium for its relaunch, refurbishing the costume gallery at the Museum, completing technical improvements at the Connaught and Pavilion, and redesigning the Museum shop.
- 4.3.2. The Pavilion Atrium now has 200 new theatre style seats for events and performances; new lighting and a projector. Fraser's Bar at The Connaught has new seating, lighting and carpets. New up-lighting has been installed at the Pavilion Theatre.
- 4.3.3. The closed period was utilised to complete a full programme of health and safety improvements to the venues and building maintenance in partnership with the Borough Council team and this work is ahead of target.

## 5. **Issues for consideration**

- 5.1. Despite the unprecedented circumstances, it remains important to review the operation of WTM over the course of the year. Mindful of the circumstances and that all of the WTM staff have been furloughed at some point, WTM's achievements over the year have been remarkable and it is therefore proposed that these should be acknowledged and welcomed by members of the Committee.

## **6. Engagement and Communication**

- 6.1. The review of WTM's performance over the year reflects engagement with the Trust throughout the year, including quarterly review meetings. An important aspect of the contractual relationship with WTM is an emphasis on working with local communities.
- 6.2. WTM has maintained its strong relationship with the Arts Council and Heritage Lottery Fund and continues to have Museum Accreditation.

## **7. Financial Implications**

- 7.1. The Council's contract payment to the Trust in 2020/21 was £1,460,010. The Council made this payment in 2020/21 to ensure that the Trust could continue to operate when possible and in compliance with government guidelines regarding support for suppliers.
- 7.2. 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 £350,000 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.
- 7.3. In the light of the pandemic, the Trust has asked the Council to increase the amount kept in the risk reserve prior to any income share arrangements to £750,000. Given that at the end of the contract, 50% of any unused reserve will be returned to the Council, the Director of the Economy has agreed to this contractual change.

## **8. Legal Implications**

- 8.1. 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.
- 8.2. 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.

- 8.3. 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.
- 8.4. 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.
- 8.5. At clause 2.5 of the Scheme of Delegations the Director for the Economy has a delegated authority to manage the relationship between Worthing Borough Council and Worthing Theatres and Museum.

## **Background Papers**

- 10th July 2018 JSC meeting - [Worthing Theatres & Museum Strategic Future Options](#) (Agenda Item 17)
- 5th March 2019 JSC meeting - [The Future of Culture for Worthing](#) (Agenda Item 12)
- 9th July 2019 JSC meeting Worthing Theatres & Museum - [The Future of Culture for Worthing](#) (Agenda Item 14)

## **Officer Contact Details:-**

Martin Randall

Director for the Economy

01903 221209

[martin.randall@adur-worthing.gov.uk](mailto:martin.randall@adur-worthing.gov.uk)

## **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.

#### **2.2 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.

#### **2.3 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.

#### **2.4 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.