

Pre-meeting Reports
2nd July 2013

- 30. Police Report.** The Chairman welcomed PC Carl Lawrence who gave an overview of the crime statistics for June (attached). Cllr Howard congratulated the police on their initiative to reach out to the young people in the town and hoped it would continue. Mr Jackman-Graham hoped that the response times could be improved and Mr Briggs asked PC Lawrence to find out whether the mobile speed camera (often seen on the A12) could be used in the town. (Post meeting – the mobile camera is used at locations where serious or fatal accidents have previously occurred.)
- 31. County Report.** The Chairman welcomed Cllr Richard Smith who reported that he had recently attended the CATS AGM where Alan Hoffman had stepped down after many years as chairman and Derek Cocker had now taken on the post. He informed members that he had attended the Flood Team meeting in Leiston on 20th June where he was pleased to have seen some positive progress made. He had facilitated a meeting with various agencies to discuss the possibility of adopting Orchard Road and had secured a promise of partial funding from Orwell Housing although other residents, and possibly the police, would now need to come on board too. There was much discussion about the removal of some essential bus services to the town and Cllr Smith explained that the subsidies previously given to unprofitable bus routes had had to be removed as a consequence of the government cuts imposed upon local councils. He was asked about the recently reported underspend of £3.5million at the County Council and tried to explain that that would be used as part of the £156million savings that were yet to be found over the next few years. He was hopeful that Mrs Cadman, the CEO of the County Council, would be able to visit the Town on 18th October and asked members help to construct the most useful programme for her visit.
- 32. District report.** Cllr Cooper reported that the District Council would shortly be adopting the Core Strategy of the LDF after its successful inspection by Mr Moore. Cllr Howard requested help to try and resolve the issues surrounding the empty property at 104 Waterloo Avenue which was upsetting neighbours. Cllr Nunn was already working on aspects of the case and would try and use enforcement if possible to get the front garden tidied. Cllr Ginger asked whether Cllr Nunn could confirm that housing benefits were being paid in a timely fashion at the moment and also informed members that there was a food bank initiative in the town although was unsure of the details. Mr Briggs asked whether there were any plans for the Caravan Park in King George Avenue. The Clerk informed him that he was hopeful that the site could be included in the Neighbourhood Plan which would help the District determine what to do with it. Mr Briggs also asked after Haylings Pond Meadow which he felt had been allowed to deteriorate to a deplorable state through lack of maintenance and urged the Town Council to not take it on until some of the issues were sorted out.

During the above discussions, the time reaching 7.30pm, it was proposed by Cllr Ginger, seconded by Cllr Hawkins, and agreed, that standing orders be suspended to allow the public part of the meeting to be completed.

**At a meeting of the LEISTON-cum-SIZEWELL TOWN COUNCIL
held in the COMMUNITY CENTRE, King Georges Avenue, Leiston, on TUESDAY,
2nd JULY 2013, at 8.01p.m.**

PRESENT

Councillor Mrs A. V. Nunn (in the chair)

Councillor D. Bailey

Councillor R. Bailey

Councillor D. Boast

Councillor A. M. Cooper

Councillor R. J. Geater

Councillor C. S. Ginger

Councillor T. J. Hawkins

Councillor T. E. Hodgson

Councillor W.H. Howard

Councillor J. N. Last

Councillor A. J. Nunn

Councillor J. Sparrow

33. **Minutes.** It was proposed by Cllr Cooper, seconded by Cllr Nunn and agreed that the minutes for the meeting of 4th June 2013 be signed as a true record.
34. **Apologies.** Apologies were accepted from Cllr Mrs Geater and Cllr Parker.
35. **Chairman's Communications.** The Chairman had nothing to report of note since the last meeting.
36. **Declarations of Interest.** Cllr Howard declared an interest in Agenda item 14a and 14b as a near neighbour. Cllr Cooper and Cllr Last in items 9 and 13b as allotment holders. Councillor Ginger in item 6 and Cllr Geater in 13a and cheque number 311669 in the accounts. Cllr Mr and Mrs Nunn declared an interest in item 6 as members of the Film Theatre Support Club. Cllr R Bailey in item 8 should Haylings Pond be mentioned and Cllr Hawkins informed members he was no longer a member of the SSG.
37. **Admission of public to meetings.** Cllr R Bailey felt that the discussion at the last meeting needed to be continued as the resulting motion had effectively gone against the Councils own Standing Orders. It was clarified that members did not feel at that time that **all** groups established by the Council at the AGM were meant for public admission and that is why the motion fell. Members did however agree that as many meetings as possible or appropriate were open to public admission and prided themselves on their transparency. The public session at each Council meeting generally lasts longer than an hour too so residents are always able to contribute to proceedings where they wish. There was a discussion on some of the smaller issues like whether the Councillors who met to produce the newsletter should meet in public for instance (and why not as residents can help write it). It was also agreed that the Fairtrade Steering Group should meet in public with some other issues getting resolved too. On a proposition from Cllr Bailey, seconded by Cllr Howard it was agreed that Committee meetings and other groups where possible always meet in public and in the Community Centre.
38. **Film Theatre – proposed extension.** The Clerk had produced a comprehensive report (attached) which members noted and discussed. This report outlined the need for an extension, the cost implications, the funding options, the risks involved and the timescale should the Council decide to proceed. Cllr Howard informed members that he was a keen supporter of the Theatre but felt that, at this time of austerity, he could not support the cost of the project. Cllr Ginger was also supportive of the venue but had concerns about the loan

implications and would abstain. Other members present discussed the Clerk's projections which showed that the extension would help maintain the level of income currently enjoyed but that, with no extension, there was likely to be a return to deficit with the loss of larger live shows. The two scenarios (loan repayments against deficit) broadly balanced themselves out such that the precept would be likely to remain the same whatever option was chosen. The risks involved were mentioned and the benefit to the community in giving all our youngsters the chance, through drama, school or dance productions, to experience a working theatre environment was also noted. Overall members favoured the investment in the facilities as this ensured the usability of the venue into the future. It was proposed by Cllr Cooper, seconded by Cllr Hodgson and agreed that members initially commit to the project by going to tender and releasing £20,000 from the project reserve to cover the professional fees needed for this to happen. Members further agreed to release £250 for consultant fees to help the Clerk bid for grant funding from appropriate sources.

- 39. Grit Bins and Snow Clearance.** Members noted the report from the Clerk which laid out the cost and administration load of installing grit bins around the town and the cost of a contract with Suffolk Coastal Services Ltd. for them to clear snow from certain out of centre pavements on an as and when needed basis. The grit bins cost around £100-£250 each (and would come from the street furniture budget) and the cost of snow clearance, based on three significant snow events each year, would be £1,700. It was proposed by Cllr Ginger, seconded by Cllr Howard and agreed that the Council buy 4 bins to begin with for areas requested by residents in Harling Way, Queen Elizabeth Close/Goldings Lane and the bottom of Carr Avenue (with one spare) and that SCS Ltd. be given an initial contract for this coming winter to see how the system works out. The bin locations were decided by those written requests received by the Clerk over the years.
- 40. King George Avenue Recreation Ground.** Members noted the transfer deed for the sale of King George Avenue Recreation Ground to Leiston Town Council for the sum of £1, and the contributions promised by SCDC to help toward the ongoing maintenance cost (declining over the next three years). The terms and conditions were as agreed so, on a proposition from Cllr Cooper, seconded by Cllr Ginger, it was agreed that the Chairman be authorised by the Council to sign the deed of transfer.

Cllr Nunn declared an interest as a director of SCS Ltd.

- 41. Valley Road Allotments.** Members noted the deed of transfer for the sale of Valley Road allotments to the Town Council for the sum of £1 and the supplemental overage agreement covering any residual value should the land be disposed of or gifted in the next 30 years. The terms and conditions were as agreed so, on a proposition from Cllr Ginger, seconded by Cllr Howard, it was agreed to authorise the Chairman to sign both documents on behalf of the Council. Cllr Cooper abstained.
- 42. Flood Meeting of 20th June.** As Cllr Smith had stated earlier members noted that, as a consequence of the priority the flooding events in Leiston were receiving, the Flood Team had engaged a consultant (AECOM) to carry out a comprehensive Surface Water Management Plan for the town and to do hydraulic modelling so we better understand the choke points and capacity problems of the town's sewers.
- 43. Highbury Field footway.** The Clerk reported that he had met the solicitor who was now working on the agreement.

The meeting took a break for refreshment from 9.05pm – 9.20pm

- 44. Renewal of contract for part funded PCSO.** The Clerk reminded members that they had tacitly agreed to renew the contract for the town's part funded PCSO when setting the Precept. It was now due for renewal and there were two new clauses in the contract which gave the SNT greater flexibility in what hours the PCSO was allowed to work. There was some dissent as it was felt that this was double taxation in effect and that, if it was felt the town needed two PCSO's, the Constabulary should provide them. For this to happen though we would have to make a very robust case as to why the town needed two PCSOs.

The case at the moment however was that a second PCSO was very useful and would only be provided with our funding. On a proposition from Cllr Cooper, seconded by Cllr Sparrow it was agreed to sign the contract for a further two years.

45. Finance.

- a) **Accounts for payment.** It was proposed by Cllr Cooper, seconded by Cllr Howard and agreed that accounts presented in the sum £9,142.47p along with £10,695.59p paid since the last meeting be approved for payment.
- b) **Allotment Rent review.** Members noted the Clerks report which recommended adding at least 10p a rod to the current water charge to go some way toward covering the cost of water to the allotments as this was the major ongoing expenditure in running the site. It was pointed out that the current rents are very reasonable indeed compared to other allotment sites in the District so a small increase would be fair perhaps. On a proposition from Cllr Howard, seconded by Cllr Ginger, it was agreed to add 10p a rod to the water charge. The annual rent for the land at Knodishall (no water) was confirmed at £350 – no change.
- c) **Cinema Hiring Review.** Members noted the recommendations and, on a proposition from Cllr Cooper, seconded by Cllr R Bailey, it was agreed to charge £40 an hour for hire of the Cinema, £150 for part day hire, £350 for Daily Hire (£400 at weekends) and £2,500 for a seven day hire.
During the above item Cllr Ginger declared an interest and left the room
- d) **Shop Rent Review.** Members noted that the rent of 72 High Street had last gone up 3% in 2012 and they also noted the Clerk's recommendation that further 3% be charged from 2014. On a proposition from Cllr Howard, seconded by Cllr Cooper it was agreed to charge an extra 3% from April 2014 which amounted to an annual increase, next year, of £80.
- e) **Community Centre Hire review.** Members noted the report and, on a proposition from Cllr Cooper, seconded by Cllr Boast, it was agreed to freeze the hire charges for a further year. Cllr Hawkins and Howard abstained.

46. Planning.

- a) **C13/0872 – Erection of single storey rear extension to increase the size of kitchen at 64 Waterloo Avenue, Leiston.** (Cllr Hawkins abstained)
RECOMMEND APPROVAL
- b) **C13/Conversion of former Edwardian Middle School to a holistic early year's facility for families from local community and neighbouring villages with children 0-5 years. The centre will also provide provision for community use including use by youth groups in evenings and at weekends, Middle School, Waterloo Avenue, Leiston.** Members were disappointed that the Youth Club had already been asked to vacate the premises when the project had not even gone to tender nor gained planning permission.
RECOMMEND APPROVAL
- c) **C13/0073 – Use of land for general caravan and camping use. Installation of "hook-up" points; widening of driveway and access splays, new passing places and conversion of building to accommodate toilets and showers at The Orchard, Abbey Road, Leiston .** Members did not feel that any of the supplied facts altered their opinion of the loss of amenity of the nearby residents and asked the clerk to respond in the same fashion as for the previous application. (Length of stay and other conditions etc.) (Cllr Cooper, Cllr Geater, Cllr Hawkins, Cllr R Bailey and Cllr Howard abstained from the vote)
RECOMMEND REFUSAL
- d) **C13/1021 – Erection of 2 storey rear extension, including demolition of semi-detached outbuilding at 38 Paradise Place, Leiston.** There is a similar extension nearby and, despite size, this may be acceptable too. (Cllr Hawkins abstained)
RECOMMEND APPROVAL

- e) **Neighbourhood Plan update.** The Clerk explained that Mr Bowden was meeting the groups this week to ensure everyone was going the right way and he would then attend their meetings from now on to guide them into the consultation phase.
- f) **SCDC proposal to sell High Street Car Park and associated land.** Members were disappointed that the town centre site had been advertised on the open market without any formal consultation with the Town Council. Even though this was just to gauge interest it would still have been polite to ask members views first. Members were asked what they would like to see the land used for and various ideas were tabled. Social housing was one, a new library, community centre and youth club was another. Overall though the Clerk was asked to investigate registering the whole site as a Community Asset and was also asked to voice members dismay to SCDC that they had not been told of the sale until three days before the advert. The Clerk informed members that he had asked SCDC to tell potential developers that they would be obliged to work within the new Neighbourhood Plan currently in production and members wanted that strengthened to SCDC not doing anything until it had been produced. The Clerk would contact the Cabinet member responsible and pass on members requests.

During the above item, the time reaching 10.00pm, it was proposed by Cllr Hodgson, seconded by Cllr Ginger and agreed that Standing Orders be suspended for 30 minutes to allow business to be concluded.

47. County Matters

- a) **Fairtrade signs.** The Clerk reported that to get the “A Fairtrade Town” signs under the Leiston signs at each entrance would cost £75 each. This would come from the street furniture reserve. Members considered this a reasonable cost and, on a proposition from Cllr Ginger, seconded by Cllr Howard it was agreed to purchase 4 signs.
- b) **Bus Shelter – Alde Valley Sixth Form Centre.** Cllr Howard reported that there was a chance of being able to help the young man who had asked for a bus shelter outside the sixth form buildings in Waterloo Avenue so hoped it could be put on the next Agenda. He was asked to invite the young man along to explain the problem.
- c) **Double Yellows – Kings Road.** Members were taken aback by the possible fees for producing a small Traffic Order to alleviate the dangerous parking in Kings Road. It was most disappointing that the County Council had to charge for overheads as well as officer time when taking on projects from towns and parishes but, by October, they would be privatised anyway so were working on a commercial model. Members discussed the possibility of the project costing more than the envisaged £1500 and eventually felt that they would have to agree to the possibility of it costing as much as £5,000 if there too many complaints and adjustments (County wouldn’t start the work without this agreement). It was proposed by Cllr Cooper, seconded by Cllr R Bailey and agreed that we commit to the project including the possibility that it could cost £5,000.

48. District Matters.

- a) **SALC.** Cllr R Bailey reported on the recent SALC Area meeting where they had heard from speakers on flooding issues and the Quiet Lanes project. They were also about to consult on future policies they were hoping to adopt.
- b) **Sustainable Communities Act.** Cllr R Bailey reported that he done workshops on the Act, for NALC, around the country and had got positive feedback.

49. Correspondence.

- a) **Allotments.** Members noted the results of a walkround carried out by the Allotment Association and asked the Clerk to respond.
- b) **Delivering Safer Cycling.** Members noted the invitation for a representative to attend a Westminster Briefing on 3rd September to discuss safer cycling and to see what funding is being made available to achieve this. It was proposed by Cllr Cooper, seconded by Cllr Howard and agreed that Cllr Hodgson attend the event and that all expenses be paid.

- c) **WW1 Centenary.** Members noted the initiative being led by the Long Shop to commemorate the centenary of the start of the First World War in August 2014. The Council have been invited to send a representative to the next meeting on 16th July. Cllr Cooper volunteered to attend.

50. Questions to the Chairman.

- a) **Town Appearance.** Cllr Bailey wondered what could be done to get some town centre premises to tidy up their appearance. The weeds out the front of and the car park behind the Black Horse were a prime example. The Clerk was asked to contact the LBA to see what could be done (post meeting note – same issue raised at LBA AGM and a Town Tidy organised for 14 July).
- b) **Newsletter.** Cllr Howard asked for a newsletter editorial meeting to be arranged. The newsletter working party agreed to meet in public at the Community Centre at 1630 on 23rd July.
- c) **Council Offices.** Cllr Howard highlighted the appearance of the Council Offices and wondered whether SCDC could be persuaded to redecorate them. The building was central to the conservation area and it was felt that it should be kept up to a certain standard.

There being no more business the meeting finished at 10.29 pm.

Chair

Dated

See next page for Film Theatre report

Attached as an Annex to the Council minutes of 2nd July 2013.

Report on options for improvement of the Film Theatre's back stage facilities.

This report hopes to cover three things;

- The case for improving facilities against not doing anything along with the various options for achieving those improvements.
- The financial implications of each option.
- Funding options available and the requirement for consultation.

Back Stage Facilities.

Members are fully aware of the size and condition of the changing rooms and back stage storage area. There are two changing rooms, no hot water and very little space to move around.

The single storey extension housing this area was built thirty years ago and is generally accepted as being sub standard as far as artists changing rooms go although it is still useable and functional for most performances which do not have a big cast. The big problem comes when there is a larger production (pantomime, variety show, school's performance etc.) as the facilities are too small for the cast. There is also the concern that children and adults (of the same sex) are using the same facilities. There are no actual regulations against this but virtually all national sports governing bodies, local authorities and other organisations running changing rooms have policies and guidance in place which recognise their responsibilities toward child protection and try to avoid this situation if possible (mainly by time separation of use which is impractical). It is also disappointing to note that local dance schools are unwilling to use the venue now due to this problem.

An example would be the recent pantomime production of Jack and the Beanstalk which included a 23 strong cast of girl dancers, who were assigned to one of these two dressing rooms (cramped), leaving the other room to be divided in three sections to separate the boys/girls/ladies (more cramped). The male cast members were moved to the garage in the rear car park - not the best facility in January plus, they still had to access the stage through the current dressing rooms.

An enlargement to the backstage area would also enable the venue to encourage use of the theatre by local schools. For many years, the theatre has wanted to stage an annual schools show, but space limitations has always prevented them from proceeding. This year however, with a huge logistical effort (backstage), they hosted the Alde Valley school musical with great success. The school would certainly continue this partnership if the facilities could be improved. Much better than a school hall and the Theatre is such a good community venue. If we were to provide an enlarged backstage area, I am sure schools would be encouraged to use the venue for other various productions too. It is also an invaluable experience for the students to be performing in a working theatre environment.

With no improvement backstage the venue will lose the pantomime, schools and variety performances as well as the dance schools. It would retain the solo artists and small group performances however so live shows would just be reduced rather than disappear.

The options

1. Do Nothing. See above. The loss of revenue will be discussed later.
2. Improve current facilities. Re-decoration, installation of new facilities (hot water etc.) would make the changing rooms cosier but this would not address the lack of space. Any investment here would not stop the migration of the large performances.
3. Build an extension. An extension would primarily need to double the amount of changing room available and provide modern facilities. This would be the minimum requirement. To do this we would have to go up or out due to the boundary restraints. Members have seen the (approved) plans for a second storey extension and have noted the illustrated proposal for using the car park. (Both attached).
4. Rehearsal Room. Members have queried the need for this in any of the plans. Quite simply, if you build an extension to double the changing space available then that space becomes dead space when there are no large productions on. If a "rehearsal room" (for want of a better term) is built which can be split three or four ways and used as changing rooms for large productions, then the space can generate revenue at other times by being flexible and available. This does not really affect the main building costs but would affect anticipated future income streams.

The financial implications.

Members, quite rightly, are concerned that any investment in the premises should bring an appropriate return. Although a business plan can be based on "community value" it is invariably then judged on personal opinion. I would however ask you to bear in mind just what Leiston possesses in having its own independent and family orientated Cinema and Theatre and just how valued the pantomime and school performances are by residents. These and the dance schools are the main vehicle in this area where young people can become involved and experience the performance and dramatic arts.

I have provided members with the potential (maximum) cost of both a second storey option and a single storey option. These were provided by Castons, a large and experienced firm of Chartered Surveyors who work in the construction industry as cost managers, project managers and quantity surveyors. I have no reason to doubt that the figures are the best illustration available of the projects costs. The single storey costs are based on a professionally drawn architects drawing that mirrors the approved second storey extension in size and facilities.

The second storey cost would be £193,297 and the single storey £251,286.

The main issue to take into account when looking at the single storey option (apart from cost) is that it blights the car park for future development. A building plot on the car park could raise £60,000 which could be used to offset the cost of the second storey extension. This is a separate issue but should be borne in mind.

To look at the potential income an extension might raise members need to look at the historical deficit and the performance of the venue with regard to live shows over the past three years.

The table below attempts to show how important live shows are to the bottom line in the Cinema. Without the pantomime and variety/school shows you reduce live show income by around £8-10,000. Many members have also expressed concern at the vulnerability of relying on cinema admissions – you can see that live shows are needed to maintain a balance against a year of poor cinematic product.

Year	Amount set aside in Precept to service deficit	Actual deficit at year end	In year Income	In year expenditure	cinema admissions	live shows	Precept that year	Band D Council Tax (Leiston precept)	% rise
2005-2006	£32,786.00	-£32,941.00	£95,854.00	£128,795.00	£60,948.00	£10,616.00	£131,702.00	£77.57	
2006-2007	£32,800.00	-£37,952.00	£86,146.00	£124,098.00	£47,758.00	£16,170.00	£136,350.00	£78.54	1.25%
2007-2008	£33,550.00	-£31,639.00	£134,564.00	£166,203.00	£60,089.00	£16,343.00	£153,400.00	£87.15	10.96%
2008-2009	£33,050.00	-£38,711.00	£134,266.00	£172,977.00	£64,069.00	£29,712.00	£172,325.00	£97.53	11.91%
2009-2010	£33,700.00	-£35,162.00	£133,701.00	£168,863.00	£61,332.00	£32,593.00	£182,305.00	£102.89	5.50%
2010-2011	£33,400.00	-£863.00	£153,423.00	£154,286.00	£76,190.00	£35,324.00	£192,175.00	£106.74	3.74%
2011-2012	£28,800.00	-£86.00	£156,476.00	£156,562.00	£83,165.00	£33,503.00	£197,875.00	£110.23	3.27%
2012-2013	£16,550.00	-£315.00	£168,095.00	£168,410.00	£80,684.00	£43,637.00	£196,100.00	£109.54	-0.63%
2013-2014	£16,750.00						£225,781.00	£129.08	17.84%
Projection									
	Amount set aside in Precept to service any deficit	<i>Amount set aside in Precept to service any deficit if no extension</i>		Expected pressures on Precept					
2014-2015	£15,000.00	£18,000.00		Loan and new tax base			£200,000.00	£131.64	1.98%
2015-2016	£15,000.00	£25,000.00		KGA recreation ground divested			£203,000.00	£133.62	1.50%
2016-2017	£15,000.00	£25,000.00		Haylings Pond divested			£206,000.00	£135.59	1.47%
2017-2018	£15,000.00	£25,000.00		new pension scheme comes in			£207,000.00	£136.91	0.97%
2018-2019	£15,000.00	£25,000.00					£207,000.00	£136.91	0.00%

The Projections in the above table are my opinion. Members may have a better feel for this as they set the precept each year and may wish to add to the expected pressures that they feel should be included. I make the following points for consideration;

- Even with a proven record of [the cinema] coming close to breaking even each year now I would still advocate allocating £15,000 against a possible deficit in the future.
- If the pantomime and schools migrate [no extension] I anticipate that there will be at least an £8,000 deficit which may be more if cinema admissions fluctuate. I have therefore allowed for a £25,000 deficit from 2015 to cover this.
- As members are aware the 2013-2014 precept includes a grant. This distorts the figures as the 2014-2015 predicted precept is just 1.98% up on this year's and last year's actual requirement (£196,100).
- Members allocated £20,000 to the theatre project in last year's precept and again this year. This earmarked reserve now stands at £39,000. The projected precept figures are inclusive of a loan repayment of £12,000 and a further £8,000 for other infrastructure requirements each year. This would not in itself require an increase in precept.
- None of the above projections take into account any increased revenue that may come from the new "rehearsal room" as members wanted to look at the worst case i.e. revenue does not increase. The manager remains confident however, that

once established, an increase of at least £3,500 a year in live performance income and hire fees for the new space will be achieved.

Risks

The main risk will of course be the length of the loan and any unforeseen circumstances which may restrict cinema or theatrical income over the period of that loan. I believe I have built in a good backstop by recommending a £15,000 deficit each year but if it were more than that we would have to look at reserves, (general and earmarked), at the time.

The Film Theatre Support Club have pledged to continue servicing our current loan of which £16,000 is still outstanding but, for those members who would like to cover even this risk, I will assume we will be repaying that.

Being blunt, another risk is the possible departure, during the loan period, of our current manager. He would of course help us recruit a suitable replacement but there is no denying his experience and local knowledge which is an integral part of running the Theatre.

Overall, members must balance these manageable risks against the community benefit of the project and the improved working conditions for staff. The value of the building would increase and, as we have always said, if the unimaginable happens the property has an inherent value which could be realised so, financially, we will always be safe.

Funding options.

I would of course try and obtain grant funding. I am not too optimistic but I will try everything I can. We may wish to set aside a small sum to employ a consultant to apply on our behalf? I have found an Arts Council scheme that may be suitable. The consultant I have in mind would complete the application for around £250 (two days work).

Whatever the outcome of grant applications however the main source of funding will be from the PWLB.

Members were given the NALC brief on the new requirements for applying for loans from the PWLB which set out the need for community consultation. I am currently trying to get something in writing as to exactly what form of "consultation" would be acceptable. There is certainly no requirement for a referendum and I don't believe one would be helpful either. A newsletter article will suffice. I am investigating this further with SALC to ensure we fulfil the criteria.

The cost of the project would be £194,000. We have £39,000 allocated to this already so borrowing would be £155,000. Add the outstanding £16,000 and this comes to £171,000.

The following illustrations are for this sum and **do not** take into account the options to pay off the £16,000 immediately (thereby avoiding years of interest) nor selling the building plot off for £60,000.

£171,000 over 10 years would be £19,162 per year at 2.22%

£171,000 over 15 years would be £14,078 per year at 2.84%

£171,000 over 20 years would be £11,788 per year at 3.34%

Early repayment would be allowed in all cases.

Paying off the £16,000 would allow for £155,000 over 15 years at £12,078 per annum – this is the option I have illustrated above.

The sale of a building plot would further allow for; £95,000 over 10 years at £10,664 per annum

These are illustrations which, if members decide to go ahead with the project, will be discussed and confirmed at a later meeting. Members would have to make any decision now however with the full intention of taking a loan if grant funding cannot be found. The decision has to be made first before grant funding can be applied for and the following timeline is put forward for consideration.

Timescales.

2nd July: Members commit to build the first floor studio option and agree to go to tender. Mr Driver advises me that it will take no longer than 10 weeks to prepare the plans/spec to go to tender.

This 10 week period should provide ample opportunity for any public 'consultation' to be conducted and for an article to appear in the Town Council August newsletter. A two week period would give residents time to voice their support or opposition to the proposal and allow us to gauge public opinion. The wording within the Town Council newsletter would have to make it clear we were seeking views and give details of how to make them.

6th September: With the plans/spec completed, the project can proceed to tender from this date.

4th October: Tenders will have to be completed and returned by this date.

4th-18th October: This period may be used to consider the tenders received. It may be useful to arrange a Film Theatre committee meeting during this 'window' to discuss the tenders that have come in.

29th October: Tenders to be submitted to the members for consideration ahead of the Town Council meeting on 5th November.

5th November: Members will be required to discuss the tenders received and with the relevant funds in place, will be required to award the contract of works to a preferred contractor/builder.

Once a preferred contractor is selected, contracts can be prepared and signed ahead of any works which, due to the Bright Sparks pantomime in January 2014 and other centenary celebratory events scheduled for February 2014, cannot commence until Monday 24th February 2014.

The period between the award of contract in November and the actual build start date in February 2014 would provide ample time for any contractor/builder to prepare/order/deliver materials to the site in order to commence with the works promptly.

The preferred competition date is Friday 18th July 2014, which would enable the studio to be utilized for the centenary summer period. The secondary completion date is Friday 19th September. The earlier date may be achievable but, if things overrun, the September date has a very high chance of being met.

This would allow the increased revenue earning potential of the project to be in place at an important time and with maximum publicity.

Summary.

This is a decision which needs to be made now. Delaying would serve no useful purpose.

If members do not wish to go ahead with an expansion that is quite understandable and the consequences are laid out above.

If members do commit then the first action would be to go to tender (and this would form part of any proposal at the July meeting). Going to tender would cost around £20,000. This is included in the project figure above (£194,000) and would come from our £39,000 reserve. Members would then have until November to look at grants and loans and to ensure they were fully behind the project prior to awarding a contract. This would be the point of full committal.

I realise that this is a very big decision to take and do hope I have provided a clear report on what is involved. I have taken professional advice from the architect, chartered surveyors and our own Theatre Manager to outline the need for and implementation of the proposal. I am as happy as I can be with the financial projections and believe the risks are manageable should members decide to go ahead.

John Rayner
Town Clerk