



CABINET – 12 JUNE 2018

CENTURY THEATRE, COALVILLE
PROPOSED TRANSFER TO LEICESTERSHIRE TRADED SERVICES

REPORT OF THE DIRECTORS OF ADULTS AND COMMUNITIES
AND CORPORATE RESOURCES

PART A

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to advise the Cabinet of the work undertaken to explore alternative management options for the Century Theatre in Coalville and seek approval for its transfer to Leicestershire Traded Services, part of the Council's Corporate Resources Department.
2. The Cabinet is also asked to de-accession the Theatre from the Museum Collection, to support its future operation and sustainability as an arts venue and to authorise the Director of Adults and Communities to make disposals from the Museum Collection on behalf of the governing body.

Recommendations

3. It is recommended:
 - a) That operational responsibility and associated resources for the Century Theatre to transfer from the Communities and Wellbeing Service (Adults and Communities Department) to Leicestershire Traded Services (Corporate Resources Department) be approved;
 - b) That the de-accessioning of the Century Theatre from the County Council's Museum Collection be approved.
 - c) That the Director of Adults and Communities be authorised to de-accession and dispose of items from the Museum Collection, except where:
 - (i) an item has particular public interest;
 - (ii) the original purchase, or cost of its conservation/restoration, was supported by external funding;
 - (iii) the disposal involves a sale;
 - (iv) the disposal of an item would result in a significant cost to the Authority.

Reasons for Recommendations

4. Planning approval for the development of the Snibston site has recently been secured and this includes a new café provision to serve visitors to the Country Park as well as the new colliery area. The café will form an extension to the Century Theatre; therefore bringing the operational management of these two elements together will ensure the benefit of this investment is maximised.
5. This proposal will help secure a sustainable operating model for the Century Theatre, which will continue to work with the Century Theatre volunteers and Performing Arts @ the Century Theatre (PA@CT) and will give a clear focus for PA@CT's support role going forward.
6. It is appropriate to make this transfer before work begins on site, so that the new operational team can be involved in this process from the beginning and help ensure any impact on the programme during the development is minimised and managed effectively.
7. Whilst the Century Theatre remains a significant historic asset, its primary purpose is now as an arts venue, not a museum exhibit. The proposal to de-accession it from the museum collection supports its future use as a vibrant and sustainable arts venue. This is supported by the curatorial recommendation.

Timetable for Decisions (including Scrutiny)

8. The Adults and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee will consider this report on 5 June 2018 and its comments will be reported to the Cabinet.
9. Subject to the Cabinet's approval, it is proposed to agree a timetable for the transfer during the summer of 2018.

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

10. In December 2016, the Cabinet approved proposals for the future use and development of the Snibston site.
11. In September 2017, the Cabinet approved a recommendation to explore alternative management arrangements for the Century Theatre.
12. On 22 February 2017, the Council approved a Medium Term Financial Saving (MTFS) of £1.3million for the Communities and Wellbeing Service to be delivered by 2020/21. The Communities and Wellbeing Strategy 2018–2022, published in July 2016 outlines the strategic direction for these services.
13. The County Council's Museum Collections Development Policy 2015–2019 sets out the approved process to de-accession and dispose of items from the Museum Collection and is attached as Appendix A to this report.

Resources Implications

14. The net budget for the Century Theatre for 2018/19 is £31,500. In line with the Council's MTFS, this is planned to reduce to nil by 2020/21. All associated resources and the savings allocation from the Communities and Wellbeing Service would be transferred to Leicestershire Traded Services (LTS), as part of the operational transfer to ensure that MTFS targets are still achieved by 2020/21 for the Authority.
15. Bringing the Century Theatre and new café provision under a shared management structure presents the opportunity to deliver the MTFS revenue saving as a result of increased income and will enhance the offer for the Snibston site a whole.
16. The Director of Law and Governance has been consulted on the content of this report.

Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure

Dr T Eynon CC

Officers to Contact

Jon Wilson, Director of Adults and Communities
Tel: 0116 305 7454
Email: jon.wilson@leics.gov.uk

Nigel Thomas, Assistant Director – Strategic Services
Adults and Communities Department
Tel: 0116 305 7379
Email: nigel.thomas@leics.gov.uk

PART B

Background

17. The Theatre is currently managed by the Communities and Wellbeing Service, which is part of the Adults and Communities Department. It comprises a range of cultural, educational and support services including libraries, heritage sites and museums and the Record Office.
18. LTS is the trading arm of the County Council that sits within Corporate Resources. It provides a wide range of products and services to customers across the Midlands. It has a great deal of catering experience, running school meals, Tithe Barn and Beaumanor Hall as well as visitor attractions such as our Country Parks.

De-accessioning the Century Theatre

19. The Century Theatre was acquired by the County Council in 1996 from the Century Theatre Co Limited, Lakeside, Keswick, Cumbria. Built in Burbage, Hinckley between 1948 and 1952, it was acquired as an example of engineering ingenuity. Originally interpreted as a static exhibit, over time the service developed the Theatre as a performance venue.
20. It is proposed to de-accession and dispose of the Century Theatre from the Council's Museum Collection because its future as a publicly accessible historic theatre is better secured as a performing arts venue in the proposed Snibston redevelopment. Appendix B of the report shows the full curatorial recommendation which has informed this recommendation.
21. The recommendation to de-accession the Century Theatre is in line with the County Council's Collections Development Policy 2015–2019; Professional Standards and the Museums Association Code of Ethics.
22. The Theatre will continue to be an asset of the County Council and be supported through the normal maintenance programme. It is an important historic asset and will continue to be recognised, supported and maintained with respect to this status.
23. The Theatres Trust, the national advisory public body for theatres, works to promote better protection of theatres for the benefit of the nation. The Century Theatre currently features on the Theatres At Risk Register, due to the historic significance of the Theatre and concerns over its long term sustainability as a performing Theatre. The Theatres Trust sees the development of the Snibston site as a means of enhancing the role and future viability of the Century Theatre.
24. The National Heritage Memorial Fund provided a grant of £154,000 towards the costs of purchasing and re-siting the Century Theatre in 1995 and the grant conditions associated with this expired in 2015. The Heritage Lottery Fund has been informed of the proposal to de-accession and has no objections.

Responsibility for Disposals

25. The Museum Collections Development Policy 2015–2019 sets out the County Council’s approach in relation to disposals and is in line with Arts Council England accreditation requirements. It is recognised that disposals from the Museum Collection, when done in accordance with policy, curatorial recommendation and best practice, is a part of good collections management.
26. The County Council’s current policy states *“The decision to dispose of material from the collections will be taken by the governing body only after full consideration of the reasons for disposal.”* (ref. 15.5, Museum Collections Development Policy).
27. It is proposed that the Chief Officer, the Director of Adults and Communities, is authorised to take the decisions on a recommendation to dispose. The Director will act in accordance with the Council’s Collections Development Policy and its stated intent for the disposal process to be *‘carried out openly and with transparency’* (ref 1.2., Museum Collections Development Policy). Any decision will be made following consultation with the Cabinet Lead Member for Adult Social Care and Heritage, Leisure and Arts.
28. In certain circumstances it would be necessary to request approval from the Cabinet for a disposal. These are outlined below:
 - where an item has particular public interest;
 - where the disposal involves sale;
 - where the original purchase, or conservation/restoration costs, of the object was supported by external funding;
 - where the disposal of an object would result in a significant cost to the Authority.
29. All decisions to dispose, including those taken under delegated arrangements, are published on the County Council’s website.

Conclusion

30. The transfer of the Century Theatre and its de-accession from the Museum Collection will support its future sustainability as a performance venue. Unifying all elements of the Snibston development under a single business focussed management team presents the most effective way to take the whole Snibston development forward and ensure the opportunities presented by this investment, which include the Century Theatre, Scheduled Ancient Monument and County Park are fully realised.

Equalities and Human Rights Implications

31. No negative impacts on users of the Century Theatre have been identified, as the current operating model will continue. If in the future it is proposed to make changes to the operating model any potential impacts would be picked as part of an EHRIA.

Background Papers

- Report of the Cabinet to County Council, 18 February 2015 “Medium Term Financial Strategy 2015/16- 2018/19” - <http://ow.ly/SbldW>
- Report to the Cabinet, 18 July 2016 “Communities and Wellbeing Strategy 2016-2020” <http://politics.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=135&MId=4604&Ver=4>
- Report to the Cabinet, 13 December 2016 “Snibston Development Proposal” <http://politics.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=135&MId=4608&Ver=4>

Appendices

Appendix A – Museums Collections Development Policy 2015-19

Appendix B – Curatorial recommendation for deaccessioning the Century Theatre