

SCRUTINY REVIEW OF EPSOM PLAYHOUSE

Report of the:	Head of Venues and Facilities
Contact:	Andrew Lunt/Margaret Jones
Urgent Decision?(yes/no)	No
If yes, reason urgent decision required:	
Annexes/Appendices (attached):	Annexe 1 – Report of the Scrutiny Review Task Group on the Review of Venues – Epsom Playhouse Annexe 2 – Draft minutes of the meeting of the Audit, Crime & Disorder and Scrutiny Committee, 23 November 2017
Other available papers (not attached):	Report of the Audit, Crime & Disorder and Scrutiny Committee, 23 November 2017 Reports and Minutes for the meetings of: Audit, Crime & Disorder and Scrutiny Committee, 11 October 2016 Community and Wellbeing Committee, 8 November 2016 Audit, Crime & Disorder and Scrutiny Committee, 4 February 2016 Financial Policy Panel, 9 June 2015

REPORT SUMMARY

This report presents the Community and Wellbeing Committee with the Report of the Scrutiny Review Task Group on Epsom Playhouse, approved by the Audit, Crime & Disorder and Scrutiny Committee in November 2017.

RECOMMENDATION (S)

That the Committee:

- (1) considers the Report of the Scrutiny Review Task Group attached at Annexe 1, in accordance with the Local Authorities (Committee System) (England) Regulations 2012;**
- (2) agrees the findings of the Scrutiny Review Task Group set out in its report including, in particular, that Epsom Playhouse should continue to deliver its services to the community and that staff should continue their work to reduce the overall costs of running the theatre;**

- (3) agrees that officers explore implementation of the matters listed in the conclusion of the Scrutiny Review Task Group report under the headings 'Income Generation', 'Equipment' and 'Building', taking into consideration operational viability, legal implications and financial constraints;**
- (4) receives a future report(s), as appropriate, on those matters identified by officers as having potential positive business opportunities for Epsom Playhouse.**

1 Implications for the Council's Key Priorities, Service Plans and Sustainable Community Strategy

1.1 The Report of the Scrutiny Review Task Group contributes to two of the Council's Key Priorities:

1.1.1 Supporting our community; and

1.1.2 Managing our resources.

2 Background

2.1 In June 2015 the Financial Policy Panel received a report which set out a work programme for preparing the Medium Term Financial Strategy. Service reviews made up one element of this work programme.

2.2 The Audit, Crime & Disorder and Scrutiny Committee agreed to undertake a service review of venues; it received the terms of reference in February 2016. The review was intended to ensure services were fit for purpose, met the needs of local residents and were cost effective to provide. Venues included within scope comprised Bourne Hall (including Bourne Hall Museum), Hook Road Arena, Epsom Playhouse and Ewell Court House.

2.3 The Audit, Crime & Disorder and Scrutiny Committee appointed a task group to undertake the investigations. Councillors Reeve, Bridger and Smitheram were appointed to the task group; Councillor Teasdale, member of the Strategy & Resources Committee, was co-opted to the task group.

2.4 The task group has approached the venues service review in stages, looking at the venues in turn. Reviewing Bourne Hall and Hook Road Arena first, the Report of the Scrutiny Review Task Group on Bourne Hall and Hook Road Arena was presented to the Community and Wellbeing Committee in November 2016.

- 2.5 In January 2017 the task group turned its attention to Epsom Playhouse. On completion of its investigations the task group reported its findings to the Audit, Crime & Disorder and Scrutiny Committee in November 2017. The Committee approved the report and agreed that it should be presented to the January 2018 meeting of the Community and Wellbeing Committee.
- 2.6 A copy of the Report of the Scrutiny Review Task Group on Epsom Playhouse, approved by the Audit, Crime & Disorder and Scrutiny Committee, is attached at **Annexe 1**.

3 Community and Wellbeing Committee to Consider and Respond

- 3.1 In accordance with the Local Authorities (Committee System) (England) Regulations 2012, the Community and Wellbeing Committee is asked to consider the scrutiny report attached at **Annexe 1**, to indicate what (if any) action it proposes to take and to publish its response within 2 months of receiving the report.
- 3.2 The Scrutiny Review Task Group has not set out any specific recommendations in its report attached at Annexe 1, but it has highlighted a number of findings and conclusions.
- 3.3 The Scrutiny Review Task Group found that Epsom Playhouse is a valued Council resource. It considers that it should continue to deliver its services to the community and that staff should continue their work to reduce the overall costs of running the theatre.
- 3.4 The task group does highlight that the theatre is facing a number of issues (discussed at paragraphs 5.58 to 5.69 of **Annexe 1**), but that it considers the theatre has the potential to explore a number of new business opportunities. The task group lists a number of matters listed under 3 headings, 'Income Generation', 'Equipment' and 'Building', for further exploration and consideration (see paragraph 6.3 of **Annexe 1**).

4 Proposals

- 4.1 It is proposed that the Community and Wellbeing Committee considers the report of the Scrutiny Review Task Group in accordance with the Local Authorities (Committee System) (England) Regulations 2012.
- 4.2 It is also proposed that the Committee agrees the findings and conclusions of the Scrutiny Review Task Group set out in its report, in particular, that Epsom Playhouse continues to deliver its services to the community and that staff continue their work to reduce the overall costs of running the theatre.

- 4.3 In addition, it is proposed that the Committee agrees that officers should explore implementation of those matters set out by the Scrutiny Review Task Group in the conclusion of its report under the headings 'Income Generation', 'Equipment' and 'Building', taking into consideration operational viability, legal implications and financial constraints.
- 4.4 Lastly, it is proposed that the Committee agrees to receive, as appropriate, a future report(s) on those matters identified by officers as having potential positive business benefits for Epsom Playhouse. This report will give full consideration to operational viability, legal and financial implications.

5 Financial and Manpower Implications

- 5.1 Any financial implications associated with matters highlighted by the Scrutiny Review Task Group for further exploration will need to be fully quantified.
- 5.2 The Committee will wish to note that end of year figures for the three year period 2014/15 to 2016/17 were used in the scrutiny report. In comparison, budgeted figures, current at the time of the scrutiny investigation, were used for the current year (latest position reflected in Appendix 4 of the scrutiny report was Q2).
- 5.3 **Chief Finance Officer's comments:** None for the purposes of this report.

6 Legal Implications (including implications for matters relating to equality)

- 6.1 If the Community and Wellbeing Committee is minded to explore and consider those matters highlighted in the conclusion of the Scrutiny Review Task Group's report, it will need to consider any associated legal implications.
- 6.2 **Monitoring Officer's comments:** If the Committee agrees to adopt the recommendation of the task group for the Playhouse to continue to deliver its services, there are no legal issues arising from this. Officers will need to consult with the Legal team in respect of recommendation 3 to ensure that all legal issues are addressed at an early stage and in order that the advice can inform officers' proposals.

7 Sustainability Policy and Community Safety Implications

- 7.1 No particular implications.

8 Partnerships

- 8.1 Epsom Playhouse works in close partnership with a large number of local community and amateur groups.

9 Risk Assessment

- 9.1 Implementation of the task group's findings and conclusions will raise a number of risks to the Council which will need to be considered in the decision making and implementation process.

10 Conclusion and Recommendations

- 10.1 The Scrutiny Review Task Group highlighted in its report that Epsom Playhouse is a venue which is highly valued by the population of the borough, it provides many economic benefits to the area and supports the health and wellbeing of the community.
- 10.2 It was also identified in the scrutiny report that the commitment, professionalism and enthusiasm of the staff and volunteers of Epsom Playhouse was, and is, central to the success of the venue.
- 10.3 Therefore in line with the scrutiny review report, it is recommended that Epsom Playhouse continues to provide its services to the community and that the Playhouse team continues in their efforts to reduce the running costs of the venue.
- 10.4 It is further recommended that the implementation of those areas highlighted by the Scrutiny Review Task Group under the headings Income Generation, Equipment and Building be explored by officers, taking into consideration operational viability, legal implications and financial constraints. Lastly, that the Committee receives a future report(s) on those matters identified as having potential positive business benefits.

WARD(S) AFFECTED: (All Wards);