



Report of the Chief Libraries, Arts and Heritage Officer

Scrutiny Board (Culture and Leisure)

Date: 8th October 2007

Subject: Progress Update, Leeds Grand Theatre and City Varieties Music Hall

Electoral Wards Affected:

City and Hunslet

Ward Members consulted
(referred to in report)

Specific Implications For:

Equality and Diversity

Community Cohesion

Narrowing the Gap

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 The purpose of the report is to update Members of Scrutiny Board on the phase 2 refurbishment works at Leeds Grand Theatre and the proposed refurbishment of the City Varieties Music Hall.

2.0 LEEDS GRAND THEATRE

(i) Background

- 2.1 Phase 1 of the refurbishment of Leeds Grand Theatre commenced in August 2005 and was completed on 17 September 2006, approximately five (5) weeks later than originally programmed, with the theatre reopening to the public in October 2006.
- 2.2 The Phase 1 works primarily addressed improvements in the auditorium and technical/operational improvements in the backstage areas, along with the provision of two new rehearsal rooms for use by Opera North. The works undertaken in phase 1 included improvements to make the theatre more accessible under the DDA requirements, Health and Safety works; new seating in the theatre stalls and refurbished seating elsewhere in the auditorium, two new rehearsal rooms, scenery bridge and get in lift, extended fly tower and new automated flying system, reconfigured orchestra pit and provision of air cooling and improved ventilation throughout the auditorium.
- 2.3 The cost of the phase 1 works is estimated to be £22.365m inclusive of construction costs, closure costs, property transactions and the cost of upgrading/ replacing much of the building's mechanical and electrical services.

(II) Current Position

- 2.4 Members of Scrutiny Board should note, that whilst the phase 1 works detailed above conserved the theatre and improved the operational efficiency of the building, the works did not include for the full refurbishment of the theatre. The phase 2 works seek to deliver visible improvements to the buildings, particularly, in the public areas of the theatre, by renovating the Grand Hall and Assembly Room, further improvements to the theatre's front of house areas, undertaking repairs/ restoration works to the exterior of the building and undertaking improvements to the backstage areas and dressing rooms.
- 2.5 Budget provision of £10.644m has been secured for the phase 2 works comprising, Arts Council England (£2.2m), HLF (£0.995m), Opera North and Leeds Grand Theatre Development Trust (£3.2m), Opera North (£0.5m), Leeds Grand Theatre and Opera House Ltd (£2m) and Leeds City Council (£1.77m).
- 2.6 The phase 2 works started on site on 17 September, with works envisaged to be complete by 15 September 2008. Members of Scrutiny should note that subject to the precise nature of the backstage works being determined, it is envisaged that the theatre will remain open throughout the duration of the phase 2 works. However, if the backstage works were to include the replacement of the theatre's safety curtain, then closure of the theatre would be required for around five (5) weeks on health & safety grounds.

3.0 CITY VARIETIES MUSIC HALL

(i) Background

- 3.1 The City Council's Executive Board at its meeting in February 2007 approved a proposed refurbishment scheme for the City Varieties costing an estimated £9.2m and comprising:-
- * Improved and extended front of house facilities, including additional foyer space, relocated box office and lift access to all levels.
 - * Refurbished auditorium including redecoration, replacement seating and improved lighting.
 - * Renewed/improved ventilation/cooling to the auditorium.
 - * Improved backstage areas.
 - * Improved accessibility and circulation.
 - * Improved fire safety measures.
 - * Improved public facilities.
- 3.2 The assumed funding provision for the proposed refurbishment works is
- | | |
|-------------------------|-------|
| * Leeds City Council | £5.2m |
| * Heritage Lottery Fund | £3.0m |

* Leeds Grand Theatre

£1.0m

- 3.3 Executive Board has also agreed that the acquisition of adjacent third party property interests should be pursued, which would provide a number of technical and operational benefits to the Music Hall in terms of the proposed refurbishment works. The cost of acquiring the third party property interest will be an additional cost to the £9.2m estimated cost of the refurbishment works.

(ii) Current Position

- 3.4 The HLF has confirmed a stage 1 pass for a grant award of £3m towards the cost of refurbishing the City Varieties.
- 3.5 A report will be presented to the Council's Executive Board in October 2007 to authorise the ongoing design development work required to submit a stage 2 bid to the HLF in May 2008.
- 3.6 Members of the Scrutiny Board should note that securing a stage 1 grant award from the HLF is a key decision for the success of the project. A stage 1 pass means that money has been earmarked by the HLF for the City Varieties project. Competition for HLF funds does, however, remain tough and while a stage 1 pass does not guarantee funding, it is a clear indication of positive support and money for the scheme is set aside for the particular project. The Council and its partner can now progress the submission of a stage 2 application to secure the full grant. It is envisaged that the stage 2 application will be confirmed in September 2008.
- 3.7 On the assumption that the HLF confirm the stage 2 award in September 2008, the development programme envisages that works would start on site in late spring 2009, with works complete by July 2010 and the Music Hall reopening in September 2010.

4.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 4.1 Scrutiny Board is requested to note the report.