

TEWKESBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to:	Executive Committee
Date of Meeting:	14 March 2018
Subject:	Roses Theatre, Community Grant Alteration
Report of:	Annette Roberts, Head of Development Services
Corporate Lead:	Robert Weaver, Deputy Chief Executive
Lead Member:	Lead Member for Community
Number of Appendices:	One

Executive Summary:

In September 2016 the Roses Theatre was awarded a Community Grant of £19,950 towards the refurbishment of the Morecombe room and a hearing loop for the café.

Since the grant was awarded, there has been a change in the management at the Theatre and the new Director has made a request to use the grant for a different purpose.

As the Council's Community Grant Scheme has now been withdrawn, recommendations on funding are required to be referred to Executive Committee for approval.

Recommendation:

To AGREE the amendments to the grant for the Roses Theatre Trust on the basis set out in this report, subject to the Trust completing a lease of the Roses Theatre with the Council.

Reasons for Recommendation:

- The new application meets the criteria of the Community Grants Scheme.
- It will be an improvement to the Roses Theatre which will benefit the Borough residents.

Resource Implications:

The existing grant is financed from sums already allocated so there are no new resource implications associated with this request. If Members decided not to support the change in use of the agreed funding, the grant offer would need to be withdrawn and the monies allocated returned to capital balances. The Council no longer has a grants scheme from which to award new grants and so the monies would just replenish the balances of the Council.

Legal Implications:

The Council has various powers to make a grant of this nature, including financial assistance under Section 145 of the Local Government Act 1972 and Section 19 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976.

It is recommended that the grant is not advanced until the Theatre Trust has a current lease of the Theatre premises, in order for it to have a proper legal interest in the property in which it proposes to undertake the works.

Risk Management Implications:

None associated directly with this report.

Performance Management Follow-up:

Feedback on community funding is provided within the council's performance tracker.

As per the terms and conditions of the grant the Roses will be required to provide feedback to the Council.

Environmental Implications:

None associated directly with this report.

1.0 INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND

1.1 The Roses Theatre was granted a community grant of £19,950 in September 2016 from the Tewkesbury Borough Council Community Grant Working Group. A new lease to the Theatre is currently under negotiation and is expected to be completed shortly.

1.2 The grant was awarded to:

- To convert the Theatre's Morecambe Room into a more versatile meeting space, to be hired out or used by community groups, schools and local businesses.
- To install a commercial kitchen to support and serve the business/community room.
- To replace and upgrade the Theatre audio equipment, which will be both reliable, portable and allow the Theatre to access more audiences.

1.3 At that time the Council was distributing Community Grants based on the following criteria:

1. Where the project covers (up to 20% of the final score – capital projects only).
 - Borough-wide.
 - Multi Parish.
 - Parish/Local Facility.
2. Evidence of a clear need for the project e.g. consultation and relevant local statistics (up to 20% of the final score – capital projects only).
3. Whether the application has secured or applied for funding, including to the local Parish/Town Council (up to 30% of the final score – capital projects only).

4. How will the grant positively influence the community incorporating (up to 30% of the final score – capital projects only):
 - A. Bringing communities together and becoming more socially sustainable.
 - B. Encouraging communities to be healthier and more active.
 - C. Encouraging learning of new skills that will be used for community benefit.
 - D. Demonstrating the financial sustainability of the group and project.
 - E. Encouraging volunteering in the community.
 - F. Improving and maintaining the community's environment.

The maximum capital grant award was £30,000.

2.0 APPLICATION AMENDMENTS

2.1 In January 2018, the Roses Theatre approached the Council to request a change to their application, as follows:

- A. To upgrade the seating in the auditorium. The Roses Theatre would like to upgrade the seating in the auditorium. They suggest that the standard of the seating is below what is expected at a Theatre and they state that this is stopping and deterring customers from attending the Theatre. The estimated cost is £70,000 for 374 seats.
- B. Refurbishment of the stage and backstage. The second request is to alter the grant to refurbish the stage and backstage of the Theatre. The current interior is very dated and not appropriate for their needs and to meet performer's expectations, including mould in the shower, no tiling and badly stained carpets.

They state that they need to upgrade some of the technical equipment such as the hanging bars from which lighting and drapes are suspended. Also, sound and lighting equipment is gradually becoming unusable and failing annual testing. The Theatre's survival depends on the ability to present shows with adequate lighting, staging and sound quality. The estimated cost is £30,000 for dressing room and stage equipment.

Please see more attached letter from The Roses Theatre Interim Director for more detailed information.

2.2 The Roses performs a unique role and has great economic value and cultural significance to the Borough and wider area. The Theatre hosts a range of performances, varying from live music, cinema, live screenings, theatre, comedy and dance, popular entertainment such as pantomimes and innovative contemporary arts.

2.3 The Roses Theatre also applied to the LEADER Programme and was awarded a grant of £24,139.20 for development of kitchen facilities and to refurbish the Morecambe room to make it fit for business use and hire. It has withdrawn this application and is submitting a new expression of interest for consideration. This application will be for a sum of £60,000 towards new seating and to refurbish the backstage area, contributing to the same work outlined in 2.1. The Theatre is also working with the Council's Funding Officer in order to secure other match funding. The Theatre is also working with the Council's Funding Officer in order to secure other match funding.

2.4 Therefore, the recommendation is to agree to the Roses Theatre's request to amend its application for £19,950 to enable it to carry out the work detailed in 2.1.

3.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

3.1 A withdrawal of the grant was not considered, due to the importance of the Theatre and the nature of the request.

4.0 CONSULTATION

4.1 None.

5.0 RELEVANT COUNCIL POLICIES/STRATEGIES

5.1 Council Plan 2016-2020.
Development Services Service Delivery Plan.

6.0 RELEVANT GOVERNMENT POLICIES

6.1 None.

7.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (Human/Property)

7.1 None.

8.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS (Social/Community Safety/Cultural/ Economic/ Environment)

8.1 The Roses Theatre is the only Theatre in the Borough. It provides a variety of shows and programmes for the local community as well as visitors from further afield.

9.0 IMPACT UPON (Value For Money/Equalities/E-Government/Human Rights/Health And Safety)

9.1 None.

10.0 RELATED DECISIONS AND ANY OTHER RELEVANT FACTS

10.1 Community Grants are no longer distributed by the Borough Council, after a decision made by Executive in March 2016 to stop the grant system.

Background Papers: None.

Contact Officers: Andy Sanders, Community and Economic Development Manager,
andy.sanders@teWKesbury.gov.uk
Martha Mundy, Community Funding Officer,
martha.mundy@teWKesbury.gov.uk

Appendices: 1. Letter from The Roses Theatre Interim Director

Supporting letter from Geoffrey Rowe the Roses Theatre Interim Director

Dear Martha

Here is my explanation about the change in plans for the proposed community grant.

Originally the plan was to decorate the Morecombe Room to make it suitable for corporate entertaining. Additionally the plan was to make a bar store into a kitchen to provide food for the delegates and for the audiences. The application was put on hold because the theatre was without a Director and there was a financial loss for the 2016/7 year which needed to be covered to put the theatre back onto a financial 'even keel'. That has been achieved and the 2016/7 accounts show a modest surplus and there is a balanced budget for the year beginning 1st February 2018.

With the passing of time it has been realised that the Morecombe Room is needed for office space. The area backstage is needed for dressing room/green room provision for the bigger shows and for the pantomime children's chorus. Additionally, the kitchen would not have been sufficient size to serve an audience before a show and the profits unlikely to cover additional staffing.

Having carried out a survey of theatre's needs, it is clear that the two vital areas need attention - the auditorium seating and the stage area including the dressing rooms.

The seating is becoming threadbare after 17 years and the upholstery is beginning to come through the seat covers at various points. The arms of many seats are frayed and insecure. As well as undermining the comfort of paying customers, the image and reputation of the theatre is undermined by the view across the auditorium. The standard of seating is falling well below what paying customers expect of a public venue. The two companies I have approached for a quote have said that it is more expensive to re-upholster than to buy new seating. The quotes are both close to £70,000 for 374 seats.

The stage and backstage areas have not been refurbished in many years judging by the standard of the dressing rooms which fall well below what one would expect to offer visiting artists. Mould in the only shower, no tiling on the toilets, badly stained carpets and a need for a re-fit of sinks, dressing tables and painting of walls. A visit backstage here would make this clear.

It is a point worth making given the title of the TBC grant that it is precisely the community type of show which need the larger dressing room space - the local children in the pantomime for 6 weeks, the Manor Players and the local choirs and bands who use the theatre.

We also need to upgrade some of the technical equipment such as the hanging bars from which lighting and drapes are suspended. The sound and lighting equipment is gradually becoming unusable and failing annual testing. The theatre's survival depends on the ability to present shows with adequate lighting, staging and sound, of course. A budget of £30,000 would cover the refurbishment of dressing rooms and provide some of the technical needs. I am obtaining quotes for this work for the Leader Fund application and can provide to TBC in due course. From initial discussions with decorators and plumbers £10,000 would be a sensible budget for the dressing rooms leaving £20,000 for the stage.

I am applying for a £60,000 grant from the Leader Project and wish to offer £20,000 from TBC as detailed leaving £20,000 for the theatre to find. Initially, we have the cash flow to deal with this expenditure but we would launch a traditional 'sponsor a seat' campaign which funded some of the cost of seating 17 years ago. There are also local trusts who may wish to help us at a modest level. If both yourselves and the Leader committee agree to the funding the projects will be achievable.

Please let me know if you need further information and/or if you would like to see a sight of the current state of the theatre.

I appreciate that the grant could not be committed until we have firm quotation. At this point we need to know if the TBC are willing to vary the grant in this manner.

Best wishes

Geoffrey Rowe

Interim Director