

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE - 28th MAY 2003

**CATERING, INTERIOR DESIGN AND DISABLED ACCESS IMPROVEMENTS FOR
THE PALACE THEATRE, KILMARNOCK**

Report by Director of Community Services

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval for the submission of an Arts Lottery Bid to the Scottish Arts Council for a programme of works to upgrade catering facilities, interior layout and disabled access at the Palace Theatre.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Museums, Arts and Theatre team from the department has embarked on a radical rethink of arts related buildings during the last three months and developed a draft three year Investment Plan which aims to reposition the facilities in the market.
- 2.3 The redevelopment at the Palace Theatre signals the start of the plan and presents an opportunity to refocus and better target the audience through a redesigned facility more able to accommodate the needs and demands of today's audience.

3. CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.1 The plans for the redesign of the Palace Theatre are set within affordable financial parameters. They have been developed to create maximum impact, whilst allowing managers to increase business and take more creative chances. A creative and radical design solution is needed that will help to transform the venue and address the current difficulties in achieving repeat audience, due to poor front-of-house experience (which recent market research indicated was a major problem).
- 3.2 It is proposed that Phase 1, which will be carried out in this financial year, will result in the Palace Theatre having one entrance and exit, rationalising the box office and improving bar and catering facilities. The Lower bar and Upper bars will be redesigned, with a performing venue for comedy, poetry and smaller music events installed in the upper bar. A lift will be installed, which runs from the entrance through to the upper bar and theatre. A complete décor change will help transform the front-of house space. The redesigned facilities will be fully accessible by customers with disabilities. (See Appendix 1).

- 3.3 The aim of this Phase will be to help reposition the theatre and create a higher quality 'night-out' for the audience. The new look will be supported by a more eclectic and creative programme, that will appeal to a greater audience mix, as is in keeping with the proposed redesign. It will also provide full access for the disabled.
- 3.4 Phase 2 (2004/5) - will result in the exterior being treated. This will enable the Council to clean and repair the building in places and to landscape the street frontage, install new lighting, signage and promotional points. This Phase will emphasise the Theatre and Halls' position as being a key cultural asset of East Ayrshire.
- 3.5 Phase 3 (2006/7) – will result in new technical resources being installed in the Grand Hall to help achieve better acoustic and lighting experience. This will also increase the capacity to host a range of large music events. We will also aim to create new production suites for creative businesses and install a range of production spaces for community groups.
- 3.6 The Palace needs to move forward quickly and these proposals provide an imaginative response to the needs of the community and region, whilst set within realistic financial parameters. The redevelopment will help to reenergise the town centre and create a major reason for visiting East Ayrshire.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 It is anticipated that Phase 1 will cost in the region of £400,000. The Council have already approved expenditure of £100,000 for the refurbishment of catering facilities, and the capital programme, if approved, will provide a further £40,000. The bid to the Scottish Arts Council, if successful, would provide the balance.

5. LEGAL AUTHORITY/IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Council would be bound by the conditions of grant award in all cases.

6. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 A new Museums, Arts and Theatre Business Development Plan will drive the future operation of the service. This will be brought to a future committee for approval. Investment in facilities is in line with the Council's Leisure Strategy and emerging Cultural Strategy.

7. CONCLUSION

- 7.1 The design proposals represent the most effective use of both Council and external funding, and will significantly improve several key aspects of the services on offer at the Palace Theatre.

7.2 The optimum date for submission of the Lottery funding application is June 2003 and therefore early approval is sought from Committee to ensure the best chance of securing grant aid.

7.3 Should the bid for funding fail, the £140,000 available will be used on a smaller scale project to refurbish bar and catering facilities and public areas.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 It is recommended that the Committee:-

- i) approve the submission of a lottery funding bid to support the developments outlined in this report;
- ii) remit to the Director of Community Services to report back on progress with this project; and
- iii) otherwise note the contents of this report.

William Stafford
Director of Community Services

WS/JAG/AG

1st May 2003

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

Nil.

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