

REPORT TO: PLACE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE, EXECUTIVE and COUNCIL
Date of Meeting: 9 November 2017 (Place Scrutiny), 14 November 2017 (Executive)
and 19 December 2017 (Council)
Report of: Corporate Manager Executive Support and City Surveyor
Title: New Entertainment Venue Needs Assessment

Is this a Key Decision?

No

Is this an Executive or Council Function?

Council

1. What is the report about?

- 1.1 An update on the outcome of the work of the New Entertainment Venue Advisory Group (NEVAG) which was set up to advise on city centre venue requirements and presentation of the findings of the new venue needs assessment.

2. Recommendations:

- 1) That Place Scrutiny Committee and Executive note progress and comment on the findings of the needs assessment;
- 2) That the Council accepts the reports' recommendation that the Corn Exchange is the preferred location for any entertainment venue; and
- 3) That Place Scrutiny Committee support and recommend approval by Executive of a public consultation exercise on the findings of the needs assessment with Council approval sought of funding of £5,000.

3. Reasons for the recommendation:

- 3.1 There has been significant public interest in the creation of a new entertainment space in Exeter. No formal analysis of need had been carried out so a needs analysis was commissioned to assess both need and, subsequently, potential locations. A public consultation on the results of that analysis will enable a wider group of interested parties and individuals to comment on the findings.

4. What are the resource implications including non-financial resources.

- 4.1 In addition to the budget of £5,000, officers from Communication and Marketing and Executive Support will be required to support the public consultation.

5. Section 151 Officer comments:

- 5.1 If approved, a supplementary budget of £5,000 will be set aside to provide for the cost of a public consultation in the current financial year. Further funding required for subsequent detailed feasibility studies, would be subject to further Council approval.

6. What are the legal aspects?

- 6.1 No legal aspects are identified at this time.

7. Monitoring Officer's comments:

7.1 The Monitoring Officer advised that she was unaware of this work and was not in a position to comment.

8. Report details:

8.1 In line with the Council's commitment to explore the options for a new entertainment venue, in October 2016 the Council convened a meeting of representatives from the Council and arts, cultural and entertainment sectors, to provide expertise and to advise how to take this project forward. This group, the New Entertainment Venue Advisory Group (NEVAG), chaired by Cllr Denham, was formed with the purpose of providing local relevant expertise on areas and venue provision and specifically to:

1. Generate ideas about a new entertainment venue for Exeter (assuming a city centre location, but considering all alternatives that meet identified needs);
2. Ensure that needs of the arts, cultural and entertainment sectors are being considered in the development of any new, viable entertainment venue for Exeter;
3. Contribute views on demand in Exeter and the sub region and to propose potential, viable solutions (including size, facilities, provider, cost, funding, location, operator and programming);
4. Inform the preparation of a brief for a consultant/expert who will undertake an options appraisal, including viability of potential entertainment venues;
5. Provide expert input to the options appraisal and respond to any recommendations that emerge.

8.2 Councillor Denham wishes to put on record the council's gratitude for the commitment of all members of NEVAG and their valuable contributions throughout the process.

8.3 In view of the wide range of views on Exeter's needs and the need for a robust evidence base, the group resolved to commission professional advice from a consultancy with a strong track record of delivering similar projects. In January 2017 a tendering exercise was launched for a consultant to deliver the following objectives:

1. To review the current performance venues in Exeter and perceptions about gaps in provision;
2. To evaluate current and likely future demand for a new large-scale entertainment venue (minimum 1,000 capacity) across Exeter and its cultural catchment area;
3. To identify the likely constraints on a new venue, including cost, location, and competition;
4. To identify opportunities presented by new and emerging technologies, the digital agenda, and innovative management and business models;
5. To review trends in recent and new UK and European performance venues, including business/financial models, the mix of art forms, and the balance between producing and receiving/presenting programmes;
6. To identify options that could meet Exeter's needs for a new performance venue in terms of scale, operating model, programming approach and facility mix, and make recommendations supported by an informed evidence base;
7. To engage with funding partners, including Arts Council England, about the likelihood of support.

8.4 Fourth Street were the successful tenderer and were appointed to undertake the needs assessment. Feedback and interim findings were submitted to NEVAG throughout the project for feedback and input. A copy of Fourth Street's final report and detailed findings is attached.

9. Next steps

9.1 Before progressing to a detailed feasibility study of the preferred option identified in the report, it is proposed that detailed public consultation and engagement is undertaken. This will promote awareness of the needs assessment and the detailed evidence behind it and enable a wider group of interested parties and individuals to comment on the findings and submit their views on an entertainment venue for the city.

10. What is the impact of the decision on equality and diversity; health and wellbeing; safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults, community safety and the environment?

10.1 There will be no adverse impact.

11. Are there any other options?

11.1 A wide range of options have been considered as set out in the needs assessment.

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Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1972 (as amended)

Background papers used in compiling this report:-

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