

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**CABINET**

**24<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2020**

**APPROVAL FOR RCT THEATRES TO PRODUCE A DIGITAL CHRISTMAS PERFORMANCE TO SHARE ON-LINE IN DECEMBER 2020**

**REPORT OF DIRECTOR - PUBLIC HEALTH, PROTECTION & COMMUNITY SERVICES IN DISCUSSIONS WITH THE RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDER, CLLR. RHYS LEWIS**

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**1. PURPOSE OF THE PAPER**

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide Cabinet Members with information in relation to the proposal for RCT Theatres to produce a digital Christmas performance to share online in December 2020.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that Cabinet

- 2.1 Note the content of the report.
- 2.2 Approve the proposal to produce a digital Christmas performance to share online.

**3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 Traditionally, RCT Theatres produce a pantomime every Christmas. This is very popular with residents and is very well-attended. Unfortunately this year, due to the Covid-19 restrictions, a live performance will not be possible. However, an option to provide a Christmas performance online could be an important boost for the public at the end of a difficult year.
- 3.2 Theatre programmes are planned up to 18 months in advance and in this instance the contracts with performers were signed in January 2020 so that the service is obliged to pay them even though the planned pantomime can no longer take place. It makes sense therefore to utilise their skills in a different way.
- 3.3 It is important for the Arts Service to show its funders (in particular the Arts Council of Wales) that it is doing everything it can to ensure people can still access the Arts in RCT despite the challenges experienced at the present time.

#### **4. BACKGROUND**

- 4.1 Due to the temporary closure of RCT Theatres as a result of Covid-19, the 2020 pantomime, 'Dick Whittington', has been postponed until Christmas 2021.
- 4.2 The annual RCT Theatres produced pantomime is regularly attended by over 15,000.
- 4.3 Planning for the annual pantomime commences in January of that year, with cast and crew contracts signed as early as possible to secure roles at what is a competitive period for the theatre sector.
- 4.4 Signed contracts for pantomime 2020 total £37,500.
- 4.5 As a member of Arts Council of Wales' Arts Portfolio Wales, alongside the sector as a whole, we are being encouraged by Arts Council of Wales to honour any contractual agreements made prior to Covid-19.
- 4.6 A budget of £40,000 has been allocated made up of:
- £30,000 from Arts Council of Wales revenue grant;
  - £10,000 Corporate support (as received in previous years).
- 4.7 There is no sufficient budget to create a full pantomime production due to no opportunity to generate an income through ticket sales or secondary spend. Average ticket sales over the past three years have totalled £104,235.
- 4.8 In order to provide a safe, accessible and high-quality digital Christmas performance offer for cast, crew and residents, further funding of approximately £15,000 is required for filming, signing and captioning, and putting in place health and safety measures e.g. PPE, screens.
- 4.9 Currently, there is draft guidance that is being developed by Welsh Government in consultation with the Arts Council of Wales and Creu Cymru. The hope is that there will be an announcement on 11th September and that activity such as this will be re-started by October.

#### **5. DIGITAL CHRISTMAS PERFORMANCE PROPOSAL**

##### **Purpose**

- 5.1 A virtual Christmas performance has been explored in order to honour pantomime 2020 cast and crew contracts agreed prior to Covid-19 and to provide residents with an accessible, online light-entertainment performance during the festive season.

## **Production**

- 5.2 The contracted Director and Musical Director will write and compose original music for a closed, pre-recorded hour and ten minute high-energy performance that will give a nod to past pantomimes and their characters performance
- 5.3 Written specifically for RCT Theatres, the script and directorship will consider all safe working protocols e.g. social distancing for cast and crew, and the use of specialist equipment including PPE as well as the use of a virtual set through post-editorial production effects.
- 5.4 Due to its range of spaces, entrances and exits, it is proposed that the Park and Dare Theatre is used for rehearsal and filming from October to end of November 2020. The following will be used: Stwidio 1, main auditorium, Drama Stiwdio and both large dressing rooms.
- 5.5 All rehearsals, filming activity and spaces used will be risk assessed in accordance with Welsh Government guidance related to the performing arts sector, television and film production sectors, ensuring adherence at all times to measures such as social distancing and safe working controls.

## **Performance**

- 5.6 The performance will be free to access at key times via a YouTube link from 21<sup>st</sup> December 2020 until after the final performance at 2pm on 24<sup>th</sup> December 2020.
- 5.7 A marketing campaign will promote the offer to all residents via Corporate and Arts Service channels.

## **6. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 An Equality Impact Assessment is not needed because the contents of the report are for information purposes only.

## **7. CONSULTATION/INVOLVEMENT**

- 7.1 No consultation exercise has been required.

## **8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)**

- 8.1 With no income generation opportunity through ticket sales and secondary spend, a further approximate £15,000 commitment is required for a safe, accessible and high-quality digital Christmas performance to be produced by RCT Theatres for the residents of RCT.



**9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED**

9.1 There are no legal implications aligned to this report.

**10. CONCLUSION**

10.1 This paper notes the proposal and further financial commitment required.

10.2 With over 15,000 attendees each year for RCT Theatres, this proposal will enable a joyous Christmas performance to be offered on-line, free of charge, during a year that has been unprecedented due to flooding and Covid-19, and whilst the theatres remain closed.



**LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

**AS AMENDED BY**

**THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985**

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