



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

STRATEGIC CULTURE AND ARTS STEERING GROUP

21st JUNE 2021

**AN UPDATE ON THE RCT TOGETHER COMMUNITY ASSET TRANSFER
OF THE MUNI ARTS CENTRE TO AWEN CULTURAL TRUST**

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR - PUBLIC HEALTH, PROTECTION AND
COMMUNITY SERVICES, IN DISCUSSIONS WITH THE CABINET MEMBER
FOR STRONGER COMMUNITIES, WELLBEING AND CULTURAL SERVICES
COUNCILLOR RHYS LEWIS**

Author(s): Caroline O'Neill, Strategic Arts & Culture Manager

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to update members of the steering group on the community asset transfer of the Muni Arts Centre to Awen Cultural Trust (Registered Charity and Private Limited Company by guarantee without share capital).

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Strategic Culture and Arts Steering Group:

- 2.1 Note the update within the report.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 That the members are updated on the progress of the community asset transfer of the Muni Arts Centre to Awen Cultural Trust and for Awen Cultural Trust to share their strategy.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 On 18th June 2019, Members of the Cabinet determined to take forward a tenancy with Awen Cultural Trust following consideration of the summary and assessment of the business plans received in respect of the asset transfer of the Muni Arts Centre.
- 4.2 Detailed negotiations have since been held between the Council and Awen Cultural Trust to develop a capital scheme of works, agree terms of the lease and the necessary financial support required to secure a sustainable future for the Muni Arts Centre.

5. UPDATE

5.1 Phase 1: Pre-Interim Works

5.1.1 A grant of up to £250,000 has been secured from the Welsh Government's 'Targeted Regeneration Investment' Fund. Alongside an agreed contribution from Rhondda Cynon Taf CBC of up to £250,000, this will enable essential refurbishment works to be carried out which will enable the building to become operationally fit for purpose as a Cultural Arts Venue.

5.1.2 A Delegated Decision report made on December 22nd 2020 (approving a leasehold transfer of the Muni Arts Centre to Awen Cultural Trust by way of a 30 year lease) was amended and accepted on February 19th 2021, with a revision to the repair and maintenance obligations under the lease.

5.1.3 An 'Agreement to Lease' was signed on 16th April 2021 as a pre-requisite to demonstrate their partnership commitment, alongside Heads of Terms and a Partnership Agreement.

5.1.4 In addition, the Council will provide capital match funding of circa £250,000 towards the Welsh Government 'Targeted Regional Investment' fund application.

5.1.5 Contractors have commenced on site and will complete the works shortly.

5.1.6 The Council and Awen Cultural Trust have undertaken consultation with stakeholders, previous users and the wider public. The outcomes of this consultation will be shared by Awen.

5.2 Phase 2: Post-Interim Works

5.2.1 When the refurbishment work is completed satisfactorily, then approval for a 30 year leasehold transfer of the Muni Arts Centre to Awen Cultural Trust will be granted along with an accompanying Partnership Agreement laying out joint obligations for both parties to deliver on agreed objectives and priorities for the sustainable operation of the venue.

5.2.2 On completion of the lease, Awen Cultural Trust will be expected to recommence service delivery and programming commitments at its earliest convenience and in line with WG Covid 19 Advice and Guidance.

5.2.3 The Council will retain responsibility for internal repairs over £8k per item and full responsibility for external repairs and maintenance for the

building demonstrates a strengthened collaborative approach in view of the prevailing economic conditions as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and further discussions with Awen.

5.2.4 The Council will provide an annual revenue funding contribution during the first 5 years of the re-development of the building to enable Awen Cultural Trust to re-build audience levels and confidence, develop a balanced commercial and community programme of events and activities. This will enable Awen to mitigate against the unknown future impact of Covid 19 on potential audience levels. To be reviewed before end of Year 5.

5.3 Phase 3 – Post Major Renovation Works

5.3.1 The opportunity has arisen for the Council to apply to the UK's Levelling Up Fund for the major renovation works outlined in the RIBA I Feasibility and Options Appraisal Report. Approval will be sought by Cabinet to submit the application and an outcome expected during Autumn 2021.

5.3.2 If Levelling Up Funding is not secured, the long-term lease will enable Awen Cultural Trust to apply for significant levels of capital funding to achieve their ambitious and innovative proposals for the full re-development of the building. The re-development aims to expose the original Gothic architecture, improve the buildings environmental sustainability and eliminate the heritage deficit and make it an easier building to maintain and strengthen its viability and sustainability.

6. CONSULTATION / INVOLVEMENT

6.1 No consultation exercise has been required.

7. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS / SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY

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

8. WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

8.1 A Welsh Language Impact Assessment is not needed because the contents of the report are for information purposes only.

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

9.1 There are no financial implications aligned to the recommendations in this report.

10 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

10.1 There are no legal implications aligned to the recommendations in this report.

11. LINKS TO THE CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT.

11.1 Pontypridd is already benefiting from significant investment including the redevelopment of the former Taff Vale site and the YMCA; the ongoing development and restoration of Ynysangharad War Memorial Park; and Pontypridd Town Council's plans in developing the Museum. The Muni Arts Centre is identified as a strategically important project in the Pontypridd Masterplan and the redevelopment of the Centre will complement the existing and planned cultural provision within the town.

11.2 The Community Asset Transfer of the Muni Arts Centre supports the Council's Corporate Plan, 'Making A Difference' (2020-2024), priorities of:

- **Enabling Prosperity** – the Muni will be a vibrant presence in the heart of Pontypridd, providing a boost to the daytime and evening economy and supporting local businesses;
- **Ensuring People are independent, healthy and successful** – the Muni will offer a range of opportunities for people to enjoy performances, to participate and volunteer;
- **Creating places where people are proud to live, work and play** – the Muni will become again a symbol of the creativity and resilience of Pontypridd, a venue where people join together to celebrate a unique cultural heritage.

11.3 Along with 44 public bodies across Wales, the Council is subject to the statutory requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, which sets a common vision for the long-term well-being of people and communities through seven national well-being goals and provides a framework for public services to work differently through five sustainable development principles. The principles include thinking about the long-term impact of our actions, seeking to prevent issues from occurring in the first place or from worsening, involving people and communities in decisions made that affect them, working together with other organisations and integrating our work to understand the knock-on effects of what we do.

12. CONCLUSION

- 12.1 This report updates members of the steering group on the Community Asset Transfer of the Muni Arts Centre to Awen Cultural Trust (Registered Charity and Private Limited Company by guarantee without share capital).
- 12.2 An 'Agreement to Lease' has been signed and a successful application to the Welsh Government 'Targeted Regional Investment' fund to secure capital funding for the Phase 1 works.
- 12.3 Interim works have commenced at the Muni Arts Centre and will be completed shortly.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

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Background Papers - None

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