

**REPORT TO:** CABINET

**DATE:** 25 FEBRUARY 2016

**TITLE:** REFERRAL FROM OVERVIEW WORKING GROUP  
– REVIEW OF THE SUSTAINABILITY OF HARLOW  
PLAYHOUSE THEATRE

**PORTFOLIO HOLDER:** COUNCILLOR EMMA TOAL

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**This is not a Key Decision  
Call-in Procedures may apply  
This decision will affect no ward specifically.**

**RECOMMENDED** that:

- A** The current funding for the Playhouse of £326,000 (plus recharges) per annum is maintained until 2018/19.
- B** The Council seeks expressions of interest and invites potential operators with a view to reduce the ongoing funding required from the Council.
- C** Cabinet notes The Overview Working Group's opinion that funding of some scale will almost certainly be required beyond 2018/19, albeit in a potentially diminishing level.
- D** Cabinet keeps under review the Capital Programme for the Playhouse with a view to aligning it with its discretionary funding.

**REASON FOR DECISION**

- A** The Overview Working Group considered a final report on its Review of the Sustainability of Harlow Playhouse Theatre at its last meeting. The Overview Working Group has asked the Cabinet to agree an approach to ensuring the Playhouse's continued operation.

**BACKGROUND**

1. In July 2015, the Cabinet asked the Cabinet Overview Working Group to conduct a review of the financial future of the Playhouse.

2. To explore the matter in more detail, in October 2015 the Overview Working Group established a working party, the Playhouse Working Group, consisting of three members of the Overview Working Group.
3. At its meeting on 11 February 2016, the Overview Working Group received a final report on its Review of the Sustainability of Harlow Playhouse Theatre from the Playhouse Working Group.
4. The Overview Working Group has considered the Playhouse Working Group's report and has made a recommendation to Cabinet that is detailed at the start of this report.
5. The Overview Working Group has also asked Cabinet to note that the viability of any future operating model for the Playhouse will be dependent on the implementation of a three-year Capital Plan. As a four-year Capital Programme has already been agreed by the Council that includes Playhouse spending, an appropriate recommendation has been inserted at recommendation D of this report.
6. Since the report at Appendix A was considered by the Overview Working Group, Officers have revised the reported funding requirement for the Playhouse so that it more accurately reflects the true cost to the Council, from £491k per annum, to £326k (plus recharges).

## **IMPLICATIONS**

Implications of the recommended decision are outlined in the 'Implications' section of the original report, which is attached as Appendix A.

## **APPENDICES**

**Appendix A** – Original report to the Overview Working Group, 'Review of the Sustainability of Harlow Playhouse Theatre, Final Report', incorporating:  
Appendix 1 – Terms of Reference for Playhouse Working Group.

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

All original reports to the Overview Working Group can be viewed from <http://moderngov.harlow.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CIId=250&MIId=729&Ver=4>