

**MINUTES OF THE PLAYHOUSE, ARTS AND CULTURAL QUARTER TASK  
AND FINISH GROUP – FOCUS GROUP  
HELD ON**

17 February 2025

7.00 - 8.24 pm

**PRESENT**

**Committee Members**

Councillor Tony Durcan  
Councillor James Griggs  
Councillor Matthew Saggars

**Officers**

Rory Davies, Playhouse Director  
Oliver Gillard, Deputy Programme Manager  
Nicole Parker, Executive Officer  
David Sellings, Regeneration Programme Manager (Town Centre)

13. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

None.

14. **DISCUSSION**

Rory Davies, Playhouse Manager informed the members that this meeting was set to go through the Playhouse., Arts and Cultural Task and Finish Group together so that we can get a view from members. Financial predictions were set, these have been sent for review. Once these are back and correct these will be distributed. There were gaps in the brief from previous Officers, so these have been reviewed and will come back to the meeting.

In terms of the Food and beverage order. This would be a council owned in house. So that profits are coming to the Playhouse/Harlow Council directly. Members could look at Spurriers café in the future for in house catering, as this is currently leased. There is a large level of space in Playhouse, so this is able to possibly cater for up to 300 people.

Rory Davies also explained there is a lack of vocational training in the arts. Introducing vocational training to younger people in the town would benefit a wide range of young people who are experiencing issues like exclusion from school etc. External educational support may need to be explored. Members agreed this would be a recommendation to go forward due to this being beneficial for educational and employment, as well as talent development.

Councillor Tony Durcan highlighted the concern of the demolition of the old BHS site and the development of the Playhouse Quarter and how this would work.

Members discussed whether the current Public Space Protection Order would interfere with the day-to-day workings of the Arts and Cultural Quarter, in terms of being able to attract members of the public on their bikes etc.

The Task and Finish Group decided that in 12 months' time they would meet and review the business modelling of and planned programme delivery to see how we are progressing.

15. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

**RESOLVED** that the Task and Finish Group recommended to the Scrutiny Committee that:

- A** Recommendation 1- Members recommend that they are sighted on the brief's in relation to consultancy work prior to the market being tested.
- B** Recommendation 2 – Based on the importance of Food and Beverage in the success of the Arts and Cultural Quarter, members recommend that further exploration takes place into the modelling of providing this provision in house with the inclusion of The ACQ, Harlow Playhouse, Harlow Museum and Harlow Innovation Park as well as the opportunity to explore event catering.
- C** Recommendation 3 – Members recommend that the lack of vocational training is explored and the opportunity to provide this via the ACQ, particularly exploring how we use the arts as a diversionary activity for young residents.
- D** Recommendation 4 - Satisfy members that the demolition of the former BHS site will not effect the operations Harlow Playhouse.
- E** Recommendation 5 – Members recommend that the Public Space Protection Order is reviewed to ensure that the public realm of the ACQ can be used to its full potential.
- F** Recommendation 6 – Members review the business modelling of and planned programme delivery in 12 months.

CHAIR OF THE COMMITTEE