



## **RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **CABINET**

**17<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER 2019**

### **UPDATE ON THE COMMUNITY ASSET TRANSFER OF THE MUNI ARTS CENTRE, PONTYPRIDD**

#### **REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH, PROTECTION & COMMUNITY SERVICES IN CONSULTATION WITH CLLR RHYS LEWIS, CABINET MEMBER FOR STRONGER COMMUNITIES, WELL-BEING & CULTURAL SERVICES**

**Authors: Paul Mee, Director of Public Health, Protection & Community Services  
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#### **1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to update Members on progress in respect of the community asset transfer of the Muni Arts Centre by way of a leasehold transfer and to receive a presentation from Awen Cultural Trust concerning the proposed refurbishment and restoration of the building.

#### **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that the Cabinet:

- 2.1 Note the progress made with negotiations with Awen Cultural Trust to agree the terms of the lease and the necessary financial support requirements to secure a sustainable future for the Muni Arts Centre; and
- 2.2 Receive a presentation from Awen Cultural Trust and their architects, Purcell, setting out their proposals for the refurbishment and restoration of the Muni Arts Centre.

#### **3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 To update Members of the Cabinet on the progress being made with the community asset transfer of the Muni Arts Centre and to share proposals developed by Awen Cultural Trust for the refurbishment and restoration of the Muni Arts Centre.

#### **4. BACKGROUND**

- 4.1 On 18<sup>th</sup> 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.
- 4.3 The initial priority has been to agree the scope and extent of refurbishment works required to re-open the building. Awen Cultural Trust have prepared a baseline proposal for the capital development of the building to ensure that on its re-opening, the Muni is safe and meets the expectations of users as a venue for Pontypridd and the surrounding area.
- 4.4 Following discussions with the Council, it was determined that a more ambitious scheme including a refurbishment and reimagining of the Muni would be produced. Awen engaged Purcell, a renowned architectural practice specialising in bringing new life to heritage buildings to develop this vision and produce outline plans and costs which will assist the Council and Awen in developing grant applications to secure the funding necessary for a longer term, more ambitious project.
- 4.5 In the meantime it is proposed to undertake the necessary works required to re-open the Muni Arts Centre in June of 2020, subject to completion of the necessary works. This will include works to secure the basic fabric of the building to enable the Council to lease the building to Awen in a good condition. In addition, investment will be required to improve the operational aspects of the Muni as a music and theatre venue. Work is currently underway to finalise and agree these short term requirements.
- 4.6 If Members are supportive of the longer term and more ambitious proposal for the refurbishment and restoration of the Muni Arts Centre, the Council and Awen will work together to secure the additional funding to support the longer term vision which, subject to funding, is likely to be realised within two to three years.
- 4.7 Representatives of both Awen Cultural Trust and Purcell will be in attendance at the meeting to present their proposals to the Cabinet.

## **5. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 There are no equality or diversity issues arising from this proposal.

## **6. CONSULTATION / INVOLVEMENT**

- 6.1 There are no consultation implications arising from this report. However, it is anticipated that should members be supportive of the ambitious, longer term proposals for the restoration of the Muni Arts Centre when the facility re-opens it will be on the basis that Awen and the Council are working towards a longer term vision, the details of which will be the subject of open consultation and engagement with the local community.

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

- 7.1 The longer term proposals that are to be presented to Cabinet today are estimated to cost in the region of £4.5 million. It will however be necessary to undertake further detailed investigative work at the building to develop more detailed schedules of work to refine and confirm this estimate.

- 7.2 The Council and Awen are currently working together to determine the short term capital requirements to re-open the Muni in June 2020. It is anticipated that these requirements, once identified, will be included in the Council's future capital investment programme.

- 7.3 In addition, the Council recognises that in the short term it will be necessary to provide a degree of revenue support to Awen to support the operation of the facility pending the more ambitious refurbishment proposals. These requirements were detailed in the original business case but will be reviewed in light of recent developments.

- 7.4 At the meeting of Cabinet on 18<sup>th</sup> June 2019, Members determined to authorise Officers to enter into detailed negotiations with Awen Cultural Trust to agree the terms of the lease and necessary financial support requirements to secure a sustainable future for the Muni Arts Centre. Subject to agreement of suitable terms, Cabinet authorised the Director of Public Health, Protection & Community Services in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Stronger Communities, Well-being and Cultural Services to make the necessary arrangements to transfer the Muni Arts Centre to Awen Cultural Trust

## **8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED**

- 8.1 Section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972 enables Local Authorities to dispose of land or buildings where there is consideration of "best value", unless the disposal is likely to achieve any one or more of the

following objectives; the promotion or improvement of the economic, social or environmental wellbeing of their area.

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

9.1 The proposed leasehold transfer of the Muni Arts Centre will support the Council's Corporate Plan "The Way Ahead" (2016-2020), priorities of "creating neighbourhoods where people are proud to live and work".

9.2 Along with other 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.

9.3 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.

9.4 The Corporate Plan also contains principles that include 'helping people and communities to help themselves' stating that:

*"(The Council) believes that if you give power to local people you get better results and achieve better value...(the Council) wants to work more closely with RCT's community and voluntary sector to stimulate innovation and encourage communities to step forward and take on new roles in providing local services and solutions."*

9.5 The Council is approaching this principle in different ways and has developed *RCT Together* as a means of engaging and involving residents in how services are best sustained in communities:

*"The Council's vision is to develop a new relationship with residents that enable them to be independent and resilient and to take on greater responsibility for their local communities. This is not about the Council shifting its responsibility – it is about recognising that residents want to be more involved in what happens in their community".*

9.6 The refurbishment of the Muni Arts Centre will contribute towards many of the Well-being Goals set out in the Well-being of Future Generations Act, in particular; a prosperous Wales, a Wales of cohesive communities and a Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language. In addition,



the proposals are consistent with the five ways of working in that the Council is working in collaboration to secure the long term future of arts and culture in Pontypridd and Rhondda Cynon Taf.

## **10. CONCLUSION**

- 10.1 To secure the long term sustainable future of the Muni Arts Centre, an ambitious set of proposals for the refurbishment and restoration of the building have been proposed by Awen Cultural Trust. These proposals take advantage of the original neo-gothic architecture of this valued Grade II listed building whilst reconfiguring and enhancing the facility to create a first class arts and entertainment venue for the residents of Rhondda Cynon Taf and wider region.

### **Other Information:-**

***Relevant Scrutiny Committee***

***Public Service Delivery, Communities and Prosperity Committee***



**LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

**AS AMENDED BY**

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

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**Background Papers**

- Medium Term Service Planning; Cabinet – 14<sup>th</sup> May 2014
- Providing Opportunities for Others to Operate Council Services and Assets; Cabinet – 30<sup>th</sup> October 2014
- RCT Together Process – Update on Progress; Cabinet – 19<sup>th</sup> May 2016
- RCT Together – Review of the Community Asset Transfer Process: Cabinet – 21<sup>st</sup> November 2018
- Proposals for the Community Asset Transfer of the Muni Arts Centre, Pontypridd – Cabinet – 18<sup>th</sup> June 2019

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