

CABINET

The Storey: Update Report 02 September 2014

Report of Chief Officer (Resources)

PURPOSE OF REPORT			
To provide a general update on the operation of the Storey and seek direction on the future of the remaining Storey Gardens artwork.			
Key Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>	Non-Key Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Referral	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Date of notice of forthcoming key decision		N/A	
This report is public.			

OFFICER RECOMMENDATIONS

- (1) That the report be noted.
- (2) That Cabinet supports the removal of the remains of the artwork 'The Tasting Gardens' from The Storey's gardens.
- (3) That the draft master planning approach for The Storey's gardens be supported, and presented to Cabinet for consideration in due course.

1 Introduction

Back in May 2013 (minute 9 refers) Cabinet approved a business plan for The Storey, based on the following key principles:

- the operation being developed as a going concern but with a formal review planned prior to 2017/18;
- the aim being to at least break-even (annually) by then, in simple terms;
- the plan being based on a combination of providing business space for commercial rent, as well as a venue for public events.

In line with these principles, community use of The Storey is to be supported but not to the extent that it undermines commercial or financial targets. Future development and use of the garden should also support this position and be integral to The Storey's operations, rather than it being a separate facility.

Once the Storey's operations started to settle, Officers moved away from providing regular specific update reports to Cabinet. This report has been prepared in response partly to a request from Councillor Hanson, and partly to update Cabinet on a number

of matters and seek direction regarding aspects of The Storey Gardens.

It brings together valuable input from Environmental and Regeneration and Planning services, as well as Property Services, who have the lead/co-ordinating role.

2 The Storey Accommodation

Lettings and Room Bookings

The net estimated cost to operate the Storey this financial year is in the region of £47,000, although this does rely on how the Storey performs in terms of the level of income taken from room bookings and the tenanted space.

The income target for hire of premises for meetings, public talks, theatre, live music and exhibitions etc. is £20,400 for this year but current estimates project that by the end of the year room hire could achieve in excess of £30,000. This would be a major achievement as the income target was originally £12,000 when the Storey budget was first established back in 2012/13.

The arts and event programme at the Storey continues to develop and this year has included poetry, public talks, theatre and four exhibitions. Since April 2014, 1,500 people have viewed the exhibitions. The Storey has exhibitions confirmed well into 2015. Both the Lancaster Music Festival and Light Up Lancaster Festival will use the Storey in 2014/15 and there are two further productions by Lancaster Footlights. In addition to this Litfest are holding a regular programme of events, We Are Improv have increased their bookings for the year from 6 to 12 and the Lancaster Literature Festival takes place in October 2014.

To date 60% of the managed workspace is occupied. It is estimated that this could rise to 71% by September 2014 as a number of companies/organisations have shown a keen interest and work continues to secure additional tenants. The Storey has recently benefited from the closure of St. Leonard's House as some tenants have chosen to move to the building. In the current climate where the supply of office space is outstripping demand it is a challenge to attract new tenants, and narrowing this down to just the creative industries sector increases this challenge – hence increasing occupancy is a real achievement.

The whole 3rd floor at the Storey is now a Yoga Studio, leased by Urban Buddha who are providing a range of courses to attract some 200 people per week. A local artist has leased space to operate a print workshop where they will create art, run public workshops and provide studio open days where members of the public can go and watch them at work.

The Storey may also support a project to develop a freelance artists' hub on the ground floor; this could also see this group programme parts of the building thus generating additional income for the Storey. The project would be funded via the Arts Council, subject to a successful funding application. The project would also support the further development of and act as a hub for activity around First Fridays (a Lancaster Arts Partnership initiative) and the Storey would host the team who are developing this work, again funded by the Arts Council.

There are a number of other potential lettings/bookings in development including:

- A research project with LICA and Imagination Lab around the Storey and visual arts. LICA is developing the project and would submit an Arts Council funding

application. The project would require a project manager and curator to be in residency at the Storey for the duration of the project. The project would look at the history of the building, its original use, its current use and it would engage with users and explore its future use around visual arts.

- A rock school with a company based in Blackpool offering weekly sessions to young people who want to develop their musical skills. This work could lead to a number of performances being staged at the Storey.
- A producer is exploring delivering a series of theatre/poetry events around Oscar Wilde.
- Another producer is interested in delivering a WW1 theatre performance in November this year.
- There are also ongoing discussions with local artists who are looking for studio space which could lead to the creation of an artist studio space in the Folly Gallery.

Finally, Lancaster University have now signed a lease for office space on the first floor for post graduate students. The lease is due to commence in October and the University requires extended hours' access to the building. This has meant that the facilities support presence within the building has needed to be reassessed. Property Group are currently in the process of initiating a new staffing arrangement at the Storey that will cover these hours for a minimal cost of circa £3K above the current staffing budget of £24K; this difference will be covered by the increase in income in the first instance.

3 Capital Works Programme

The condition surveys undertaken in 2012 estimated the building and maintenance works required at the Storey to be £495K plus additional works to the garden walls in the region of £100K, making a projected overall budget for the building of £595K.

£323K of work has been undertaken for the first phase of the ongoing delivery programme and of this £160K has now been completed. The detail of the remaining £272K that make up the rest of the projected overall budget is currently being worked up and is planned to commence later in this financial year.

Once this programme is complete the emphasis will shift to a planned maintenance programme, which should result in a lower financial commitment in terms of reactive repairs and provide greater financial certainty for budget planning purposes.

4 The Storey Gardens Artwork

Background

There are two gardens at The Storey, divided by a wall. In the far garden are remains of an art installation by Mark Dion. The artwork was called 'The Tasting Gardens', taking up the majority of the garden. The art work was commissioned in 1998 as part of ArtTranspennine98, which was a collaboration between Tate Liverpool and the Henry Moore Trust, and consisted of an exhibition of international contemporary visual art in which 50 international artists created 40 artworks for 30 sites from Liverpool to Hull. Most of the exhibits no longer remain.

The remains of the art installation are within the walled garden, with paths in the form of branches of a tree. Each of the four main branch paths bore a fruit (apple, cherry, plum and pear), and each small branch path led to a particular variety of tree together with a bronze sculpture of a fruit on a plinth – although the bronze fruit are no longer there. In one corner is the “arboriculturalist’s work shed”, a folly or monument which acknowledges the achievements of the men and women who created this diversity of fruit varieties. The art work was vandalised a number of years ago and now needs major restoration if it is to be retained.

Proposal Details

Since the Storey returned to the Council’s management Officers have been engaged in considering future options for the garden. Work has taken place between the City Council, County Council and the active ‘Friends of’ Group to look at how best the space can be used in the future. In order to make best use of the gardens considerable work is required; some of this may be funded by bidding for external funding. Therefore, Officers are to develop a master plan for the gardens. The master plan will provide an agreed basis on which to develop the gardens and on which to submit bids for funding. In summary, the proposed principles on which the plan will be based are as follows:

- 1) Generally, the gardens are part of The Storey and should be included within the wider Storey business plan as it develops.
- 2) More specifically, as part of the Storey offering Officers would look to develop further the garden that adjoins the Storey (e.g. for weddings, functions, etc.)
- 3) Although part of the wider Storey facility, the garden with the defunct art installation lends itself to having greater use as a public open space, but clearly fitting in with the opening times and use of the Storey and the adjoining garden.

All the above would provide a clear direction for the development of the gardens to fit with the Storey’s wider business plan, and would enable Officers to develop and direct a work programme, allowing for input from the ‘Friends of’ Group and other resources. The plan will also have regard to the future formal review of the Storey operation ahead of 2017/18. The costs of developing the master plan will be contained within existing budgets.

In order to take this approach, however, a decision needs to be taken on what to do with what remains of the art installation in the walled garden, to ensure a clear focus for the master planning approach. Cabinet’s input is therefore sought, at this early stage.

5 Details of Consultation

Consultation on the future of the gardens has been undertaken in conjunction with the newly formed ‘Friends of Storey Gardens’ group. This has taken the form of open days, focus sessions with the friends group, door to door questionnaires, exhibitions in the Storey and Lancaster Library and discussions with stakeholders.

As might be expected there are different views with regards to what to do with the remains of the art installation. These are distilled in the section below.

6 Options and Options Analysis (including risk assessment)

	Option 1: Seek to restore the artwork	Option 2: Remove / no longer recognise the art work in its physical form in the garden, supporting a master planning approach.
Advantages	<p>If the artwork was restored and resources provided to market it and maintain it an installation by an artist of international repute may attract additional tourism to the area.</p> <p>It may be possible to secure funding to restore the art work. As an example The Henry Moore Foundation may be interested.</p> <p>(If restored it would be possible to recast the sculptures in resin which would deter thieves, but not vandals).</p>	<p>The removal of the artwork would free up the second garden for wider development. Suggestions are on the line of a secret garden where people can meet, eat lunch, show temporary artworks, nature areas, etc.</p> <p>This is a sustainable option with no additional cost to the council. It is not envisioned there would be any additional cost charged direct to the Council for removing the artwork. The healthy trees will remain.</p> <p>Consistent with the overall vision for the Storey.</p> <p>Whilst initial consultation has shown an interest in artwork within the garden, this could be addressed with temporary / seasonal pieces to work. (which is preferred by some on the consultation responses)</p>
Disadvantages	<p>Requires one -off funding to refurbish the artwork, which would need to be considered during the budget. The cost is estimated at between £30,000 – £50,000. Could impact therefore on other arts support.</p> <p>All restoration and alterations would need to be in agreement with the artist for it to remain as his work.</p> <p>A reduced artwork would not be acceptable.</p> <p>It is estimated an additional £250 per annum would be required to maintain the restored artwork, excluding any required tree work. (The Friends group have already indicated that they would not be interested in maintaining the artwork on the Council's behalf as they have little interest in it remaining).</p> <p>It takes up most of the garden</p>	<p>Final end of an already defunct / dilapidated piece of artwork.</p>

	<p>area, only leaving the border to be developed. There is limited development opportunity in the other garden.</p> <p>The existence of artwork is not widely known or promoted.</p>	
Risks	<p>Funding is not secured.</p> <p>Restoration conflicts with the majority of the Friends group who then may lose ownership become disinterested and disband – this will have an impact on the quality of detailed work that could be undertaken in the borders and other areas.</p>	<p>Could impact on the Council's reputation in artistic circles, potentially (but bearing in mind the current condition of the installation and other arts support that the Council gives, this risk is considered to be very small).</p>

7 Officer Preferred Option (and comments)

The preferred option is Option 2. The artwork has been severely vandalised and would require major reconstruction and investment to return it to its original condition, with ongoing maintenance and marketing to bring the work up to standard so that it could be classed as a tourism asset for the district. The Council has no funds with which to restore the artwork and it is not even clear where external funding could be bid from. The proposed master plan will be reported back to Cabinet for consideration in due course.

8 Conclusion

Good progress is being achieved in operating the Storey; this will need to continue and strengthen if it is to break even by 2017/18. In terms of the Gardens, there is much support for improving them, without the artwork, in a way that would complement the main building and in terms of the far gardens, such improvements are unlikely to have much financial impact. This way forward, as part of the master planning approach, is considered to present a better opportunity to improve the gardens and their use in due course, still fitting with the Storey's business plan.

RELATIONSHIP TO POLICY FRAMEWORK

In general terms The Storey contributes to the Council's priority of sustainable economic growth. The gardens may also contribute to the priority of 'Clean, Green and Safe places', one success measure being to increase the number of projects that directly involve local communities in improving local areas, parks and open spaces.

CONCLUSION OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT (including Health & Safety, Equality & Diversity, Human Rights, Community Safety, HR, Sustainability and Rural Proofing)

As outlined in report; none directly arising.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Legal Services have been consulted; there are no specific legal matters arising. The

Council is under no obligation to restore the art installation.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

As set out in the report.

OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Human Resources/Information Services/Property/Open Spaces:

As outlined in the report.

SECTION 151 OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The s151 Officer has contributed to this report, which is in her name (but in her role as Chief Officer (Resources)).

MONITORING OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The Monitoring Officer has been consulted and has no further comments.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

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