

DECISION TAKER: Cabinet Member for Business and Culture - Councillor Lucille Thompson

REPORT TITLE: PLAY TO THE CROWD – ONE-OFF GRANT AWARD

12 JUNE 2025

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WARD(S): ST BARTHOLOMEW WARD

PURPOSE

Play to the Crowd, a registered charity, manages and operates the Theatre Royal in Winchester city centre. The maintenance and improvement of the theatre is their responsibility under the lease from the Winchester Theatre Trust who hold the building in trust for the community. Over recent years a programme of refurbishment and improvement has been undertaken to ensure the Theatre offers a high quality and accessible arts venue in the city and for the benefit of the district. This has included extensive remodelling of the entrances, foyer and café areas. The project now proposed, and seeking council support, continues that work by creating a vibrant, inviting, shared public space linking the outside to the inside of the Theatre through striking street art.

A funding requested has been submitted by Play to the Crowd and this report sets out the case for offering a one-off grant award towards the cost of creating this new outside space and street art on Tower Street.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. To approve a one-off grant award of £5,000 to Play to the Crowd as a funding contribution toward the total street art project costs at Tower Street.
2. To approve the expenditure of £5,000 from the council's Community and Voluntary Sector grants programme reserve.

IMPLICATIONS:

1 COUNCIL PLAN OUTCOME

1.1 Thriving Places

1.2 The council has stated it wants attractive, clean public spaces and facilities, with strong footfall in all the districts centres. To achieve this, it will “work with partners to promote and develop our unique cultural, heritage and natural environment assets across the district.” Supporting Play to the Crowd in creating this outside space will help achieve these outcomes.

1.3 The council adopted the district wide Cultural Strategy in 2024 with the vision that “Winchester district’s creative dynamism enriches lives and makes amazing things happen”. There is a priority for Placemaking and underpinning themes including Inclusion and Diversity and Health and Wellbeing, all of which this scheme contributes towards.

1.4 Healthy Communities

1.5 Similarly, this new space which will be open for all to use and benefit from, it will help provide “access to attractive and well-maintained public facilities, green and natural spaces with space to play and gather for all ages” which is a key healthy communities outcome.

2 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

2.1 The total cost of the artwork installation proposed is £35,300 based on quotations obtained by Play to the Crowd (PTTC) who are contributing £22,800 (64.6%%) to these costs. The remaining £12,500 is to be funded from grants awards. The £5,000 grant offer from the City Council therefore represents a 14.2% contribution to the overall costs. The grant payment will only be made once proof that all the required funding has been secured to enable the works to be commissioned.

2.2 The grant offer from the council will be funded from the Community and Voluntary Sector Grants Programme reserve.

3 LEGAL AND PROCUREMENT IMPLICATIONS

3.1 The council has the power to provide discretionary grants under the Localism Act 2011 and the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976.

3.2 Play to the Crowd has submitted a funding application in line with the requirement of the Community and Voluntary Grants Programme and is eligible to apply as a registered charity. They will be required to enter into a grant agreement that set outs the terms and conditions of the award as a one-off contribution to the project. The agreement will stipulate that by providing a grant contribution the council will not be liable for any future maintenance or other costs associated with this artwork project. The grant offer is valid for

two years between June 2025 and June 2027, if the project has not progressed or been completed in that time a new application for funding will be required.

4 CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

- 4.1 Hampshire Cultural Trust, The Licoricia Statue trustees and the Cabinet Rooms as neighbours to the site have been consulted by Play to the Crowd. All agree that this project will be of significant benefit to this area and will help drive footfall and add to the creativity of the area.
- 4.2 The Play to the Crowd board of trustees, made up of a range of skilled and experienced individuals including people from the local business and cultural communities, has reviewed this project proposal and support its implementation. They have also agreed to commit funding to enable it to happen.
- 4.3 The Trustees of Winchester Theatre Trust, the owners of Theatre Royal Winchester's building, are also supportive of the project.
- 4.4 Hampshire County Council has been consulted and approved the plans regarding the Tower Street highway. The council's Planning and Historic Environment teams have been consulted and advertising consent (24/01899/AVC) and listed building consent (24/01347/LIS) have been granted.

5 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 5.1 Creating a public space from highway and reducing priority to vehicles creates more opportunity for people to gather in an outside space fostering social interaction and cultural exchange. It will help reduce noise and air pollution in an area heavily used by people coming to the Theatre and neighbouring venues.

6 PUBLIC SECTOR EQUALITY DUTY

- 6.1 None

7 RISK MANAGEMENT

- 7.1 The council's current overall risk appetite is currently defined as moderate, which means only modest level of risks in order to achieve outcomes, especially in relation to Thriving Places outcomes. The level of proposed grant funding to Play to their Crowd is low and their track record of delivering improvements to the Theatre demonstrates a low risk that the scheme will fail to be achieve the enhanced outside space.

Risk	Mitigation	Opportunities
Financial Exposure The grant is used for works that are not finished and the council may be asked to fund more of the costs to complete the project.	A grant offer will be made that stipulates that the grant award will only be made after all necessary funds have been secured to enable the works to be commissioned. Payment of the grant will only be made on proof of expenditure and completion of the works.	
Exposure to challenge Inappropriate use of public funds.	A grant agreement will be required that secures the correct use of the funds and has provision for claw back if missed used or is not spent.	
Innovation A new street art scheme of this nature and vibrant modern design is not recognised for its innovation.	Play to the Crowd has researched other cities that have adopted this form of street art to evaluate the benefits. This is a small area to test the approach. Modern design has been used in the St Maurice Covert wall mural which is in keeping with this project design.	This approach could be replicated in other areas and or at a larger scale.
Reputation Negative public response to the artwork and funding support from the council.	Neighbouring businesses have been consulted and support the scheme. The council has made a clear commitment to support culture and arts in the district and this small grant is in line the objectives of the adopted Cultural Strategy.	
Achievement of outcome Play to the Crowd fail to deliver the scheme, or to	Play to the Crowd has a track record in implementing and completing refurbishment	

meet the proposed standards and design specifications.	and improvement schemes at the Theatre. Its Board of trustees provide the necessary governance oversight for the project's delivery.	
Property The proposed scheme impacts a listed building, conservation area and highways.	All necessary highway licences, approvals and planning, design permissions have been obtained and proof provided with the grant application. The grant agreement will stipulate that council will not be liable for any future maintenance or other costs associated with the artwork.	
Community Support Local business and visitors to the Theatre and neighbouring venues express disapproval to the scheme.	Neighbouring businesses have been consulted and support the scheme.	This approach to painting highway to create public art and open spaces could be replicated in other areas in the city and the wider district's high streets.
Timescales Securing all the required funding delays the implementation of the project.	The grant offer will remain valid for two years, from June 2025 to June 2027 to give the project time to secure the necessary funding.	
Project capacity Resources are not available to deliver the project.	Play to the Crowd has extensive experience of completing refurbishment and improvement projects at the Theatre Royal. The charity's Board of Trustees provides oversight for the project within the organisation's overall programme and activity delivery and can direct resources as required.	
Other		

8 OTHER KEY ISSUES

8.1 None

9 SUPPORTING INFORMATION:

9.1 Theatre Royal Winchester has benefitted from for a programme of improvements which includes a new redesigned café and reception area, toilet refurbishments and improvements to the sound and digital capabilities in the auditorium. Play to the Crowd are committed to investing the in the Theatre to make it a recognised place for creativity, public engagement in the arts and artistic expression.

9.2 It has been a long-held ambition to enhance the project area, to create a vibrant public realm artwork to enliven the outside of Theatre Royal Winchester and make good use of the bollarded area of Tower Street – see appendix 1 for site plan. To this end the artwork design celebrates the colour, shapes and heritage of the interior of the heritage variety theatre.

9.3 In their application for funding Play to the Crowd states “We believe that this end of Jewry Street should feel more like the creative and cultural quarter that it is with ourselves, The Arc and The Cabinet Rooms all together, along with the Licoricia Statue.”

9.4 This artwork will extend 15m up Tower Street and onto the outside wall of the Theatre Royal Winchester – see Appendix 1 for design illustration. This will provide an attractive piece of public realm for people to gather and spend time, and Play to the Crowd does have a pavement license for tables and chairs for this space. This will provide an increased capacity for people to circulate and sit before, during and after performances at the Theatre.

10 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

10.1 Other funding schemes have been considered including:

- a) Community Infrastructure Levy – this was rejected as the scheme was deemed not meet the criteria of infrastructure as determined in the CIL regulations.
- b) District and Town Small Grants funding – this was rejected as the scheme does not meet the outcome priorities for the funds.

10.2 Not to fund the scheme – this was rejected as the scheme supports the council’s Cultural Strategy and Council Plan priorities. A small contribution can help facilitate the projects which is majority funded from other sources.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:-

Previous Cabinet/Committee Reports or Cabinet Member Decisions:-

None

Other Background Documents:-

Advertisement Consent

[24/01899/AVC | A. Repaint/reposition the Theatre Royal Winchester logo on the Tower Street facing wall along with other new design that extends onto the Tower Street pavement/road; B. Change the colour of the log... | Theatre Royal Winchester 21 - 23 Jewry Street Winchester Hampshire SO23 8SB](#)

Listed Building Consent

[24/01347/LIS | 1. Replace 3no. fire doors \(1A, 1B, 1C, on the plan\); 2. Paint 3no. fire doors \(1A, 1B, 1C\); 3A. Remove disused door and add 1no. internally-illuminated poster frame for context board; 3B. Vinyl ap... | Theatre Royal Winchester 21 - 23 Jewry Street Winchester Hampshire SO23 8SB](#)

APPENDICES:

Appendix 1 – Plan and design of the street art installation