

Item 9 - Supporting the Recovery of Culture in the District

The attached report was considered by the People & Places Advisory Committee 16 June 2020. The relevant Minute extract is below.

People & Places Advisory Committee (16 June 2020, Minute 58)

The Chief Officer for People & Places presented the report which outlined the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the culture industry and sets out a request from Sevenoaks Town Council for financial assistance to mitigate current financial difficulties related to the closure of The Stag due to coronavirus outbreak.

The culture sector across the country has been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. The Stag had been closed since 21 March 2020. No grants had been supplied by Government for theatres and Government briefings have suggested that the theatres and cinemas would be one of the last sectors to re-open.

Although there had not yet been any Government guidance or timelines on the re-opening of theatres and cinemas, The Stag had commenced work to identify the impact of re-opening and reshaping the business. The plan was based on social distancing measures, seeking external capital input, investigating the cost and feasibility of the auditorium to show film, safe working practices, marketing campaigns to reassure customers of health and safety provision, and training for staff on new safe working procedures.

Sevenoaks Town Council asked the Council to consider the following:

- To make available to Sevenoaks Town Council access to draw down from a Council load of up to £220,000 over the next 8 months towards The Stag's essential recovery, building security, liability insurance and utility costs. The loan would be interest free with the stipulation that it would be paid back to the Council in financial year 2021/22. If the loan is not paid within the repayment period, any outstanding balance would accrue and be charged a rate of 6% interest with effect from April 2022.

Following queries from Members, the Chief Officer for People & Places advised that The Stag is able to receive business support and guidance from the Council. It was highlighted from the report that it was advised that any financial assistance to The Stag from the Council should safeguard the recovery of the loan by making it conditional on Sevenoaks Town Council entering an agreement to meet the costs of the loan payments and identify how this would be achieved.

Public Sector Equality Duty

Members noted that consideration had been given to impacts under the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Resolved: That it be recommended to Cabinet that

- a) the information provided in the report, the financial implications and risk assessment on the request to make available to Sevenoaks Town Council, a Council loan of up to £220,000 over the next 8 months towards essential recovery, maintenance and utility costs, be considered; and
- b) the loan would be interest free with the stipulation that it would be paid back to the Council in financial year 2021/22. If the loan is not paid within the repayment period, any outstanding balance will accrue and be charged a rate of 6% interest with effect from April 2022.

(Having declared an interest, Cllr Raikes left the room during consideration of this item and did not take part in the debate or voting thereon. Having declared an interest, Cllr Dr Canet did not take part in voting but remained in the room.)