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| Meeting: | Overview and Scrutiny Committee |
| Date: | Monday 29 January 2007 |
| Subject: | Harrow Arts Centre and Museum |
| Key Decision: (Executive-side only) | No |
| Responsible Officer: | Javed Khan Director, Lifelong Learning & Cultural Services |
| Portfolio Holder: | Councillor Christine Bednell |
| Exempt: | No |
| Enclosures: | None |

SECTION 1 – SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This report sets out to describe the current situation in regards to the Harrow Arts Centre, Harrow Museum and Headstone Manor, together with a background summary of events leading up to the closure of Arts Culture Harrow.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Committee is requested to note the content of the report.

REASON: (For recommendation - Executive-side reports only)

SECTION 2 - REPORT

Brief Background

The Harrow Arts Centre and Harrow Museum & Headstone Manor provision has historically been managed through a Service Level Agreement by the Lifelong Learning & Cultural Services department.

The SLA has been with Arts Culture Harrow (ACH), a charitable Trust, since 2000.

ACH activities attracted 183,000 visits per year across the Museum and Arts Centre.

ACH ceased to trade by voluntary liquidation on 7th December 2006.

The Council is not responsible for any debts of the former ACH, and all such matters are being dealt with by the officially appointed liquidator, Ian Holland & Co.

SLA Management

The SLA provided for management of heritage assets, arts lifelong learning provision, audience development, theatre programming and arts festival events. A formal quarterly review of achievement against SLA commitments involved senior officers and Trustees of ACH. The relevant Portfolio Holder attended the mid-year and end of year review meetings too.

The SLA was managed by a structured monitoring process and additionally, in 06/07 a Partnership Advisory Group with Officers and ACH members met monthly to review and discuss the financial position of ACH and its options forward.

The timing of ACH's closure was a surprise to the Council as we had been led to believe that ACH would produce a recovery plan in what had been yet another difficult financial period for the organisation, similar to many previous years.

Current Situation

Lifelong Learning & Cultural Services staff have secured the buildings and placed temporary security in place to safeguard assets.

An official liquidator firm was appointed at a creditor's meeting held on the 20th December.

The Council is owed approx. £103K by ACH, which almost certainly will not be repaid.

The Council has negotiated the purchase of ACH assets as a means to reopening the sites. The funding for this purchase has come from existing resources within the remainder of the SLA payments that were scheduled to be given to ACH in January.

Plans are underway to reopen the sites as quickly as possible and they will be completed and will keep within the SLA funding. The schedule of reopening to the public is expected to be:

- the museum: Thursday 25th January
- the arts centre: Thursday 1st February

Reopening the Museum

The museum will be reopened on a 3-day week public access (Thursdays, Fridays, Saturdays, 10am to 5pm) commencing January 25th. Library Services will be managing the museum with a view to integrating additional information services on site.

Staff will be available on January 25th to answer questions and recruit volunteers needed to support the activities at the museum and Headstone Manor.

The Harrow Heritage Trust has graciously offered to accept any donations the public feels obliged to make in support of heritage and arts. Information and donations will be accepted on the day.

Reopening the Arts Centre

The arts centre buildings will be reopened to the public on February 1st, operated by the Arts & Leisure Service. The reopening will occur in phases, commencing first with hire of classroom and performance spaces, then introducing lifelong learning classes and expanded arts programming in April.

A series of public and user meetings will be held during February and March to gather further public comment. Taster workshops will commence in late March during an open house where the public can sign up for the April courses.

Anyone wishing to hire space will be able to contact staff at the site from February 1st to get assistance in the rescheduling of rooms and performance space bookings. A rate card and booking information will be available for all hirers wishing to inquire about facility rentals.

The box office would reopen at the arts centre as a point of reception, but would operate limited hours for the first few months. These hours will be posted on the day of opening and further details will be found on the council's website.

Arts officers will be based on site to support the reintegration of the user groups, creative businesses and clubs who wish to return, ensuring that they are supported during the transition. The officers will also work on development of

further funding options with Arts Council England (ACE) and others. The site is recognised as having a strong presence with visual arts and dance, which fits well with current ACE funded audience development programmes, and the site is ideal for development under Olympics initiatives, a top priority for the Council's Corporate Plan.

Temporary Staff Recruitment

A series of fixed term posts will be needed to reopen the sites. Information will be available on Harrow Council's website at www.harrow.gov.uk, or in local newspapers. A Recruitment Fair will be held on Tuesday January 23rd and again on January 30th, from 10am to 1pm at the Harrow Arts Centre for anyone interested in applying for a temporary position at either site.

Future Development Planning

During this interim phase between January reopening and March 31st, a fully costed development plan and budget are to be prepared for a full year business plan. This will be based on an operating assumption within the MTBS funding for 2007/2008.

Legal Comments: I note that there are no background papers listed.
I can see no obvious information in the report regarding consultation.

SECTION 3 - STATUTORY OFFICER CLEARANCE

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|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Chief Finance Officer | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Name: Paula Foulds |
| | | Date: 19 Jan 07 |
| Monitoring Officer | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Name: ...Rosemarie Martin |
| | | Date:19 Jan 07 |

SECTION 4 - CONTACT DETAILS AND BACKGROUND PAPERS

Contact: Javed Khan
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Telephone: 2365
Email : javed.khan@harrow.gov.uk

Background Papers: *No background papers listed.*

IF APPROPRIATE, does the report include the following considerations?

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| 1. | Consultation | YES |
| 2. | Corporate Priorities | YES |
| 3. | Manifesto Pledge Reference Number | |