

Community Grant to Yeovil Swan Theatre Company (Executive Decision)

Director: *Kirsty Larkins, Director of Service Delivery*
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Lead Officer: *Nathan Turnbull*
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Purpose of the Report

Councillors are asked to consider the awarding of a grant of £12,500 towards Microbe-Safe Ventilation

Public Interest

Awarding grants is a key way that SSDC supports and helps to deliver community projects sponsored by Parishes and voluntary community organisations in the towns and villages across the district.

The Swan Theatre Company has applied to the Area South community grants programme for financial assistance with the costs of £12,500. The Locality Officer who is submitting this report to enable the Area South Committee to make an informed decision about the application has assessed the application.

Recommendation

That Councillors award a grant of £12,500, the grant to be allocated from the Area South capital programme and subject to SSDC standard conditions for community grants (appendix A)

Application Details

Name of applicant:	Yeovil Swan Theatre Company
Project:	Microbe-Safe Ventilation
Total project cost:	£28,000
Amount requested from SSDC:	£12,500
% amount requested	44.64%
Application assessed by:	Nathan Turnbull

Community Grants Assessment Score

The table below shows the grant scoring for this application. Applications must meet the minimum score of 22 to be considered for SSDC funding under Community Grants policies.

Category	Max Score available	Officer score	assessment
A Supports Council Plan/Area Chapter	1	1	
B Supports Equalities & Diversity	1	1	
C Supports Environment Strategy	3	1	
D Need for Project	10	8	
E Capacity of Organisation	15	14	
F Financial need	7	3	

Total	37	28
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Background

In 1967 the Bass brewery sold The Swan, a derelict Yeovil pub, to the Yeovil Dramatic and Arts Society. For seven years members worked to transform the pub into an attractive headquarters with facilities for rehearsals and set-building. Performances still had to take place in hired halls. The society then decided to build its own theatre on the land behind the building. Its first production there was in 1976.

Over the years, improvements have been made. The Swan does not receive public funding, or any financial support from any other organisation, relying solely on the efforts of its members and patrons. Years of voluntary work and the re-investment of all profits into the building and its equipment have resulted in the Swan becoming one of the best equipped little theatres in the West of England. They can now offer the public an intimate performance space, tiered auditorium with excellent acoustics, professional quality lighting and sound systems, and a fully licensed bar.

The Swan Theatre Company is committed to developing the performing arts in Yeovil and performs six shows a year, providing a wide range of opportunities for its members to perform or work backstage. In addition, the theatre is a venue which is used by other groups in the area. Through its Charity Nights they have helped local charities raise thousands of pounds.

In addition to the six shows a year, they present rehearsed readings and run workshops on technical and stage-related aspects. To reinforce its links to the local community they maintain close contacts with schools and colleges in the area to explore mutually interesting projects.

The theatre aims to provide an interesting and challenging theatrical environment for people of all levels of ability. It is recognised as an outstanding example of non-professional theatre, evidenced by the press notices received for their productions, the awards received in local drama competitions and by the comments and loyalty of its local audience,

Parish information

Parish*	Yeovil
Parish Population	30,378
No. of dwellings	13,696

*Taken from the 2011 census profile

The project

The COVID pandemic has been a great shock to the theatre, which was ready to stage the opening night of a new production on the day that all theatre venues across the country were closed.

As they look forward to a relaxation in the restrictions of and the future opening of entertainment venues, it is recognised the importance in providing a safe and comfortable environment for cast, crew and audience alike. A key element to keeping COVID and other microbial contaminants in check is good ventilation, which can reduce the rate of transmission by more than 90%.

The Swan is a conversion of a very old building and does not have an adequate ventilation system. This needs to be addressed with some urgency if they are to resume future theatrical productions with confidence.

The Committee intend to install a new ventilation system which will refresh the air at a rate commensurate with the occupancy levels of the building, combined with a heat recovery/heat exchanger system to ensure that energy is not wasted by venting pre-heated air to atmosphere.

The specification they have selected has been subject to intense debate and scrutiny. It has the full support of the Swan Theatre committee as being an expensive but necessary element in our ability to offer the right safe and comfortable conditions for future users and audiences.

Local support / evidence of need

All users of the Swan Theatre, being the volunteers, members, cast, crew and, most importantly, its audiences will benefit from a safe and comfortable operating environment.

Maintaining a comfortable temperature and adequate air circulation has long been a challenge for the users of the theatre, and they have known that something needed to be done when circumstances allowed. The Covid-19 pandemic and its impact on viral transmission in unventilated enclosed spaces has substantially increased the urgency for providing a microbiologically safe atmosphere for all.

Project costs

Project costs	Cost £
Total cost for the separate supply/extract systems	£20,500
Cost of heat exchanger/heat recovery systems	£6,500
Making good and redecoration around controls and vents	£1,000
Total	£28,000

Funding plan

Funding source	Secured or pending	Amount £
Parish/Town Council	Pending	£2,500
Own Funds	Secured	£13,000
Total		£15,500

Conclusion and Recommendation

It is recommended that a grant of £12,500 is awarded

Financial implications

The balance in the Area South Capital programme is £133,009. If the recommended grant of £12,500 is awarded, £120,509 will remain.

Grants are awarded subject to all other funding being secured before the commencement of the project and are on a % basis of the full project costs. Payment of the grant cannot exceed the grant award and is proportionally reduced if full project costs are under budget.

Council Plan Implications

Council Plan themes and Areas of focus for 2021/22

Focus 2: Economy To promote a strong and growing economy with thriving urban, rural and land based businesses and improving productivity we will:

- Work with businesses and use our assets.
- Advise and support initiatives that ensure worker skills meet the employer's needs.
- Lobby for and support infrastructure improvements to enable growth.
- Capitalise on our high quality culture, leisure and tourism opportunities to bring people into the district

Focus 5: Health and Communities

To build healthy, self-reliant, active communities we will:

- Support communities so that they can identify their needs and develop local solutions.
- Target support to areas of need.
- Help people to live well by enabling quality cultural, leisure, play, sport & healthy lifestyle facilities & activities.
- Work with partners to tackle health issues such as diabetes and hypertension and mental health.
- Work with our partners to keep our communities safe.

Area Chapter Implications for 2021/22

No implications

Carbon Emissions and Climate Change Implications

Reduce our reliance on fossil fuels

Equality and Diversity Implications

The project aims to provide for people across all age and interest groups in the local community.

Background Papers

None

Appendix A

Standard conditions applying to all SSDC Community Grants

The applicant agrees to: -

- Notify SSDC if there is a material change to the information provided in the application.
- Start the project within six months of the grant offer and notify SSDC of any changes to the project or start date as soon as possible.
- Confirm that all other funding sources have been secured before starting the project, if these were not already in place at the time of the application.
Acknowledge SSDC assistance towards the project in any relevant publicity about the project (e.g. leaflets, posters, websites, and promotional materials) and on any permanent acknowledgement (e.g. plaques, signs etc.).
- Work in conjunction with SSDC officers to monitor and share the success of the project and the benefits to the community resulting from SSDC's contribution to the project.
- Provide a project update and/or supply before and after photos if requested
- Supply receipted invoices or receipts which provide evidence of the **full** cost of the project so that the grant can be released.
- Note that they cannot apply for another community grant for the same project within a 3 year period of this award.

Standard conditions applying to buildings, facilities and equipment

- Establish and maintain a “sinking fund” to support future replacement of the building / facility / equipment as grant funding is only awarded on a one-off basis.
- Use the SSDC Building Control Service when buildings regulations are required.
- Incorporate disabled access and provide an access statement where relevant.

Special conditions

For example where an applicant has not provided all necessary information in the application and you are happy to wait for it eg access review; planning permissions. Or where some further encouragement could be given to do X or Y in future. Or to secure a definite outcome in the long term should the project fold, perhaps where land or buildings are concerned.