

Surrey Heath Borough Council
Council
10 April 2024

Allocation of Funding for Camberley Theatre

Portfolio Holder:	Cllr John Skipper, Leisure & Culture
Strategic Director/Head of Service	Nick Steevens, Strategic Director – Environment & Community
Report Author:	Nick Steevens, Strategic Director – Environment & Community
Key Decision:	Yes
Portfolio Holder signed off the report:	4 April 2024
Wards Affected:	All

Summary and purpose

The presence of reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) in Camberley Theatre has prompted further detailed inspection and a proposal for a capital allocation to be identified for the remediation of the RAAC. Whilst the theatre is currently considered as safe, works will need to be undertaken to address the presence of RAAC and secure the future of Camberley Theatre and the continuity of the arts & cultural offering within Surrey Heath.

Recommendation

The Council is asked to RESOLVE that the Capital Programme for 2024/25 be increased by £625,000 for RAAC remediation works at Camberley Theatre.

1. Background and Supporting Information

- 1.1 In September 2023 RAAC was identified in Camberley theatre in several locations including the bar, main stairwell, plant room, dance studio, stage, and changing rooms. A specialist contractor with detailed knowledge of RAAC has been undertaking further detailed surveys to advise on the works that will be necessary to address any future risks associated with its presence.
- 1.2 Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) is a form of lightweight concrete used in construction in many buildings between the 1950s and 1990s. Due to its aerated composition, RAAC is weaker than conventional concrete and more susceptible to structural failure, particularly when exposed to moisture, with the air pockets permitting water to enter the

material and cause decay, rust and weaken the steel reinforcement within.

- 1.3 The Executive meeting on 16 April 2024 will consider detailed proposals for addressing the existence of RAAC in Camberley Theatre and associated timescales. Whilst the allocation of capital funding is a decision for the Full Council, any decision to undertake the actual works on the Camberley Theatre is an executive function and, in addition, will be a key decision. It is therefore the nature and commencement of the project is a decision for the Executive to take.
- 1.4 The Council is asked to approve the allocation of the funding in the capital programme for 2024/25.

2. Reasons for Recommendation

- 2.1 The allocation of capital funding in the Council's capital programme for 2024/25 would enable the Council to be able to undertake works to address the existence of RAAC in the Theatre during the current financial year. Delaying the agreement of this capital allocation until later in the year could impact the viability of the Theatre and increase costs to the Council if the Theatre needed to close at short notice due to any significant deterioration in the condition of the RAAC and would lead to subsequent delays in commissioning and undertaking the necessary works and delay the reopening of this important cultural venue within Surrey Heath.
- 2.2 The ongoing operation of the theatre is important to sustaining the economic, financial, cultural and social benefit that the theatre creates.

3. Contribution to the Council's Strategy

- 3.1 The decision to allocate capital funding in the capital programme for the remediation of RAAC at the Theatre is aligned with the Council's priority of Delivering Effective Services with Sustainable Finances and including the focus on optimising the use of Council Property Assets.

4. Resource Implications

- 4.1 Cost estimates undertaken indicate that a budget of £625,000 would be required to provide remediation works to the Camberley Theatre. This includes a contingency element. [A full breakdown of estimated costs is shown at Annex A.]

5. Section 151 Officer Comments:

- 5.1 Capital budgets can only be allocated or increased by a Council decision. The cost of remediation works, including contingency, is considered as capital expenditure. It is likely that these costs will increase the capital financing requirement in-year.
- 5.2 The costs of the staff are already budgeted for in the annual budget for 2024/25 and should therefore be considered as 'sunk' costs. Wherever

possible, staff should be redeployed within the Council to provide wider support to Council services.

- 5.3 Loss of income during any temporary closure will need to be monitored against budgets and reported in the quarterly budget management reports.
- 5.4 Use of contingency should be carefully considered and any use should only be with the authority of the Strategic Director for Environment and Community in consultation with the Strategic Director Finance and Customer Services (or nominated deputies).

6. Legal and Governance Issues

- 6.1 Only the Full Council can agree the budget for the proposed RAAC remediation works and the Executive must make decisions in accordance with the budget agreed by the Council.
- 6.2 The decision to agree the works is the responsibility of the Executive as it is an executive function. A decision by the Council to agree a budget prior to its consideration of the item does not constitute approval of the scope and commencement of the project. If the Executive chooses not to take the action requested the budget will remain unspent.

7. Monitoring Officer Comments:

- 7.1 No further matters arising.

Annexes

Annex 1 – Full Cost Projections (exempt)

Background Papers

Camberley Theatre Executive Report