

For publication

Re-opening of Chesterfield Theatres and Venues.

Meeting:	Community, Customer and Organisational Scrutiny Committee
Date:	Thursday 8 th July 2021
Cabinet portfolio:	Cabinet Member for Town Centres and Visitor Economy
Directorate:	Leisure, Culture and Community Wellbeing

1.0 Reason for inclusion on the work programme

1.1. Purpose of reviewing the topic:

To provide a brief update on the re-opening of Chesterfield Theatres and Venues since re-opening in May 2021

1.1 Objectives of the review:

To update on numbers of events since re-opening.
To update on any issues encountered, and how they were resolved.
To update on future plans.

1.2 Progress to date: summary of previous scrutiny involvement and/or recommendations

A report entitled Arrangements for the Reopening Chesterfield Theatres and Venues was presented to the Committee on 10th September 2020.

2.0 Summary

2.1 Chesterfield Venues, which comprises Winding Wheel Theatre, Pomegranate Theatre, Hasland Village Hall, Assembly Rooms, and the Rest Rooms, were originally closed on 16th

March 2020, in line with the Government guidance due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

- 2.2 The Pomegranate Theatre re-opened with a reduced seating capacity initially for cinema on 24th July 2020, and then for live theatre in October 2020. The Winding Wheel Theatre re-opened for live theatre in October 2020. Both Hasland Village Hall and the Assembly Rooms re-opened for venue hire in October 2020. The Rest Rooms remained closed as it was not possible to re-open them safely in a Covid Secure way.
- 2.3 On 5th November 2020, due to new restrictions, the Pomegranate Theatre and the Winding Wheel Theatre were closed again. However, Hasland Village Hall and Assembly Rooms were able to remain partially open for use by support groups within the community.
- 2.4 In January 2021, the Winding Wheel Theatre was licensed to the NHS for use as a vaccination centre and continues to the present day.
- 2.5 At Step 3 on the Government's roadmap to the easing of restrictions, on 17th May 2021, the Pomegranate Theatre re-opened with a reduced seating capacity for cinema and live theatre. Also, on the same date Hasland Village Hall, and the Assembly Rooms were able to open for a wider category of activities and events.

3.0 Report details

3.1 The Pomegranate Theatre

Since the Pomegranate Theatre re-opened on 17th May 2021, a mixed programme of cinema and live theatre has been presented. Due to social distancing, the seating capacity of the theatre has been reduced from 590 seats to a maximum of 160 seats.

In Table 1 below is detailed the number of performances/screenings:

Programme Type	Number of performances/screenings 17 th May to 26 th June 2021
Cinema	46
Live Theatre	11
Total	57

3.2 Hasland Village Hall

Since 17th May 2021, Hasland Village Hall has been hired for various events, including support group meetings, dance classes, and a wake.

In Table 2 below is detailed the number of bookings for each activity:

Activity Type	Number of Bookings 17 th May to 26 th June 2021
Support Groups	8
Dance Classes	18
Wake	1
Total	27

3.3 Assembly Rooms

Since 17th May 2021, Hasland Village Hall has been hired for various events, including support group meetings, and other meetings

In Table 3 below is detailed the number of bookings for each activity:

Activity Type	Number of Bookings 17 th May to 26 th June 2021
Support Groups	6
Meetings	3
Total	9

3.4 Other venues

The Rest Rooms continue to remain closed for community use but were used for local elections on 6th May 2021. The Winding Wheel Theatre is currently licensed to the NHS as a vaccination centre.

4.0 Potential barriers

4.1 All the venues have been opened according to Government regulations, and Council requirements. These comprehensive regulations are designed to ensure that the venues can be used safely by customers, hirers, and promoters.

4.2 The general response from customers has been very positive and importantly they have followed the guidelines. Some customers have made return visits to the venues since we re-opened.

4.3 The procedures for hirers and promoters during the pandemic have been more complicated than usual and additional time has been required to ensure hirers and promoters have designed their activities in a Covid secure way and have provided all the necessary documentation required.

5.0 Future plans and areas for further scrutiny involvement

5.1 Depending on details of the final step in the easing of restrictions, which is anticipated on 19th July 2021, we will be planning to further re-open the venues during the next few months.

- 5.2 The key to the future re-opening programme is whether we are able to operate the venues without social distancing in place. If we are not able to do so, many of the events booked for September 2021 will need to be re-scheduled, as they will not be commercially viable with restrictions in place.
- 5.3 It is hoped that the Winding Wheel Theatre will re-open at the end of August 2021. There is an extensive programme of concerts, comedy, and events booked from September onwards.
- 5.4 It is hoped that we will be able to re-open the Rest Rooms in conjunction with the local management committees during the late summer.

6.0 Implications for consideration

6.1 Council Plan

The operation of the venues is in line with two priorities of the Council Plan:

6.1.1 Improving quality of life for local people

Support key Covid-19 schemes including assisting with community response, testing and mass vaccination programmes.

The use of the Winding Theatre as a vaccination centre is part of the Council's support of the response to the pandemic.

6.1.2 Providing value for money services responding to and developing plans for re-engaging communities with leisure and cultural facilities to maximising customer safety, health, wellbeing, and value for money. The plan to continue to re-open the venues in line with Government regulations, and further extend their use is part of the Council's response to re-engage communities and support their wider wellbeing through positive engagement with a range of cultural activities.

6.2 Financial and value for money

The ongoing restrictions are challenging in terms of growing income from ticket sales and secondary sales of the Pomegranate Theatre and also on venue hire income at both Hasland Village Hall and the Assembly Rooms. In response to this the operational delivery team are aware of the need for balance regarding Covid compliance and operational efficiency and to

date have managed this very well. In addition the Council was awarded a second grant under the Cultural Recovery Fund for the period April to Jun 2021, and approximately £124,500 of this grant is allocated to the operation of Chesterfield Theatres for this period which is providing essential support to the operation of the service.

6.4 Community wellbeing

As detailed above, the re-opening and further re-opening of the venues has been and will be a positive contribution to community wellbeing. First, the programme of arts and entertainment presented at Chesterfield Theatres will provide positive health and well-being benefits to those attending or participating. Secondly, having a wide range of community facilities open and available will enable local residents to engage in a wide range of activities which will have multiple benefits for all.

Document information

Report author	
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Background documents	
Not applicable	