

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by the Executive Director Educational Services

Corporate Cultural Sub-Committee: 13th September 2011

Subject: OPTIONS PAPER – Music for a Christmas Evening 2011

1. Purpose

- 1.1 To advise the Corporate Cultural Sub Committee of a number of options relating to the provision of Music for a Christmas Evening 2011 in consequence of the temporary closure of Clydebank Town Hall; and to seek committee approval to implement the recommended Option 4. outlined in Appendix 1.

2. Background:

- 2.1 Music for a Christmas Evening was formed by Clydebank Council in 1988 involving local music and choirs in a series of joint concerts at Clydebank Town Hall in the lead up to Christmas.
- 2.2 Since this time the concerts have grown in size and now take place across three evenings the first weekend in December attracting a total audience of 1500.
- 2.3 The concerts now comprise some eight performing groups, these being: Clydebank District Choir, Clydebank Ladies Choir, Clydebank Male Voice Choir, Dumbarton & District Pipe Band, The Mummies, Clydebank Music Society, Stagelights Theatre Company and WDC Schools Wind Band.
- 2.4 The concerts are organised by Educational Services via the Libraries & Museums Section. A coordinating committee formed of the participating groups meets monthly in the lead up to the concerts with group members giving their time freely.
- 2.5 In producing the concerts a free let of Clydebank Town Hall has been provided, with the addition of up to six free lets (per group) in council buildings for rehearsals. These lets can be accommodated at no cost by utilising free space within community halls during current opening hours.
- 2.6 The concerts working budget is 7k annually, with ticket income generated being distributed amongst the participating groups.

- 2.7 In addition the concerts raise monies for the Provost's chosen charities through audience donations. This raises on average 1k per year for the three charities involved.
- 2.8 The concerts are a significant and popular annual event attracting audiences from across West Dunbartonshire and beyond. Local Nursing and Care Homes form a significant part of the audience on the Thursday evening.
- 2.9 In addition the concerts are a civic event with the Saturday evening including over 100 Provost's guests, followed by a Civic reception.
- 2.10 In 2010 the concerts were cancelled on the advice of Health & Safety due to extreme weather conditions. Tickets holders were reimbursed and groups received reduced income due to the loss of tickets sales.
- 2.11 Clydebank Town Hall is currently closed for refurbishment and will remain closed during the time of the traditional Music for a Christmas Evening Concerts leaving the concerts without suitable accommodation and alternative accommodation having to be sought.

3. Main Issues

- 3.1 In identifying options for an alternative venue to host Music for a Christmas Evening a number of key issues have been explored. These include: public accessibility, capacity to house audiences of 500 per evening, capacity to house a cast of 200, suitability to house specialist sound and lighting requirements, and financial and staffing implications.
- 3.2 In order to produce Music for a Christmas Evening a venue requires to be able to house a cast of 200 performers and musicians each night. This includes providing space suitable for rehearsals in addition to changing facilities. Given the range of ages involved in the concerts it is essential that separate changing space is provided in particular for juvenile performers.
- 3.3 A suitable venue must be able to house audiences of 500. Venues with a smaller audience capacity do not have the ability to generate enough revenue to cover costs. Similarly if concerts are increased in number this has a knock on effect increasing staffing and facility costs. It is unlikely that the groups involved have the capacity to provide more than the existing commitment of three evenings in addition to rehearsal time.
- 3.4 Investigations have shown that there exists no venue which fully replaces the facilities and capacity offered by Clydebank Town Hall. None of West Dunbartonshire school theatres offer enough audience capacity to host music for a Christmas Evening.
- 3.5 Denny Civic Theatre in Dumbarton offers an audience capacity of only 342. Whilst it does offer specialist lighting and sound facilities it does

not have the changing facilities required unless accommodation could be secured via the Concord C E Centre.

- 3.6** At the time of the planned concerts Denny Civic Theatre is fully booked hosting the Christmas Panto produced by Dumbarton Theatre Company. This popular Panto runs for one week with the theatre being taken up for a significant period of time prior to and following the shows.
- 3.7** As shown in October 2010 by the Commonwealth Handover event the Playdrome Clydebank has the capacity to host audiences exceeding 500. It is believed that it is feasible to house changing facilities also. However utilising this venue involves a significant increase on cost.
- 3.8** In order to house Music for a Christmas Evening the venue is required for a minimum of five days to allow set up of sound, lighting and staging. This involves a significant increase in the running costs which are identified in the options within this paper.
- 3.9** Utilising the Playdrome also involves a significant increase in running costs through loss of income to the council, through loss of lets to the Playdrome and increased set up and staffing costs to support the event. These are detailed in the options within this report.
- 3.10** It is suggested that given the audience capacity of the Playdrome (approx 600), to minimise costs Music for a Christmas Evening concerts could run for two nights only.
- 3.11** The Playdrome offers a central location with sufficient car parking to accommodate the concerts. However it offers limitations on its ability to provide rehearsal space. It also has limited capacity to house a civic reception.
- 3.12** The Playdrome offers the only suitable accommodation to house Music for a Christmas Evening in 2011. This will involve a significant increase in costs. Alternative options are provided in this report for consideration by the committee. In exploring options officers have been mindful of financial constraints, suitability, and promoting Best Value. It should be noted that none of these options may be provided wholly within existing budgets.
- 3.13** This paper proposes a number of options for consideration involving various degrees of financial investment by the council.

4. Options

- 4.1 Option 1 – Hosting Music for a Christmas Evening on two nights at The Playdrome Leisure Centre Clydebank.**

- 4.1.1** This option offers the only suitable venue in which to house Music for a Christmas Evening in 2011. The venue has the capacity to house the required size of audience to meet costs.
- 4.1.2** This option means that this popular series of concerts can go ahead. Reflecting the council's commitment to public cultural events and generating income for local music groups and charities.
- 4.1.3** It is proposed that given the capacity of the venue the concerts are held over two evenings to limit costs; and that these are held on Thursday 1st and Friday 2nd December to reduce staffing costs.
- 4.1.4** Hosting the concerts in The Playdrome provides sufficient ability to house the cast however with a limited rehearsal facility. Similarly the venue offers limited capacity to host a civic reception for Provost's guests.
- 4.1.5** As the facility is not a functioning theatre/concert venue this option requires provision of increased sound and lighting to enable the concerts to function resulting in a significant increase in the costs relating to sound, lighting and staging. In particular the crew costs involved in setting up and get out from venue. Increased costs are likely to be an additional £ 4,000.
- 4.1.5** This option also involves additional costs relating to loss of council income relating to lost lets of the Playdrome over a period of five days. There are also significant additional staffing costs involved in hosting the event including removal and reinstatement of the bowling halls for use as changing facilities. These costs increase the running costs of the event, additional venue costs are estimated to be £4,500 and are not achievable within existing budgets.
- 4.1.6** Total costs for housing Music for a Christmas Evening 2011 at the Playdrome, Clydebank are shown in Appendix 1.

4.2 Option 2 – Cancellation of Music for a Christmas Evening 2011 – Savings Option

- 4.2.1** Given the lack of an appropriate and affordable alternative venue to Clydebank Town Hall. The committee could consider cancelling this year's concerts. This would reflect the council's commitment to scaling back Christmas events following public consultation.
- 4.2.2** This option would result in a saving to the council of £7,000 in 2011/12 representing the working budget for the event.
- 4.2.3** Cancelling the concerts would result in no council Christmas Concerts other than those by the school orchestra. This would impact on regular attendees of Music for a Christmas Evening.

4.2.4 Cancellation would result in a loss of income (approx £700 per group) for the eight participating music groups and choir groups many of whom rely upon this income.

4.2.5 This option would also result in a potential loss of income for charities for which collections are made each night.

4.2.6 Total savings gained through cancelling Music for a Christmas Evening 2011 are shown in Appendix 1.

4.3 Option 3 – Cancellation of Music for a Christmas Evening 2011 – Distribution of Costs amongst participating groups and charities.

4.3.1 Given the lack of an appropriate and affordable alternative venue to Clydebank Town Hall. The committee could consider cancelling this year's concerts. This would reflect the council's commitment to scaling back Christmas events following public consultation.

4.3.2 This option would result in the working budget of £7,000 being distributed amongst the participating groups named earlier and two chosen charities. Effectively providing a grant donation of £700 to each group to assist with running costs and forthcoming public concerts. This donation could be acknowledged at future concerts and production e.g. in concerts programmes.

4.3.3 This option would negate a potential loss of income for two chosen charities for which collections would have been made.

4.3.4 Cancelling the concerts would result in no council Christmas concerts other than those by the school orchestra. This would impact on regular attendees of Music for a Christmas Evening.

4.3.5 Total costs are shown in Appendix 1.

4.4 Option 4 – Cancel Music for a Christmas Evening and replace with spring concerts marking the re-opening of Town Hall.

4.4.1 Given the lack of an appropriate and affordable alternative venue to Clydebank Town Hall. The committee could consider cancelling this year's concerts. Again this would reflect the council's commitment to scaling back Christmas events following public consultation.

4.4.2 As series of concerts could then be promoted in 2012 marking the reopening of Clydebank Town Hall. This would take a similar format to Music for a Christmas Evening and involving the groups named earlier.

4.4.3 This option would result in income generation for the groups affected by cancellation of Music for a Christmas Evening. Similarly there would be no loss to income for charities.

- 4.4.4 Hosting the concerts in the refurbished Town Hall, albeit with restricted changing and rehearsal facilities would provide a significantly more efficient proposal compared with Option 1.
- 4.4.5 This option would result in a saving to the council of £7,000 in this financial year. However £7,000 would be required to be identified in financial year 2012/13 to provide these concerts, in addition to the £7,000 allocated to Music for a Christmas Evening in December 2012.
- 4.5.6 Total savings and costs are shown in Appendix 1.

5. Personnel Issues

- 5.1 There are no personnel issues in relation to this report

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1 The options outlined within this paper are shown in Appendix 1. Options 1 and 4 cannot be implemented within existing budgets. The recommendation is that the Sub-Committee consider funding its preferred option (should this be Option 1 or 4) from the Sub-Committee's own budget. To do so the Sub-Committee will have to be satisfied that there is sufficient budget available to fund this expenditure.

7. Risk Assessment

- 7.1 There is a risk with Option 2 that the council could be seen to make a financial saving at the expense of a loss of income to local groups.
- 7.2 There is a risk in Option 2 and 3 that should this year's concerts be cancelled without any future planned concerts the Council could be criticised for not funding an alternative venue for this popular Christmas event.

8. Equalities Impact

- 8.1 No issues were identified in a screening for potential equality impact of this measure.

9. Conclusions and Officers' Recommendations

9.1 This paper informs the Sub-committee of the options identified following an appraisal of venues for this year's Music for a Christmas Evening Concerts, due to the closure of Clydebank Town Hall.

9.2 The Corporate Cultural Sub Committee is invited to:

- a. Note the content of this paper and the options for Music for a Christmas Evening 2011 identified within it.
- b. Given the practical difficulties and additional expenditure associated with Option 1, the potential impact of loss of income to local groups resulting from Option 2. and loss of income to council in Option 3. It is recommended that the subcommittee approve Option 4. as outlined in the Appendix enabling a high profile event marking the re-opening of Clydebank Town Hall and securing income for local music groups and charities.

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Appendix 1. Options - Music for a Christmas Evening 2011

Wards Affected: All Council Wards are affected