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## Report to Charitable Trust Committee

# Werneth Park Music Rooms

**Officer Contact:** Brian Enright

**1<sup>st</sup> December 2021**

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### **Executive Summary:**

Following concerns about the future of the Werneth Park Music Rooms from the local community, approval was obtained from the Charitable Trust Committee in June 2019 to authorise a bid to the Architectural Heritage Fund for a grant to engage professionals to undertake a Project Viability Report concerning the future of the asset.

An initial consultation of key stakeholders was undertaken via Teams in April 2021, and following on from this exercise, the architects explored a number of options, including a wedding/events/conference centre and a performance/rehearsal venue that could include a museum outreach facility or an accompanying commercial use.

The findings were reported to the Corporate Property Board, with endorsement for further engagement with the community and to soft market test the proposals to help determine future interest and viability.

This report seeks approval from the Charitable Trust Committee to undertake the soft marketing and consultation exercise on the future of Werneth Music Rooms.

### **Recommendations:**

That the Charitable Trust Committee approves Council officers undertaking, on its behalf, a soft marketing and consultation exercise in relation to the Werneth Park Music Rooms.

**Werneth Park Music Rooms**

**1 Background**

- 1.1 A briefing paper was circulated to the Charitable Trust Committee in June 2019 to authorise a bid to the Architectural Heritage Fund for a Grant in order to engage professionals to undertake a Project Viability Report concerning the Werneth Park Music Rooms.
- 1.2 A bid was subsequently submitted led by the Greater Manchester Building Preservation Trust, in partnership with Oldham Council. The Council was duly awarded a grant towards the cost of the report. Following a compliant tender process, Buttress Architects were appointed to complete the report

**2. Current Position**

- 2.1 One of the requirements of the bid was that there needed to be engagement with local stakeholders from the community of Oldham. An initial consultation of key stakeholders was undertaken via Teams in April 2021.
- 2.2 Approval is sought from the Charitable Trust Committee to undertake further consultation, along with a soft marketing exercise. For the purposes of clarity, all decisions in relation to the Music Rooms are for the Charitable Trust Committee to take with reference to the Charities Act requirements. The proposed soft marketing and consultation exercises will, subject to the Committee's approval, be carried out by the Council on behalf of the Trust.

**3. Soft Marketing and Consultation Exercise**

- 3.1 In order to identify a preferred option for the future of the Music Rooms, it is proposed that a soft marketing exercise is carried in the first instance, along with a subsequent and separate consultation exercise. This will give the local community in particular an opportunity to indicate what it sees as its preferred end use for the building.
- 3.2 Both soft marketing and the consultation exercise will be undertaken with the assistance of the Marketing and Communications and Procurement Teams and local community groups. Importantly, as stated above, both the soft marketing and consultation exercise will need to make clear that the preferred end use will be contingent upon external funding being secured.

**4. Financial Implications**

- 4.1 Finance implications are covered in the report in the restricted part of this agenda.

**5. Legal Services Comments**

- 5.1 Legal implications are covered in the report in the restricted part of this agenda.

**6. Co-operative Agenda**

- 6.1 Not applicable
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## **7. Human Resources Comments**

7.1 Not applicable

## **8. Risk Assessments**

8.1 Given there is no specific funding identified to presently support this scheme there is a risk the Council is not presently in a position where it can facilitate the preferred option identified via the soft market testing for this building. (Mark Stenson)

## **9. IT Implications**

9.1 Not applicable

## **10. Property Implications**

10.1 Noted within the body of the report. (Brian Enright)

## **11. Procurement Implications**

11.1 Due diligence needs to be undertaken to understand the full implications on potential uses for the building, particularly as it was gifted to the Council.

11.2 The procurement team will lead on a formal market engagement exercise to help shape and inform a strategy for this project. Once a strategy has been agreed, all necessary appointments for professional services and works will be procured in full compliance with the public contract regulations, contract procedure rules, and any external funding conditions.

## **12. Environmental and Health & Safety Implications**

12.1 Not applicable

## **13. Marketing and Communications Implications**

13.1 All comments subject to approval from the Charitable Trust Committee. The soft market testing would be undertaken first.

13.2 Once the exercise has completed, and we have a clearer understanding of market interest/capabilities - in addition to data gathered from the previous consultation - this should inform the next steps in terms of further consultation.

13.3 A communications and engagement plan should be created. A consultation exercise would be designed with consideration to the above. It could include an online survey, along with community face to face engagement. This could also be tied into the Big Oldham Conversation meet the leader sessions depending on dates.

13.4 Consultation would be supported by communications which outline our commitment to bringing the building back into use – subject to available funds. As well as providing a clearer way forward, the consultation may support future funding bids and/or additional reach to potential private/third sector partners via the publicity.

## **14. Key Decision**

14.1 Not applicable

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**15. Background Papers**

15.1 Report to Corporate Property Board, 26<sup>th</sup> August 2021 (restricted)

**16 Reason(s) for exemption from publication:**

16.1 The restricted report contains information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person including the Council.

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