

Meeting: Cabinet
Date: 28 June 2023
Classification: Part 1
Key Decision: No
Title of Report: **Response to Jazz Petition**
Report Author: Mark Harvey (Executive Director - Adults & Communities)
Executive Councillor: Cllr Derek Jarvis (Portfolio Holder for Arts, Culture, Heritage & Leisure)

1 Executive Summary

- 1.1. The council received a petition: ***'Britain's first-ever cultural centre for jazz opened in 2016 at Southend's Beecroft Art Gallery is facing eviction on August 1st, 2023. If you oppose this decision by Southend City Council, please sign below to help us fight this decision.'***
- 1.2. This report sets out the Council's response to the petition.

2 Recommendation

- 2.1. That Cabinet reverse the decision to serve notice on Jazz Centre UK (JCUK) and agree a new service level agreement (SLA)/lease for the organisation to remain in its current location at the Beecroft Museum.

3 Background

- 3.1. Southend-on-Sea City Council (SCC) issued formal notice to terminate the current arrangements with the JCUK in August 2022 pursuant to the SLA which requires 12 month's notice to end the agreement between SCC and JCUK.
- 3.2. Other alternatives have been sought for JCUK, but they have felt they are not appropriate for their archive and access to the public.
- 3.3. Since the notice was given, JCUK have offered a financial contribution to the council to support the running costs within the Beecroft Museum if they are able to remain.

4 Response to the petition

Recognising the history of JCUK in the City and the initial goodwill that the council extended to help them find a secure base within the city, the council feels that it is appropriate to reconsider the decision previously made.

The council wants to continue to build on the various cultural assets that Southend City is now nationally renowned for, and we believe that JCUK forms part of that reputation.

Since receipt of the petition the council has re-considered the notice which is due to expire in August 2023 and feels that it should reverse this decision, withdraw the notice and enter in to negotiations for JCUK to remain in the building on new terms which will include negotiation on recovery of affordable contribution to the Council's costs going forward and unlock the potential for future funding whilst making sure that any future plans (not yet known) for the building would not be fettered.

SCC will continue to look at how it ensures access to the wider archive of the museums and galleries can be realised. Continuing to look at long term planning and wider opportunities from national bodies to help the service and increase its capacity to display the internationally significant archive that it holds.

5 Options

- 5.1. Revert the decision to service notice on JCUK and agree a new service level agreement for the organisation to remain within its current position at the Beecroft Museum (recommended)
- 5.2. Continue with the current notice period and require Jazz Centre UK to vacate the premises as per the current notice.
- 5.3. Continue with the current notice but allow continued occupancy for up to 12 months or until a viable alternative can be found within that period..

6 Financial Implications

- 6.1. The current arrangements will continue in relation to rent, which will mean a continuation of a rent-free position for the occupation of the premises. This sum is circa £15k per annum.
- 6.2. JCUK have already agreed to contribute to costs for residing in the space going forward and these negotiations will continue. This will mitigate costs to the council going forward and ensure that the direct subsidy is minimised.

7 Legal Implications

- 7.1. The withdrawal of the notice is at the discretion of the Council, as is the grant of any new occupational agreement.

8 Carbon Impact

8.1. Neutral

9 Equalities

9.1. N/A

10 Consultation

10.1. This is in response to the petition and following consultation with the new Cabinet members. Initial discussions have been had with JCUK.

11 Appendices

11.1. None