



PART B: RECOMMENDATIONS TO COUNCIL

REPORT TO: POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

DATE: 4 FEBRUARY 2021

**REPORT OF THE: PROGRAMME DIRECTOR FOR ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT, BUSINESS AND PARTNERSHIPS
PHILLIP SPURR**

**TITLE OF REPORT: MILTON ROOMS PROGRESS REPORT, AND GRANT
REQUEST**

WARDS AFFECTED: ALL

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To present the Milton Rooms Working Party interim report summary.
- 1.2 To present the Business Plan of the Milton Rooms Committee covering the period 2020-2023.
- 1.3 To request a decision on a capital grant proposal from the Milton Rooms to support building improvements as part of strategic developments.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION(S)

2.1 It is recommended that:

- (i) Progress against the Milton Rooms Working Party interim report set out in sections 6.3 – 6.6 is noted at P+R committee.
- (ii) The Business Plan of the Milton Rooms Committee covering the period 2020-2023 is noted at P+R committee.
- (ii) P+R recommends to council that it gives approval for capital funding of up to £193k to fund works outlined in section 6.11, subject to receipt of detailed plans, with delegated authority given to the programme director to release the funds on a phased basis, in consultation with the chairman of P+R Committee.

3.0 REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)

- 3.1 The Milton Rooms Working Party Final Report (March 2020) recommended that an interim report be produced which provides an update on progress made towards the concluding recommendations. The recommendations were originally approved by P&R on 19th March 2020.
- 3.2 The Milton Rooms Working Party Final Report (March 2020) stated that the Milton Rooms Committee would like their forthcoming Business Plan to be presented to RDC This Business Plan has since been developed further by the new board of trustees and addresses key strategic areas for improvement. It is responsive to the recommendations made in the Milton Rooms Working Party Report.
- 3.2 The grant request by the Milton Rooms Committee is to cover key capital projects at the venue which are designed to improve the facilities, enhance public access and support the developments outlined in the business plan. The works outlined would provide a sound investment in the building infrastructure.

4.0 SIGNIFICANT RISKS

- 4.1 The Milton Rooms trustees regard the works outlined in the grant bid as a key aspect of their development and recovery post-Covid. They seek funding from RDC as landlord to support these building developments which they anticipate will be instrumental as part of their financial recovery. Without agreement of financial support there is concern that they will not be able to progress with the development plans for the site and attract the audiences necessary to become financially viable. Officers believe this investment would provide improved facilities throughout the building providing a sound basis for business development and use in the long term.
- 4.2 There is a risk that any continued and long term impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and consequent restrictions on venues operating normally, could mean that the Milton Rooms Charity struggle to sustain the venue. A robust business plan and operating model will mitigate these risks for the Milton Rooms Committee.

5.0 POLICY CONTEXT AND CONSULTATION

- 5.1 From November 2019, the Milton Rooms Working Party met once a month over a period of five months, to explore and discuss the current operations and management of the venue. A number of interested parties were invited to share their feedback on the venue, its operations and suggestions for improvement. The trustees of the Milton Rooms also attended.
- 5.2 The Working Party sessions concluded in March 2020 with a final report on the outcomes of the meetings. The report contained a series of recommendations for the Milton Rooms which were developed from the discussions and feedback obtained from the sessions into an action plan. A request was made by the Milton Rooms trustees for RDC to have sight of the new Milton Rooms Business Plan. It was also agreed that a report summarising relevant updates as per the recommendations be submitted to outline progress.
- 5.4 In respect of the grant request, the Working Party report also contained reference to building improvements and stipulated that these are achieved with support from and partnership with RDC, but which would be considered on a case by case basis.

- 5.5 The Council Plan 2020-2024 highlights the ambition to support Ryedale's Creative Industries and expand the cultural offer. Investment in the building improvements outlined would support that aim and widen opportunities for business and audience development, as well as helping to build a financially sustainable community venue.
- 5.6 The Milton Rooms trustees and Venue Manager have also contributed feedback to the consultants working on the North Yorkshire Cultural Strategy and will be developing their programming using feedback from Ryedale's own cultural consultation which supports the Ryedale Cultural Action Plan.

REPORT

6.0 REPORT DETAILS

Milton Rooms Working Party Recommendations:

- 6.1 The Milton Rooms Working Party was set up in October 2019 (first meeting in November 2019) to assess the current governance and operation of the venue and to work with the Milton Rooms trustees to make recommendations for a sustainable and financially viable way forward. The Working Party meetings were attended by a range of invited guests from a range of backgrounds who had some experience of using or managing the venue and who shared their views on how the site could be developed.
- 6.2 A report was produced once the Working Party sessions had completed which detailed the evidence gathered and contained a series of recommendations. The following key recommendation categories were covered:
- 'Operations and Management',
 - 'Maintenance',
 - 'Malton Museum', and
 - 'Support from RDC'.
- 6.3 Since then progress has been made and developments are continuing. These include:
- Recruitment of a number of new trustees to the board with a range of expertise.
 - Fire safety review
 - A new two year licence negotiated with Malton Museum to occupy the subscription rooms
 - Discussion to develop project with Malton Museum and others for Arts Council funding bid.
 - Revision of volunteer policies and procedures and recruitment of new volunteers.
 - Discussions to expand and diversify the programming with some scheduled new acts
 - Meeting held with arts development agency to consider partnerships and funding opportunities.
- 6.4 The Milton Rooms are being supported by RDC's Arts and Events Officer who is working with the Trustees and Venue Manager to help identify opportunities, develop arts programming and networking for partnership opportunities. This has included to date
- introductions to music promoters for possible performances in 2021,
 - a collaborative opportunity being developed with Orchestra's North and North Yorkshire Music Action Zone for an early years music programme in summer 2021,
 - introductions to the arts development agency Arcade to explore options for a

collaborative bid to the Arts Council incorporating Malton Museum.

- 6.5 Feedback on the events that have taken place in periods when Covid-secure performances were allowed to go ahead has been very good and encouraging. Positive feedback has been received from the public on the events themselves as well as positive feedback on the new operations from the performers and acts themselves.
- 6.6 The following key developments at the Milton Rooms throughout 2020 should also be noted, which demonstrate their willingness to develop the site collaboratively and strategically:
- a strategic approach to programming developed through community and professional consultation
 - volunteer and staff development through implementation of new policies and procedures
 - a new business plan addressing key areas of strategic development
 - development of community networks across the district and programming for local groups
 - a renewed effort to work collaboratively both locally and regionally

Milton Rooms Business Plan:

- 6.7 The Working Party recommendations included the development of a Milton Rooms Business Plan by the Committee. A first draft was outlined in the summer 2020 but since the recruitment of new trustees this has been reviewed and updated by them. It was agreed this would be shared with RDC for information.
- 6.8 The Business Plan takes in to account the recommendations in the Working Party Report and details proposed developments for the next 2-3 years. This includes, developments and improvements to the governance and management of the site, a revised membership programme, improved volunteer recruitment and management, a diversified arts programme and the development of a range of business opportunities.
- 6.9 The Milton Rooms Committee plan to make use of data and feedback from the Ryedale culture consultation survey (completed October/November 2020) which should help support strategic programming.
- 6.10 The Business Plan has been developed to strategically consider all aspects of the venue and its potential but is realistic in its ambitions. The development of key policies and actions relating to the volunteer team, the responsiveness to the recommendations made by the Working Party and the open willingness to work with partners and explore opportunities demonstrates a strong strategic direction for the site.

Grant Request:

- 6.11 The Milton Rooms Committee's Business Plan identifies areas for capital improvements which would improve the facilities and provide greater opportunity for audience engagement and community use. This supports the plans the venue has for developing new income streams and providing multifunctional community spaces for event use such as wedding receptions. The areas identified for improvements are:
- Toilet refurbishment throughout, new disabled toilet and baby changing facility, wheelchair accessible lift from foyer to basement (Total cost £93,723.69)
 - New Sink to Bar area to provide new hand wash basin (Total £1,247.52)

- New Kitchen facilities to Assembly Rooms (Total £9,270.86)
 - Refurbishment of Main Hall including plasterwork, painting, floor resurfacing and improvements to stage steps (Total £18,080)
 - Black out curtains/blinds for building (Total £14,800.00)
 - Refurbishment of main Kitchen off the bar area (£10,000)
 - Wheelchair ramp from foyer to main hall (£535)
 - New Professional lighting rig and lanterns (£20,000)
 - New heating system/heaters for main hall (£25,000)
- Total identified costs: £192,657.07

- 6.12 Details of the identified works have been sought and itemised in the attached grant request.
- 6.13 Feedback from the public has consistently referenced the poor state of the toilets, that they are shabby and smelly and that many are put off from using the venue due to this. Members of the public have also referenced the main hall, that is unwelcoming and in need of redecoration.
- 6.14 Other developments in the grant request are all aimed at improving the visitor experience, improving the venues ability to better engage audiences, widening the potential for community use and improving general public access. The developments will support the Milton Rooms' drive to be a sustainable community venue, and respond to the venue's business and community development plans and the recommendations made in the Working Party Report.

Potential Council Investment:

- 6.15 RDC had previously ring-fenced £340,000 as match funding towards a Milton Rooms grant bid to the National Lottery Heritage Fund in 2017. This bid was unsuccessful and the money has since been moved back into the council's reserves. It is confirmed that while not ring-fenced for the Milton Rooms any more it is still available to request for other projects. The Milton Rooms would like to request part of these funds (£193,000) from the council's reserves to support these identified improvements.
- 6.16 In terms of any requests for work from RDC outside of obligatory maintenance work, the Working Party Report states '*Requests from the Milton Rooms Committee for RDC to fund maintenance or improvement capital works outside of the terms of the sublease should be determined by RDC members on a case by case basis, on the same terms as other venues in the district, and only upon receipt of full plans and rationale from the operator.*' (p.26). This request is presented as one such case.
- 6.17 This investment support if offered will have multiple benefits for the whole district as well as the Milton Rooms itself:
- It could help attract further external funding from external funders to help support the arts development and community work.
 - Investment in the facilities will support the Milton Rooms' income generation plans through diversifying activity, audience development and community use.
 - In addition to developing their arts programming, the Milton Rooms wants to develop the site to provide spacious and accessible community spaces for a wide range of use by organisations and community groups across Ryedale. This investment will support these aims.
 - The improvements would also create opportunities to develop partnerships with local businesses in Ryedale and support the site to develop its commercial offer.

6.18 Investing in the works outlined, would therefore support the arts development opportunities for Malton and the district and provide multifunctional spaces and a fully accessible building available for the whole Ryedale.

6.19 A decision is requested on whether the P&R committee will approve the request for funds to go to full council.

7.0 IMPLICATIONS

7.1 The following implications have been identified:

a) Financial:

£193,000, to cover the cost of the works identified in the grant request. This amount has been set out in the proposed Capital Programme in the revised Financial Strategy, subject to Council approval.

b) Legal

The grant being requested is for works outside of the maintenance remit of the sub-lease between the Milton Rooms and RDC. If all or part of the financial request is granted, the legal team can draw up a grant agreement with approved terms and conditions. If requested any grant conditions could be presented to committee for sign off before the award was made.

c) Other (Equalities, Staffing, Planning, Health & Safety, Environmental, Crime & Disorder)

All necessary health and safety protocols to be followed if the works outlined in the grant request are to go ahead. These can be outlined in the terms and conditions of any grant awarded.

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Background Papers:

Milton Rooms Draft Business Plan and Grant Request

Background Papers are available for inspection at:

Location or web address