

Agenda item 10 – Funding considerations

Text of an e-mail from John Spann, Manager, Avenue Theatre, Sittingbourne to Councillor Ken Rowles dated 06/12/20

Following our recent conversation the current financial situation at the theatre is as follows.

We received our target figure of £1000 from our recent crowd funding appeal. This was very heartening, and did show that we are valued in the community. In addition we gained another £800 in refunds from licences etc from the Christmas show we had to cancel. A major relief was the extension of the furlough scheme, given that one of our major regular outgoings was to our administrator, Alison.

We do have about £1000 of ticket money for the cancelled show and we do not know yet how many people will request a refund.

Our main problem is that even if we are allowed to open, then until social distancing is stopped we can only get a maximum of 20 in the auditorium, which means that the theatre is totally uneconomic, and the cinema will at best break even

Whilst we believe we can now manage our resources to enable us to reopen when allowed, I believe it would be imprudent to embark on capital spend, and leave us open if unexpected items turn up, **like the new roof leak that has just been reported at the entrance to the auditorium!!** As it would be an ideal time to do this when we are closed, if any help is available, it would be very welcome.

As you are aware we had embarked on a program of maintenance and renewal on what was a 30 year old installation. We re-prioritised some of this due to Covid, specifically overhauling the toilets and installing new equipment to make them hands free, as well as providing all the necessary equipment to make us COVID secure.

As a result our plan to overhaul lighting throughout the premises, installing LED's and new control equipment, had to be put on hold. This includes replacement of old fittings in bar, where we also need to check for water damage from the leaking roof, auditorium house lights which are not up to modern standards, and the corridors and ancillary rooms replacing 30 year old tube fittings. Preliminary costings give a figure of up to £3000 for equipment and we are planning to use mainly volunteer labour wherever possible. It can be done in phases which would spread the cost where necessary. We did change a number of the stage lights to LED some time ago and this work will also significantly reduce energy demands.

As it would be an ideal time to do this when we are closed, if any help is available, it would be very welcome.

John Spann