



Award of Contract - Guildhall Arts Centre Pantomime

Report Author

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Purpose of Report

To award a contract to the successful bidder following a compliant procurement exercise

Recommendations

That Cabinet:

- 1. Approve the award of the Guildhall Arts Centre pantomime contract to Polka Dot Pantomimes for a period of one year with the potential to extend for a maximum of three further years.**
- 2. To delegate any potential extension of the contract for a maximum of three further years to the Assistant Director – Leisure, Culture and Place, in consultation with the relevant Cabinet Member.**

Decision Information

| | |
|---|------------------------|
| Is this a Key Decision? | Yes |
| Does the report contain any exempt or confidential information not for publication? | No |
| What are the relevant corporate priorities? | Connecting Communities |
| Which wards are impacted? | Grantham Wards |

1. Implications

Taking into consideration implications relating to finance and procurement, legal and governance, risk and mitigation, health and safety, diversity and inclusion, safeguarding, staffing, community safety, mental health and wellbeing and the impact on the Council's declaration of a climate change emergency, the following implications have been identified:

Finance and Procurement

- 1.1 The Council's annual spend on the pantomime at the Guildhall Arts Centre is approximately £80k per annum. However, this cost is offset by the income from the ticket sales for the pantomime which makes an overall operating surplus. In line with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules a procurement exercise has been undertaken to identify a preferred supplier to provide the service for a maximum of four years. This includes an initial contract period of one year with the potential to extend for a maximum three further years.

Completed by: Richard Wyles, Deputy Chief Executive and s151 Officer

Procurement

- 1.2 A compliant procurement process has been followed to identify a preferred supplier for the pantomime at the Guildhall Arts Centre. The process has been supported by Welland Procurement and was conducted in accordance with best practice and the Public Contract Regulations 2015. The principles of transparency, equity and fairness have been adhered to throughout the process.

Completed by: Helen Baldwin (Procurement Lead)

Legal and Governance

- 1.3 A compliant procurement exercise has been undertaken and the recommended action is in line with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules.

Due to the urgency of obtaining a decision, the Chairman of Council has agreed that any decision Cabinet takes would not need to be subject to the call-in process. The notice can be found at:

<https://moderngov.southkesteven.gov.uk/ecSDDisplay.aspx?NAME=SD452&ID=452&RPID=13311401>

Completed by: James Welbourn, Democratic Services Manager and Deputy Monitoring Officer

Safeguarding

- 1.4 Within the contract specification the Council's requirements in relation to safeguarding have been set out. As part of the tender exercise the responders were asked to provide detailed information on how they would satisfy these requirements and provide further assurance to the Council on their own Safeguarding Policy and arrangements.

Completed by: Sarah McQueen, Head of Service (Housing) and Safeguarding Lead for SKDC

2. Background to the Report

- 2.1. Within the Council's Corporate Plan (2024 – 2027) the Council has set a vision to be 'A thriving district to live in, work and visit.' To underpin this vision the key priority of Connecting Communities details the Council's ambition to deliver and facilitate a sustainable cultural offer.
- 2.2. The Guildhall Arts Centre in Grantham has a track record for delivering a professional high-quality pantomime during the festive period which has historically been well supported. This offer forms part of the Council's commitment to provide cultural experiences that residents can be proud of, and its ambition to improve pride of place, raise aspirations, prioritise the health and social wellbeing of residents, and contribute to the growth of the district.
- 2.3. A tender exercise has been undertaken to secure a suitably qualified and experienced provider to co-produce the annual pantomime at the Guildhall Arts Centre for a maximum period of four years.
- 2.4. The contract specification requests a minimum of 60 performances during a period covering late November to early January and includes provision for a number of relaxed performances and British Sign Language interpreted performances.
- 2.5. The successful contractor will be contractually required to work collaboratively with the arts centre to market the pantomime, to ensure maximum visibility and to support uptake of tickets. The contract fee to be paid will be a split of the box office returns less pre-agreed costs.
- 2.6. A total of six tenders were received and evaluated on a 70% quality and 30% price split. Following independent evaluation and moderation, the successful tenderer is Polka Dot Pantomimes.

3. Key Considerations

- 3.1. The annual pantomime run at the Guildhall Arts Centre generates a significant amount of income for the Council and generates over 10,000 ticket sales during the festive period. In addition, the pantomime generates a non-traditional theatre audience and provides the potential to market other shows and encourage repeat visits.
- 3.2. Historically the key dates sell out very early with some customers booking a year in advance. Therefore, it is imperative that the 2025/26 pantomime is put on sale as soon as possible to benefit from advance sales.

4. Other Options Considered

- 4.1 The Council has the option to do nothing and continue to procure the pantomime on an annual basis. However, entering a contract with a provider secures the pantomime for a longer period, thus protecting a significant revenue stream and the Council's reputation.

5. Reasons for the Recommendations

- 5.1. Cabinet is requested to approve the award of contract following a compliant procurement exercise.