

MEETING: 23/09/2015

Ref: 12844

ASSESSMENT CATEGORY - Making London More Inclusive

Bush Theatre

Amount requested: £54,600

Amount recommended: £54,600

Adv: Sandra Jones

Base: Hammersmith & Fulham

Benefit: London-wide

The Charity

The Bush Theatre, the trading name of the Alternative Theatre Company, is widely acknowledged as a home for new plays and as a champion of playwrights. It is a writers' theatre in that it commissions new work and provides support, script-writing services and development programmes. After 40 years of delivering its mission from above a pub in Shepherd's Bush Green, in 2011 the theatre moved to a new home in Old Shepherd's Bush Library.

The Application

Moving into the new premises has required major capital works to make the Library suitable for hosting a theatre. The initial phase of works has been completed, and Phase 2 will develop the building to incorporate best practice in operational and audience provision, including disabled access. This request is for funds to install a lift to ensure that the entire building is fully wheelchair accessible.

The Recommendation

In order to make the theatre fully accessible, the Bush Theatre commissioned an independent access audit with funding from your Committee. All recommendations from the access audit have been incorporated into Phase 2 and include a lift to all floors of the building. The organisation is genuine in its commitment to providing access to the widest possible range of people.

£54,600 towards the cost of installing a lift as part of Phase 2 of the capital project.

Funding History

Meeting Date	Decision
29/01/2015	£3,711 to commission an independent access audit to inform the redevelopment of the Old Library building.

Background and detail of proposal

The new Bush Theatre building was developed in Phase 1 as a single central auditorium, with front foyer spaces and rear dressing room. In the basement are bar cellar and services; the first floor contains offices and toilets; and the top floor roof space has a rehearsal space and some additional storage. Currently wheelchair access to the theatre is via the rear studio ramp and then through the auditorium, which limits the use of the building for wheelchair users when events block the use of the auditorium to cross from the accessible entrance.

To make access to the building better, the entrance will be moved to connect with the existing foyer, and this combined with a new terrace level will mean that the foyer can be entered from the level through a pair of new automatic doors.

In order to access the basement, ground, first and second floors a platform lift will be installed next to the main stair area. This was felt to be the most appropriate type of lift as it allows a user access to all of the floors, whereas a passenger lift would only be able to provide access for the ground and first floor due to the need for a pit and overrun. All costs in the application relate to the installation of the lift, with other elements identified by the access audit being funded through other sources.

Financial Information

Total forecast income in the current year is £2,664k, of which £1,385k (52%) had been confirmed by August. The charity states that box office, bar, room hire and other income targets earned throughout the year are based on previous years.

The charity advised it holds a biennial fundraising gala of which the last was held in 2013/14 and results in fluctuations in operations year on year. Income raised from the gala is set aside for following years, which partly explains the higher level of unrestricted free reserves held at 31st March 2014.

Its reserves policy is to hold free unrestricted funds of £155k which is based on two months' worth of core costs i.e. salaried staff and fixed costs. The charity advised that other expenditure is incurred in relation to specific productions which vary from year to year and may or may not take place.

Year end at 31 March	2013/14 Audited Accounts £	2014/15 Forecast Outturn £	2015/16 Current Year Forecast £
Income and Expenditure			
Income	2,566,387	1,800,226	2,664,097
Expenditure	2,111,443	1,940,693	2,318,719
Unrestricted Funds Surplus / (Deficit)	308,892	(139,711)	(189,988)
Restricted Funds Surplus / (Deficit)	146,052	7,253	535,366
Total Surplus / (Deficit)	454,944	(132,458)	345,378
Surplus / (Deficit) as a % of turnover	17.7%	(7.4%)	13.0%
Cost of Generating funds (% of income)	477,213 (18.6%)		
Free unrestricted reserves			
Free unrestricted reserves held at Year End	498,471	381,080	191,092
How many months' worth of expenditure	2.8	2.4	1.0
Reserves Policy target	130,000	155,000	155,000
How many months' worth of expenditure	0.7	1.0	0.8
Free reserves over/(under) target	368,471	226,080	36,092