

Report to:	Environment and Neighbourhood Committee	Date:	26 January 2017
Report title:	Petition: Save Sutton's Theatres		
Report from:	Tolis Vouyioukas, Strategic Director - People		
Ward/Areas affected:	Borough Wide		
Chair of Committee/Lead Member:	Councillor Jill Whitehead		
Author(s)/Contact Number(s):	Jan Underhill, Executive Head of Wellbeing, 020 8770 4359		
Corporate Plan Priorities:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An Open Council • A Fair Council • A Smart Council 		
Open/Exempt:	Open		
Signed:		Date:	13 January 2017

1. Summary

- 1.1 To consider a petition from Tony Monblat, on the subject Save Sutton's Theatres, as submitted to Councillor Ruth Dombey via Change.org on 29 November 2016.

2. Recommendations

The Environment and Neighbourhoods Committee is recommended to:

- 2.1 Consider the petition and determine the appropriate course of action as set out in the options section of this report.

3. Background

- 3.1 Councillor Ruth Dombey submitted a petition, on behalf of Tony Monblat, which has been referred to this committee for consideration.

- 3.2 The petition has 1356 signatures and the petition prayer is set out below:

Sutton's two theatres represent the cultural lifeblood of the borough. Between them they have provided space both for big touring productions and local amateur shows. One of them was



actually brought into being by Lib Dem Councillors in the early 1990s. They are a much loved and treasured part of the community, and had been gaining a new lease of life recently with record attendance numbers especially for the stand-up comedy shows. We call upon you at Sutton Council to take over the running of the theatres, as you have done previously, so that the arts can again thrive in the borough.

- 3.3 In accordance with Part 4E of the Council's Constitution, Scheme for dealing with petitions and e-petitions, the spokesperson may talk to the petition for up to 5 minutes and the petition will then be debated.

4. Issues

- 4.1 Detailed consultation with residents and theatre groups regarding the future of Sutton theatres took place following the Environment and Neighbourhood Committee meeting of 4 September 2014. In the context of the considerable savings targets set by the government, the Council could not prioritise services which it had no legal duty to provide, including theatres, which were heavily subsidised. At that Committee, a decision was taken to invite outline business cases from organisations interested in taking over the running of theatres from the Council. At its meeting of 6 November 2014, the Environment and Neighbourhood Committee noted that, if a successful bidder went into liquidation during the lease period, the theatres would revert back to the Council for consideration of future use. Following a procurement process, the theatres transferred to a limited company, Sutton Theatres Trust, in June 2015. This company went into liquidation on 11 August 2016 and the theatre buildings were handed back to the Council on 14 October 2016.
- 4.2 The Council went out to the market for a second time and in the context of Council Committee decisions already taken. Expressions of interest in the commercial leases for the two former theatre buildings were invited. These buildings are designated as suitable for community use. Six expressions of interest were received and further discussions took place with interested parties. The bids are still being assessed. No viable bids for the leases on the buildings were received.

5. Options Considered

- 5.1 The two buildings were offered to the market with the aim of establishing the viability of a community/cultural use in them. Implicit in this process is that a variety of options will be put forward for the future use of these buildings.

6. Impacts and Implications

Financial

- 6.1 None arising directly from the report and any implications will be considered as part of the final local plan report.

Legal

- 6.2 None arising directly from the report and any implications will be considered as part of the final local plan report.

7. Appendices and Background Documents

Appendix letter	Title
N/A	

Background documents
Petition

Audit Trail		
Version	Final	Date: 12 January 2017
Consultation with other officers		
Finance	No	N/A
Legal	No	N/A
Equality Impact Assessment required?	No	N/A

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