
Report to

Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee

14th July 2010

Report of

Councillor John Blundell

Title

Report Back on the Work Of Outside Bodies – Belgrade Theatre Trust 2009-2010

1 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 At their meeting on 10th May, 2005, the Cabinet approved a process of reporting back to the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee on the work of those outside bodies appointed to by the City Council. This reports sets out details of the work of Belgrade Theatre Trust (Coventry) Limited over the preceding twelve months and details of attendance by the City Council's representatives.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 I recommend that Coventry City Council continue to appoint two Councillors to the Board of Belgrade Theatre Trust.

3 Information on Work of Outside Body

- 3.1 The Belgrade reopened in September 2007 after an 18month closure while the £14 million Capital Project was undertaken.
- 3.2 With the reopening the Belgrade has sought to establish itself as a major producing house and create a programme of work that could not be found in any other regional theatre and therefore attract the country's leading artists and develop audiences.
- 3.3 To this end between September 2007 & March 2008 there were 8 home produced shows to huge national acclaim. In particular 'Scenes from a Marriage' (which was supposed to transfer to the West End but logistical difficulties prevented this) and 'One Night in November' which was revived November 2008 and is due to transfer into the Main Stage November 2010. 2008/09 saw a large drop in activity while the Theatre adjusted to dealing with the higher overhead costs of a larger organisation (only four home produced shows, and B2 not operational for much of the year) but 2009/10 and 2010/11 sees the Theatre increasing its activity to 7 home produced shows and B2 operational for much of the year. This has been achieved in part by developing new sources of income and increasing audiences but also requires the Theatre to draw on some of its reserves. The Theatre also won an Arts Council Sustain Award to support its work during these two years. The Theatre has just reported record audience figures for its 2009/10 activity.
- 3.4 Community and Education work continues to be a major part of the Belgrade's work. Work Programmes of the in house youth theatre, with its pioneering 2 year project 'Acting Out'

that is delivering in partnership with the Local Authority and the outreach youth theatres in Canley, Tile Hill and Foleshill all delivering to improve the outcomes for young people.

The current financial climate continues to pose its problems and the theatre suffered a drop in box office income and a reduction in income from sponsorship and trusts. In order to combat this and generate income for the future the theatre has produced 2 significant new income streams (Events and Conferencing and Belgrade Production Services) that are forecast to contribute nearly three times more in ancillary income than the pre capital project. These however are not sufficient to allow the Theatre to deliver a balanced budget, leaving the level of producing, how many weeks B2 can be open and the work of Community and Education projects, in particular, under threat. For 2010/11, a balanced budget has been achieved with the Theatre drawing on a limited level of reserves and through the Arts Council Sustain Award. Plans for 2011/12 will not have the benefit of the Arts Council Sustain Award and threatens a significant reduction in the Theatre's activities.

4 Benefits to the City Council of the Appointment

- 4.1 Coventry City Council is a major sponsor of the Belgrade, which is a significant contributor of the cultural life of the city and an important vehicle to deliver educational programmes.

5 Attendance Record and Remuneration for the Appointment

- 5.1 Coventry City Council's representatives on the Belgrade Theatre Trust are Councillors Blundell (from May 2009), Councillor Khan (from May, 2009). During the period of May, 2009 to March, 2010 inclusive 7 Board of Director meetings took place, of which Councillor Blundell attended 6 and Councillor Khan 2.
- 5.2 There is no remuneration for the appointment.

List of background papers

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Papers open to Public Inspection

Description of paper

Schedule of City Council Appointments to Outside Bodies

Location Council House, Room 59