Contents

Introduction  3
Methodology  4
Results  5
Findings and Summary  7
Introduction

It builds upon the evidence base that already exists that includes:

1. Social Impact Research on the Regal Theatre undertaken by the Ark Consultancy which was commissioned by Mid Suffolk District Council and involved 158 local people;

2. The Vision for Prosperity for Stowmarket Local Consultation which was led by Mid Suffolk District Council involving over 400 local people; and

3. Targeted stakeholder engagement about the project by Stowmarket Town Council involving consultation with:
   - A focus group of theatre users
   - Stowmarket Operatic and Dramatic Society
   - Stowmarket Chamber of Commerce
   - The Mix
   - Red Gables
   - Mid Suffolk Disability Forum
   - Three and a Half Roads Residents’ Group
   - The Stowmarket Society

This document provides details of the community consultation that has been undertaken by Stowmarket Town Council during the summer of 2019. It seeks to capture and summarise the views expressed by local people about the Regal Theatre Redevelopment Project.

The latest round of consultation has been conducted prior to final decisions being taken about funding the project, obtaining planning consent and deciding the interior design, seating and refreshments offer to be provided at the venue. It provides useful insight into the hopes and expectations of the local community and confirms that there is a high level of support for the project.
The Town Council has been eager to ensure that it keeps local people informed about the project and has implemented a range of measures to achieve this.

It has produced newsletters, periodically, about the project which have been published on its website and also a funding factsheet.

It has published a 12 page consultation document to support the consultation process. This has been available in paper format with over 1,000 copies having been produced and has also been available for viewing on the Town Council’s website.

Every household in the town has received a booklet of summer events in the town which has contained notification of a public engagement event at the Regal Theatre on Sunday, 21st July, 2019. This event was attended by over 200 people.

An information film has been produced by the Town Council about the project which has been shown at the Regal Theatre before all performances during the consultation period.

Social media has been used to promote the consultation and explained how to get involved either:

a. Electronically via use of Survey Monkey; or

b. By paper copy with copies of the consultation document and survey form being available from the following venues:
   - The Regal Theatre
   - The John Peel Centre for Creative Arts
   - Cedars Park Community Centre
   - Stowmarket Community Centre
   - Stowmarket Library
The consultation closed on Sunday, 1st September, 2019 by which time, the Town Council had received:

Survey forms via Survey Monkey

536

Survey forms in hard copy format

566

Total number of forms

1102

The responses to the questions were as follows:

1. How much change would you like to see at the Regal Theatre?

- None at all: 2.3%
- A minor refresh of the décor: 7.8%
- Some improvement to the facilities: 36.1%
- Significant improvement to the facilities: 53.8%

2. Please rate the following in terms of their importance to you:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>High</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Greater customer choice through 3 screens:</td>
<td>11.7%</td>
<td>32.6%</td>
<td>55.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access for all including those with disabilities</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
<td>18.7%</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sufficient toilet facilities</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>23.6%</td>
<td>74.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seats are comfortable</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
<td>17.3%</td>
<td>81.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audio &amp; visual experience</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
<td>21.7%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Café and refreshments</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>45.6%</td>
<td>44.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Options for online and box office ticketing</td>
<td>10.2%</td>
<td>39.3%</td>
<td>50.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer service</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>73.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local parking</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
<td>21.4%</td>
<td>69.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The survey results comprise 1102 responses to each of questions 1, 2, 3, 4, 6 & 7. The responses to question 5 comprise 764 responses from people living in Stowmarket. This is because the question about loan repayments (Q5) directly affects the people of Stowmarket who support, through Council Tax, the operation of Stowmarket Town Council.

3. How much do you like the proposals for the exterior of the redeveloped theatre?

- Not at all: 2.7%
- A small part of the proposals: 6.8%
- Most of the proposals: 33.9%
- All of the proposals: 56.6%

4. How much do you like the proposals for layout of the redeveloped theatre?

- Not at all: 2.5%
- A small part of the proposals: 6.8%
- Most of the proposals: 33.9%
- All of the proposals: 56.8%

5. Do you support the Town Council funding the project for the town which will include borrowing £1 million to deliver the project?

- Yes: 94.2%
- No: 5.8%

6. Are you in favour of the Regal Theatre Redevelopment project going ahead?

- Yes: 95.7%
- No: 4.3%

7. Will you use the Regal after it is improved?

- Yes: 99.5%
- No: 0.5%
Findings and Summary

Findings

- There is a high level of community support for the redevelopment of the Regal Theatre with 95.7% of respondents wishing to see the project go ahead.
- There is a high level of community support for the Town Council obtaining a £1 million loan for the project with 94.2% of respondents in the IP14 post code area supporting this proposal.
- All or most of the proposals for the exterior of the theatre are liked by 90.5% of respondents.
- All or most of the proposals for the interior of the theatre are liked by 90.7% of respondents.
- There is a high level of community support for the Regal Theatre Redevelopment Project with 99.5% of respondents saying that they would use the Regal after it has been redeveloped.

Summary

The Regal Theatre is a popular local attraction which has had close to 70,000 admissions over the past year. Stowmarket Town Council and Mid Suffolk District Council wish to invest in its future success as part of a range of actions for the development of the town which have been included within the Vision for Prosperity for Stowmarket.

The objective of the project is to provide a first class entertainment venue for the local community in Stowmarket and across Mid Suffolk. Therefore, lying at the heart of this project has been a determination on the part of the funding partners, to engage with local people, find out their views and reflect their ideas in the proposals for the theatre.

The results of this consultation provide evidence of the extent of community support that exists for the redevelopment of the Regal Theatre:

- They provide important feedback about what the community would like to see.
- They confirm that there is community support for the funding arrangements.
- They also suggest that the community will use the theatre after it has been redeveloped.

On the basis of this consultation, it is recommended that the following steps are taken:

1. That the Town Council seeks borrowing approval from the Secretary of State for a £1 million loan from Mid Suffolk District Council to complete the funding package for the project; and

2. That subject to the receipt of this approval, a contractor is appointed to proceed with the build phase of the project.