



The Rose Theatre Commercial Discussion Document

Background

Since Covid 19 the landscape of the arts has changed considerably. There is a need to be relevant, resilient, proactive and innovative in order to sustain the Rose Theatre as a viable business.

In the past 3 years work has been done to upgrade the furniture in the bar area, decorate the walls in the bar area, hold a variety of events to draw in fresh crowds eg Exhibitions, Theatre Seasons etc. These activities have all had a positive impact but there is a need to continue developing the offering to the public and encouraging all ages through the theatre doors.

In looking at avenues to increase revenue, improve profile and usage, options have been looked at that could be put into action almost immediately, to both test our business opportunities on the local markets and increase revenue as soon as possible.

Unfortunately, we have incurred significant unforeseen maintenance costs over the past months due to significant damage and wear and tear on an old building, however, to compete with other local establishments, we do need to improve our offering.

Our core objectives for the theatre are:

- Focus on building a long-term future for the Rose Theatre
- Improve our representation locally and with the diversity of theatre and the performing arts on offer to the local community
- Source funding and income generation
- Support digital developments and changes to working practices
- Support both touring and regional productions, giving a wide variety of options
- Be a trusted and knowledgeable voice in the community
- Devise, deliver and support research and analysis to build audiences
- Provide a quality training programme from industry professionals for all staff

Whilst keeping all of the above in mind, the following are discussion topics around ideas which will meet those core objectives.



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Shakespeare Festival

Recognising the importance of increasing income and sustaining the Rose Theatre as a viable business, has prompted us to start investigating potential revenue streams by adding commercial options to our annual calendar.

Last week we met with a representative of The Walking Theatre Company to discuss the possibility of offering a Shakespeare Festival designed to support the GSCE/A Level Curriculum for local High Schools.

This would take the format of an immersive theatre experience, encouraging participation from the audience and supporting their curriculum learning, which would therefore be more likely to encourage buy in from schools.

We could also offer a supporting workshop to work in tandem with the performance during the same day. The strategy would be to split content into five different areas or approaches to teaching Shakespeare

Cultural approaches - Find out how Shakespeare comes to life on stage and in film by exploring art, design, costumes and other historical objects

Themes - Engage with some of the playwright's universal themes, including conflict and the supernatural, and discover how they can still be relevant today.

Context - Learn about life in Elizabethan times to consider how it might have shaped Shakespeare's work.

Genre - Discover how conventions, stock characters and themes developed across the broad genres of Shakespeare's plays.

Plays - Explore Shakespeare's most widely taught plays with this selection of creative materials and practical approaches.

We have opened communication with The Hart School as a starting point, to gauge their interest, but this is something that could be offered to all local High Schools, and work in tandem with the Literature/Performing Arts Curriculum for each school with the potential of becoming an annual festival event.

We are awaiting costings for this in its entirety but should there be an interest from The Hart School we could potentially offer multiple workshop days to different high schools and performances to support that learning.

The performance is also something which could be rolled out to the public if the interest is there and it is well supported.

Do Councillors support this way forward?



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Rose Bar

Increasing use of the bar area in the theatre is an opportunity. Giving it a name of its own – The Back Stage Bar, The Green Room or 'Palmers' – for example, will give it its own identity to be able to market it as an independent concern. It would also give us the opportunity to 'launch it', which would improve its profile and spike interest.

Objectives

Our overall objective is to increase footfall into the Bar/Coffee Shop area of the theatre and therefore increase revenue.

Quality

Our products should be of a good quality, but frugal, and managed sensibly, i.e. If we are looking at offering some warm food options, they should be able to be stored in a freezer and warmed up for use, rather than buying fresh stock and wasting it.

If we are competing as a Coffee shop the quality of the coffee and hot drinks on offer needs to compare to that which you can buy in other places in town.

The Theatre does not currently have a coffee machine and only sells instant coffee. Is there an opportunity to purchase / rent a commercial coffee making machine for the bar area?

Bar Menu

The ready mixed on tap cocktails weren't supported, however, we could add a couple of easy to make cocktails from existing long-life stock to add to our bar menu. This will be easy to achieve with some simple ingredients and open up our menu options, making the bar a more attractive option in the town.

The bars which have become popular in Rugeley in recent years are the ones which offer a wide selection of options to their customers, ie. a decent selection of cocktails, beers, bar food and many have now added entertainment.

Because of these options lots of people are staying local for nights out rather than going into Lichfield for example, and negotiating public transport. To be a viable contender, we must upscale our offerings.

To test the water, should we look at holding a one-off night, musical entertainment and specials on the bar, with a view to it becoming a regular option on certain non-theatre nights? What works well in the best bars?



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Open Mic nights

The bar space lends itself perfectly to more intimate open mic or music acts, we could look at offering these once a month on a Friday for example, with simple bar food available.

Councillors to consider planning one night to test the market and see if it is supported by locals, as per above.

Publicity

Something that has become very apparent from discussions with many local people, is that those that were not brought up in the area, do not know that Rugeley has a theatre. Signage is poor, and we do need to invest in banners such as the ones we have for the Artisan Markets advertising annual and regular events.

The Rose website is very outdated and does require an upgrade, but this is expensive. In the shorter term, a plan to increase engagement on the Rose Facebook page in line with the RTC Facebook page, will improve our online presence.

Cllrs to consider dedicating at least one full page to The Rose in each edition of the Rugeley Record Newsletter which goes to all households in Rugeley.

Children's Parties

We have 12 Primary Schools in the catchment area of The Hart School, our local High School. Parents are continually looking for venues to hold children's parties and also for entertainers.

By developing relationships with local entertainers we can collate a directory for Children's Parties and support their local businesses whilst they will be able to promote ours to their own customers.

We obviously also have catering facilities and Ruth Hall, a very keen member of the community who may be interested in supporting catering children's parties as an additional option.