

South Ayrshire Council

**Report by Assistant Director People
to Partnerships Panel
of 21 September 2022**

Subject: Ayr Gaiety Partnership Performance Report

1. Purpose

1.1 The purpose of this report is to invite members of the Panel to scrutinise the performance of the Ayr Gaiety Partnership (AGP).

2. Recommendation

2.1 It is recommended that the Panel considers the performance of the Ayr Gaiety Partnership in delivering the activities required as part of the agreement for Council funding.

3. Background

3.1 On 22 March 2012, the Council agreed to support a partnership between the Council, AGP and the University of the West of Scotland. As part of this agreement and working to lever in other external funding, AGP were asked to deliver:

- the theatre as a community resource and a performance and display space for local arts organisations;
- a centre of excellence for education and training;
- links with UWS to deliver an education programme and re-enforcement of Ayr as University town; and
- volunteering opportunities.

3.2 In December 2017, Council agreed a 3 year funding package for AGP:

- 2018/19 £125,000;
- 2019/20 £115,000; and
- 2020/21 £100,000.

3.3 In addition to this previously agreed financial support and due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Council agreed to provide £100,000 to the Gaiety Theatre from the Covid-19 Business Support discretionary fund plus a further £200,000 from Council general reserves.

3.4 The Council previously agreed a secured loan of £650,000 at a rate of 2.5% over 5 years. Given the unprecedented effects of the Covid-19 pandemic the Council agreed to amend the repayment terms and period of the loan. A payment holiday was in place until April 2022 and AGP is now making loan repayments on a monthly basis.

3.5 In March 2022, the Partnerships Panel discussed a funding request from AGP and referred the matter for consideration. A paper regarding the funding request is going to Cabinet in September 2022.

4. Proposals

4.1 The AGP is an important partner in delivering the Council's strategic objectives to increase access to arts and culture in South Ayrshire. Officers have been working with them on aligning their activities with the Council's strategic objectives and the vision, aims and objectives of the Tourism and Events Strategy. A summary of progress is set out in [Appendix 1](#).

5. Legal and Procurement Implications

5.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

5.2 There are no procurement implications arising from this report

6. Financial Implications

6.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

7. Human Resources Implications

7.1 Not applicable.

8. Risk

8.1 Risk Implications of Adopting the Recommendations

8.1.1 There are no risks associated with adopting the recommendations.

8.2 Risk Implications of Rejecting the Recommendations

8.2.1 There is a risk that rejecting the recommendations will mean that the Council misses the opportunity to scrutinise an external body that it provides funding to.

9. Equalities

9.1 The proposals in this report allow scrutiny of performance. The report does not involve proposals for policies, strategies, procedures, processes, financial decisions and activities (including service delivery), both new and at review, that affect the Council's communities and employees, therefore an equality impact assessment is not required.

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10. Sustainable Development Implications

- 10.1 **Considering Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)** - This report does not propose or seek approval for a plan, policy, programme or strategy or document otherwise described which could be considered to constitute a plan, programme, policy or strategy.

11. Options Appraisal

- 11.1 An options appraisal has not been carried out in relation to the subject matter of this report.

12. Link to Council Plan

- 12.1 The matters referred to in this report contribute to Commitments 4 and 6 of the Council Plan: South Ayrshire Works/ Make the most of the local economy; and A Better Place to Live/ Enhanced environment through social, cultural and economic activities.

13. Results of Consultation

- 13.1 There has been no public consultation on the contents of this report.
- 13.2 Consultation has taken place with Councillor Alec Clark, Portfolio Holder for Tourism and Rural Affairs, and the contents of this report reflects any feedback provided.

Background Papers **Report to Partnerships Panel of 23 March 2022 – [Ayr Gaiety Partnership Performance Report and Funding Request](#)**

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Ayr Gaiety Partnership Annual Report

This report summarises AGP activity and impacts over the financial year 2021-22. It provides the wider context of what the organisation delivers for the Council and notes current and planned activity in 2022-23.

Key results

During 2021-22 South Ayrshire Council provided additional support to enable Ayr Gaiety Partnership to continue to run The Gaiety theatre and to continue and extend its work in communities. Over the year, AGP delivered

1. Over £5 income for every £1 of Council support (50% of the usual ratio, due to Covid)
2. Over £100,000 of new money from the Scottish Government's Community Recovery Fund to 8 organisations responding to Covid
3. 14 permanent jobs retained
4. 110 freelancers employed
5. 22,000 audiences entertained
6. Around 1,000 people in the community engaged

South Ayrshire Council investment through the pandemic

In the first year of the pandemic, AGP was able to secure other emergency income and therefore avoided making any additional call on SAC in that period. . AGP worked with a range of local groups and charities working in the area to secure the following funding from the Scottish Government's Supporting Communities Fund and Community Recovery Fund. This was in response to requests from national agencies to assist in the process of getting emergency funding out to community based activity:

TOTAL	Supporting Communities Fund		Community Recovery Fund	
	Apr-20	Sep-20	Jan-21	Jul-21
£318,453	£128,991	£75,546	£35,676	£78,240

SAC provided increased funding of £200,000 to enable AGP to weather the second year of Covid impacts. SAC was also able to secure for AGP a further £100,000 in Covid-related recovery funding. AGP itself secured £1,031,000 from other sources over the period too, including some ticket sales but mainly other emergency grants and donations. The breakdown is as follows:

2021-22		
Adapt and Thrive	Grant to support planning for and implementing relaunch	£75,000
Culture Collective	Innovative creative engagement work with artists working in excluded communities	£197,000
Performing Arts Venues Relief Fund 2	Stay solvent, bring staff back from furlough & deliver a major programme of activity	£390,000
Donations	Various donations from individuals and private trusts	£50,000
Culture Cancellation Fund	Cover the costs of shows cancelled due to Covid over late 2021 and early 2022	£113,000

2021-22		
Recovery Fund for Cultural Organisations	To deliver new artistic projects, engaging freelancers and creating productions, with some to strengthen reserves	£206,000
	Total	£1,031,000

AGP's delivery over 2021-22

The main benefit of AGP activities is in delivering on the National Performance Framework Culture Outcome: *We are creative and our vibrant and diverse cultures are expressed and enjoyed widely.* The Government's Culture Strategy clarifies this further, *"Culture is central to who we are. It is Scotland's strength. This is why it must be valued first and foremost in and of itself – that is to say culture is worth more than any financial value that can be placed on it."* (Culture Secretary Fiona Hyslop).

In these terms AGP continued to deliver in South Ayrshire over 2021-22. The organisation's economic impact is usually greater than over this period – because much of the activity was in communities and online. However from September there was a gradual return to activity on the stage as well, and that has started to reassert economic impact too. Key achievements during the year included:

7. **Around 22,000 live audience experiences** with an average feedback 'score' of 4.7 on a 5 point scale. Performances from September to November and February to March began to see shows originally scheduled for 2020 finally hitting the stage. Prior to that live shows from our stage, streamed over the internet reached audiences across Scotland and garnered four and five star reviews.
8. **A completely new pantomime "Jamie and the Unicorn"**. Like 2019's *"Jack and the Beanstalk"* – but unlike pantos from 2012-18 – this was created specially for Ayr, with a Scottish creative team and cast. In economic terms this keeps more of the benefit locally. And the increased artistic quality was recognized nationally with four star reviews across the media for the lives show and film.
9. **A new touring Christmas Show – "The Lost Elf"** – targeted at a younger age range (and their families): touring Troon, Girvan, Maybole, Kirkmichael and Ballantrae.
10. **Engagement in creative activity** for around 1,000 people of all ages in settings varying from Wallacetown and Girvan, to Primary Schools and Youth Centres. With significant additional funding secured through Creative Scotland we have placed artists in communities where access to culture is generally low. And created a track record of success gathering national attention.
11. **"The Happiness Collectors"** – an interactive outdoor show that played to small groups of families and children across North Ayr, Girvan, Maybole and beyond – reaching over 1,000 people.
12. **"Text Me When You Get Home"** – an interactive process with community inputs, leading to a film about women's experiences of personal safety.
13. **Investment in new facilities and skills** so that the organisation is better placed as the pandemic recedes to engage in digital delivery and reduce its carbon footprint.
14. **Hosting events on the stage** – while live events were not possible we hosted a wide range of local organisations and events including delivery by South Ayrshire Council, Ayr Hospice, Tamfest and local bands.

15. **Continued support and backing for a range of local initiatives** and organisations with advice and securing funding – for example supporting Ayrshire Women’s Hub to secure new premises and interim funding totaling over £40,000.

16. **Continued support for wider artistic activity including Tamfest** and support for developing artists who focus their work on making a difference in communities.

Meeting Council priorities

AGP also delivers on both economic and wellbeing outcomes, with the following impacts summarized in line with Council priorities.

Council priority	Gaiety activity
<i>Reduce Poverty and Disadvantage</i>	In particular partnering with the Council, SVRU and others to develop activity in Wallacetown and pursue further funding
<i>Make the most of the Local Economy</i>	Since September 2021 we have been bringing people back into the Town
<i>Increase the Profile and Reputation of South Ayrshire and the Council</i>	Over the period we secured regular media and TV coverage for Ayr and Ayrshire – with four star reviews for livestreamed, filmed and live shows
<i>Enhanced Environment through Social, Cultural and Economic Activities</i>	The core of what we do, despite the pandemic and a closed building we continued to deliver online – reaching our local audience through social media and film.

AGP works with the Council in its delivery, coordinating and collaborating with culture, events tourism and education staff. It also works closely with other local organisations including the University of the West of Scotland and Ayrshire College, as well as many community organisations and charities.

2022-23 and beyond

Despite all the challenges of funding uncertainty, The Gaiety is emerging from the pandemic as a stronger organization with a much enhanced and expanded range of activity. Our new Creative Engagement wing, involving some of Scotland’s most exciting theatre-makers, is all about working in and with communities. Dependent on South Ayrshire Council backing over the next year we have and will:

- Deliver key outputs from projects in Wallacetown, Girvan, with care experienced young people and people with dementia.
- Initiate new projects in Maybole and continue many of the creative engagement activities already underway.
- Deliver a steadily growing range of activity on our main stage.
- Reopen our studio for performances including tours of Glasgow’s *A Play A Pier and A Pint*.
- Restart our rural touring programme reaching venues across South Ayrshire (and beyond). Most of the delivery is in South Ayrshire, with occasional dates in other parts of Ayrshire, in the past primarily Fairlie and Cumnock. AGP delivered occasional shows in other villages around South Ayrshire including Barr and Mossblown, but the key South Ayrshire venues have been Ballantrae, Girvan, Maybole, Kirkmichael, and Troon. Funding for this pre-pandemic came from Ayrshire Leader and this relaunched initiative is funded by Creative Scotland at present – AGP are seeking further funding to continue the programme into 2023.
- Initiate a new programme of support for local professional and amateur theatre-makers.

- Deliver the next of our panto productions *Sleeping Beauty* – set to be one of the best pantomimes in Scotland.
- Host the National Festival of Youth Theatre in partnership with South Ayrshire Council.
- Continue to support the delivery of *Tamfest*, and
- Work with Council staff to develop the local cultural economy.