

Funding Agreement between Colchester Borough Council and the Mercury Theatre

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Colchester's vibrant cultural scene is one of the Borough's unique selling points, and something that Colchester Borough Council (CBC) is keen to support and sustain. The Mercury Theatre, Colchester Arts Centre and Firstsite and are central to this, together providing the leadership, capacity, creativity and innovative programmes of delivery to make Colchester a great place to live, learn, work and visit.
- 1.2 The Council provides core revenue grants to these organisations; to contribute to the delivery of the Council's Strategic Plan and to support the Creative Colchester Strategy, which is a framework for enhancing the impact of the arts and creative industries on the local economy. The Creative Colchester Strategy is currently being updated, but in line with its overarching aims the Council continues to work with partners to align policy and funding to help deliver key economic and social outcomes through investment in the arts.
- 1.3 As part of the Council's commitment to transparency, quality and performance management systems, the organisations that receive CBC funding must set out clear objectives and provide performance and sector data so that the service provided through partnership working can be measured, evaluated and improved. This document defines the performance targets and monitoring process and confirms the funding amounts currently agreed.
- 1.4 The Mercury Theatre is one of three arts organisations funded strategically by CBC in alignment with Arts Council England (ACE). In 2017 the Mercury was successful in their bid to ACE for continued National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) funding from April 2018 for four years. Therefore, the 2019-20 funding agreement with CBC will continue to focus on the Theatre's work towards the goals as set out in that bid, as well as the key areas of performance and delivery required by CBC.
- 1.5 Supported by Colchester Borough Council the Mercury Theatre is currently undergoing a major redevelopment and will relocate to a temporary site during the period covered by this agreement. The likely impact of this is acknowledged and will be reflected in the targets agreed.

2.0 Scope and Financial Arrangements

- 2.1 Between 1 April 2019 and 31 March 2020, the Council will fund the Mercury Theatre to the amount of £168,175. This funding was agreed by the Cabinet and full Council in line with the budget strategy to support the core operations of the organisation as set out in the business and operations plan and to meet the targets for performance set out in section 9 of this Agreement.

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- 2.2 Upon signature of this Agreement, the Council will release the funding in quarterly instalments.
- 2.3 Any financial investment that the Council needs to make under its obligations as the owner of the theatre buildings is deemed to be outside of this agreement. However, any tenant responsibilities that the Mercury Theatre holds are considered to be within this agreement.
- 2.4 On signing this Agreement, the Mercury Theatre recognises that it is in receipt of public funding and accepts responsibility for showing proof of eligibility, meeting the targets for performance, and collecting qualitative and quantitative performance data to provide evidence of the service standards. The Theatre also agreed to provide available sector data to assist with monitoring and performance assessment.
- 2.5 Where appropriate and possible within current resources, Colchester Borough Council will provide non-financial support to the Mercury Theatre where it seeks to develop additional services that contribute towards meeting the Council's strategic priorities. If these additional services are developed to a point that requires additional funding, the Mercury Theatre may request such funding formally, and the Council may issue a separate funding agreement if applicable. If this circumstance arises, the services will be deemed to fall outside of this agreement.

3.0 Eligibility and Criteria for Acceptance

- 3.1 In order to be eligible for funding the Mercury Theatre must supply evidence to demonstrate that it is:
 - a. Properly constituted
 - b. Financially viable
 - c. Able to manage its work effectively, monitor and manage risk, and seek necessary professional financial, legal and insurance advice
 - d. Operating with effective policies and procedures in equal opportunities, health and safety, equality and diversity, access, and protection of children, young people and vulnerable adults.
 - e. Delivering on the current strategic priorities of the Council.

4.0 Performance monitoring framework

- 4.1 The Mercury Theatre must submit an up to date Business Plan and operations information to CBC, including a budget to cover the same period as the funding agreement and a copy of the audited accounts from 2018-19 when available.
- 4.2 As a minimum throughout the term of the agreement, the Mercury Theatre must submit quarterly budget reports if required and invite a Council representative to observe Board meetings if appropriate. The organisation will also participate in an annual review meeting, as outlined below.

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- 4.3 At the end of the agreement period, the organisation must provide audited accounts and submit performance data to evidence the organisation's turnover, audience and participation levels as well as contribution to the Council's strategic priorities.

5.0 Bi-annual review process

- 5.1 A review meeting will take place between Colchester Borough Council and Mercury Theatre at least once during the period of the agreement. The meetings shall be attended by the Portfolio Holder (PFH), relevant officer(s) of the Council and Executive staff of the Mercury Theatre.
- 5.2 The Portfolio Holder and Theatre Management may be asked to sit before a Scrutiny Panel to monitor performance and achievements. As such, the bi-annual review process should be seen as an opportunity to ensure that the Portfolio Holder can evidence performance within their area of responsibility.

6.0 Acknowledgement of funding

- 6.1 The Mercury Theatre will acknowledge its financial assistance from CBC in all marketing and communication materials in print, electronic, broadcast and other formats.
- 6.2 The organisation is asked to specify particular steps that it will take within the period of this Agreement to promote the support that it receives from the Council in Section 9.

7.0 General conditions

- 7.1 The funding provided under this agreement may not be assigned to any other person, association or company other than in the course of delivering the Business Plan and agreed performance targets.
- 7.2 This agreement does not constitute the Mercury Theatre as an agent of the Council or otherwise make the Council liable to any person who may take proceedings against the Theatre.
- 7.3 The Council reserves the right to nominate annually a councillor to be a director on the Mercury Board.
- 7.4 Funds will be repayable in full to the Council in the event of any of the following:
- i. Misuse of payment received from the Council by Mercury Theatre
 - ii. A breach of the law by Mercury Theatre
 - iii. Petitioning the court for the appointment of an administrator
 - iv. Having a receiver appointed over all or any part of the Theatre's assets
 - v. Being the subject of a petition or resolution for the Mercury Theatre's 'winding up'
- 7.5 The Council should be consulted where any change or development in the direction of the organisation's affairs might affect this Agreement.

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8.0 Breach in agreement

- 8.1 In the event of either the Council or the Mercury Theatre notifying the other in writing of a breach in this agreement, the parties shall meet to discuss the alleged breach within 21 days.
- 8.2 Both the Council and the Mercury Theatre agree that they have an equal responsibility to reach a practical and reasonable solution to the breach, but if after 12 weeks a solution has not been agreed then the parties mutually agree to arbitration.

9.0 Specification of performance targets

- 9.1 The specification of performance targets is developed collaboratively between the Council and the Mercury Theatre. The information provided here substantiates the Council's decision to invest public funds and helps to strengthen the partnership delivery model.
- 9.2 The information is set out in line with the Strategic Plan to help to convey to Members, officers and partners how the Council's financial support is an effective and efficient way to deliver services to meet local identified needs.

9.3 Performance Overview

Target	Outputs/Report
Annual target to put on 148 performances with 76,000 people attending.	195 performances and events achieving a capacity of 61% (against the national average of 48%). Actual audience attendance of 70,205 . In addition a further 230,000 attended non-ticketed events. (Streaming of Cinderella over Easter)
Collate and report audience feedback about the artistic programme with a minimum of 60% approval rating.	Customer Satisfaction Surveys are carried out following <i>each Made in Colchester</i> Production. Customers currently rate the Mercury as 4.8* out of 5* . This feedback is reviewed daily.
Collate and report press feedback about the artistic programme.	All press reports from local, regional and national papers are collated. Copies are available on request. There were 412 mentions of the Mercury in the press in 2019/20. 3 Review Quotations The Sun: Ain't Misbehavin' (24 th March 2019?) This musical review and the five characters at the heart of it take you on a joy ride

	<p>through the hits of jazz pianist Fats Waller—certain to have you dancing in the streets.</p> <p>Colchester Gazette – Cinderella: But it's the little touches that make this show shine like the end of Act I, which if I say any more will ruin Christmas itself, and the transformation of Cinders Ella into Cinderella, which is very, clever. If you're after a little magic in your lives this Christmas, take a trip to the Big Top - it's the greatest show on Earth - well in Colchester anyway.</p> <p>Colchester Gazette – Cinderella: A SHOW-STOPPING pantomime which was staged in a huge tent as the Mercury Theatre undergoes refurbishment has been nominated for two awards. The theatre's production of Cinderella has been shortlisted for two accolades at the Great British Pantomime Awards.</p> <p>Oliver: Winners at The Paulies: SPECIAL AWARD The Mercury Theatre/Colchester Operatic co-production of Oliver! - With the technical side being provided by The Mercury, this show gave local amateur performers such a terrific experience, so this has to be the special award of the year. I've no doubt it changed some young lives, and we may never see anything like it again.</p> <p><u>BritishTheatre.com</u> - Cinderella Director Ryan McBryde has brought together a terrific team, and the energy from the stage fills the large arena with fun and joy- and, thanks to Magic Consultant Michael J Fitch, some truly magical moments. "What till you see the end of Act One" everyone was telling me beforehand, and they were right, it is an absolute highlight! Well done Mercury for taking the plunge and moving the action to the Big Top.</p>
<p>At least 50% local audience and 50% audience supporting tourism economy.</p>	<p>65% of our audience was local to Colchester (within Borough postcodes) and 35% from beyond Colchester (the majority from Essex).</p> <p>Given the year of operation this was an increase of local people attending our work from previous years in the region of</p>

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	15%
Annual target of community and education sessions with 17,500 participants of which 150 will be undertaken at The Abbey Field Centre.	15,859 people took part in our Learning and Participation Programme across 608 sessions. 162 sessions took place at the Abbey Field Centre.
Continue SLA partnership between CBC, Arts Council England and the Mercury to ensure on-going revenue funding for core stage and community work is maintained.	Revenue funding maintained for 2019/20 with a slight increase of £14,000 as an inflationary award. The Mercury retains membership of Arts Council England's National Portfolio.
Continue to develop Abbey Field Centre and consolidate community hires for local groups.	During the year the Abbeyfield Centre continued as the primary centre for our youth and community programme and rehearsals. In addition, we established an easily accessible on-line booking system for local community groups interested in hiring the space. During the year we facilitated a range of bookings such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residents meetings • The Local Mosque • Fundraising Coffee Mornings • Fundraising Fetes • Weddings, Engagement Parties and Family Celebrations

9.4 Community and Audience Development

Target	Outputs/Report
£150,000 to be invested into work in the community.	Total Investment: £142,122 from Mercury core budget, with significant additional project funding from external sources.
Annual target – 787 community and education sessions with 17,500 participants.	Please refer to the above.
Maintain rate of 7% of tickets sold to disabled people and carers.	7.4% achieved.

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Maintain level of accessible performances for disabled and deaf people – 14 performances.	14 access performances achieved, including three relaxed performances and a dementia friendly performance.
Maintain methods of seeking audience and user feedback – 75 surveyed events per year.	<p>An audience experience survey is conducted throughout the year following each of our Mercury Productions. Feedback is reviewed daily and actioned throughout the organisation.</p> <p>As an Band 2 NPO Mercury Theatre is part of the Insight and Impact programme managed by The Audience Agency where our audience data is compared to other similar theatres and venues regionally and nationally.</p>

9.5. Governance and Management

Target	Outputs/Report
<p>Mercury Theatre Board of Directors to agree a new three-year business plan for the period 2018/19 – 2021/22 to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activity Plan • Artistic Programme • Financial Projections • Cash Flow 	<p>Our Three Year Business plan for the period to 2021/22 was agreed in 2018 with annual reviews each year alongside an Annual Action Plan.</p> <p>This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activity Plan • Artistic Programme (including Creative, Learning and Talent) • Budgets and Quarterly Management Accounts • Cashflow projections (including sensitivity analysis relating to our off site season and our return to the new building). <p>The Board of Directors receive regular reports on artistic activity and review quarterly management accounts at the full meeting and its quarterly Finance and General Purposes Committee.</p>
<p>Mercury Board to review and update all policy statements to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equality and Diversity Strategy and action plan • Digital Plan • Audience Development Plan 	<p>All policies have been reviewed annually with appropriate updates.</p> <p>Policies and procedures introduced last year have continued to ensure the safety and well-being of our staff including:</p>

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risk Management • Health and Safety • Sustainability and Environmental Strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employee Confidential Telephone Support Service • Safeguarding • Dignity at Work <p>During the year we have also introduced a new mental health and well-being policy and staff training.</p>
<p>Mercury Board and senior staff to continue to progress the capital development of the Mercury Theatre:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tender and procurement processes • Details plans and costings to completion • Financial and fundraising strategy <p>(subject to additional capital funding being secured).</p>	<p>During the year our Mercury Rising Capital Programme continued to progress positively.</p> <p>At the year end a projected further £573,691 was confirmed from individual donations, Trusts and Foundations and the corporate sector during the year.</p> <p>Confirmed funding at the end of the period was £9,737,191 against a target of £936,191 (an increase of approx. £1 million from the last costing (£8.9 million) due to costs relating to meeting environmental standards and material/labour increases.</p> <p>The remaining target is £561,281. Further funding bids to the value of £1 million have been submitted during the period.</p> <p>The project continues to be managed by Colchester Borough Homes on behalf of Colchester Borough Council and the Mercury and will meet all necessary RIBA Stages, tendering and procurement processes.</p> <p>A Joint Working Group continues to meet on a monthly basis between CBC, CBH and ECC.</p> <p>The Mercury's Board of Directors has established a Capital Sub Committee to support the Large Capital Scheme with a further internal Capital Operations Group made up of Senior Management and Heads of Department to manage the associated work streams.</p> <p>The agreed Fundraising Strategy continues to be implemented to secure the required partnership funding.</p>

9.6. Diversity

Target	Outputs/Report
<p>Continue to encourage more diverse audiences and participants engage with the Mercury across all equality groups.</p> <p>Target: 3% of audiences</p>	<p>2.9% of our audience self identified as being from a minority ethnic group in 2019/20</p> <p>7.4% of our audience was disabled, deaf or hard of hearing.</p> <p>58.76% of our audience were women. No data is available around sexuality, religion, marital status etc.</p>
<p>Continue to ensure the Mercury recruits and attracts a diverse workforce.</p> <p>Target:</p> <p>70% female 5% disabled 2% minority ethnic 5% lesbian and gay</p>	<p>The Mercury continues to ensure all of its recruitment methods target local diverse communities.</p> <p>Staffing statistics include –</p> <p>49 staff employed across full time, part time and casual</p> <p>71 actors and creatives.</p> <p>Across both groups:</p> <p>63% female 14% disabled 16% minority ethnic 17.5% lesbian/gay 57% under 34</p> <p>Please note staffing numbers were reduced during the year to reflect the smaller programme and playing weeks to accommodate our capital project.</p>
<p>Annual review all equality action plans and policies.</p>	<p>All policy documents are reviewed on an annual basis by our staff, Senior Management and Board of Directors.</p>
<p>Continue to attract those from lower income and modest income households, proactively engaging with those from disadvantaged backgrounds and deprived areas of Colchester.</p> <p>Target: 10% of users and audiences</p>	<p>Attendance from 2019/20 priority areas – St. Anne's Ward, St Andrew's. Greenstead, Berechurch, Shrub End (CO4 0, CO4 3, CO2 CO9) was 6,292 which is 7.8% of the total audience.</p> <p>Increase of .8% on the previous year</p>

9.7. Young People

Target	Outputs/Report
Maintain rate of 10% all tickets sold as concessions are for young people.	12% achieved.
Deliver 787 community and education sessions attracting 17,500 participants.	Please refer to the above comments.
<p>Maintain Teachers Forums for Primary and Secondary Schools.</p> <p>Target: 40 members schools</p>	<p>The Teachers Network was postponed during the year but will be relaunched in March 21</p> <p>We have delivered 4 CPD opportunities for teachers with a total attendance of 47 teachers including session on Bringing Shakespeare to life.</p> <p>Our Creative Learning and Talent team represents the Mercury Theatre:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As a cultural lead on Colchester's Local Cultural Education Partnership maintaining key relationships with ROH Bridge, Essex MeH other cultural organisations and schools • As a representative of cultural organisations on the University of Essex's Cultural Outreach Steering Group • At Creative Colchester Projects Board Meetings • Colchester BID
Continue to create opportunities for access to the arts particularly for children and young people. This includes community involvement in Mercury Company productions and an ongoing commitment to overall community activities.	<p>Opportunities created for people of all ages:</p> <p>5 – 11 years</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5-7's and 8-10's Mercury Youth Theatres • John Bunyan Literacy project • Market Field, Lexden Springs, , Kingswode Hoe Primary Schools Literacy through Drama <p>11 – 18 years</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 11-13's, 14-16's and 16-18's Youth Theatres • Kingswode Hoe School, Market Field

	<p>School and Doucecroft School SEND Afterschool Drama Clubs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • hACkT digital summer school • SEND Summer School • “So you want to work in Theatre” Work Experience Week • Schools and Youth Theatre Festival • “Pantomime” Junior Chorus • Silver and Gold Arts Award qualification courses in Clacton and Walton on the Naze Schools • Aspire, Share Create club nights monthly <p>16 – 25 years</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 16-18’s Mercury Youth Theatres • Vocational Internships • Youth Assistant roles • Work Experience <p>18+</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talent Development Programme – including Mercury Creatives and Associate Artists Scheme • Mercury Voices Archiving Volunteer Programme • Mercury Voices Exhibitions and talks • Senior Matinees pre show talks <p>Additional workshops have taken place in partnership with organisations such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Colchester Operatic • Cultural Marquee at Colchester Food and Drink Festival – working with Colchester Chinese Society, Nepalese Society, Arts La Olam, AFiUK and Refugee Action(2058 visitors over 2 days) • Action for Children • Autism Anglia • Balcerne Gardens Care Home • Livestream of panto free to local care homes. • Army Welfare Services • Colchester Garrison <p>Colchester Operatic collaboration on Oliver involving 45 members of the community</p>
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Maintain level of 145 young people enrolled in youth drama classes (Youth Theatre).	<p>134 young people enrolled in youth drama classes.</p> <p>We have expanded our Youth Theatre offer to 9 regular groups including a Youth Theatre group for young people with Autism Spectrum Conditions</p> <p>All Youth Theatre Groups are based at Abbeyfield Centre and take place Sunday – Wednesday each week.</p>
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9.8. Older People

Target	Outputs/Report
<p>Work with older people will continue during the period through senior matinees and other specific activities.</p> <p>The former ACT V Programme has been transferred to the Headgate Theatre. A new programme of work will be developed over the next two years to be launched in 2020 within the new building.</p>	<p>Senior Matinees remain popular during the year – there were 5 in total during 2019/20 achieving 1,720 people in total.</p> <p>ACT V was transferred to the Headgate Theatre with a small grant as due to the capital project it has not been possible to accommodate the group over the next two years.</p> <p>We remain in regular contact with the group attending their committee and planning meetings.</p>

9.9. Job Creation, sector skills development and contribution to the local economy

Target	Outputs/Report
Deliver 10 work experience placements during the year.	<p>8 school student work experience placements (1 week)</p> <p>8 student internships ranging from 16 weeks to 12 months</p> <p>1 Apprentice.</p> <p>Total: 17</p>
Deliver 1 apprenticeship across all areas of the Mercury and 5 internships.	<p>During the year we continued our Hervey Benham Technical Apprenticeship Scheme. Part funded by the Hervey Benham Trust, the apprenticeship is aimed at a local young person aged 16-18 years old. The course is validated by Norfolk and Norwich College.</p> <p>We continue to work in partnership with Colchester Institute and Creative and</p>

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	<p>Cultural Skills to create further opportunities in the future.</p> <p>Hosted 8 paid internships supported by the University of Essex sponsored by Santander.</p>
<p>Provide evidence and support for new and emerging regional talent and companies.</p> <p>Target: 60 participants</p>	<p>During 2019/20 we continued our Talent Development Programmes.</p> <p>We were able to launch our new Mercury Creatives programme offering mentoring, professional development and support for a wide variety of local creative businesses and artists.</p> <p>Activities included:</p> <p>Mercury Creatives Participants in cohort 1: 42 Number of jobs created: 17 Number of products created: 45</p> <p>Associate Artists 2019-20 Number of Artists: 6 Additional Collaborators: 10 Sharing Attendees: 25</p> <p>Borders photographic competition Total Entrants: 19</p> <p>SECCADS creative business development Total applicants: 17 Number of participants: 17 Number of session: 6</p> <p>Essex Theatre Artists Network Total Members: 899</p> <p>4 x Diverse Creatives Open Days 4 x Scratch Nights profiling Artists of Colour</p> <p>8 x PROUD LGBTQ+ Writers Group</p>
<p>Launch new Mentoring and Professional Development Programme for start-up and emerging professionals and artists in the Creative Industries (funded by the European Regional Development Fund</p>	<p>Our Mercury Creatives Programme was launched during the year offering professional development, mentoring and networking for artists and creative businesses.</p>

<p>to 2022).</p>	<p>42 sole traders and businesses were engaged in the first cohort phase (target 40).</p> <p>Each participant is offered 24 hours of mentoring across a wide variety of skills areas of their choosing such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marketing • Business Planning • Creative Skills (writing, directing etc) • Personal Skills • Fundraising • Product development <p>We were particularly pleased that the majority of participants were based in Colchester and North Essex.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of jobs created: 17 • Number of products created: 45 <p>An interim evaluation report about the programme is available on request.</p>
<p>Target and engage with 20 volunteers during the year.</p>	<p>12 regular volunteers and 24 one-off volunteers for projects such as our Mercury Voices Archive project that launched during the year funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund.</p>
<p>Assist CBC with other initiatives including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Night-time economy • Local employment and skills • Development of creative and cultural industries • Marketing of Colchester as a visitor destination 	<p>The Mercury continues to work in partnership with CBC as follows –</p> <p>Night-time Economy The Mercury are active members of local trade associations such as the Business Improvement District for the town centre. We work closely with the BID on marketing campaigns, joint branding (for example our panto was jointly branded across the Town this year) and our Panto Dames switched on the Christmas Lights.</p> <p>Local Employment and Skills The Mercury continues to work in partnership with a variety of organisations to improve local employment and skills such as –</p> <p>Hosting Essex Chamber of Commerce bi-</p>

	<p>monthly breakfast briefings and twilight events for local businesses.</p> <p>Regular presence at local business and employment events and fairs.</p> <p>Strong partnerships exist with local Job Centre, Colchester Institute and Essex University.</p> <p>The Mercury has been awarded Silver Employer Status from the Ministry of Defence for our employment of former service personnel and their families. We aim to gain Gold Status next year. During the year we have participated in several recruitment and skills events held locally and regionally.</p> <p>Development of Creative and Cultural industries</p> <p>The Mercury is an active member of the Creative Colchester Initiative with representation at Board level (the Mercury's Chair is the Chair of the organisation) and the Project Working Group.</p> <p>Marketing of Colchester as a Visitor Destination</p> <p>The Mercury continues to engage in dialogue with senior officers from CBC about how to promote Colchester as a destination.</p> <p>The Mercury continues to offer ticketing services for key events (such as the annual Fireworks in Castle Park, Summer Screens and Charter Hall). This data will be used to support further campaigns and initiatives to support tourism and the visitor economy for the town.</p> <p>During the year, the Mercury continued to offer support and advice to Charter Hall and the Town Hall.</p> <p>Through its overall marketing strategies, the Mercury continues to promote Colchester as a destination and through the use of the <i>Made in Colchester</i> brand on tour throughout the UK.</p>
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	The Mercury's Executive Director continues to be a Board Member of <i>Visit Essex</i> and the <i>Haven Gateway Partnership</i> .
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9.10. Environmental and Economic Sustainability

Target	Outputs/Report
Develop and agree a Sustainability and Environmental Policy and Action Plan.	<p>During the year in partnership with Colchester Borough Homes, we have continued to work on the detailed design of the new building to ensure that it is as sustainable as possible and creates the least environmental impact on completion.</p> <p>We have been able to retain our BREEAM certification of VERY GOOD for this phase of the project.</p>
Collate and publish targets to reduce carbon footprint and provide evidence of improvement at regular intervals.	<p>This has been completed for the first quarter of the year in our old building.</p> <p>Once back in our new building we will establish clear reporting methods and targets.</p>
Monitor the usage of green energy.	<p>Completed for the first quarter as above. Statistics are collated quarterly and reported internally and to Arts Council England (through our membership of the Julie's Bicycle Scheme).</p>
Strengthen and grow partnership working through joint bids, cross programming and shared activity, including developing a big data approach to audience development across partners.	<p>Achieved. Commitment to the Audience Agency's Audience Finder big data project.</p> <p>Discussions have continued with CBC and the other NPO's in Colchester about the development of joint projects and closer joint working.</p> <p>Successful joint funding bids have been achieved once again with community groups including Stage Write and the Packing Shed.</p> <p>The Mercury offered support and guidance for a further 16 Grants for the Arts Funding Bids to Arts Council England for local artists and companies. All of which were successful.</p>

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9.11. What are your particular plans to promote the support that the Council provides during the period of the agreement?

This year has been extraordinary for the Mercury as we left our old home in late June to allow our contractors to start work to extend our front of house area and re-fit our main theatre.

Throughout the period we have maintained strong local partnerships. We are particularly grateful to the MOD for their support of our temporary venue on Abbeyfield.

Our partnerships with other community groups have continued including - Chinese and Nepalese Communities, Colchester and Tendring Women's Refuge, Colchester Operatics Societies and others.

We continue to develop co-productions to enable our **Made in Colchester** shows to tour nationally and where appropriate internationally raising the profile of Colchester.

In 2019/20, the Mercury's productions gained the following national awards and nominations:

- *Cinderella* – National Panto Awards – *Best Ugly Sisters*
- *Aint Misbehavin*
 - Stage Debut Award (nomination) – Tyrone Huntley (Director)
 - Off West End (nominations) - Best Ensemble, Set Design, Choreographer and Musical Director
 - OFFIE - Oti Mabuse for best Choreographer
 - West End Wilma Awards - Best Off West End Production (nomination)

We were particularly pleased to be gain an award from UK Theatre (the UK's largest industry body for Theatre) for *Excellence in Inclusivity*.

The Mercury continues to attend regional and national conferences and events to present and share best practise to those within the arts and creative industries and others acknowledging the support of the Council.

Acknowledgement of the Council's support in **31,000** brochures distributed twice a year. In addition, electronically we distribute a monthly e-newsletter to **69,080** people with more than **20,941 monthly** unique visitors to our website in 2019/20. **37,831** monthly visits. In addition, there was continued steady a growth on Facebook and an increase in Twitter followers.

35,906 Social Media subscribers

The Mercury invites civic guests to press/gala evenings each year as a chance to say thank you for the support given and to promote the stage and community work that the funding partnership makes possible. The event includes acknowledgment of the Council's support.

9.12. Please outline the way in which your organisation will meet the Colchester Borough Council Strategic Plan 2018-21 and other relevant local, regional or national strategies

Local

The Mercury Theatre continues to work proactively with the Council and Colchester and Ipswich Museums, Firstsite and Colchester Arts Centre to ensure a collective and united vision for Arts, Culture & Heritage promotion and accessibility across Colchester aimed at maximising potential and seeking out opportunities for a more collaborative and sustainable approach. This has included in engaging with the other arts and cultural organisation about joint working models, the benefits of a joint box office and shared data and the joint commissioning of services.

We were particularly pleased to be able to contribute to the BID during the year and ensure that arts, culture and heritage were contained within the prospectus. We were also pleased to be able to consolidate our relationship with the Garrison and the MOD through our use of Abbeyfield for our temporary venue. This project alone attracted a new audience to our work that we hope to re-engage once we return to our new building.

The Mercury Theatre actively contributes to 'The Creative Colchester Strategy' by supporting emerging local talent and providing work experience, supporting cultural tourism initiatives, and working with a range of community service providers such as charities, health providers and voluntary groups to engage and develop communities.

The Mercury is an active member of the Creative Colchester Board (Chair of Mercury Board of Directors Chaired the group until the end of the calender year) and the Creative Colchester Project Group (Head of Creative Learning and Talent).

The Mercury is an active member of the BID and contributes to the Christmas Lights Switch On Event and other community events throughout the borough.

Further partnership agreements are in place with Colchester Institute and Essex University around joint funding bids, skills development and other place-making initiatives.

National

The Mercury Theatre has promoted its collaborative working with other arts providers to strategic funders such as Arts Council England and the Heritage Lottery Fund. This has demonstrated a strategic partnership approach to the development of arts and heritage in Colchester which will raise the profile and status of the town as a cultural centre and generate greater efficiencies and value for money.

We look forward to building on discussions during the year of creating a new Cultural Strategy for the borough.

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11.0 Acceptance

- 11.1 Upon signing this agreement, the organisation agrees to the terms and conditions of funding and use reasonable endeavours to meet the performance targets and monitoring framework that have been outlined above.

On behalf of Mercury Theatre	Date	
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Signed (Executive Director)

Name (please print)

On behalf of Mercury Theatre	Date	
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Signed (Chair of the Board)

Name (please print)

On behalf of Colchester Borough Council	Date	
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Signed (Portfolio Holder)

Name (please print)

On behalf of Colchester Borough Council	Date	
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Signed (Officer)

Name (please print)
