

Report of	Head of Community Services	Author	Claire Taylor ☎ 282655
Title	Review of the Council's funding and partnership delivery arrangements with Colchester Arts Centre and The Mercury Theatre		
Wards affected	Not applicable		

The Panel is invited to review the range of programmes delivered by each organisation and how effectively they support the Council's Strategic Plan priorities and the value for money for the funding provided.

1.0 Scope of review

- 1.1 To review the range of programmes delivered by each organisation and how effectively they support the Council's Strategic Plan 2015-18 priorities and the value for money for the funding provided.

2.0 Reason for undertaking review

- 2.1 The Council's Code of Corporate Governance states the aim for robust scrutiny, and principle to engage with stakeholders to ensure public accountability.
- 2.2 Regular reviews of Colchester's arts and cultural partners are undertaken by the Panel. The last review took place on the 17th of March 2015.

3.0 Representatives

- 3.1 The following representatives have accepted an invitation to attend and present to this meeting:

Steve Mannix, Executive Director, Mercury Theatre
 Robin Fenwick, Director of Communications and Audience Services, Mercury Theatre
 Anthony Roberts, Director, Colchester Arts Centre

- 3.2 The Chairs of the respective Boards of Trustees have been invited to attend the meeting.

4.0 Partnership delivery arrangements

- 4.1 Colchester's cultural organisations help to make Colchester the place to live, learn, work and visit. They have a role to play in community development; ensuring a diverse range of experiences and activities are accessible to all, and vulnerable and hard to reach groups have positive ways to interact in their local community. The organisations are integral to the creative industries and the tourism and nighttime economies, all priority sectors for the Borough.
- 4.2 This cultural and creative asset base is a result of a strong funding partnership

between the Council, the arts organisations, Arts Council England, and Essex County Council which has been in place for more than 10 years.

4.3 Annual Funding Agreements are agreed in close consultation with each organisation and set out the activity and targets around delivery. Copies of the Funding Agreements for 2015/16 with outcomes and the current agreements for 2016/17 are attached as Appendices.

4.4 A Member of Colchester Borough Council is nominated to sit on the Board of both organisations.

5.0 The organisations

5.1 The Mercury Theatre

The Mercury engages with over 120,000 people in Colchester and the surrounding area each year through a broad programme staged across two auditoria, and through community education partnerships. It has a proven track record of attracting people into theatre for the first time.

Under the Made in Colchester brand, the Mercury reaches audiences and generates critical attention regionally and nationally; representing and raising the profile of the Borough by association.

The Mercury has been housed in its current location since 1972. The Main Theatre and Studio Theatre seat a combined total of 586. On-site production and workshop facilities create sets, props and costumes for both for in-house productions and touring companies, including the National Theatre. Fundraising is currently under way for a £8.7m extension and refurbishment of the building, transforming and safeguarding the venue as a cultural and community asset for Colchester into the future.

With a turnover of £3m annually, the Mercury is a significant local employer and provider of apprenticeships. It is a major driver of the restaurant and hospitality economy in Colchester.

5.2 Colchester Arts Centre

Housed in St Mary's Church, Colchester Arts Centre reaches over 40,000 people a year with a full and diverse programme across a wide range of contemporary performing arts and events. It takes a leading role in the development of live art through commissions and partnerships. The Centre's mission is to provide arts events of the highest quality and in doing so support new work, innovation, experimentation and international work. Colchester Arts Centre aims to be assessable to the local community in every way and to inspire and nurture creativity within it. The variety and number of events taking place at the venue, on almost every day of the year, make it a key asset in attracting people into the centre of Colchester.

6.0 Financial Arrangements

6.1 The Council determines the level of funding that will be provided on an annual basis, but also aims to support the organisations' medium-term business and operational plans. The funding is agreed by Cabinet and full Council. The terms and conditions of funding including eligibility criteria and performance monitoring arrangements are set out in the Funding Agreements attached here as Appendices.

6.2 Between 1 April 2016 and 31 March 2017, the Council will provide funding of:

- £221,850 to The Mercury Theatre
- £63,650 to Colchester Arts Centre

7.0 Strategic Plan References

7.1 This report links to the 'Vibrant' strand of Strategic Plan 2015-18:

- Enhance the diverse retail and leisure mix supporting independent businesses valued by residents and visitors
- Develop a strong sense of community across the Borough by enabling people and groups to take more ownership and responsibility for their quality of life
- Make more of Colchester's great heritage and culture so that people can enjoy them and draw inspiration for their creative talents
- Create the right environment for people to develop and flourish in all aspects of life both business and pleasure

8. Standard References

8.1 There are no particular references to publicity or consultation considerations; or financial; equality, diversity and human rights; community safety; health and safety or risk management implications.

Background Papers

Appendix 1 Funding Agreement with the Mercury Theatre 2015/16 with outcomes
Appendix 2 Funding Agreement with the Mercury Theatre 2016/17 (current)
Appendix 3 Funding Agreement with Colchester Arts Centre 2015/16 with outcomes
Appendix 4 Funding Agreement with Colchester Arts Centre 2016/17 (current)