

PRESENTATION FOR O&S

25 September 2023

Performance and plans for the Assembly Hall Theatre and the Amelia Scott

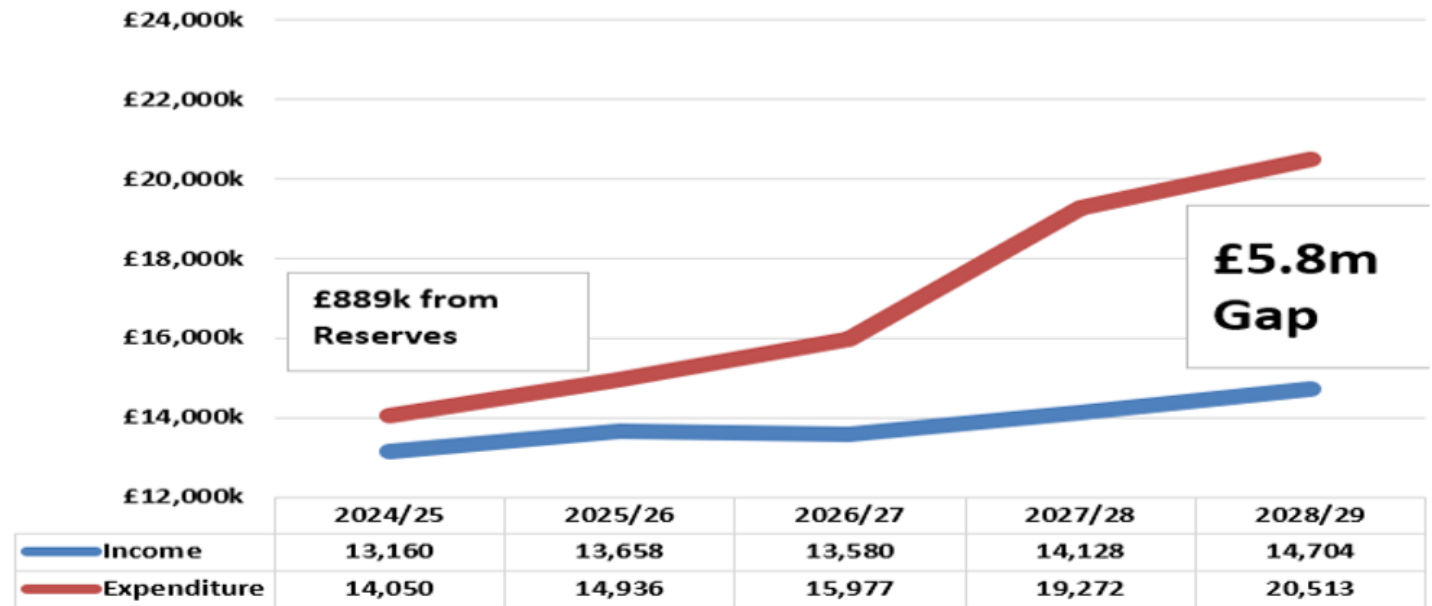
**Justine Rutland – Cabinet Member
for Economic Development**

Background - the budget challenge

- Like most local authorities, the council is facing financial challenges
- Inflationary pressures on contracts; cost of materials, labour and energy; and increased demand arising from the cost-of-living crisis
- In July, the LGA reported: ‘Councils in England face a funding gap of almost £3 billion over the next two years just to keep services standing still.’
- Members will have seen Lee's graph of the widening budget gap →

MTFS Update, October 2023

Revenue Budget Gap



Background – public consultations

- **Budget consultation** In February 2023, Cabinet considered responses to the 23/24 budget consultation. The consultation asked the public to allocate a fixed amount of funding across the discretionary services to see how this compares with the draft budget. The areas where the public would be most likely to reduce the budget are:
 - The Amelia Scott*
 - Property
 - The Assembly Hall Theatre
- * The Amelia Scott provides a mix of statutory and non-statutory services, as it includes registration of births and deaths and our front-line face-to-face and telephone services.
- **Residents survey** The results of the residents survey** undertaken in June-July 2023 show that most residents don't want to see cuts in services and that the most important Focus on Five priority across all age groups was Vibrant and Safer Towns and Villages.
- ** Results to be published following the feedback event on 1 November.

AHT & Amelia Scott financial performance

Summary

Both venues have controllable and non-controllable costs that need to be set against any revenue streams (which are limited for The Amelia Scott). Example of controllable costs across venues includes casual hours & training. Examples of non-controllable costs include utilities & salaries.



**22-23
(Actual)**

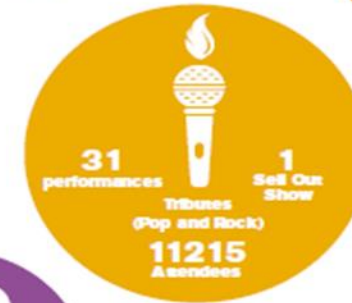
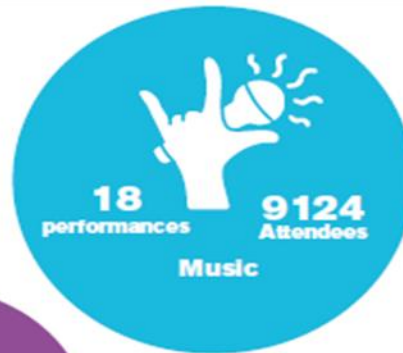
Approved (£)	Projected (£)	Actual (£)	Variance vs Projected (£)
291,340	291,340	219,461	71,879



**22-23
(Actual)**

Approved (£)	Projected (£)	Actual (£)	Variance vs Projected (£)
1,435,960	1,398,960	1,272,163	126,796

AHT performance – non-financial



Alcoholic Beverages Sold
42671

Ice Creams Sold
13187

Soft Drinks Sold
29966

Teas and Coffees Sold
5111

Food (Snacks and Confectionary) Sold
14839

Go Card Tickets Sold
519

Total
85655
Attendees

Total
200
Performances

Total
11
Sell Out Shows

AS performance – non financial

300,587
Visitors

Averaging about 25,000 per month



44,296
Exhibition views



4,141
Schoolchildren visitors
Since September



30%
of visitors used
3 or more services



79%
of visitors thought
The Amelia is a place
for the whole community



181,393
Call Centre
Customers Served



326 Events



21,581
Attendees

Adult
Education

4,907
Course
Enrolments



484
children
visited
Santa



88,000



Website visits

126
cups of
coffee
paid forward



880
Likes



Followers

3,349
2,701
3,167



124,083
Book
Loans




**The
Amelia**
1st year statistics
theamelia.co.uk

AHT/AS Performance Summary

- It was an excellent year for both AHT and the AS, despite both seeing significant rises in ‘uncontrollable costs’, e.g. utilities.
- Assembly Hall Theatre: the team have worked hard to curate a more balanced programme, with 11 sold-out shows in 2022-23. Recent sold-out performances include a week-long run of SIX, Johnny Marr and Ben Fogle.
- Amelia Scott: raised the profile of the town, hosting an incredible Literary Festival, building on the success of the inaugural Festival; Microworlds was the most visited TWBC exhibition ever (circa 30k visits); it has consistently been the best-performing library in Kent, with more sign-ups to the Summer Reading Challenge than anywhere else in the county.
- The Assembly Hall Theatre and the Amelia Scott are wonderful assets for the Borough and provide different aspects of our leisure, cultural and community offer, as you will see on the next slide.

Benefits of the AHT and the AS

- The theatre delivers a wide variety of productions that have broad appeal to the local community and beyond. This drives revenue and creates a high-profile destination in Tunbridge Wells.
- The Amelia Scott (ethos: 'Enriching Lives, Inspiring Learning') includes key functions - library, call centre, face-to-face services, heritage assets, etc. Events (ticketed and free) deliver a broad scope of experiences, value and support for the community, helping make culture accessible to all.
- Along with Skate, the AHT and the AS bring over half a million people in to the borough every year.
- The Culture team supports the provision of culture across the borough, eg: the public art programme; hosting educational activities for schoolchildren; Park Safaris in Cranbrook; Cranbrook Museum; and is involved with the UKSPF-funded Rural Heritage Placemaking project for Hawkhurst & Sandhurst.

Direct Benefits

- Drives Revenue through ticket sales (AHT)
- Drives revenue through parking (both)
- Provides additional resources for TWBC to leverage, e.g. Community Toilets (AS)
- Venue for Council events e.g. Elections (both)
- Warm room, community events, Santa etc

In-Direct Benefits

- Additional footfall helps businesses across the entire town and beyond. (both)
- Raised profile of town as whole via highly visible and publicised talents and exhibitions e.g. Ricky Gervais.
- Supports placemaking strategies around bringing / sustaining people living within the town & wider community.

Future Plans (1)

- We are working with officers to build on the good work of last year.
- Our approach is to work constructively with our officers to put together a high-level savings plan (three-year business plans) to reduce the costs of both the Assembly Hall Theatre and the Amelia Scott and put them on a more sustainable footing.

Future Plans (2)

- Work with officers to increase income:
 - For AHT this will mean increasing the number of shows by around 10-20% a year, which we anticipate may increase revenue by circa £100k in years 1-3 (this is subject to availability of produce and demand)
 - Explore longer-term options of increasing offer, e.g. F&B, film
 - For AS this will mean maximising opportunities to be more commercial, pushing room hire, digital advertising, increasing paid donations with potential income/savings of circa £75k
 - Explore increased use of digital technology in the Contact Centre

Future plans – Skate

- This season, the ice rink run will be two weeks shorter than in previous years, from 1 December to 1 January. This will save money on fuel, staffing and security.
- There will be a main ice rink and a toddler/Bavarian curling smaller rink, the same as last year.
- In addition, this year, TWBC will be operating and managing an on-site Santa event. This will include a Lapland post office, sleigh garage housing a hydraulically operated sleigh with VR (Virtual Reality) experience and a visit to Santa in his Grotto.
- A planning application has been submitted by TWBC for a 22-metre high observation wheel, the 'Happy Wheel'.
- The AHT team drives the planning, sales, marketing and operational delivery of Skate; P&L does not sit in its books.



Questions

