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## **Community Buildings Committee**

### **Meeting 24 September 2020**

### **CB016 – Proscenium Arch, Queens Hall**

#### **1. Introduction**

Currently the proscenium arch in the Queen's Hall (QH) is made of dark red velvet comprised of two vertical sections on either side of the stage curtains (legs) and a horizontal section stretching from either side of the hall shaped across the ceiling and hanging to just below the top of the stage curtains. Some of the hems are starting to unravel and there are several unsightly stains on the material. The legs have shrunk and no longer reach the floor. The stage curtains are made of the same material. Being made of cloth the arch and curtains should be subject to biennial fireproofing; this was last performed by Cuckfield Dramatic Society (CDS) at the request of Cuckfield Parish Council (CPC) at least 6 years ago (my memory is a bit hazy on this).

The stage curtain mechanism is controlled by a hand-winder from a fixed position stage-right; the impact of the positioning is that during stage performances a stage-hand is obliged to be permanently positioned stage right as there is no possibility to move from there except to the "Green Room" without being seen.

The dark and older-looking proscenium arch has a negative effect on the overall visual impact on the main hall.

#### **2. Approach**

The aim is for a light and airy impact when viewing the hall but with a safe infrastructure in place that will allow flexibility in use at minimal effort.

##### **2.1 Replace the velvet proscenium arch**

###### **a. with a fireproofed structure:**

- i. The structure should not be overly heavy nor have its main weight loaded directly onto the stage as the floor beams under the stage have not been strengthened. It will need to be built in front of the hammer-beam construction to allow for the stage curtains. Since the structure must be fireproofed, we should consider using aluminium with appropriate panels. This will mean that spraying with fire-retardant on a 2 yearly cycle will not be required.
- ii. Above the curtain line there will be grills for loudspeakers to be installed behind the arch with permanent wiring to control area stage left
- iii. There will be metal cable guttering to allow power cables to be safely laid from one side of stage to another.

- b. With a like or like fireproofed material curtains
- 2.2 Inobtrusive metal curtain rails will be installed on above the legs to allow curtaining and/or decorations to be hung covering the panels. A similar curtain rail could also be hung for the horizontal section of the proscenium arch on a mechanism that can be raised and lowered. These will provide flexibility to all users for party and wedding organisers as well as to CDS since myriad colours/themes would be possible without damaging the hall's infrastructure.
- 2.3 Replace the stage curtains with similar but made with fireproofed material
- 2.4 Move the manual stage curtain mechanism from stage right to stage left. With the bricking up of the outside door in the "Green Room" this has caused issues for stage users having a stage-hand isolated stage right. (We could investigate replacing it with an electrical motor with controls switches stage left together with a possibility to link the curtain controls to appropriate theatre-technical software but this this will depend on cost and if CDS are prepared to invest in (some of) the costs)
- 2.5 Stage floor has been painted by CDS, but the paint has flaked, and the resulting look is less than inviting. CDS has proposed a product called Rhinofloor which they will pay for if CPC pays for installation. Costs require investigation.
- 2.6 CDS currently having 13amp power points at first hammer beam and 5 15amp extension cables on either side of the hall. CDS is thinking to install a number (probably 3) 15-amp sockets on hammer beams near the 13-amp sockets so not visible from main hall and then tidy cabling through to the power controllers rear stage left.
- 2.7 The CPC sound system is rarely used and some of its components no longer work. It is also located in an impractical place for PAT testing. Proposal is to move/simplify sound system to merely include Amplifier with both USB and Bluetooth inputs and the Hearing-Loop.
- 3. Recommendations**  
We need to get quotes for all of the separate elements, investigate funding sources such as Lottery Grants and some financial support from CDS, and then propose to Council.

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