

COVID 19 RESPONSE SUB-COMMITTEE - 16 NOVEMBER 2020

PART I –NOT DELEGATED

6. WATERSMEET REOPENING REPORT (DCES)

1 Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report outlines the current plans to reopen Watersmeet following the successful award of a £175,000 grant from the Culture Recovery Fund administered by Arts Council England.
- 1.2 Watersmeet was originally planned to reopen on 12 November 2020 however following the announcement of a second national lockdown the reopening date has been postponed to 3 December 2020.
- 1.3 The revised reopening plans allow for flexibility should the current national lockdown restrictions be extended beyond 2 December 2020.

2 Background

- 2.1 On 17 March 2020, the Council took the decision to close Watersmeet from 18 March 2020 following Government guidance and the Coronavirus pandemic. Watersmeet has remained closed to the public since that date.
- 2.2 On the 4 July cinemas were allowed by Government to reopen under 'Covid Secure' guidelines.
- 2.3 On the 15 August indoor live theatre performances were allowed by Government to resume under 'Covid Secure' guidelines.
- 2.4 On 3 September 2020 the Council's Covid-19 Response sub-committee agreed Priority 1-3 activity. Watersmeet film programme and pantomime were categorised as priority 3. On 5 October 2020 the Council's Covid-19 Response sub-committee agreed Priority 4 & 5 activity. Watersmeet live theatre programme and venue hire was categorised as priority 4.
- 2.5 On 2 September the Council and Jordan Productions (the pantomime producers) agreed to postpone the Watersmeet pantomime *Cinderella* to December 2021 due to uncertainty and the significant financial risks.
- 2.6 On 12 October Arts Council England confirmed Watersmeet had been awarded £175,000 grant as part of the DCMS Culture Recovery Fund to support the resumption of a live theatre programme.
- 2.7 Watersmeet management began preparing to the reopen the venue for 12 November 2020 with a limited programme of film, live theatre screenings and live theatre performances.
- 2.8 On 31 October 2020 the Government announced a second national lockdown starting on 5 November 2020 and running until 2 December 2020. These restrictions enforce the closure of theatres and cinemas and so the reopening of Watersmeet has been postponed to 3 December 2020.

3 Detail

- 3.1 Watersmeet management have prepared a programme of live theatre and film based on availability of films, live theatre screenings and live theatre shows.
- 3.2 The live theatre programme (co-promoted shows) includes stand-up comedy, family and live music shows.
- 3.3 The cinema programme consists of a combination of available blockbusters, classic family films and a selection of live theatre screenings including musicals, NT Live plays and ballets.
- 3.4 Watersmeet will be available to hire for shows and public events providing Government guidance is strictly followed.
- 3.5 With social distancing of 1m+ Watersmeet has a capacity of 207 seats (reduced from 515).
- 3.6 The venue is being prepared to be 'Covid Secure' with a full host of measures including, reduced capacity, Perspex screens at box office, track and trace compliance include display of QR code, hand sanitise stations, seat service for drinks via a bar app, queue management systems and staff training.

4 Changes as a result of the second National Lockdown

- 4.1 Following the latest Government restrictions Watersmeet's original plan to reopen on 12 November has now been postponed to 3 December.
- 4.2 Due to the uncertainty of whether these restrictions will remain in place beyond 2 December Watersmeet's original plans to present a Christmas themed live theatre performance for a few days has been cancelled because it would not be appropriate to postpone this event beyond December if required, and the significant marketing spend required to promote the event in advance.
- 4.3 The revised programme in December will mainly consist of films and live theatre screenings (e.g. NT Live) as these offer more flexibility should the new restrictions be extended.
- 4.4 In order that we comply with the conditions of the £175,000 Culture Recovery Fund grant awarded to us the planned programme for January 2021 onwards remains the same at this time including live theatre performances. Any impact of further changes to Government restrictions will be responded to as they arise.

5 Policy/Budget Reference and Implications

- 5.1 The recommendations in this report are within the Council's agreed policy.
- 5.2 Any budget implications are being assessed and reported to Policy and Resources Committee via the Budget Monitoring cycle.

6 Financial Implications

- 6.1 This financial year, 2020/21, has had significant financial implications for Watersmeet and the Council that have been reported regularly via the Budget Monitoring cycle.
- 6.2 The successful award of the Culture Recovery Fund Grant will enable Watersmeet to reopen, cover the fixed building costs from 1 October 2020 – 31 March 2021 and support a live theatre programme. It is anticipated that there will be no additional

costs to the Council as a result of reopening Watersmeet beyond those already incurred up until 30 September 2020.

6.3 The grant must be spent from between 1 October 2020 to 31 March 2021 and will be used to cover:

6.3.1 Fixed building costs such as staff salaries, utilities and general maintenance costs between 1 October 2020 – 31 March 2021

6.3.2 'Covid Secure' set up costs such as deep cleans, Perspex screens, hand sanitising stations

6.3.3 To subsidise a live theatre programme between 3 December 2020 – 31 March 2021

6.4 The grant cannot be used to cover costs incurred before 1 October 2020 or after 31 March 2021.

7 Legal Implications

7.1 Watersmeet has acted and continues to act in accordance with Covid related Legislation and guidance in the suspension and restoration of its various activity including obligations around track and trace, the sale of alcohol and the presentation of live performances, films and hires.

8 Equal Opportunities Implications

8.1 Relevance Test

Has a relevance test been completed for Equality Impact?	No
Did the relevance test conclude a full impact assessment was required?	No

9 Staffing Implications

9.1 Watersmeet staff are part of the recently formed Covid-19 Action Group which consists of staff from Leisure Development, Community Partnerships, Regulatory Services, Communications and Watersmeet. This group is designed to allow the Council to respond appropriately to the communities needs as a result of the second lockdown. Tasks will be allocated to the appropriate staff with the relevant skillset.

9.2 In addition two Watersmeet staff continue to be redeployed part time, one to Community Partnerships and one to Grounds Maintenance.

10 Environmental Implications

10.1 None specific.

11 Community Safety Implications

11.1 None specific.

12 Public Health implications

- 12.1 Postponing the reopening of Watersmeet will likely have implications for residents' and Watersmeet's front of house volunteer's mental health who have been looking forward to attending their local arts and entertainment venue.

13 Customer Services Centre Implications

- 13.1 None specific.

14 Communications and Website Implications

- 14.1 Watersmeet's website and social media channels will continue to be updated with the latest information relating to Watersmeet.

15 Risk and Health & Safety Implications

- 15.1 The Council has agreed its risk management strategy which can be found on the website at <https://www.threerivers.gov.uk/service/risk-management>. In addition, the risks of the proposals in the report have also been assessed against the Council's duties under Health and Safety legislation relating to employees, visitors and persons affected by our operations. The risk management implications of this report are detailed below.
- 15.2 The subject of this report is covered by the Corporate Framework. Any risks resulting from this report will be included in the risk register and, if necessary, managed within this/these plan(s).

Nature of Risk	Consequence	Suggested Control Measures	Response <i>(tolerate, treat, terminate, transfer)</i>	Risk Rating <i>(combination of likelihood and impact)</i>
<i>Description of the risk</i>	<i>What happens if the risk was to occur</i>	<i>List control measures that are, or could be put in place</i>	<i>How will the risk be dealt with *</i>	<i>Enter the residual risk score</i>
Watersmeet is not reopened	Three Rivers residents do not have access to their local arts and entertainment venue	Watersmeet is reopening as soon as Government restrictions allow	Risk Assessments and Government guidance will be followed and services restored.	4
Negative Public Perception on Watersmeet	Satisfaction ratings within the Council will reduce and the number of	Watersmeet is reopening as soon as Government restrictions allow	Risk Assessments and Government guidance will be followed	4

	complaints may increase		and services restored.	
Spread of COVID-19 within Watersmeet	Negative publicity and further spread of the illness	Risk assessments completed and procedures implemented such as making the venue 'Covid Secure' in line with Government guidance.	Responsible officers will complete risk assessments and procedures and ensure compliance.	4

Likelihood Very Likely -----> Remote	Low 4	High 8	Very High 12	Very High 16
	Low 3	Medium 6	High 9	Very High 12
	Low 2	Low 4	Medium 6	High 8
	Low 1	Low 2	Low 3	Low 4
	Impact			
	Low -----> Unacceptable			

Impact Score

4 (Catastrophic)

3 (Critical)

2 (Significant)

1 (Marginal)

Likelihood Score

4 (Very Likely (≥80%))

3 (Likely (21-79%))

2 (Unlikely (6-20%))

1 (Remote (≤5%))

16 Recommendation

16.1 That the Covid-19 Response sub-committee, agrees and recommends the Watersmeet Reopening Report to Policy and Resources Committee for adoption.

Report prepared by:

Josh Sills, Watersmeet Venue Manager

Data Quality

Data checked by: Wendy Stratford, Watersmeet Operations & Events Manager

Data rating:

1	Poor	
2	Sufficient	✓
3	High	

Background Papers

None