

## Part A

Report to: Outsourced Services Security Panel  
Date of meeting: 8 November 2016  
Report of: Client Section Head – Corporate, Leisure & Community  
Title: End of Year Report on the Colosseum Theatre contract with HQ Theatres

### 1.0 SUMMARY

- 1.1 Outsourced Services Scrutiny Panel is responsible for reviewing those services outsourced by Watford Borough Council, which includes the contract with HQ Theatres for Watford Colosseum.
- 1.2 Following the Scrutiny Panel's visit to Watford Colosseum before the meeting, Members will have an opportunity to pose questions to representatives from HQ Theatres and the Council's Client Services Team.
- 1.3 The report and attached appendices set out the following information that provide the Scrutiny Panel with background information to support the scrutiny of the contract – this report provides a summary of:
- Background information about the venue and the operator
  - Programming
  - Governance and contract management arrangements
  - End of Year Report by HQT – Appendix 1
  - HQT workforce - Appendix 2

### 2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 To review the progress of the contract and consider whether any further action is required.

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Report approved by: Head of Corporate Strategy & Client Services

### 3.0 **Colosseum Theatre Contract**

#### 3.1 **Background information about the venue and the operator**

In 2009 HQ Theatres & Hospitality (HQT) were awarded a 10 year contract to operate the Watford Colosseum Theatre. In 2010 the council invested £5.5 million to refurbish and extend the facility.

<b>Colosseum History Timeline</b>	
<b>Date</b>	<b>Event</b>
1938	Opened as Assembly Halls
1994	Managed by Watford Colosseum Ltd
2004	Theatre ceased trading
2005	The Council reopened the Colosseum
2008	Outsourcing process commenced
2009/2010	HQ Theatres selected as preferred bidder
2010	£5.5 million refurbishment / extension commenced
August 2011	Watford Colosseum re-opened

HQ Theatres & Hospitality is a regional theatre, venue and conference operator in the UK and is part of the Qdos Entertainment Group. HQT currently operate 11 venues across England including G-Live in Guildford, Wycombe Swan and Wyvern Theatre in Swindon.

#### 3.2 **Programming**

In the first few years of the contract Watford Colosseum programme was building its reputation as a venue and until this was established was significantly reliant upon the hiring of tribute bands. The company has made a business decision to promote the venue as a more wide-ranging opportunity and to exploit its capacity as a music venue as well as sports, dance, comedy and smaller capacity opportunities. Some of the offer included bringing in shows, such as;

- Jools Holland
- Russian state Ballet of Siberia
- Bill Bailey
- Sports events - darts and snooker
- Moscow City Ballet
- Miracle on 34<sup>th</sup> Street Musical
- Evening with Boycott and Aggers

HQT do well to utilise the venue's different spaces, this is achieved by letting the venue out for rehearsals, recordings, educational activities and community use. They offer discounts for charities and educational organisations. On 9 March 2016, Watford Colosseum

celebrated one year of **#LobbyLive** - a platform for local musicians to showcase their talent by entertaining audiences in Watford Colosseum’s foyer.

**3.3 Top Genres**

- Light Entertainment, Rock and Pop, Dance, Classic, Comedy

**4.0 Governance and contract management arrangements**

4.1 In line with the contract requirements, council representatives hold regular client meetings and met with Jo Ditch, Theatre Director Watford Colosseum and Alvin Hargreaves, Operations Director HQT in September 2016 to review the last 12 months’ programming and financial performance.

Alongside their main commercial enterprise of operating the theatre, HQT are long term and active members of the Cultural Leaders Working Group and participated in the development of the current action plan. HQT also promote and support the Big Events programme.

HQT are developing a marketing strategy to target other areas and extend the marketing further outside of Watford and surrounding area.

Top 3 postal code areas attending the Colosseum *(data from March 2016)		
Town	Number of Customers	% Total of Database
Rickmansworth/Watford/Oxhey / Bushey/Abbots Langley/Kings Langley/Borehamwood/Radlett (WD postcode)	29,041	47.23%
Hemel Hempstead (HP postcode)	6,976	11.35%
Harrow/Ruislip/Pinner/Northwood/ Stanmore (HA postcode)	5,776	9.39%

**5.0 Implications**

**5.1 Financial Issues**

5.1.1 The Head of Finance (Shared Services) comments that there are no budgetary implications of this report.

**5.2 Legal Issues (Monitoring Officer)**

5.2.1 The Head of Democracy and Governance comments that there are no legal implications in this report.

## **APPENDICES**

Appendix 1 – HQT End of Year Report (2015-2016)

Appendix 2 – HQT workforce breakdown (2015-2016)