

	Full Council
Date	16 June 2025
Agenda Item	10

Proposed Community Arts Centre

At its meeting on 14 April, Halstead Town Council agreed the following actions:

- 1 That a survey of the public (supported by existing evidence), users of existing properties and all other interested parties be undertaken to provide evidence to develop a business case for the proposal and that funding of up to £10k be released from EMR for this to take place.
- 2 Outline drawings for an extension to the Empire Theatre be drawn up and that the cost of these be drawn from the Earmarked Reserves held for the Community Centre Development, as agreed at private session on 14 April.
3. That, on completion of the survey and business case in April 2026, HTC determines whether the development should proceed and the next steps to achieving this are planned.
4. That the Clerk be authorised to arrange for Pre-application advice from BDC subject to the normal fees to be drawn from the reserves held for the Community Centre when initial drawings are prepared.

Community Arts Centre project – Update 19/5/25

Actions following the April meeting

A..ECC was contacted immediately after the April meeting in order to establish the state of the petrol tanks under the Empire car wash, as this was previously a filling station. The report below was received:

Empire Filling Station, Butler Road, Halstead.
The Petroleum (Consolidation) Regulations 2014
The Environmental Information Regulations 2004

Having searched our records, and recalling them from Archive for the above site, it appears that for whatever reason these records were authorised to be destroyed in August 2024, so I am unable to provide you with site plans. This was not a authorisation made by Trading Standards as our policy to retain Petroleum Records is for 100 years.

However, I can confirm that there were 3 Tanks removed from the site in 1988 when the site was redeveloped, and 4 New Tanks installed in 1988.

The site was in operation until 2006 when they ceased trading, and the 4 Tanks were made safe by de-gassing and filling with foam in 2007.

As far as we are aware, the manhole covers are still in situ on the site, so this will be an indication to where the tanks are located on the forecourt.

I am sorry that I am unable to provide you with any further information and for this reason we shall not be making a charge for this search.

B. Oswicks design

Oswicks carried out an initial survey on 7 May in order to provide outline plans. The results of this survey will not be available until the end of June.

C. Project management

There are 2 routes possible for this:

- a) the whole project managed by the Empire Trust as a CIO with HTC making all the purchases as a funder, which would have VAT benefits.

Make the application to the National Lottery, Heritage or Arts Fund, S106 funding

- b) The alternative way to proceed is to consider HTC having full control of the project using a mix of Section 106, precept funding and public works loan board support

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| HTC would | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- be a funder- Pay professional fees- Hire a quantity surveyor- Pay for planning permission- Pay and reclaim VAT- Buy fixtures and fittings- Have a budget for the survey (help from BDC?) |
|-----------|--|

D. Finance

Current estimates suggest £600 -£750 k

E. Proof of need - Following a meeting with Danielle Frost of the RCCE,

we have noted these points:

- Proof has to be established through the community survey – cost of help from RCCE £2975 + VAT- this does not offer anything which HTC cannot do for itself
- Should be up to 20 questions
- Should address all demographics, young, old and those in between
- Survey monkey online survey – send link to all primary and secondary schools – this can be sent on to parents
- Paper survey to all care homes and sheltered housing, school pupils
- Publicity about the plans is essential
- Open meetings with the community during and after the survey

F. Lease

The lease is due for review anyway in August 2025. To be reviewed to see if it should be revised because of building plans

Empire Trust as the CIO will be the lead

What permissions does HTC have to give the trust

Need to see a copy of the CIO document for the Empire

G. Working party – this to be addressed at the 16 June meeting

The model for this will depend on the route taken for funding the project but we would suggest;

3 from Empire Trust (1 from Trust who is not a councillor, 1 or 2 from Exec Committee)

3 from HTC

3 other local people?

Clerk as Minute secretary

5. Vision

An accessible large space for Arts & Community together engaging with the town Centre – regeneration of that part of the town

Vision to be presented to HTC at June meeting (discussions with ET before that)

'The proposed Arts and Culture Community Building is envisioned as a vibrant and inclusive hub designed to celebrate creativity, foster connections, and serve the diverse needs of the community. This facility will provide an accessible space for cultural, educational, and recreational activities, enabling people of all ages and backgrounds to come together and thrive. With state-of-the-art features, sustainable practices, and innovative programming, this space will become a cornerstone for community engagement, offering something for everyone, from families and youth to artists and local historians. By incorporating cutting-edge technology, flexible spaces,

and collaborations with local organizations, the building aims to enrich lives while preserving the region's rich heritage and fostering its future.

The aim is for it to act as a dynamic and inclusive space, tailored to meet the needs of the entire community. Featuring key amenities like flexible rooms, immersive experience spaces, and accessible designs, the building will accommodate diverse activities and events, from cinema screenings to outdoor performances. It will support programs for youth, parents, pensioners, fitness enthusiasts, and neurodiverse individuals, while also hosting cultural festivals, workshops, and seasonal events. Additionally, by preserving local history and integrating sustainable infrastructure, the facility emphasizes environmental consciousness and heritage conservation. With its blend of innovation, accessibility, and community-centered programs, the building promises to be a transformative space that inspires creativity, encourages learning, and strengthens social bonds' Empire Theatre Executive Committee

Recommendation: that, following a meeting with the Empire Trust, in June HTC selects 3 councillors to sit on the working party and seeks members of the Empire Trust and Executive committee to join, as well as seeking interest from the public, particularly those with financial expertise/experience in project management.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sarah Greateorex". The script is cursive and somewhat stylized, with the first name "Sarah" and the last name "Greateorex" clearly legible.

Sarah Greateorex **Town Clerk**