

REPORT TO:		Communities and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee	
DATE:		09 March 2026	
PORTFOLIO:		Councillor Munsif Dad BEM JP - Leader of the Council	
REPORT AUTHOR:		Kirsten Burnett, Head of Policy and OD	
TITLE OF REPORT:		Oswaldtwistle Civic Arts Centre and Theatre	
EXEMPT REPORT (Local Government Act 1972, Schedule 12A)	No	Not applicable	
KEY DECISION:	No	If yes, date of publication:	

1. **Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 To update the Committee on work being undertaken to progress plans to allow the reopening of the Oswaldtwistle Civic Arts Centre and Theatre.

2. **Recommendations**

- 2.1 That the Committee notes the report.
- 2.2 That any questions are put forward in advance of the meeting to enable the relevant officers to provide responses.

3. **Reasons for Recommendations and Background**

- 3.1 Oswaldtwistle Civic Arts Centre and Theatre is a historic building that has served the community for over 150 years. It comprises an original Victorian two-storey administrative block, situated on Union Street, that was expanded in 1890 to provide a new public hall with ballroom at first floor level. The extended building, which became known as the Town Hall, is believed to have been designed by the town surveyor, Robert Naisbitt Hunter and built to celebrate the Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee. The building has had many community uses during its lifetime, including as a mixed ballroom, hall and theatre space, the town fire station, a recruiting station for the First World War, the headquarters of the town council, and as additional class facilities for a local school.
- 3.2 In 2010 the building was refurbished and reopened as an arts centre and studio space on the ground floor with a c.450 seat theatre on the upper level. Charitable organisation,

Hyndburn Arts Limited took over the running of the arts centre and studio, with the theatre initially under separate management. The theatre was brought under the charity's operation in 2015 and it was responsible for repairs and maintenance of the building.

- 3.3 The venue closed suddenly in July 2023 after Hyndburn Arts Limited, the charity that had managed the theatre for 13 years, went into liquidation. The charity was officially dissolved in September of that year and the theatre handed back to Hyndburn Council.
- 3.4 A series of initial health and safety, and conditions surveys on the building, determined that the building requires significant investment to carry out necessary repair and upgrade works, including new lighting and heating throughout.
- 3.5 The Council has demonstrated substantial financial commitment to securing the venue's future. Capital allocations include £267,000 for refurbishment works (approved in the 2024/25 Capital Programme), with a further £250,000 allocated in 2025/26. This gives a total capital budget of £517,000.
- 3.6 The Council successfully applied to the Theatre Trust to have Oswaldtwistle Civic Arts Centre and Theatre selected as one of ten recipients of their Resilient Theatres: Resilient Communities programme, securing a £10,000 grant to undertake essential roof survey work. This external recognition underscores both the building's significance and the Council's proactive approach to its restoration.
- 3.7 The detailed roof survey has now been completed, and the tender process for roofing contractors commenced in late 2025. Rosslee Construction have been appointed and it is proposed that works will commence on site from Monday 27 April 2026. The roofing works are anticipated to run for 25 weeks, bringing planned completion of the project to mid-October 2026.
- 3.8 Rosslee Construction await a final scaffold design from their scaffolding contractor. Once received and finalised, this information can be shared with neighbouring properties as part of the party wall notices.
- 3.9 Bringing the venue back into use features in the Council's Culture and Heritage Strategy 2025-30, demonstrating its strategic significance to our cultural regeneration priorities. It is specifically referenced both as a key heritage asset (section 2.5) and as a dedicated action within Strategic Objective 3, which commits the Council to "advance the Oswaldtwistle Civic Theatre and Arts Centre's funding and future development, leveraging its place on the Theatres at Risk Register."
- 3.10 The Council is actively exploring options for phased community use of the building at the earliest opportunity, recognising that some areas (potentially the ground floor spaces) may be suitable for activation while essential structural works continue on other parts of the building. This approach would enable us to begin restoring the venue's role as a community cultural hub while ensuring the building can be made structurally sound and sustainable for long-term use.

4. Alternative Options considered and Reasons for Rejection

4.1 N/a

5. Consultations

5.1 Cabinet have agreed to form a working group, recognising the significant local interest in this venue. This will be progressed once the work on the roof is nearing completion and the Council is in a position to actively consider potential uses and tenants.

6. Implications

Financial implications (including any future financial commitments for the Council)	The Council has set aside capital funding totalling £517,000.
Legal and human rights implications	N/a – update report
Assessment of risk	N/a – update report
Equality and diversity implications <i>A Customer First Analysis should be completed in relation to policy decisions and should be attached as an appendix to the report.</i>	N/a for this report.

7. Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985: List of Background Papers

7.1 None

8. Freedom of Information

8.1 The report does not contain exempt information under the Local Government Act 1972, Schedule 12A and all information can be disclosed under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.