

REPORT TO:	Scrutiny Committee October 31st 2017
SUBJECT:	Fairfield Halls
LEAD OFFICER:	Shifa Mustafa, Executive Director: Place Paula Murray, Creative Director Colm Lacey, Director of Development
CABINET MEMBER:	Councillor Alison Butler, Deputy Leader (Statutory) and Cabinet Member for Homes, Regeneration and Planning Councillor Timothy Godfrey, Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Sport
PERSON LEADING AT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING:	Paula Murray: Creative Director, Place Colm Lacey: Director of Development, Place

ORIGIN OF ITEM:	A request for an update from the Chair of Scrutiny
BRIEF FOR THE COMMITTEE:	This report accompanies a presentation to this Committee. It summarises an update on the refurbishment of Fairfield Halls plus the mobilisation and engagement plans of the incoming operator BHLive.

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Initial enabling works have been completed in the Fairfield Halls and Vinci, the main contractor appointed, are on site and undertaking main works. A series of tours were conducted of the site in September and will be repeated in coming weeks and months. BHLive the incoming operator for the Fairfield Halls have appointed a Venue Director and begun a programme of engagement and developing communications in preparation for handover.

2. FAIRFIELD HALLS: REFURBISHMENT

2.1. Works Update

The initial Enabling works package comprising of targeted strip out of MEP and Asbestos removal was completed in June 2017. Completion of these works were timed with the appointment of the main contractor – Vinci Construction Ltd.

Vinci have progressed on site over the past 4.5 months undertaking works as follows:

- **Site set up** – Installation of welfare and site facilities.
- **Site review** – Review and sign off, of completed Enabling works. Familiarisation survey of site in relation to proposed works.
- **MEP Works** – Continued MEP strip out of works outside the Enabling works package.
- **Asbestos works** – Removal of previously unidentified Asbestos (The construction process is subject to ongoing Asbestos review)
- **Scaffolding** – Installation internally of small sections of scaffold for exploratory works. External scaffold erection to the North elevation for façade works.
- **Seating** – Ashcroft Theatre – Removal and protection of seating, Concert Hall to follow.
- **Subcontractor packages** – Subcontractor tender packages have all been returned and are being reviewed by Gleeds (External Project Management Consultants) and Vinci Construction Ltd.

2.2. Proposed Works Detail

2.2.1. Externals

- **North Elevation** – A frameless glass extension to the north elevation will provide an improved connection to College Green, providing a new entrance and much improved circulation with a new lift and stairs. Independent access to the Ashcroft Theatre from College Green will be created. Cleaning and refurbishment of the existing signage, stonework and cladding, together with replacement of the existing failed precast cladding, will enhance the original designs.
- **South Elevation** – The existing Arnhem Gallery main elevation will be demolished and re-built to match the existing materials and massing, with improved cladding performance and insulation. This will create a new multi-function space and terrace to be incorporated at second floor level, with a back lit polycarbonate glazed façade and new plant area. The retained portions of the façade will be cleaned and refurbished with a new independent access created to the Arnhem from Barclay Road. The existing failed precast cladding to the high level Concert Hall elevation will be replaced and the existing 'Arnhem Gallery' signage will be cleaned, refurbished and reinstated on the new section of the elevation.
- **East Elevation** – It is proposed to keep the east of Fairfield Halls for the purpose of technical and back of-house activities. The unsightly office extension built in the 1990s will be removed. The loading dock for the Concert

Hall get-in will be replaced with an improved layout and design. The unused kitchen extension will be removed and the kitchen service yard remodelled. There will also be upgrades to the existing sub-station and the introduction of a new energy centre for the future connection to a proposed district heating system.

2.2.2. Internals

- **Ashcroft Theatre** – Refurbished and new seating will be provided with an increased capacity from 750 to 801. A new audience address system will be provided, with general decoration throughout to retained elements.
- **Arnhem Gallery** - The existing Arnhem Gallery main elevation will be demolished and rebuilt providing two new floors of multifunction space, with sprung and semi sprung floors, new lighting and a performance grid. The 1990s extension will be removed.
- **Concert Hall** – The existing renowned acoustics to the Hall will be preserved and enhanced with a new acoustic rear canopy and acoustic banners, together with technical facilities for a greater audience and performer experience. Seating will be refurbished with new retractable choir seating to allow an increased stage area and improved access. The existing lighting is to be refurbished, and the get-in will be improved for easier access.
- **Main Foyer** – A new box office ‘Welcome’ area will be provided with clear and improved circulation, accessibility and wayfinding. Existing heritage architectural features will be enhanced with the original ceiling, lighting design and projecting balconies reinstated. The existing entrance doors and glazing will be replaced and a new informal performance space, bar, café and cloakroom provided.

2.3. Engagement: Site Tours

Last month Fairfield Halls opened on a Saturday for a series of tours of the building work so far. Around 80 people in total were taken across a total of 4 tours throughout the day. One of the tours was opened up to the public via the London Open House scheme and the others were by invitation. The tour participants were particularly taken with how different the building was internally after the strip out that has taken place. There is an intention to run more tours at a suitable point in the build programme again in the near future.

3. FAIRFIELD HALLS: OPERATIONAL

3.1. BHLive Update

A presentation to Cabinet in June this year introduced BHLive the future operator for the Fairfield Halls and gave information on their current business and highlights from their tender documentation. Over the last three months, engagement and recruitment have already begun as part of a mobilisation phase prior to the opening of the venue.

3.1.1. Venue Director

BHLive have appointed Neil Chandler as the Venue Director who is due to start working with them from the middle of November. Neil comes to BHLive from Ambassadors Theatre Group, running the New Wimbledon Theatre and the Bristol Hippodrome. Neil was also Head of Operations for Fairfield Halls from 2009-11 so has some previous experience of the venue. The role of the venue director will be to lead on managing day to day operations, event programming, community engagement and events and business events.

Working jointly, the council will support the new venue director in a whole series of engagement sessions for local partners, stakeholders, community representatives and organisations in the New Year. Some discussions are already underway with the existing head office programming and community engagement heads from BHLive with key cultural organisations and potential promoters.

3.1.2. Employment

The main recruitment drive for Fairfield Halls will commence approximately 6 months from opening, with key positions such as Sales, Marketing, Community, Hospitality, Ticketing, Facilities plus Technical and Stage. It is BH Lives aim to have as much local talent as possible and they will engage with Croydon Works throughout the process. In the interim period BH Live central resource have been busy liaising with key partners to develop and prioritise key elements of the mobilisation plan.

3.1.3. Marketing and Communications

The focus of the Marketing department in the early stages has been in managing the PR generated by the news that the new operator has been appointed. Significant coverage has been generated in all local media and extremely positive customer feedback has been forthcoming on social media platforms. BH Live have been working with the Council to understand the historical customer data and are developing a contact plan over the coming months, being mindful of the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) coming in to force in 2018. A landing page has been launched in the short term to capture customer details for ongoing communication, and a new website,

with integrated ticketing, is under construction. Some initial research has been undertaken regarding the Fairfield Halls brand look and feel.

3.1.4. Community Engagement

Paul Griffiths – Group Lead, Community Engagement and Learning, has been focused on building new relationships with key stakeholders in Croydon; meeting with The Brit School, Glenthorne School, Savvy Theatre Company, Croydon Youth Theatre Organisation and Croydon Youth Arts Collective for example. A number of individual schools have also been in contact and several additional future meetings are also in the pipeline.

Paul has also met key Council contacts covering areas such as Arts Participation, Youth Engagement, Fundraising plus Music and Arts. Meetings to date have been mostly exploratory, gaining a wider understanding on the aspirations of the various departments.

3.1.5. Hospitality

Developing the catering proposition is viewed to be critical to the re-launch of Fairfield Halls. BH Live are planning a bespoke range of experiences to suit all customer demographics, ranging from coffees, sandwiches, panini's and light snacks during the day targeting the business, student and office workers – to Street Food on event nights such as gourmet burgers, Mexican, oriental, etc. appealing to diverse tastes. This will be complimented by VIP Hospitality packages, with themed evenings linked to show genre. Current market trends such as Gin and Prosecco will be served via mobile outlets

The new Glasshouse on the side of the building will be the new F&B destination of choice for the cultural quarter with wood-fired pizzas plus craft and local beers.

Fairfield Halls will also look to develop many non-performance experiences such as Corporate Events, exhibitions, award ceremonies, weddings, parties and Town Hall events. Contact has been established with Croydon BIDs and BHLive plan to host events for business events bookers in the coming months.

CONTACT OFFICER:

Paula Murray, Creative Director

APPENDIX:

None

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

None