

To: Leadership Board

On: 1 May 2019

Report by: Chief Executive

Heading: Thomas Coats Memorial Church

1. Summary

- 1.1 This report seeks to update Board on the future of Thomas Coats Memorial Church, Paisley. The report summarises the activity of the Thomas Coats Preservation Trust and their collaborative efforts alongside Renfrewshire Council and other partners to secure a sustainable future for the building.
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2. Recommendations

- 2.1 It is recommended that Board:
- (i) note the progress made to date for the future of Thomas Coats Memorial Church; and
 - (ii) agree to offer a contribution of £50,000 from the Paisley Common Good Fund to the Thomas Coats Preservation Trust towards their current fundraising campaign, subject to demonstrating a robust and funded business case for their proposed reuse of the Church.
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3. Background

- 3.1 A report to Leadership Board on the 20th June 2018 described in detail the issues faced by the current Trustees of Thomas Coats Memorial Church (TCMC) Paisley and the steps taken to date to identify and secure a viable alternative use for the building.

- 3.2 The report also informed Board of the establishment of Thomas Coats Preservation Trust (SCO 48033), a new organisation equipped to take ownership of the building. In January and May 2018 the Thomas Coats Preservation Trust was granted Planning Permission and Listed Building Consent respectively for the change of use from a church to a multi-purpose entertainment venue.
- 3.3 In May 2018 Renfrewshire Council received correspondence from Thomas Coats Preservation Trust seeking financial and project management support to further develop their project and steer it through to completion. The Leader of the Council responded to this request stating that the Council would consider future involvement. The current Trustees of Thomas Coats Memorial Church previously issued Thomas Coats Preservation Trust with an offer of exclusivity. This prevented ownership of the church being transferred to any other organisation and gave a degree assurance to Thomas Coats Preservation Trust as they developed their business plan. This period of exclusivity expired on the 1st March 2019.
- 3.4 The last service at TCMC took place in August 2018 and the building is no longer used as a place of worship. The Trustees of the church remain responsible for the building. The existing governance arrangements and Trust status only allow for the building, its contents and associated assets to be transferred to another charitable organisation, such as the new Thomas Coats Preservation Trust. The decision on such a transfer lies with OSCR (Scotland's charity regulator).
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4. Progress to date

- 4.1 On the 1st February 2019 the Thomas Coats Preservation Trust launched a 100-day crowdfunding campaign to repurpose TCMC as a multi-purpose entertainment venue. The crowdfunding campaign seeks to raise £1.5 million and is due to conclude on the 11th May 2019. To date, according to the website set up for crowdfunding purposes, the campaign has raised about £120,000. It should be noted that the website makes clear that should the funding target not be reached by the Preservation Trust, any donations received will be used for essential repairs for the Church building in discussion with the existing Coats Trustees.
- 4.2 The campaign has received significant interest and featured in several national media publications. A dedicated campaign website has helped extend its reach and has facilitated online donations. A series of open days and other fundraising events are scheduled throughout the campaign, with musical performances, exhibitions and tours helping to focus activity in the building and maintain public profile. The Council's marketing team has supported the Trust's efforts by sharing campaign information on Council media channels.

- 4.3 Council officers have worked with the Thomas Coats Preservation Trust to maintain dialogue with key external stakeholders to identify broader heritage opportunities. In February 2019, the Council facilitated the involvement of the Scottish Civic Trust to utilise resources through the 'My Place Mentoring Scheme'. The scheme aims to grow the capacity of the trustees and support business planning and fundraising opportunities. Council officers submitted an 'Expression of Interest' application to the scheme and facilitated an introductory project meeting with the scheme's Project Officer which took place in March.
- 4.4 In February 2019, Council officers also facilitated a meeting with building surveyors to refine the Preservation Trust's estimated project costs and assist with the programming of short, medium and long term remedial works. This has enabled the Preservation Trust to add to the suite of information they hold about the church's condition.
- 4.5 Members are asked to note that a robust business case and funding strategy for the suggested future use of the building by Thomas Coats Preservation Trust are not yet available. These documents are required to support applications for external funding.
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5. Next Steps

- 5.1 The "100 Days to Save Coats Memorial" campaign has proved to be a successful platform to raise awareness of the building and the Trust's plans for its future use. It is therefore recommended that the Board agree to offer a contribution of £50,000 from the Paisley Common Good Fund to the Thomas Coats Preservation Trust.
- 5.2 This offer would be subject to the Preservation Trust being able to demonstrate, to the satisfaction of the Council's Director of Finance, that a robust and funded business case is in place to ensure the delivery of their proposed reuse and refurbishment of the Church.
- 5.3 Any organisation taking responsibility for the building will require support for capacity building and fundraising. This will ensure the building's end user is informed, equipped and adequately resourced to meet the building's needs and operate sustainably. Council officers can offer significant experience in this regard with historic buildings and will therefore continue to work with Thomas Coats Preservation Trust to build their capacity and identify collaborative opportunities to strengthen their proposal going forward.
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Implications of the Report

- 1. Financial –**
An offer of a £50,000 contribution from the Paisley Common Good Fund to the Thomas Coats Preservation Trust's fundraising campaign is outlined in the report, subject to the caveats outlined in the body of the report.
- 2. HR & Organisational Development – None**

3. **Community Planning –**
 - ***Reshaping our place, our economy and our future:*** Renfrewshire Council is working with stakeholders to maximise the opportunities for culturally-led regeneration, providing support to make best use of heritage assets.
 - ***Building strong, safe and resilient communities:*** working in partnership with local groups and organisations to achieve positive outcomes.
 4. **Legal - None**
 5. **Property/Assets - None**
 6. **Information Technology - None**
 7. **Equality and Human Rights**
 - (a) The Recommendations contained within this report have been assessed in relation to their impact on equalities and human rights. No negative impacts on equality groups or potential for infringement of individuals' human rights have been identified arising from the recommendations contained in the report. If required following implementation, the actual impact of the recommendations and the mitigating actions will be reviewed and monitored, and the results of the assessment will be published on the Council's website. An Equality Impact Assessment is being prepared as part of the project requirements
 8. **Health and Safety – None**
 9. **Procurement - None**
 10. **Risks - None.**
 11. **Privacy Impact - None**
 12. **Cosla Policy Position - Not applicable**
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List of Background Papers

1. Report to Leadership Board: 20th June 2018 'Thomas Coats Memorial Church'.
 2. Report to Council: 15th December 2016 'Coats Memorial Church – Referral by Paisley North Local Area Committee'
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AM/SJ
25 April 2019

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