

The Spotlight: Options Appraisal and Recommendations

Broxbourne Borough Council

April 2021

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1 Introduction

Fourth Street was commissioned in November 2020 by Broxbourne Borough Council to advise on the future of The Spotlight venue to improve its sustainability, financial performance, and operational flexibility.

Within this report, we have presented:

- A set of strategic aims that have informed the appraisal of options for the future of The Spotlight (Section 2).
- The appraisal of options and identification of an option with lowest risk, and best fit with objectives and financial performance for the short-term future of The Spotlight (Section 3).
- A new vision for The Spotlight and recommendations to deliver on the shorter-term aims (Section 4)
- An updated staff structure and role definition (Section 5).

This work has been informed by the following work undertaken during the commission:

- Strategic review of Broxbourne and Hertfordshire aims, objectives, and policies.
- Consultations across the community, council, cultural groups, and stakeholders.
- Resident demand analysis.
- Local and regional venue supply research and analysis.
- Analysis of The Spotlight's performance and facilities.
- Consultations across the wider entertainment sector with venue directors, promoters, and agents – tapping into trends and best practice particularly in respect of Covid-19.
- Meetings and discussion with representatives of the project steering group.
- Soft market testing through a review of various expressions of interest received from potential operational partners.

2 Aims and Objectives

The options appraisal requires us to identify and evaluate options for The Spotlight to advance the cultural, social, and economic agendas of Broxbourne Borough Council.

The bedrock of any options appraisal is a clear and unambiguous set of objectives. We have undertaken a thorough review of relevant plans, policies, and strategies to ensure that the objectives for The Spotlight are consistent and sympathetic with the Borough's wider aims and aspirations. A set of aims for optimised use of The Spotlight, previously agreed with the Council, are provided below.

2.1 Aims

Short-term aims:

1. Optimise financial return from recent investments in The Spotlight
2. Reposition The Spotlight to address short-term demand and market opportunities
3. Contribute to the cultural and social vibrancy of the borough
4. Agree longer-term strategy for The Spotlight

Long-term aims:

1. Ensure residents have access to community space which meets their needs
2. Ensure residents have access to an excellent arts, culture, and entertainment offer
3. Improve the return (financial and non-financial) on the Council's arts and culture investment
4. Optimise the utilisation and value of council assets
5. Contribute to improving the sense of place of Hoddesdon and the perception of the borough and its communities more generally
 - a. Align with the borough's strategic aims and values including:
 - b. Generating quality places and supporting thriving town centres
 - c. Enhancing the quality of life and encouraging a sense of community through events, leisure activities and volunteering
 - d. Championing learning and skills through supporting higher educational attainment and connecting young people to the job market
 - e. Nurturing employment

3 Options Appraisal

3.1 Introduction

The main purpose of the options appraisal is to determine which options for The Spotlight optimise public value. Central to this is a robust appraisal of options and cost-benefit analysis led by the council's aims for social, cultural, and financial value as outlined in section 2.1. Through this appraisal we seek to answer the question: "What is the option that most advances our objectives, at best value and least risk?" Nested within that simple question are the cornerstones of a competent business case: objectives, options, value, and risk.

We note that while multiple options are on the table, granular detail and absolute accuracy are less important than comparability and relative accuracy – our appraisal will be high level in line with the available detail for each option. For a fair comparison of like-for-like, we need only to consider conceptual options with high-level models and costings. We do not need to know the exact cost of Options X and Y; we only need to know – with reasonable precision – whether Option X costs more or less than Option Y.

We take the previously stated long term aims as the objectives for this appraisal – and have removed the financial objective #3 as this will be dealt with separately in the qualitative analysis. The resulting objectives are:

Figure 1: Options appraisal objectives

COMMUNITY SPACE	Ensure residents have access to community space which meets their needs
CULTURE OFFER	Ensure residents have access to an excellent arts, culture, and entertainment offer
OPTIMISE ASSETS	Optimise the utilisation and value of council assets
SENSE OF PLACE	Contribute to improving the sense of place and the perception of the borough and its communities more generally

3.2 Summary options

Below we summarise two sets of options – overarching options categories as shown in Figure 2 to be used in the options appraisal, and specific expressions of interest and proposals as detailed in Figure 3. The individual proposals and their relationship to the options are discussed further below.

The options listed in Figure 2 below strive to be all-encompassing for The Spotlight's short-term future. Considerable research, consultation and deliberation has gone into the identification of options, which have been tested with Council officers, and informed by discussions with members and cultural and community stakeholders.

Figure 2: The Spotlight options

	Option	Description
1.	Status Quo	Return the operation of The Spotlight to pre-Covid plans and structures.
2.	Devolved responsibility – commercial operator	Devolution of The Spotlight management and operation to a commercial operator with experience of venue management.
3.	Devolved responsibility – Cultural trust	Devolution of The Spotlight management and operation to a cultural trust – either existing or formed for the express purpose of managing the venue. A transfer of lease or management contract could be agreed either a new special purpose vehicle (e.g., charitable trust with trading subsidiary or other type) or an existing trust (to form part of a portfolio operation).
4.	Relocation and devolved responsibility – commercial operator	Devolution of The Spotlight management to a commercial operator who will manage its relocation to an existing or purpose-built facility, while redeveloping the current site for other uses and financial gain.
5.	Significant physical change and investment in the building	Significantly modify and update The Spotlight building and spaces to better accommodate needs of the business and for improved financial performance.
6.	Restructure to improve performance	Restructure operations and staff in line with an updated business and programme focus for improved financial performance.
7.	Close the venue	Cease Spotlight operation and close the venue, with long term potential to redevelop the site for a non-cultural use.

While the above describes options in general, some are inspired by unsolicited proposals that the Council has received within the last year. These have been followed up by Council staff to confirm interest still exists – many have been hesitant to include a financial proposal without further discussion with the Council. Only one proposal stated clearly what financial support they would expect from the council in the new arrangement (Love Huddesdon for option 3). The proposals are listed below with their salient details and corresponding options within the appraisal:

Figure 3: The Spotlight proposals received to date

Proposal	Date received	Description	Financial details	Corresponding option
Entertainment Go	July 2020	Submitted a Heads of Terms for acquiring a lease for The Spotlight for operation as an entertainment, conferencing, and leisure venue.	Rent free lease, with 15% of profits returned to the council.	2. Devolved responsibility – commercial operator

Proposal	Date received	Description	Financial details	Corresponding option
Rye House Group	October 2020	Proposal to purchase the Spotlight in order to redevelop the site as a luxury residential space. The Spotlight would be relocated to a new building in between the Rye House Kart Raceway and Rye House Stadium along the Lee Navigation. RHG mentions a possible 'rent free period', which may indicate that they expect the council to rent the new building from them to 'continue running any long-established clubs or activities'.	Bid to purchase the Spotlight not included. Possible rent free period for the new Spotlight facility.	4. Relocation and devolved responsibility – commercial operator
Bellis Homes	December 2020	Proposal to develop the Spotlight car park with residential units, thereby financing the reorganisation and refurbishment of the Spotlight's internal spaces.	Proposal suggests ca. £2.6 million can be invested in refurbishing and reorganisation of the venue.	This represents a financing option for option 5 - significant physical change and investment in the building
Stepping Stones Events	January 2021	A proposal to stage 12 live music events at the Spotlight with recommendations for future improvements to Spotlight operations. It is unclear whether the proposal is seeking a management contract for the venue.	Rent free lease, unspecified % of profits shared with council. Council liable for maintenance of building and exterior repairs.	Proposed events, if profitable, could contribute to a restructured programme (option 6). A management contract would fall under option 2.
SOKA Catering	March 2021	Proposal to hire the kitchen from a local caterer for use as their catering facility. Additional offer to redevelop the menu and food service at the Spotlight in future.	No financials provided with the proposal.	Use of the kitchen and proposals to redevelop the catering offer at Spotlight could form part of option 6, if contributing to improved financial performance.

Proposal	Date received	Description	Financial details	Corresponding option
Love Hoddesdon	April 2021	Proposal by Love Hoddesdon and Howlin' Entertainment Ltd to establish a new not-for-profit company to assume management of The Spotlight. Proposal includes a peppercorn rent agreement for a minimum of 5 years, with existing Spotlight staff, who would need to be transferred to the new company, funded by the Council for the first 1-2 years (£100,000 per annum). The Council is requested to set up an additional £100,000 reserve fund for the new company to draw down in setting up the business over the first 2 years.	Potential subsidy of £150,000 per annum for the first 2 years.	3. Devolved responsibility – Cultural trust

These proposals show a variety of options and interest of varying degrees but are only a small sample and not representative of the responses that would be generated by a full marketing and procurement exercise.

3.3 Appraisal of options

3.3.1 Summary of approach

Options have been subjected to a cost-benefit analysis that considers the following:

1. Risk assessment (through a probability/impact assessment)
2. Qualitative assessment (assessing fit with objectives)
3. Quantitative assessment (relative financial analysis based on available data, as previously discussed)

The combination of these three aspects gives a full and measurable overview of the merits and weaknesses of each option. The following sections summarise this process.

3.3.2 Risk Assessment

Our risk assessment has been split into seven categories:

- Market: risk of failure to reach market or financial projections
- Planning: risk of failure to secure planning consent for proposed changes
- Delivery: risk failure to deliver on on-time, on budget, or high quality offering
- Funding: risk of failure to secure sufficient capital funding, or to meet ongoing revenue funding requirements

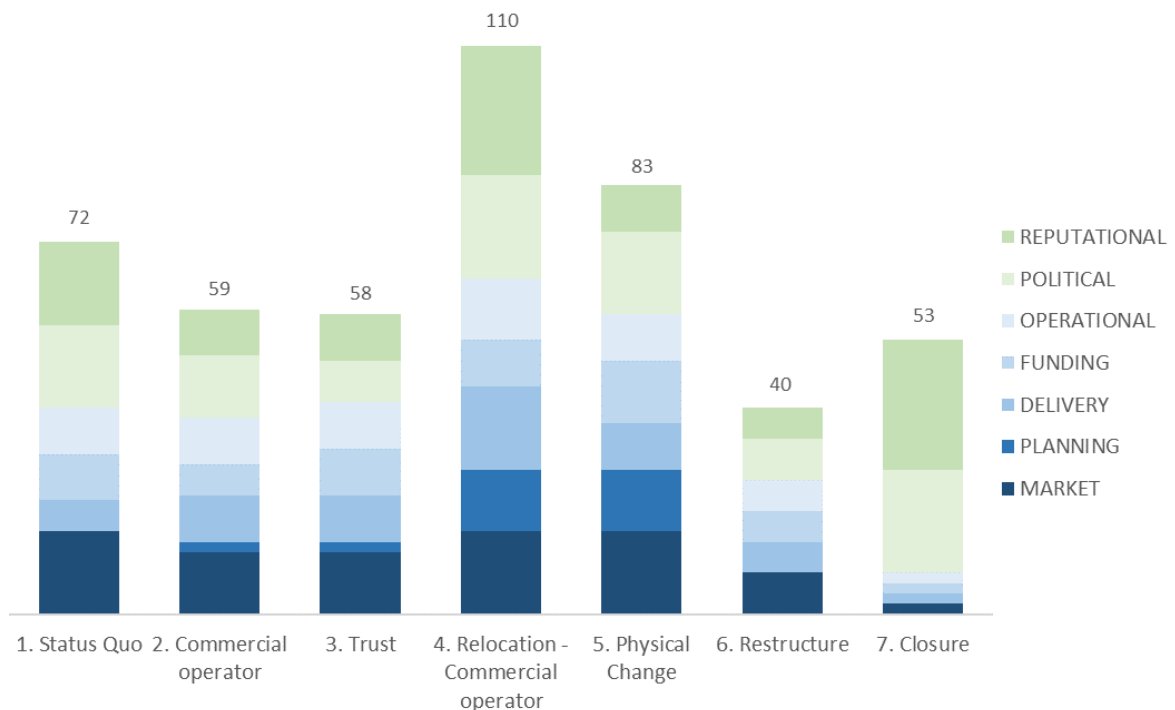
- Operational: risk of failure to deliver core product, programme, or services
- Political: risk of failure to secure local government, community or stakeholder support or incur political backlash
- Reputational: risk of damage to reputation of the council, stakeholders, or partners

The breadth of these categories is intended to be comprehensive, taking in to account risk from all sides of the business, political and regulatory environment, and public opinion.

As shown in Figure 4 below, the following factors affect the risk for each option:

- The largest risks lie in the reputational category, with Option 4 (relocation/redevelopment of the Spotlight site) and Option 7 (closure of The Spotlight) presenting both a high probability of reputational damage with a high impact. Both Option 4 and 7 carry a high political risk for similar reasons. Option 7 (closure of the Spotlight) is low risk in most other areas, as it is not technically difficult to close the venue.
- Option 5 (significant physical change to the building) carries risk of market failure without a clear vision and plan to improve Spotlight's performance, as well as political risk if significant investment did not deliver the impact expected by members and the community. These risks combine with moderate funding and planning risks to make this option 2nd highest in risk.
- Option 1 (status quo) has no planning and low delivery risk, but high market, political and reputational risk, with members, stakeholders, and audiences keen to see better performance and use of the venue – carrying the 3rd highest risk in the assessment.
- Options 2 (devolution to a commercial operator) and 3 (devolution to a cultural trust) are similar in overall risk. These carry slightly higher market and operational risk arising from the steeper learning curve for a new trust or commercial operator in managing a venue for the first time and entering a new market. However, the political risk of the commercial operator is slightly higher given the importance of The Spotlight and its spaces to its many community groups – a commercial operator would have its own targets and objectives which could be at odds with the venue's current role in the community.
- Option 6 (restructure to improve performance) represents the lowest risk with operational changes that have been identified through consultations and industry research, as well as future plans of the Spotlight staff, that could improve performance. Updating the staff structure, programme and services will align these to market opportunities without reinventing the wheel and providing an increased focus on the customer and the venue experience.

Figure 4: The Spotlight options risk assessment



3.3.3 Qualitative assessment

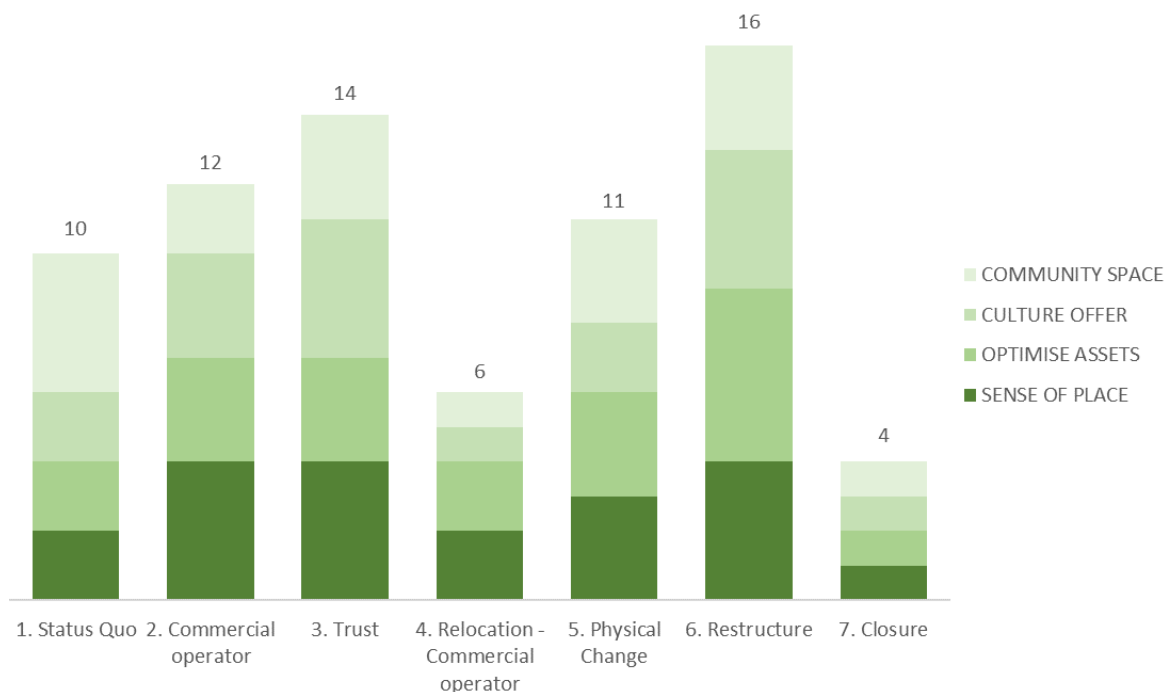
For the qualitative assessment, we score the fit with project objectives – outlined above in Section 3.1 – for each option. Each of the four objectives are given equal weighting in the assessment as they each represent important functions for The Spotlight within the Council and community. It should be noted that if the weighting were to be changed, the overall ranking of options would remain the same, if with slightly different final scores.

As shown in Figure 5 below, the following factors influence overall scoring:

- Option 1 (status quo) shows that the previous operation of the Spotlight is not achieving Council objectives - It is noted that The Spotlight could be delivering more cultural experiences to a greater number of people and more diverse groups across the borough. The Spotlight is also not contributing significantly to the sense of place locally or creating new opportunities for leisure or learning, therefore a relatively low fit with objectives.
- Both Option 4 (Relocation) and Option 7 (Closure) score poorly against the Council's four objectives in that they are not likely to further cultural or social ambitions or improve use of the Council's asset. Consultations have indicated that a closure of The Spotlight would raise significant upset and challenge from the community. With no alternative or replacement arts and cultural provision confirmed for the borough currently, this community and cultural void would unlikely be resolved for several years at least.

- Option 2 (devolution to a commercial operator) and 3 (devolution to a cultural trust) again have similar scoring, with Option 3 scoring slightly better on improving the cultural offer and meeting community space needs.
- Option 6 (restructure to improve performance) achieves the highest score in that it focuses on the needs of the customer and increasing spend at the venue, seeking to activate its spaces and extend dwell time. With the Council's dual interest in an active programme and community access, the cultural programme can bring added value to Hoddesdon and the cultural offer of the borough.

Figure 5: The Spotlight options qualitative assessment



3.3.4 Quantitative assessment

As previously shown, detailed financials for the options are not available – but it is possible to demonstrate relative financial improvements or additional costs through estimated short-term and long-term financial impact. This is detailed in Figure 6 below.

Figure 6: Financial impact and benefit of the Spotlight options

	Option	Short-term financial impact	Long-term financial impact	Total financial benefit
1.	Status Quo	No change to subsidy	No change to subsidy	None
2.	Devolved responsibility – commercial operator	No subsidy required	Potential for profit share	Medium

3.	Devolved responsibility – Cultural trust	Decreased subsidy	No subsidy required	Medium
4.	Relocation and devolved responsibility – commercial operator	Capital receipt and decreased subsidy	Decreased subsidy	High
5.	Significant physical change and investment in the building	Significant financial investment and initial subsidy requirement	Decreased subsidy	None
6.	Restructure to improve performance	Decreased subsidy	No subsidy required	Medium
7.	Close the venue	Decreased subsidy	Potential for capital receipt	High

The above table includes the following assumptions:

- Option 2 has received two expressions of interest from commercial operators that do not require subsidy from the council and state the potential for profit share if available. For options 2 and 3, the council would remain liable for building maintenance and upkeep of the exterior.
- Option 3 has the potential to move to a zero subsidy position, as shown in one expression of interest received – historically, devolution options result in low financial gain for public authorities in the short-term i.e., less than 3-years. These options typically need time to develop their operational plan and improve venue performance, and therefore require a subsidy from the Council. Longer term reductions to subsidy should be realised through a more independent status and mission-led focus. The expression of interest received forecasts only a two-year potential subsidy with no future requirement.
- Options 4 and 7 likely result in a capital receipt for the council, with a high financial benefit. In the short term, closure of the venue (even in a mothballed state) would still incur costs to insure and secure the building and its wider site.
- Option 5 would require significant financial investment but could improve financial performance in the long term. It is unlikely, however, that the investment will be recouped by venue profits, if available.
- Option 6 comes with decreased subsidy in the short term and removal of subsidy in the long term with an increased focus on profitable activities and customer experience – detailed analysis and recommendations for this are shown in Section 4 below. These include increasing bar spend and dwell time, enhancing the customer experience, increased offer of profitable shows, and increasing Spotlight’s visibility in the local area.

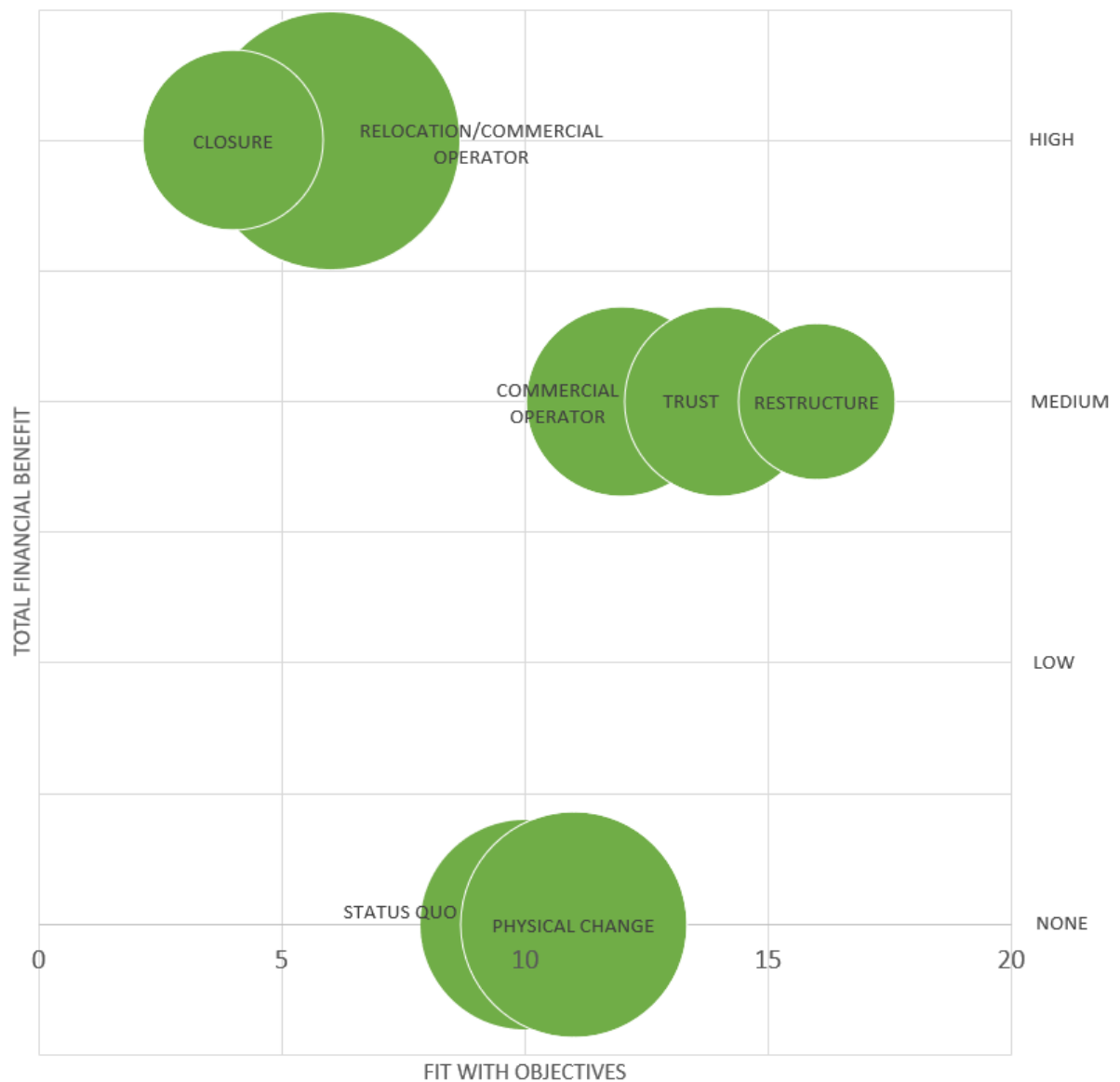
3.4 Summary recommendations

The synthesis of the above assessments, and the rationale for keeping or discarding options, is described below, and shown graphically in Figure 7. The chart is designed to capture – in a single graphic – every element of the appraisal.

- Fit with objectives (qualitative assessment) is represented by a movement along the horizontal axis – further to the right is a better fit with objectives.
- Financial benefit is shown on the vertical axis.
- Relative risk is represented by the size of the 'bubble'.

The 'ideal' solution would thus be a small bubble in the top-righthand corner of the chart. In fact, an honest and robust appraisal will almost never reveal this theoretical best option. The appraisal is not meant to be a substitute for decision-making – it is only meant to quantify and describe the trade-offs between different options so that decision-making is informed, transparent and defensible.

Figure 7: The Spotlight options appraisal



Through the combined assessments, the following options can be discounted in the short term:

- Option 7 (closure of The Spotlight) has a low fit with objectives and a low level of risk with a potentially high financial benefit. This option would substantially reduce the direct operational deficit of The Spotlight but also eliminate the community and cultural value that The Spotlight delivers. It is also recognised that there is no desire from the Council to close the venue and have invested in the venue over recent years to improve its condition and financial performance. In the absence of either an alternative plan for the building and its site or an alternative provision for the community and cultural provision, the short-term financial benefit from closing The Spotlight would be far outweighed by the negative reaction that the council would undoubtedly receive, combined with the potential upside of delivering a short-term restructuring of the business (as described in Option 6).
- Option 1 (status quo) has a medium fit with objectives and no financial benefit. This would return the operation of The Spotlight to pre-Covid plans and structures, operating at a deficit which could worsen in the post-Covid period in an uncertain market without an updated approach. Furthermore, the council has indicated that the status quo will not be an accepted way forward.
- Option 4 (relocation and devolution to a commercial operator) also has a low fit with objectives and a high degree of risk, along with a high financial benefit. In this case, the uncertainty of the future cultural provision managed by a commercial operator, and the loss of the current facility, outweighs the financial benefit as it would be detrimental to the cultural life of the community.
- Option 5 (significant physical change to the building) has a medium fit with objectives and no financial benefit. Significant investment could in theory be made in The Spotlight building to adjust or change its offer and market positioning. Such change would come at a significant capital cost and require a significant further period of closure to procure a design and implement the works (likely to be a minimum of 12 and more likely 24 months duration at least). While a means of raising some capital funding has been suggested through the potential redevelopment of the adjacent car park by Bellis Homes, there is at this stage no evidence to support such investment from a market perspective and which would sufficiently overcome the constraints of The Spotlight's location, accessibility, and physical context. If significant capital were to be invested in a differentiated arts and culture offer, it would make more sense to consider an alternative location and realise the maximum value from The Spotlight site as a source of cross-funding.

Therefore, the remaining options for consideration are Options 2, 3, and 6 – devolution to a commercial operator, cultural trust, or restructure operations to improve performance.

The primary aim of devolution would be to transfer the council's operating risk and liability by devolving the facility or its management to a third party. Potential benefits that often accrue include business rate relief, reduced overheads, operating and procurement efficiencies, commercial focus etc. These financial benefits can take time to be realised, however the expressions of interest received forecast fairly positive outcomes, moving to low or no subsidy in a relatively short period of time. Similarly, restructuring the Spotlight to improve performance with increased commercial focus also has the potential to move to a no

subsidy position. Therefore, all three remaining options have a similar financial benefit as discussed in the quantitative analysis.

It remains to consider the level of risk and fit with objectives between these three options. As shown in Figure 7, there is increasing fit with objectives from option 2 to 3 to 6. The cultural trust option demonstrates a slightly higher fit with objectives over the commercial operator option due to its projected cultural and social charitable objectives, whereas the restructuring option allows for these objectives to be embedded within the new operational plan, as discussed in detail in section 4. Additionally, there is higher operational risk with both the commercial operators and the trust options due to the uncertainty of forming a new organisation with all new procedures and untested business plans.

Option 6 (restructure to improve performance) has a higher fit with objectives and lower risk than options 2 and 3. With improvements and modifications in the areas of programme focus, customer experience, staff and organisation, hire policy and building usage (discussed in detail in section 4), a route to greater income and reduced cost has crystallised through the course of this study, while retaining council management of the venue for the least disruption to service. A new staff structure and team would be developed with a heightened focus on realising commercial programming opportunities and being more customer-focused. Collectively, these recommendations could deliver a significant improvement on the current operating deficit over a three-year timeframe, moving to zero subsidy if recommendations are fully implemented.

It is recommended that other options be retained and further considered as part of a longer-term downstream appraisal of The Spotlight and in the context of the wider arts and cultural offer within the borough, to be undertaken once The Spotlight has been operational in its new format for at least two full years.

4 Restructuring Recommendations

4.1 Introduction to the Recommendations

The recommendations set out in this section relate to the restructuring option that has been identified through The Spotlight options appraisal process (see Section 3 above). If Broxbourne Borough Council were to continue to manage and operate The Spotlight following its post-Covid reopening, it would seek to:

- Capitalise on its recent investments.
- Place greater emphasis on the quality of its programme and audience experience.
- Respond to market opportunities.
- Reduce the Council's operational subsidy through a combination of increased revenue and yields and optimising operational efficiencies.

As noted in the options appraisal, the successful implementation of the recommendations has the potential to significantly improve The Spotlight's operational financial performance. The Spotlight operated with a £216,000 subsidy in financial year 2019/20, prior to the Covid-19 pandemic (without central recharges, business rates or maintenance costs included) – with the below recommendations implemented, this could improve by between £100,000 and £250,000, reaching a lower subsidy or moving into surplus. This range is determined by how much future operations are guided by commercial or community focus. Keeping The Spotlight as a community resource will require a higher subsidy whereas using its spaces and streamlining its programme for commercial gain will reduce the financial support required from the Council. Additionally, there are variations in impact amongst the below recommendations. Some will make a greater difference to income and expenditure than others - how these are implemented will also create a range of financial outcomes.

For each recommendation, the *rationale* for its implementation has been summarised below, together with a high-level indication of the *timescale*, *priority*, *resources*, *responsibility*, and *impact*.

Importantly, each recommendation supports at least one of the following short-term aims that were defined as part of the options appraisal process:

1. Optimise financial return from recent investments in The Spotlight.
2. Reposition The Spotlight to address short-term demand and market opportunities.
3. Contribute to the cultural and social vibrancy of the borough.
4. Agree longer-term strategy for The Spotlight.

4.2 A refreshed Vision for The Spotlight

A proactive refresh of the vision as Broxbourne's premier entertainment venue is required to send a signal to the market to expect improvements in the programme and quality, and reaffirm the venue's focus for its staff, the council, suppliers, and clients.

The Spotlight – Broxbourne’s Premier Entertainment Venue

The Spotlight...

- ...delivers stand-out experiences for the people of Broxbourne.
- ...showcases and nurtures the best and emerging talent in Broxbourne.
- ...presents a wide range of touring shows for the residents of Broxbourne.
- ...partners with Broxbourne’s schools, businesses, community groups and charities to better engage and connect our audiences with arts and cultural activities.
- ...fosters an exceptional team and culture.

This refreshed vision for The Spotlight will be achieved through the Council’s significant investment in its people and in the building and an adjustment to the business’s principal focus.

The management and operation of The Spotlight will be underpinned by an *innovative, collaborative, and practical* culture.

4.3 Short-term vs Longer-term

For the purposes of this study, ‘short-term’ is assumed to relate to a 3-year timeframe and the ‘longer-term’ is assumed to relate to the period beyond that.

The recommendations set out below relate only to the short-term.

It is anticipated that the long-term plan for The Spotlight will be picked up within a new cultural strategy for the borough (which we understand is being commissioned by the Council) and be informed by its shorter-term performance.

It is important to note that if any uncertainty around the short-term future of The Spotlight prevails, there is a risk that this could undermine its recovery and performance during this period. Related to this, we have included a specific recommendation (see Section 4.7) that The Spotlight team prepare a 3-year business plan for the venue with a clearly defined set of measurable Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).

4.4 Programming

Recommendation 1.	Remove or displace underperforming events i.e., those delivering little or no net income contribution or where there is a significant opportunity cost.
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Rationale:	The Spotlight’s programme contains many events that either operate well below the building’s capacity or that deliver little or no financial contribution towards the business’s operating costs. Over 60% of events in 2019-20 operated at 30% of capacity or less. By removing or displacing these events to other venues within the Council’s portfolio, The Spotlight’s capacity for hosting more impactful events will be freed up. In some situations, it will be financially beneficial to host no event rather than to host a loss-making event, despite its
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perceived community value. A clear policy will need to be established to guide decision making in this area to carefully balance the commercial and community role of The Spotlight. We would advise that in the 3-year business plan term, commercial events are prioritised over non-commercial events and that the policy for non-commercial events requires a case to be made for their individual inclusion i.e., the non-financial impact generated by its inclusion within The Spotlight programme.

Timescale:	Immediate/ongoing
Priority:	High
Resources:	No additional resources required
Responsibility:	Theatre Manager
Impact:	High

Recommendation 2.	Develop commercial pantomime plan
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Rationale: Audiences for the pantomime provided by Paul Holman Associates have declined over FY 2018-2019 and 2019-2020, operating at 57% of the venue's capacity over 32 shows in 2020. The net box office income per ticket was £4.53, only slightly outperforming the annual average for all entertainment sales. The Spotlight's regional competitors are experiencing growth in audiences and sales over the same period, achieving 80%-100% capacity audiences, and The Spotlight's market share is declining. Pantomime is often cited as a crucial financial pillar of performance venues – underwriting the development of its programme throughout the year. In addition, pantomime audiences, which are comparatively easy to attract, can then be targeted for future audience development and continue to grow the venue's customer database.

Quality has been cited as the primary issue with the current pantomime. General industry trends around improving the pantomime offer include:

- Ensure high production values
- Employ highest quality talent and recruit West End performers
- Develop a house style that includes local themes and issues developed with audiences and participants, making shows more relevant to the community
- Deliver a product suitable for schools – reduce inappropriate content and engage with what schools want

- Sourcing celebrity talent that raises quality and draws a sizeable audience can be difficult to achieve for mid-sized venues – consider removing celebrity element

These trends are not a comment on The Spotlight’s current strategy but rather a checklist for staff to use when thinking about improving the pantomime offer. Conversations with the current producer should be held to establish a shared plan for the 2021 pantomime and to recommit to best practice. The terms of the current contract should be reviewed and revised to include performance targets and quality expectations to update the model for the 2022 pantomime. If necessary, an alternative provider may need to be procured. Over time, as a new ‘house style’ is established with audiences, the programme can build towards greater performance targets that build on schools and audience feedback.

Timescale:	Immediate
Priority:	High
Resources:	No additional resources required
Responsibility:	Theatre Manager
Impact:	High

Recommendation 3.	Expand / develop commercial events programme
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Rationale: Similar to pantomime, The Spotlight’s programme would benefit from an increase in events with a strong commercial proposition, reaching wider and broader audiences and raising the overall quality. Central to this is developing signature events throughout the year that are distinctly ‘Spotlight’ and speak to the interests of the core audience across a range of genres. Consistent quality is key with this approach to build trust between audiences and the venue, rather than between audiences and individual shows. Particularly in the post-Covid period, re-launch events need to be carefully curated to be both commercially successful and providing a taste of the future programme of The Spotlight.

Identified areas for expansion include broadening the offer for young adults (i.e., 18-35) and the family offer. Updating conversations with promoters with this in mind will seek out more innovative product and signal that The Spotlight may be interested in taking calculated risks on the right offer – further detail on the staff requirement for promoter management and communications is provided in Recommendation 15. Initially, The Spotlight may need to take a more flexible approach to the splits and guarantee thresholds for agreements, supplemented by an enhanced marketing plan for signature events aiming to increase return

on the investment in the long term. Crucially, building this core audience with higher profile events allows the venue to target and feed audiences into other events and programme areas under development.

Timescale: Immediate/ongoing

Priority: Medium

Resources: Broadly speaking, programme spend contained within existing budgets but effectively redeployed. There could be a working capital requirement to enable appropriate deals to be struck – approximately £5,000 per signature event, or £30,000 in total over six events.

Responsibility: Engagement & Events Coordinator

Impact: High

4.5 Experience

Recommendation 4.	Extend dwell time through pre- and post-show experiences
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Rationale: With the Council's recent spend on bar renovations, bar spend and dwell time outside of events can be improved. Pre- and post-show experiences can encourage this, such as:

- Afternoon artist workshops
- Pre-show bar programme
- Post-show talks
- Post-show meet and greet

Promoters have indicated that post-show events are easy to arrange, as are afternoon events when the technical schedule permits.

Dwell time also relates to improving the food and beverage offer – this is discussed further in section 4.104.10 below. To further encourage pre- and post-show drinks and meals, transport shuttle services from Broxbourne station could be explored for events expecting a higher bar spend.

It should be noted that some experiences are not easily socially distanced and may need to be planned for fully vaccinated audiences.

Timescale: Immediate/ongoing

Priority: Medium

Resources: Budget depends on extent and scope of experiences and should be linked to the event and audience size, focusing on additional deals struck with promoter. Ranging from £0-£5,000 per event.

Responsibility: Engagement & Events Coordinator

Impact: Medium

Recommendation 5. Build customer relationships through a consistent welcome and loyalty programmes

Rationale: A warm and consistent welcome is needed to create deeper relationships with audiences and create greater venue loyalty. This is primarily focused on staff actions, but also affected by the building and its facilities, as discussed further in section 4.10. Key actions include:

- Refreshing ongoing staff training plan and welcome protocols
- Include responsibility for venue experience in job descriptions
- Monitoring change through audience surveys and soliciting informal feedback
- Emphasise 'audience experience' in venue and management strategies

In addition, membership and loyalty programmes can encourage audiences to prioritise The Spotlight in their leisure choices and spend. Membership could provide access to exclusive experiences, pre- or post-show, advance ticket sales for popular events and food and drink discounts. Membership data and feedback will enhance the customer database and give the venue valuable information about its core audience's behaviours and interests. This could be tied to the existing Friends of Broxbourne loyalty programme if a good fit with the existing offer.

Timescale: Immediate/ongoing

Priority: Medium

Resources: Budget for member experiences tied to the size of the membership, starting from £1,000 per annum and growing commensurately

Responsibility: Box Office & Admin Supervisor

Impact: High

4.6 Communications

Recommendation 6. Develop dedicated website for The Spotlight and optimise use of social media platforms

Rationale:	<p>Contemporary customers have high standards for website and ticket sales usability. A poor functioning website will discourage customers and decrease overall ticket sales. Many factors affect conversion rate optimisation – some of which are identified by web designers, and some are discovered through experimentation and A/B testing (a process of testing and measuring two sets of identical online communications with one variable changed for greater engagement/effectiveness). A dedicated allows changes to be easily implemented, new content published, and use optimised with one eye on engagement analytics. Ticketsolve is a capable ticket sales system which can be better used within the context of a functioning venue website.</p> <p>A website with full venue access can also easily monitor traffic sources. The Spotlight should expand its social media presence with an enhanced strategy across platforms with the best audience reach, while observing which platforms result in ticket sales via the website. A strategy for social media should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Focus on high quality images and video ➤ Engagement with trusted social media groups such as Mumsnet for editorial content or ticket offers ➤ Ensure social media content is on brand and consider engaging external advice ➤ Monitor social media engagement to understand audience segment behaviour over time ➤ Focus on the platforms with the most return ➤ As digital marketing grows, monitor the usefulness of printing paper brochures to allocate marketing budget most effectively <p>We understand that a website was previously commissioned, but its completion is not confirmed at this stage. Our recommendation is that the timescale for this is brought forward and it be delivered in advance of the reopening to aid marketing (ideally, completed 3-months prior to re-opening).</p>
Timescale:	Immediate
Priority:	High
Resources:	Website budget is already approved - redeploy existing marketing budget towards social media subject to business planning targets.
Responsibility:	Engagement & Events Coordinator
Impact:	High

Recommendation 7. Prepare re-launch marketing plan

Rationale: With the programme re-launch in September, The Spotlight will be entering an uncertain market, potentially with many active and engaged customers but also with a dizzying amount of choice, particularly after a prolonged period of little to no cultural activity. Some customers will be wary of returning – and these cannot be rushed by the venue. Those that are ready to return will likely respond well to a joyful and confident message that the venue will be open again for social and cultural experiences. Messages across channels should be coordinated and consistent to create a buzz and show The Spotlight’s cultural leadership. To address the fears and practicalities and give further confidence to customers, The Spotlight additionally should:

- Publish a Q&A webpage on reopening plans for the venue
- Establish operational policies that follow recommended Covid-safe guidelines
- Develop and implement post-Covid induction, communication, and training programme for all front-of-house staff
- Communicate with audiences about what to expect when visiting
- Identify and work with local voices and venue ‘champions’ to reassure audiences and promote the venue’s re-opening

Timescale: Immediate – for 2021 reopening

Priority: High

Resources: Staff time and re-allocation/direction of existing marketing budget. To re-establish itself strongly in the marketplace, the marketing budget should comprise roughly 10% of gross revenues.

Responsibility: Engagement & Events Coordinator

Impact: High

Recommendation 8. Improve directional and ‘what’s on’ signage

Rationale: The Spotlight’s location, away from the town centre and set back from the road in a dip, means it is easily passed without being noticed. The current signage is set back from the roadside, the writing is small and therefore can easily go unnoticed.

Signage off the High Street has two main purposes. Firstly, as a marketing device to raise awareness of The Spotlight generally and to signal upcoming

shows. And secondly, to provide a directional aid for those travelling to The Spotlight.

We would suggest that a new brown sign (that can be viewed from the south and north) is added to the lamppost opposite the entrance with the standard 'theatre or concert hall' logo and ideally, the words 'The Spotlight' included and a 'P' sign for parking. This sign should direct people into the turn-off for The Spotlight.

The current signage when travelling south is set back too far and should be brought forward onto the grass verge with larger writing for the venue's name and strapline and, rather than A1 posters for individual shows, we would recommend a much larger space for show banners to be included.

When travelling north, the signage should also be enlarged if possible, with similar features to that proposed at the south-bound location.

Land ownership should be ascertained for the positions described above.

Highway signs can take time to install - early action is important for realisation within the next financial year.

Timescale:	Immediate
Priority:	Medium
Resources:	Ranging from £5,000-£25,000 depending on size and location
Responsibility:	Theatre Manager
Impact:	Medium

Recommendation 9.	Invest in The Spotlight's customer database and ticketing system
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Rationale: Customer database management is about understanding audience behaviour and interests to better meet their needs and expectations. Investment should enable training for enhanced expertise, equipment procurement for ease of front of house management and specialist adjustments for enhanced systems collaboration.

With full integration between email marketing, website, ticketing system and customer database, The Spotlight can increase proactive marketing, more easily segmenting customers and targeting for repeat visits and upselling for relevant shows. This can also integrate with promoters' websites and online promotion and track third party sales effectiveness. Proactive marketing also encourages online sales and reduces the demand for physical transactions, decreasing the importance of a physical box office.

Additionally, to reduce ticket fraud for large/standing events – and especially if this is an area of interest for expansion – bar code/QR code scanners should be invested in to track entry and eliminate repeat use of tickets, which is supported by the Ticketsolve system.

Timescale:	Immediate
Priority:	High
Resources:	Needs further costing relative to the requirements of The Spotlight’s system and training needs
Responsibility:	Engagement & Events Coordinator
Impact:	High

Recommendation 10.	Explore and develop marketing partnerships
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Rationale: With a re-vamped signature programme a refreshed marketing plan is needed to ensure the greatest capacity audiences are achieved. Marketing partnerships range from ticket offers to a targeted subscriber list to presence at local and regional festivals to offering services to local schools. Online and offline potential platforms should be explored with projected audiences for signature events in mind.

Timescale:	Immediate/ongoing
Priority:	Medium
Resources:	No additional resources required
Responsibility:	Engagement & Events Coordinator
Impact:	Medium

4.7 Organisation

Recommendation 11.	Define new roles and titles with flexibility across functions and hours
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Rationale: The Spotlight staff have traditionally been assigned to distinct front of house roles such as box office, bar, and catering staff with separate duties for administrative staff as well. Through more flexible roles and job descriptions, savings can be made in the following areas:

- All staff should be available for tickets sale during daytime hours when footfall is comparatively low, reducing the need for dedicated box office staff.

- Ensure the ticket sales process is streamlined and train bar staff on ticket sales support for flexible capacity between the bar and box office during peak periods
- With a recommendation to create a simplified kitchen next to the bar in Recommendation 28 below, catering tasks and food preparation can be carried out by trained bar staff, reducing need for dedicated catering staff and food runners between the kitchen and bar.

In the long term, The Spotlight can investigate the possibility of merging the box office and bar through ticket sale software and POS (point of sale) integration for increased efficiency.

An updated staff structure is discussed in detail in section 5 of this report.

Timescale:	Immediate
Priority:	Medium
Resources:	No additional resources required
Responsibility:	Theatre Manager
Impact:	High

Recommendation 12.	Develop a Service Level Agreement to confirm decision making between council and The Spotlight
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Rationale: Council-owned and operated theatres on the whole have benefitted from creating a more independent and distanced brand from their respective councils. This can be seen in the progression of Hertford Theatre, Harlow Playhouse and South Mill Arts. Organisational culture – distinct from the parent organisation – is a key area for venues – from working hours to IT needs to marketing, theatres and councils have different practices and expectations. Many have in place a service level agreement that outlines these differences, making it easier for venue managers to deploy their budget and human resources most effectively.

The Spotlight managers should be encouraged to own the programme and venue management – this influences branding, communications, and many of the recommendations being made across the venue’s operations and business model. This should be proactively reconfirmed to give further confidence to The Spotlight’s staff in a period of transition where decisions need to be taken and implemented swiftly, removing the need for councillors to be involved in management decision-making.

Timescale: Immediate

Priority:	Medium
Resources:	No additional resources required
Responsibility:	Director of Finance
Impact:	High

Recommendation 13. Better network staff for advice and professional development

Rationale:	Many venue managers benefit from informal advice and discussion with their peers. In consultations, directors of Harlow Playhouse and Herford Theatre have openly offered their time for discussions and brainstorming – we have also spoken to other managers who have valued the advice of their networks, such as the National Venue Manager Network, again an informal gathering of venue managers within local authorities. Harlow Playhouse also benefits from support from the Barbican, while Hertford Theatre is working with the Royal Opera House bridge organisation. These strategic networks and partnerships can expand the skills and resources of a small team immeasurably and help The Spotlight reposition itself, particularly in an uncertain market post-Covid.
Timescale:	Ongoing
Priority:	High
Resources:	No additional resources required
Responsibility:	Theatre Manager
Impact:	High

Recommendation 14. Develop a three-year business plan

Rationale:	<p>A three-year business plan to cover the period 2021-2024 (taking effect later this year) should be developed, ideally led by (or at least in consultation with) the existing Theatre Manager. The business plan should incorporate the recommendations set out in this report and establish appropriate KPIs covering financial and non-financial outcomes. Measurement methods should be identified – any systems that are not yet in place for measurement should be set up as a priority.</p> <p>The business plan should also confirm the capital investment requirements in the immediate term (again, based on these recommendations) – which will allow the organisation to develop and expand revenue streams and operate with a higher degree of efficiency. This will build on the council's previous ca.</p>
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£500,000 spent updating the venue, including the dressing rooms, bar and Dinant room.

Financial planning should confirm the council's financial commitment over the three-year term for greater clarity on the profit contribution needed from events and other income streams. The Spotlight's spending and procurement power without council approval should be checked to ensure the investments recommended within this report are able to be realised.

Timescale:	Immediate
Priority:	High
Resources:	No additional resources required
Responsibility:	Theatre Manager
Impact:	High

Recommendation 15.	Supplement existing resource and skills as required to collaborate effectively and proactively with promoters and agents
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Rationale: Promoters are keen to work with venues in the post-Covid reopening process, but many feel that venue staff across the industry are understandably paralysed with indecision after a year of false starts and highly uncertain social distancing and lockdown announcements. Two factors most influence promoters' decision-making at this time – the strength of their relationship with venue staff and the financial deal that can be agreed. In many cases promoters will be looking for a guarantee, after a year of dwindling resources and no booking income. At a minimum a conversation will be needed to ensure that the risk is equitably shared between the venue and promoter.

Many promoters also feel that August/September will likely be the first month that is safe to plan a return to indoor events, indicating a potentially busy market for The Spotlight's reopening. As the year progresses, it may become more difficult to secure bookings. To source the highest quality programme with an opening season of The Spotlight 'signature' events and signal to the market that the programme has a new standard, a staff role is needed that covers the following tasks and responsibilities:

Commercial and Marketing

- Review previous venue hire contracts, reset the rate card, and identify and internally sign off any variants of venue hire deals to secure new business and reflect the risk appetite of organisers

- Review protocols around accepting bookings for non-commercial events and when and how these bookings are diarised and the rental deals
- Create and commence a re-engagement plan with previous venue hirers
- Review all marketing channels and marketing materials to ensure fit for purpose and relevant to post-Covid recovery
- Identify new business opportunities and pursue these, identifying any new business development collateral, hire deals, in house provision required to get to contract.
- Review previous supply contracts and establish if supply chain is resilient or if new suppliers are needed

Venue Operations

- Check all key operating systems are functional and test these, including life safety, box office IT, EPOS, production equipment, kitchen equipment, HVA, power distribution.
- Deep clean to any areas where required to ensure venue is ready to welcome public.
- Install and commission any new equipment and test before venue reopening
- Plan a soft opening event or events to bed in the new team and test the venue facilities

Covid Specific

- Review industry best practice guidance
- Risk assess the venue and operational practices to highlight required changes
- Revise policies and procedures to reflect revised operational needs
- Publicise these through all channels to managers, staff, event organisers and audiences
- Create professional signage to augment existing signage where necessary
- Pre-record or script any key audience messages

Staffing

- Reappraise management and staff structure to balance flexibility and affordability with securing good quality, well-motivated team members
- Map out job roles and person specifications in readiness to recruit or rehire the operating team as necessary.

- Ensure these redefined roles meet the criteria to be more flexible and provide consistent employment across the pool of staff.

Timescale:	Immediate
Priority:	High
Resources:	Potential for additional staff complement if not already covered.
Responsibility:	Theatre Manager
Impact:	High

4.8 Private hires

Recommendation 16.	Implement new private hire policy prioritising the public programme
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Rationale: Getting the public programme right and increasing its profitability should take highest priority in the short term. A new policy should be developed which prioritises public programme over private hires in the short term. Rather than cancelling and rescheduling community events at short notice, creating unnecessary negative feelings in the community, those private and community hires which place the most strain on The Spotlight's resources and represent the greatest loss of potential income should be notified quickly of cancellation. This should be linked in communications to The Spotlight's updated vision and drive to become Broxbourne's premier entertainment venue. As discussed further in Recommendation 17 below, the council could present an alternative venue option within its portfolio, or The Spotlight could recommend a suitable alternative in the community.

Private hires should also be considered carefully against audience development. Where financially sustainable, private hires which are relevant to The Spotlight's programme and mission will contribute to audience development. These groups can also be consulted with on programming interests or marketed to with ticket offers for future shows.

In the long term, business event bookings and private functions should be explored with a bar rather than catering focus – which can more easily be accommodated with an alternative kitchen closer to the bar for snacks and appetisers as discussed in Recommendation 28, opposed to more substantial meals.

Timescale:	Immediate
Priority:	High
Resources:	No additional resources required

Responsibility: Theatre Manager

Impact: High

Recommendation 17. Manage private hires as part of wider council portfolio of venues

Rationale: Community events and hires with smaller audiences or that do not utilise The Spotlight's production facilities should be considered for scheduling across the council's portfolio of venues. This could include meeting space at Bishops College and leisure centres, or even a simple referral to other affordable community venues. To facilitate this, the council should consider making its room booking systems more user friendly and automated (bookable online) where possible.

Timescale: Immediate

Priority: High

Resources: Council staff time to set up with The Spotlight clients/review booking processes.
Hall hire booking system price to be determined

Responsibility: Theatre Manager/Facilities Manager

Impact: High

4.9 Business performance and measurement

Recommendation 18. Establish monthly reporting regime against business plan KPIs

Rationale: As discussed in Recommendation 14 above, KPIs should be set against the business plan which can be measured easily through existing or new systems. These KPIs should be monitored monthly with quarterly review against targets.

Key areas to monitor would include:

- Individual event performance measures
- Bar spend against staff expenditure
- New bar menu spend and customer feedback
- Signature events success and reception
- Customer sentiment around building a stronger relationship to the venue
- Effectiveness of upselling and targeted ticket offers via Mailchimp and google analytics
- Dropout rates on (new) website sales conversion and conversion paths – assess barriers to sale conversion

Timescale:	Immediate
Priority:	High
Resources:	No additional resources required
Responsibility:	Theatre Manager
Impact:	High

Recommendation 19. Implement system to evaluate every event on an individual P&L / contribution basis

Rationale: Related to Recommendation 19 above, greater clarity on each event's contribution to profit and loss after direct event costs (e.g., staff, equipment hire, marketing, etc) is needed. Itemised P&L's per show would allow greater clarity and commercial analysis and should include:

- Show fees
- Casual staff hours
- Promotional costs
- Equipment hire
- Licensing fees
- Ticket sales
- F&B sales
- Hire fees
- Recoverable charges

This will support in decision-making to streamline the programme, inform future event deals and negotiations and ultimately, ensure greater commercial success.

Timescale:	Immediate
Priority:	High
Resources:	No additional resources required
Responsibility:	Theatre Manager
Impact:	High

Recommendation 20. Implement regular customer survey to gain greater feedback on non-financial metrics

Rationale:	<p>Also related to Recommendation 19, regular customer surveys should be undertaken to understand performance against key criteria such as customer welcome, product quality, experience of bar service, and success of initiatives to extend dwell time. Care should be taken to limit multiple survey requests sent to individuals, and especially used for events bringing in larger proportions of new or lapsed audiences.</p> <p>Importantly, survey data is best interpreted with one eye on informal feedback with customers in the venue for additional context – managers should be trained and encouraged to engage customers in discussion on venue and programme changes and collate this information in monthly/quarterly reports.</p>
Timescale:	Immediate
Priority:	High
Resources:	No additional resources required
Responsibility:	Engagement & Events Coordinator
Impact:	High

4.10 Building and Land

4.10.1 Arrival

Recommendation 21. Update the prominence of the building entrance to be more welcoming and open.

Rationale:	Consideration of enhancing the visitor orientation and welcome, by way of totem or signage. The visibility of the venue at street level is limited and the main entrance lacks a sense of arrival at an entertainment venue.
Timescale:	Immediate
Priority:	Medium
Resources:	Cost could vary considerably but initial budget of say, £10k-£25k suggested.
Responsibility:	Theatre Manager
Impact:	Medium

4.10.2 Main Auditorium

Recommendation 22. Utilise the repositioning of the tiered auditorium seating to suit events

Rationale:	For more intimate events, fully utilising the adjustable seating to bring the rake forward will create a large open space at the rear of the auditorium. This area can be utilised as a temporary, additional bar/gathering space before and after events and during intermission. This increases bar service capacity but also enables concurrent events in the auditorium and bar, subject to sound proofing that enables these to happen (see Recommendation 25 below). A temporary bar can be set up simply and effectively with trestle tables, linens, and portable coolers/refrigerators, and the space can be enhanced with a few tall tables for drinks as well.
Timescale:	Immediate
Priority:	Medium
Resources:	Mostly within existing budgets with some additional equipment identified such as furniture, pop-up bar provision etc.
Responsibility:	Senior Technician/Box Office & Admin Supervisor
Impact:	Medium

4.10.3 Other Event Spaces

Recommendation 23. Simple upgrade / renovation of Dinant room

Rationale:	The Dinant Room is in need of renovation to create a more inviting environment – but rather than a complete renovation for a new specified use, we recommend a simple redecoration to brighten the space while longer term usage changes are tested. It is understood that some \$106 money was allocated for a larger scale renovation of the Dinant room – some of this could be better used on kitchen adjustments as discussed in Recommendation 28 below.
Timescale:	Immediate
Priority:	Low
Resources:	Redecorating budget of say, £5k-£15k, within existing dedicated budget
Responsibility:	Theatre Manager
Impact:	Low to Medium

Recommendation 24. Develop dedicated means of public access for each of the events spaces

Rationale:	In an effort to programme concurrent events at The Spotlight, some attention needs to be paid to access and flow through the venue, and whether bottlenecks
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could be removed. An additional primary entrance through the bar area could provide better visitor management with separate entry points for different events.

However, there are some issues with the route to the bar entrance crossing driveways and staff parking areas – in addition, the pathways might not be wide enough for standard use. With these safety concerns, this may not be a priority or possibility for the short term, but something to keep in mind as the programme grows and evolves. If smaller events are held in both the bar and the auditorium simultaneously, the combined audience should be of a manageable size to use the main entrance without causing any egress issues. Some improvement may be necessary for the internal doorways between the foyer and the bar to distinguish the transition from public to private space and to provide suitable means of security, queuing and access management.

Timescale:	Immediate review of possibilities and definition of potential development options, but significant change not likely before the venue relaunch
Priority:	Low
Resources:	Minimal investment in the short term perhaps say, £5k-£10k for improving existing internal doorways and arrangements.
Responsibility:	Theatre Manager/Health and Safety Officer
Impact:	Low

Recommendation 25.	Appraise soundproofing potential and options between bar and auditorium
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Rationale: To extend the active hours of The Spotlight and increase footfall, concurrent and overlapping events should be considered in future programming. To facilitate this, soundproofing options between the auditorium and the spacious, recently refurbished bar should be reviewed and appraised. Increased events in the bar will also lead to increased reliance on The Spotlight as a leisure and entertainment destination, tapping in to more recent and successful events in standing and cabaret format.

Soundproofing could take the form of an enhanced double-door system between the two spaces, as well as additional soundproofing treatment for the walls. These options would need to be appraised as to their cost and effectiveness.

Timescale:	Immediate
Priority:	High

Resources:	Appraisal undertaken within existing budgets. Cost of any intervention to be determined through the appraisal.
Responsibility:	Senior Technician
Impact:	High

4.10.4 Audio Visual Equipment

Recommendation 26.	Improve auditorium sound quality
Rationale:	<p>Sound quality has been a concern of consultees and The Spotlight staff alike, with audiences experiencing echo, feedback, and dead spots. Key improvements address these issues as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Acoustic treatment of the brick and solid walls to address echo and improve overall sound quality. ➤ Ensure the tech box has open air access to the auditorium with a window that opens for sound mixing, or relocate the tech desks to the rear of the auditorium ➤ Explore sound proofing for the projector to eliminate machine noise or invest in a new, quieter projector ➤ Rehang speakers with correct rigging to eliminate motion causing feedback and dead spots, and in the correct position to eliminate delays. Ensure delay timings are correct. ➤ Reposition monitors to eliminate feedback ➤ Reposition subwoofers off-stage to manage audience decibel levels and reduce trip hazards <p>These improvements help to build The Spotlight's reputation for a high-quality programme and facility. Further study and quotes should be sourced to prioritise the above list for the most efficient impact.</p>
Timescale:	Immediate
Priority:	High
Resources:	Up to £50,000 – to refine with further investigation
Responsibility:	Senior Technician
Impact:	High

Recommendation 27.	Improve technical ease of use
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Rationale:	<p>The technical systems are not optimised for ease of technical set up for events. Improving this would reduce the hours and potentially number of technical staff required for get-in and setup and maintain better relationships with touring companies.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Replace and reposition amp rack to standardise quality and make it more accessible ➤ Replace, rewire, and relocate patch bays and multicores for a simplified setup ➤ Install 3-phase power for professional touring companies near stage
Timescale:	Immediate
Priority:	Medium
Resources:	Up to £50,000 – to refine with further investigation
Responsibility:	Senior Technician
Impact:	Medium

4.10.5 Kitchen

Recommendation 28. Develop plan for the provision of an additional basic food prep facility located adjacent to bar, thus providing integrated F&B operation

Rationale: The Spotlight's existing kitchen is large and well-equipped, but under-utilised and far from the bar, requiring additional staff to act as food runners to deliver orders from the kitchen to bar customers. A more conveniently located and smaller, user-friendly food prep area would require fewer staff to operate during events, and again, utilise flexible roles for greater efficiency. This would also reflect a simplified menu that focuses more on snacks and bar food in support of the public events programme.

In the short-term, the existing larger kitchen would be used for more substantial food preparation requirements in advance public events and the smaller facility located adjacent to the bar providing the during-event service. The larger kitchen would also be retained to service the long-standing lunch contracts held in the Dinant room that amount to 40 lunches for 30 people per annum.

With the aim of creating a new, smaller food prep facility by the September re-opening, this might take the form of a temporary building or cabin placed just outside the bar area, avoiding the design and implementation of a permanent building and the need for significant further building intervention and planning consents. Key considerations for the new food prep area would be to ensure

	appropriate service access for staff and to consider the re-deployment of some equipment from the existing kitchen.
Timescale:	Immediate – for 2021 reopening
Priority:	High
Resources:	Costs could range substantially from say £15,000 upwards depending on size and specification. A temporary facility has the potential for future resale.
Responsibility:	Theatre Manager
Impact:	High

4.11 Longer-term Recommendations

Recommendation 29. Develop a cultural strategy for the borough

Rationale:	Broxbourne is a culturally vibrant place with many residents committed to sustaining and growing its cultural, social, and commercial life. Yet some barriers to collaboration exist such as transport infrastructure and separation of villages moving north along the Lea Valley. A cultural strategy can increase collaboration and networks across the borough and create a framework that creates links between the venues, organisations, and creative communities of Broxbourne. This can also define how culture can deliver on wider council objectives such as wellbeing, skills, and education – and in particular give The Spotlight a rationale for mutually beneficial external partnerships.
Timescale:	Within 5 year period
Priority:	High
Resources:	The Council has already allocated a budget for the development of a cultural strategy
Responsibility:	Leisure Projects Manager
Impact:	High

Recommendation 30. Apply evidence and experience from the next 3-years to appraise the longer-term

Rationale:	With changes in venue facilities, management and reporting, programming and a more commercial operation comes a period of evaluation to assess effectiveness. Within the last year of the 3-year period, KPI reporting and financial performance should be holistically assessed to understand the successes and what should be carried forward or altered in the commercial
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strategy. This would ideally sit within a wider arts and culture strategy to be developed by the borough, which will inform The Spotlight’s vision and business plan. Larger scale investment should be considered at this point – whether expansion or substantial reconfiguration of the venue is needed – along with governance and management options.

Timescale:	Within 3 year period
Priority:	High
Resources:	Within existing resources and specified within the proposed 3-year business plan budget.
Responsibility:	Director of Finance
Impact:	High

5 Staff roles and structure

With major shifts in operation such as a more commercial focus on programming, improving the customer experience and welcome, and increasing dwell time, appropriate staff roles are needed to realise the recommendations, focused on the customer and their experience.

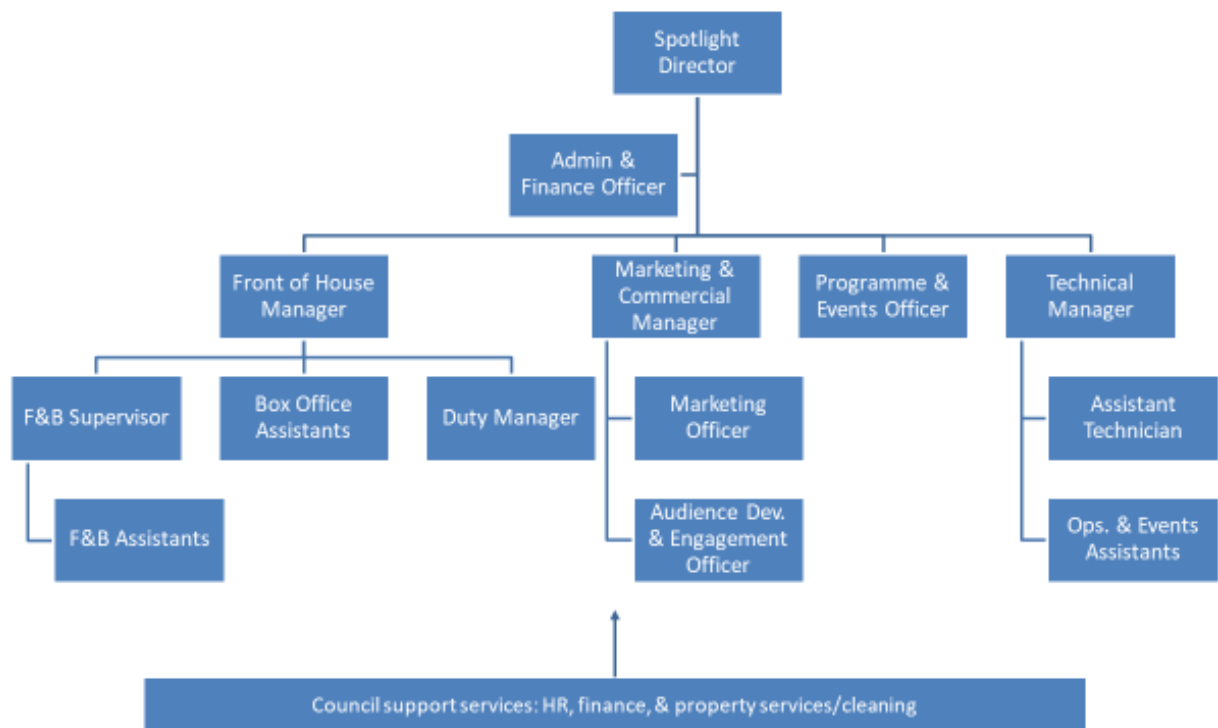
We recommend the following key moves:

- Creation of a **Front of House Manager** to focus primarily on customer experience and establishing a welcoming culture. Redistribution of the customer service focus of the Box Office & Admin Supervisor to this post and the rest to the Admin & Finance Officer. The Front of House Manager can also double as duty manager where possible but will be supplemented by another **Duty Manager** on 0.5 FTE – both can also double as reception staff when working outside of events.
- Theatre Manager role replaced with **The Spotlight Director**, which has increased responsibility for the cultural programme and is supported by a **Programme & Events Officer** in bookings and developing relationships with promoters as well as private hire clients. This brings the programme more organically in line with The Spotlight’s strategic vision and business plan and contributes to driving The Spotlight’s vision as Broxbourne’s premier entertainment venue forward.
- Shift the focus of the **Marketing & Commercial Manager** to include business development, with the responsibility to seek out innovative new partnerships for income generation. The remuneration for this post should be tied to the financial success of new initiatives.
- Creation/expansion of an **Audience Development & Engagement Officer**, who develops outreach and educational programmes with communities as well as plans for relationship building to new target audiences. This role also contributes to grant writing and fundraising to support educational programmes.

The proposed structure is shown in Figure 8 below. The number of staff and size of the structure are commensurate with other similar size theatres and represents a volume of human resource capable of supporting a viable commercial operation. In the current period where the council is considering and enacting staff and operational changes alongside this study, it may be necessary to reconsider how some roles are delivered or supported by the council – for instance, cleaning services may need to be provided in house if not provided by the council.

The below structure is open for adjustment in consultation with the client.

Figure 8: Proposed staff restructure



Each role is described in further detail in Figure 9 below. Where roles require multiple or part-time staff, the FTE (full time equivalent) is given, as well as a salary range for each post based on accepted industry levels. Bringing remuneration in line with expected levels ensures that roles are attractive to skilled and experienced professionals who will contribute to the quality of The Spotlight’s programme and operation. It is noted that recommended salary levels may not fit easily into council pay bands – the level of responsibility of each post should be reviewed to make sure the pay band level is the best fit for industry standards and closely matching the below recommendations.

The title of the role in The Spotlight’s previous staff structure is shown below against the new role which it most closely resembles. In many cases, previous roles fit into new roles with small changes. However, the following roles are not included:

- Box Office & Admin Supervisor: removed in favour of a more customer-facing role in the Front of House Manager, who has oversight for how the box office is managed.
- Halls Operations Manager: Senior Technician position elevated to Technical Manager, responsible for ensuring successful technical delivery of programme and events, while liaising with council building services and maintenance team
- Chef: to be hired on a contract basis tied to catering contracts for lunches and events. Bar catering is expected to be simplified and carried out by bar staff in a new kitchen facility near the bar.

- Roles which were previously left vacant: the General Manager and F&B Assistant Manager.

All salaries are shown exclusive of NIC and pension.

Figure 9: Proposed staff roles and salary ranges

Role	Responsibility	FTE	Salary range	Previous post
The Spotlight Director	Strategic and artistic direction and programming, financial management, business planning, fundraising and income generation	1.0	£40,000-£50,000	Theatre Manager
Marketing & Commercial Manager	Marketing strategy and business development, PR and communications, marketing partnerships, marketing KPIs reporting and assistance with business planning. Remuneration tied to programme performance.	1.0	£35,000-£45,000	Marketing Manager & Events Coordinator
Front of House Manager	A new role which helps make The Spotlight more outward (customer) facing: responsibility for experience, potential membership schemes, dwell time, and corporate hospitality. Oversight of bar and box office to integrate customer service.	1.0	£28,000-£34,000	New role
Technical Manager	Responsible for efficient production of The Spotlight shows and events, liaison with council building and maintenance services	1.0	£28,000-£32,000	Senior Technician
Marketing Officer	Executes the marketing strategy across all platforms: Website management and optimisation, integration with ticketing systems and CRM, social media strategy and content	1.0	£25,000-£30,000	Digital Media & Profiling Officer
Audience Development & Engagement Officer	Develops educational and outreach programmes to target new audiences, primary schools liaison, contributes to fundraising and grant writing to support these activities.	0.6	£25,000-£30,000	New role/ Engagement & Events Officer
Programme & Events Officer	Responsible for programme booking and relationships with promoters, as well as organising show logistics and communications with technical staff. Manages private hire clients and their bookings.	1.0	£25,000-£30,000	New role
Admin & Finance Officer	Internal financial record-keeping and reporting, administrative coordination, liaison with council financial and HR systems and staff	1.0	£24,000-£28,000	Venue Administrator/ Admin & Finance Officer
Duty Manager	Supports the Front of House Manager in house management for events	0.5	£22,000-£25,000	New role

Role	Responsibility	FTE	Salary range	Previous post
Assistant Technician	Support to Senior Technician and event production	1.0	£22,000-£25,000	No change
F&B Supervisor	Manages bar, food and beverage and ensures excellent customer service	1.0	£22,000-£25,000	No change
Box Office Assistant	Responsible for efficient running of ticket services and excellent customer service	1.5	£19,000-£22,000	No change
Operations & Events Assistants	Assist with venue logistics and customer support for private hire clients and events. The role would ideally be shared between two part-time staff for flexible scheduling.	1.0	£18,000-£21,000	Operations Assistant
F&B Assistant	Responsible for efficient running of bar service and excellent customer service	3.5	£18,000-£20,000	No change
Total (salary exclusive of NIC and pension)		15.90	£384,500-453,500	

It is noted that the current budget for The Spotlight's staff is approximately £431,000, exclusive of NIC and pension but inclusive of the marketing team. This brings the total spend for the new staffing structure within a reasonable range of previous levels with an initial potential for savings.

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