

Councillor Eileen Lintill
Leader of the Council
Chichester District Council
East Pallant House
Chichester
PO19 1TY

**CHICHESTER
FESTIVAL
THEATRE**

10 November 2020

Dear Cllr Lintill,

Chichester Festival Theatre

As I am sure you are aware, Chichester Festival Theatre receives an annual grant from Chichester District Council of £187,500. This is aligned to, and predicated on, CFT continuing to receive Arts Council England (ACE) National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) funding and the current CDC/CFT agreement aligns with their funding period, originally 4 years from April 2018 to March 2022. Due to the impact of Covid-19, ACE have confirmed an extension to the funding period for a further year, to March 2023. ACE has requested that we prepare a revised business plan for April 2021-March 2023, to be submitted in March 2021.

I write to request that CDC consider a 1-year extension to our current grant agreement to mirror the extension of ACE funding. To have confirmed funding from CDC, maintained at the current level to March 2023 will hugely support us in planning for the next two years, demonstrate to ACE the on-going positive support of the local council and ensure that we can continue to provide arts and cultural provision for the district.

As I am sure you will be aware, CFT has been significantly impacted by Covid-19. We were forced to cancel our entire 2020 Festival Season after only a single day of rehearsals. We have seen a loss of 81% of income since March 2020, including ticket refunds (£1,096,000 to-date), we have lost ancillary sales (£330,000), LEAP subscriptions (£75,000), reduction in membership renewals (£33,000) and have lost corporate sponsorship opportunities due to cancellation of sponsored productions (£77,300).

Despite this, activity at CFT and engagement with the community has never stopped.

Our Learning, Education & Participation department (LEAP) launched "LEAP Remote" in April to ensure the arts continued to connect and bring joy to our communities. Described by one participant as 'a creative life line,' this involved online workshops as well as Youth Theatre sessions delivered via Zoom, reaching 3,273 participants.

We have sought new and innovative ways to support the local community: our Buddies volunteers continue to make weekly calls to 200 of CFT's most vulnerable and isolated patrons; we provided 200 arts packs to local schools; we partnered with Chichester Scrub Hub to provide fundraising support and equipment to make scrubs for front-line workers; we offered our

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accommodation on Broyle Road to NHS staff; we volunteered our vans to support UK Harvest to redistribute food; our youth theatre members provided videos and creative content to local care homes; and we recently raised over £80,000 to support 300 local young carers by providing IT equipment to those without access to digital technology.

Harnessing the success of our 2018 live stream of *The Midnight Gang* to the children's wards of St Richards and Worthing hospitals and Chestnut Tree House, between April and June we broadcast online, three production recordings for free to an audience of over 130,000. Our Five Day Play competition received over 300 entries, with four recorded by professional actors.

We have led the industry in reintroducing audiences in a Covid-secure way. In August we hosted a Music and Movies Weekend including a drive-in cinema in Northgate Car Park, delivered in partnership with Chichester Cinema at New Park, an outdoor Family Fun in the Park and evening concert on Oaklands Park – we are very grateful to CDC for their support of these events. In October we launched a new Autumn Season to bring live theatre back to the City after a significant remodelling of all areas to create a Covid-safe working environment and socially distanced auditorium. We held two sold-out and live-streamed concerts and opened Sarah Kane's play *Crave* in the Festival Theatre, originally programmed for the Spiegel tent. Despite the recent lockdown we were able to complete the run by live-streaming the final performances, watched by patrons in 45 countries internationally, to great acclaim in the national and international press and via social media. We hope to play a significant part in bringing Christmas to Chichester by presenting a show for pre-school age children, a week of Christmas Concerts and our Youth Theatre production of Pinocchio involving seventy of our youth theatre members.

Through use of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and by implementing salary reductions, we have to-date avoided redundancies of CFT permanent staff. However, with 70% of the workforce in the creative industries being freelance and the impact of closure on subsidiary businesses, including our catering partner Caper & Berry and other suppliers, we know that the best way that we can support local jobs and the local economy is to create work. We are determined to maintain a positive and creative outlook and continue to support the district, our community, staff and audiences to access arts and culture. In times of isolation, lock-down and social distancing we feel this responsibility ever more acutely.

While the economic impact that CFT can bring to the district will undoubtedly be reduced for a period of time by the current crisis, we are confident that our approach will allow us to continue to support the community and the presence of the district on a national and international scale, ensuring that we return to an adapted version of normal as soon as possible. CDC's committed additional support of CFT through to March 2023 would be hugely helpful in these endeavours.

Please let me know if I can provide any further information to support your consideration of this request.

With best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kathy Bourne', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

KATHY BOURNE
Executive Director
Chichester Festival Theatre