

De Montfort Hall & Haymarket Theatre

Culture and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Commission

Date of meeting: 22/01/2026

Lead director/officer: Peter Chandler, Director of Tourism
Culture and Economy

Useful information

- Ward(s) affected: All
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- Report version number: 1

1. Summary

This report updates on the operational and financial progress at De Montfort Hall and the Haymarket Theatre, which are being managed as an integrated service.

A significant milestone has now been achieved, as it now costs the Council less to operate De Montfort Hall and the Haymarket Theatre as a joint service than it would be to mothball them. This also enables the delivery of a high quality cultural and teaching/learning offer for the city.

2. Recommendation(s) to scrutiny:

- 2.1 To note and comment on the report.

3. Operational Updates:

De Montfort Hall

- 3.1 With a maximum audience capacity of 2200, De Montfort Hall is Leicester's largest arts venue. It is located on the outskirts of the city centre adjacent to Victoria Park and has been a popular destination for generations of Leicester people. It was built in 1913 by the City of Leicester Corporation, has remained a council owned and operated venue ever since, and has always provided the city with a broad range of music, comedy and celebrity-based performances, just as it does today.
- 3.2 During the 2024/25 financial year, De Montfort Hall recorded ticket sales of 228,821, representing an increase of 42,151 tickets sold compared to 2023/24. The venue achieved a turnover of £6.5 million, an improvement of £1.2m over the previous year. Due to the reduced availability of original music artists in the UK post covid, programming has strategically shifted towards filling the roster with more readily available tribute acts. This change has led to an increase in performance numbers, rising from 174 in 2023/24 to 241 in 2024/25, and contributed to the improved ticket sales.
- 3.3 Catering operations have also continued to perform strongly, driven by improved contractual terms, higher attendance and the increased frequency of events, with income rising to just under £1m in 2024 against £835k in 2023.
- 3.4 Analysis of 2024/25 audience data indicates that 27% of De Montfort Hall audiences live within Leicester City Council city postcodes (LE1 to LE5), 50% are from the wider Leicestershire LE postcode region, and 23% originate from other areas of the UK, overseas or unknown locations.

- 3.5 Of the 50% that come from the wider Leicestershire LE county postcodes, just under half come from the LE6 to LE8 urban area immediately surrounding the city boundary, such as Oadby, Wigston, Syston, etc. This suggests that just over half of the total De Montfort Hall audience (51.3%) for the year came from the Leicester urban area.

Haymarket Theatre

- 3.6 Leicester Haymarket Theatre is a 1970s building in the brutalist concrete design of the time. It is located on Belgrave Gate in the heart of the city. For many years it was home to Leicester Theatre Trust and a well-regarded producing theatre, until their move to Curve in 2007 when the Haymarket Theatre building closed.
- 3.7 The Council retained a long-term tenancy agreement on the building, and this remained empty for over a decade until 2018. The Council then refurbished the building and procured an external operator to manage it. This operator ceased trading in 2020 and the building was once again closed, and reverted back into council control.
- 3.8 The council has subsequently purchased the Haymarket Shopping Centre, including the Haymarket Theatre, in 2021. After extensive external engagement with theatre operators, promoters and potential users, the theatre reopened as a centre for teaching, learning and young people, principally within arts education and associated stage performances.
- 3.9 Some limited further investment to convert the former workshop and office areas into teaching spaces allowed two important strategic partnerships to be established to deliver this vision, with large numbers of young people now regularly benefitting from the new provision:

- Addict Dance Academy are one of the UK's leading colleges for professional dance training. Established in 2012, they have expanded quickly in the city and entered into a ten-year license agreement at the Haymarket Theatre in 2024.

The license is for daytime/weekday use of the premises, teaching up to 650 young people a week, from all over the country, at diploma, foundation degree and undergraduate level in musical theatre and dance subjects.

- Leicestershire Music (formally the Leicestershire Schools Music Service) are a music education organisation, established in 1948, and have a strong track record of delivering music tuition, training, advice, and performance and ensemble opportunities throughout Leicester and Leicestershire.

They have also agreed a licence on a 10-year basis to provide instrument tuition to up to 200 young people on Saturday mornings and Monday evenings.

- 3.10 Both of these agreements exclude the use of the auditorium, stage, and dressing room facilities at weekends to ensure availability for additional dance and stage school hires. Engagement is planned to attract further users, particularly stage and dance schools.

Service Integration & Combined Financial Performance

- 3.11 The Haymarket Theatre has now moved from the Estates and Building Services division into the Tourism, Culture and Inward Investment division, and this has provided an opportunity to fully integrate the cultural offer at De Montfort Hall and the Haymarket Theatre strategically, operationally and financially.
- 3.12 The Haymarket Theatre and De Montfort Hall are now fully integrated from both a management, operational and revenue budget perspective, and they now operate within their combined budget allocation. This integration increases service efficiency and provides economies of scale.
- 3.13 The service delivered an outturn of £605k against a combined allocated budget of £803k in 2024/25. This has been possible largely through significant management and staff effort focussing on a more commercial approach at De Montfort Hall over the last decade aimed at reducing costs and increasing income.
- 3.14 The performance of De Montfort Hall has proved particularly successful with the net cost of the operation falling from over £1.3m in real terms in 2014/15 to £247k in 2024/25, which in itself is a dramatic improvement.
- 3.15 The Haymarket Theatre has also seen significant financial improvement. This is despite several one-off costs that have arisen during the initial reopening period. Due to the age and nature of the building, there has been a need to invest in improvements at the site to bring services up to standard.
- 3.16 The management team is focused on continuing to grow usage of the Haymarket Theatre. Licence fee income has steadily increased as new facilities become available, and indeed the improved revenue performance only includes income for a partial year in 2024/25 for some spaces. Full annual incomes from both Addict and Leicestershire Music are now reflected in the current year. This is expected to drive continued growth in user numbers during 2026 onwards, which is anticipated to improve revenue and further reduce the net cost of the joint operation.
- 3.17 It has long been an objective for De Montfort Hall to operate at a budget-neutral level relative to the financial implications of mothballing the building (i.e. that it costs the same or less to operate the service as it does to not operate it).
- 3.18 Assessments earlier this year conducted with colleagues in Finance and Estates and Building Services estimate the cost of mothballing De Montfort Hall at £242k per year, and the Haymarket Theatre at £368k per year, (£610k combined).
- 3.19 The mothball costs include all statutory costs during closure such as business rates, as well as ongoing costs such as storage, utilities and basic maintenance as well as a level of contingency. It excludes any potential staff redundancy and other one-off closure costs – which are estimated as having a cost of up to £1m in addition.
- 3.20 The joint cost of operating both sites in 2024/25 was £605k, therefore operating below the £610k cost of mothballing the venues. This marks a significant milestone in demonstrating the efficiency and sustainability of De Montfort Hall and the integrated service model with the Haymarket Theatre.

3.21 This means that the budget-neutral aim has been achieved – i.e. in revenue terms it has cost LCC less to operate De Montfort Hall and the Haymarket Theatre in 2024/25 than it would have done to close them.

4. Ongoing renewal

4.1. Performance venues require ongoing capital investment to maintain technical performance standards. To address the ongoing need for investment in technical equipment (especially at De Montfort Hall) and the limited availability of additional capital funding for the foreseeable future, a £1 venue levy has been added within the cost of each ticket sold at De Montfort Hall.

4.2. This is a standard industry practice nationally, and the initiative is expected to generate a fund of approximately £200,000 per year to support this expenditure, without significantly impacting ticket sales volumes. This will help to address the need for ongoing annual investment in the buildings enabling them to stay operational and technically proficient. This will help to maintain delivery of a high quality cultural and teaching/ learning offer.

5. Financial, legal, equalities, climate emergency and other implications

5.1 Financial implications

As a summary of the performance of the two venues, there are no direct financial implications arising from this report. The financial performance is reflected in the figures within the main body of the report.

Signed: Stuart McAvoy – Head of Finance

Dated: 3rd December 2025

5.2 Legal implications

There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

Signed: Kevin Carter, Head of Law - Commercial, Property & Planning

Dated: 21 October 2025

5.3 Equalities implications

There are no direct equality implications arising from this report as it provides an update on De Montfort Hall and Haymarket Theatre. However, the Council must continue to ensure both venues are accessible to all customers and staff. Additionally, all communications and publicity should be provided in accessible formats, including both digital and non-digital methods.

Signed: Sukhi Biring, Equalities Officer

Dated: 16 October 2025

5.4 Climate Emergency implications

City centre buildings are a major source of carbon emissions in Leicester. Following the city council's declaration of a Climate Emergency and its aim to achieve carbon neutrality,

addressing these emissions is a vital part of the council's work, particularly within the council's own buildings.

Events can generate carbon emissions where they lead to additional travel by staff, members of the public or staff of partner organisations using private cars, taxis/private hire vehicles or buses. There are also building emissions (heat and power) associated with the use of venues for events and services. Impacts could be managed by encouraging the use of sustainable travel options and using buildings and materials efficiently. If further maintenance and/or development works are carried out, these projects should individually assess opportunities to further reduce carbon emissions, in line with council policies.

Signed: Phil Ball, Sustainability Officer, Ext 372246

Dated: 17 October 2025

5.5 Other implications

None