

GREATER LONDON AUTHORITY

REQUEST FOR MAYORAL DECISION – MD2531

Title: Tara Arts Group Building

Executive Summary:

Founded in 1977 in the aftermath of the racially motivated murder of a Sikh teenager, Tara Arts Group is an important grassroots theatre in Wandsworth and a rare example of a Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) led arts organisation in London and the UK. BAME-led organisations still make up only 10% of Arts Council England's National Portfolio of core funded organisations, and only 18% of programming in London's theatres is BAME focused.

This decision seeks to agree a partnership with Wandsworth Council and Arts Council England to create a package of funding support for Tara Arts, to secure this strategically important grassroots theatre venue located on the high street. This will be secured through a grant to Tara Arts. Wandsworth Council will also contribute £45,000 with a further £300,000 provided by Arts Council England.

Decision:

That the Mayor approves:

Expenditure of up to £180,000, by way of the award of grant funding to Tara Arts as a contribution to the costs of securing the Tara Arts building at 356 Garratt Lane, London SW18 4ES.

Mayor of London

I confirm that I do not have any disclosable pecuniary interests in the proposed decision and take the decision in compliance with the Code of Conduct for elected Members of the Authority.

The above request has my approval.

Signature:



Date:

14/1/20

PART I - NON-CONFIDENTIAL FACTS AND ADVICE

Decision required – supporting report

1 Introduction and background

- 1.1 Tara Arts Group is an important grassroots theatre in Wandsworth and an award-winning Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) led arts organisation in London and the UK. BAME-led organisations make up only 10% of Arts Council England's National Portfolio. Only 18% of programming in London's theatres is BAME focused, against a London BAME population of 40%.
- 1.2 Tara Arts was founded in 1977 to create a dialogue of inclusion and multiculturalism in the aftermath of the racially motivated murder of a Sikh teenager from Southall. It was the first BAME company to be invited to present its work at the National Theatre and has built a reputation for high quality storytelling over the last 40 years. Tara Arts has been resident at 356 Garratt Lane in Earlsfield since 1983 and is part of the local fabric and high street, providing unique, visible cultural provision. Crucially, Tara Arts owns its building, one of very few BAME organisations in London who do.
- 1.3 The organisation presents a diverse artistic programme, currently largely working with visiting companies. BAME artists make up 80% of the programme. It has well-established local and industry-wide networks and a nationally recognised and valued history and brand. Its patrons include Sir Richard Eyre CBE, Shobana Jeyasingh MBE, Hanif Kureishi CBE, Sir Salman Rushdie and Nitin Sawhney OBE. Tara Arts is core funded by Arts Council England through its National Portfolio - a signal of its strategic value.
- 1.4 Tara Arts has been part of Black Theatre Live, a consortium which is transforming the national touring landscape for BAME companies and artists, supported by Esmée Fairbairn. The programme brings together a network of venues and organisations offering support in touring, marketing and audience development and broadening the range of work available. As such, Tara Arts is vital part of sustaining BAME-led theatre and ensuring that the next generation of talent has an opportunity to thrive.

Building background

- 1.5 The Greater London Council granted funding to the Trustees of the Tara Arts Group in April 1985. The conditions of this funding were contained in a Deed of Covenant dated 2 April 1985 which specified that the funding was to be used for establishing and maintaining a centre for the purpose of the development of Asian Arts. If the Trustees breached that, or the other conditions of the document, within the period of thirty years from the date of the document, some or all of the grant monies would become repayable. The document also placed a charge over the theatre building in favour of the Greater London Council and restricted disposal of the building without the Council's consent during the thirty-year period.
- 1.6 In 2012, Arts Council England supported Tara Arts with £1.82m in capital funding to refurbish its building, and the capital project was completed in 2016. Arts Council England held a fixed and floating charge over Tara Arts assets including the building. Arts Council England's charge was subordinated to Lloyds Bank in 2017 in return for a loan to the organisation to support operations following the capital project, meaning the bank has first call on any funds available from the sale of the property. This means Lloyds could call in outstanding loans by seizing the building without advance notice to other funders. This poses a risk to a significant cultural asset for London – both to the building and to the organisation.
- 1.7 The building reopened in 2016 with additional rehearsal studio and office facilities, and additional auditorium capacity. As a grassroots venue in London, Tara Arts operates with a very small team and relies on hiring space to meet its income targets. The scale of the venue (100 seats) makes it difficult

to run as an entirely commercial proposition. Public funding continues to be crucial in ensuring its work, particularly in supporting a wider network of BAME artists.

- 1.8 This is in the context of London's rapid loss of grassroots venues. For example, London lost 61% of LGBTQ+ venues between 2006 – 2016, while 35% of grassroots music venues closed between 2007 – 2016. Despite signs of stabilisation, grassroots cultural infrastructure continues to be at substantial risk. These are incubator spaces for the talent of the future, making them of great strategic importance for London's vibrant creative economy, which is worth £52bn a year and accounts for 1 in 6 jobs in London.
- 1.9 This grant is part of a package of support which will secure the building and consolidate the organisation. Arts Council England core funding (National Portfolio Organisation or 'NPO' funding) is in place until 2022. In addition, Arts Council England has committed organisational development funding of £300k to develop a new business model for the theatre, including a hires strategy. Wandsworth Council has committed £45k to match GLA funding to secure the building. All three funders have worked together to set out a programme of support to ensure that the building and the organisation are secured into the future. Tara Arts will be invited to apply for continued NPO status in 2020-21 for the period 2022-25.
- 1.10 It is proposed that the GLA and Wandsworth Council will grant funds to Tara Arts on the requirement that these funds are used to pay down the bank loan and secure the building. It is proposed that there will be a grant agreement between the GLA and Tara Arts. Wandsworth Council is proposing to secure its contribution with a charge over the building and the GLA will consider whether it wishes to do the same.
- 1.11 Tara Arts is currently recruiting a new Chair and additional Trustees. In November 2019, Tara Arts' Artistic Director Jatinder Verma announced he will be stepping down after 40 years supporting Asian theatre artists. A new Artistic Director will be recruited in 2020.

2 Objectives and expected outcomes

- 2.1 The GLA contribution of £180,000 and Wandsworth Council's £45,000 will ensure that Tara Arts can continue to own its building. The objective is to protect the building and the public funding investment which has already been made in this important cultural asset for London.
- 2.2 Against the context of the continued loss of grassroots venues in London, this contribution will secure an important venue with strategic significance for the long-term, delivering against the Mayor's Cultural Infrastructure Plan.
- 2.3 Tara Arts is the only BAME-led theatre in London with its own building. This support package will ensure continued provision of high quality BAME programming, currently involving at least 80% BAME artists.
- 2.4 By retaining the building, Tara Arts will continue to provide workshops for local communities and young people, widening access and supporting networking and training opportunities for the next generation of BAME theatre professionals. Continued provision will also enable Tara Arts to continue as a thriving part of its High Street, contributing to the local economy.

3 Equality comments

- 3.1 Under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, as a public authority, the Mayor of London must have 'due regard' to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation as well as

to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people who have a protected characteristic and those who do not.

- 3.2 The Mayor's Cultural Infrastructure Plan includes diverse local and community venues; important cultural venues such as local pubs, libraries and community centres as well as theatres, museums and galleries. These spaces provide accessible opportunities for people from all backgrounds in London's communities to enjoy, connect, participate and exercise with others in their communities. As one of the very few BAME-led cultural organisations in London which also own their building, securing the Tara Arts building is a crucial component of ensuring this accessibility for culturally diverse communities.
- 3.3 Tara Arts specifically provides opportunities for people from BAME backgrounds to realise and fulfil their potential through education and mentoring programmes, increasing their confidence and skills, and providing them with an equal opportunity to pursue their talents and ambitions in theatre.
- 3.4 It is not anticipated that the project will have a negative impact on any protected groups identified under the Equality Act 2010. It will be developed and delivered in compliance with relevant Codes of Practice and in line with the requirements of the public-sector equality duty to ensure that the following issues have been considered:
- Tara Arts will continue to work collaboratively with other arts groups and artists and actively foster closer working between a diverse range of both organisations and individuals.
 - The grant agreement will stipulate that the organisation has equality policies in place, proactively applies the principles of the Equality Act 2010, and that it regularly refreshes its equality and diversity policies and practices.

4 Other considerations

Risks & Issues:

Risk	Likelihood (low 1-4 high)	Impact (low 1-4 high)	Rating	Mitigation
Sustainability of organisation	1	2	2	The grant will be part of a substantial package of support matched by Arts Council England and Wandsworth Council and will include organisation development support to ensure continued delivery. New leadership and Trustee skills and networks will add support for the organisation.
Financial mismanagement of the GLA funding provided.	1	3	3	The grant will be paid to Tara Arts and a grant agreement will ensure that the funding is used to secure the building by releasing the current bank charge. The use of the

				building will be enshrined in a new deed protecting its use.
Future risk to the building	1	3	3	The building will be secured through a legal mechanism which will protect its use. Wandsworth Council proposes to secure its contribution with a charge over the building and the GLA will consider whether it wishes to do the same.

4.1 The proposed grant directly relates to key Mayoral strategies and priorities including:

- 4.1.1 Mayor's Culture Strategy, *Culture for All Londoners*, by enabling more people to experience and create culture on their doorstep, as well as safeguarding cultural spaces and places.
- 4.1.2 Mayor's Cultural Infrastructure Plan which sets out what we need to do to protect and grow London's cultural facilities, recognising the vital role grassroots venues and spaces make to the wider creative economy and the urgent need to reverse their decline.
- 4.1.3 Ensuring animated, attractive and diverse high streets – Tara Arts programming and its location on the high street will provide opportunities to deliver the draft new *London Plan's* policies for supporting London's night-time economy and its diverse range of arts, cultural and entertainment enterprises and the cultural, social and economic benefits they offer to its residents, workers and visitors.
- 4.1.4 *Inclusive London*, the Mayor's equality, diversity and inclusion strategy, which sets out that a successful city needs to work well for all residents. Everyone should be able to share in its prosperity, culture and community life regardless of their age, social class, disability, race, religion, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, marital status, or whether they are pregnant or on maternity leave.
- 4.1.5 Tara Arts' programmes support the Mayor's Social Integration Strategy, *All Of Us*, which aims to improve social integration in London. This means enabling people to have more opportunities to connect with each other positively and meaningfully and supporting Londoners to play an active part in their communities and the decisions that affect them. It involves reducing barriers and inequalities, so that Londoners can relate to each other as equals.

4.2 There are no conflicts of interest to declare for any of the officers involved in the drafting and clearance of this decision form.

5 Financial comments

- 5.1 Approval is sought for expenditure of up to £180,000 as grant funding to Tara Arts to secure the Tara Arts building at 356 Garratt Lane.
- 5.2 The funding for this expenditure will be contained within savings identified in the existing 2019/20 Culture and Creative Industries Unit budget.

6 Legal comments

6.1 The foregoing sections of this report indicate that:

- 6.1.1** the decisions requested of the Mayor concern the exercise of the GLA's general powers, falling within the statutory powers of the GLA to do such things as may be considered to further, and or be facilitative of or conducive or incidental to the furthering of, the promotion of economic and social development and wealth creation in Greater London; and
- 6.1.2** in formulating the proposals in respect of which a decision is sought officers have complied with the GLA's related statutory duties to:
 - a) pay due regard to the principle that there should be equality of opportunity for all people;
 - b) consider how the proposals will promote the improvement of health of persons, health inequalities between persons and to contribute towards the achievement of sustainable development in the United Kingdom; and
 - c) consult with appropriate bodies.

6.2 In taking the decisions requested, the Mayor must have due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty; namely the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010, and to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic (race, disability, gender, age, sexual orientation, religion or belief, pregnancy and maternity and gender reassignment) and persons who do not share it (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010). To this end, the Mayor should have particular regard to section 3 (above) of this report.

6.3 Officers have indicated that the expenditure proposed constitutes the award of grant funding rather than a payment for goods, services and works. Officers must ensure therefore, that the proposed funding is disbursed in a fair and transparent manner in accordance with the GLA's Contracts and Funding Code and a funding agreement is put in place between and executed by the GLA and proposed recipient before any commitment to provide funding is made.

6.4 No monies should be paid from the GLA to Tara Arts without a signed and dated funding agreement being in place between the parties. It is understood that it would also be preferable to co-ordinate payment with Wandsworth Council.

7. Planned delivery approach and next steps

Activity	Timeline
GLA grant agreement with Tara Arts	January 2020
Wandsworth Council funding approved	February 2020
Bank partial payment	January 2020
Final bank payment and building secured	March 2020
New Business Plan developed	October 2020

Appendices and supporting papers:

None.

Public access to information

Information in this form (Part 1) is subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FoIA) and will be made available on the GLA website within one working day of approval.

If immediate publication risks compromising the implementation of the decision (for example, to complete a procurement process), it can be deferred until a specific date. Deferral periods should be kept to the shortest length strictly necessary. **Note:** This form (Part 1) will either be published within one working day after it has been approved or on the defer date.

Part 1 - Deferral**Is the publication of Part 1 of this approval to be deferred? YES**

If YES, for what reason: Publication of this decision should be delayed until after all funding decision have been made by partners (expected end February 2020).

Part 2 - Sensitive information

Only the facts or advice that would be exempt from disclosure under FoIA should be included in the separate Part 2 form, together with the legal rationale for non-publication.

Is there a part 2 form - YES**ORIGINATING OFFICER DECLARATION:**

Drafting officer to
confirm the
following (✓)

Drafting officer:

Kirsten Dunne has drafted this report in accordance with GLA procedures and confirms the following:

✓

Sponsoring Director:

Emma Strain have reviewed the request and are satisfied it is correct and consistent with the Mayor's plans and priorities.

✓

Mayoral Adviser:

Justine Simons has been consulted about the proposal and agrees the recommendations.

✓

Advice:

The Finance and Legal teams have commented on this proposal.

✓

Corporate Investment Board

This decision was agreed by the Corporate Investment Board on 13 January 2020.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, RESOURCES:

I confirm that financial and legal implications have been appropriately considered in the preparation of this report.

Signature

M. D. Ollé

Date

13.1.20

CHIEF OF STAFF:

I am satisfied that this is an appropriate request to be submitted to the Mayor

Signature

D. Bellamy

Date

13/1/2020

