

- Welcome from Josh, explained that he understands the urgency of the situation and wanted to have a meeting before Xmas and thanked everyone.
- Not a formal meeting with fully formed plans, more to discuss ideas and thoughts and encourage a cohesive strategy going forward.
- Josh emphasised that he didn't know about the proposal for closure ahead of time.
- He has reached out to various funding sources, charities and other theatres in similar situations.
- Has been raised three times in parliament in various formats.
- There is a commitment from minister for local growth (community right to buy and community ownership) and minister of culture to have a meeting to understand the local angle.
- Submitting an application for debate in houses of parliament next week not guaranteed, but there's plenty of other MPs supporting this effort for local culture.
- Josh requested signatures for a parliamentary petition at the end of the meeting, to allow him to submit a formal statement with petition to allow another approach for discussion in parliament.
- Question was asked whether a paper petition for those who aren't online could be organised and Josh confirmed the community could do that and submit to the council. Action to be taken away.
- Josh advised that the stock condition survey is now in the public domain.
- LUF project variation submission was sent to government in June 2024 but still awaiting a reply. Correction was made by Peter that the submission was actually made in March, with the public disclosure made in June. The government hasn't given clear guidance on when to expect a response, it was meant to be by end of year.
- Question was asked whether the public can influence the LUF variation decision. It depends on what the government response is, regarding the outcry that has happened since the proposal announcement.
- Concern was shown about the possibility of the venue closing pre-sale. Josh confirmed that he has been advised there is no plan to close earlier than Apr, but encouraged the question to be asked of the council too for confirmation.
- Statement made by member of the audience that public consultation wasn't made before the submission of project variation and the plans have varied significantly to the detriment of the community - now only representing a cafe, a new car park and pedestrian crossing.
- Josh agreed that the lack of consultation was poor performance by the council, but also pointed out that the LUF money had a deadline of being spent by Mar 2025, which is still officially the deadline. So it was either a case of pulling the plug on the LUF project or moving quickly and submitting a new plan.
- One of the biggest delays in the whole planning and application process of the LUF project has been acquiring the land to make the project happen. This is part of the reason of splitting the project into two phases. It was also highlighted that the LUF is now a legacy fund, so it's a use it or lose it situation.
- Slip of the tongue mention by Josh that the building around the theatre would have cost £14m?
- Response to Josh's comments, is that the community understands the money has to be spent, but if it is on white elephant projects like new car parks and a cafe no-one

wants, then it is money wasted. The money should be spent knocking down the car park and refurbishing the theatre which everyone wants.

- A point was made that council officers are living in the shadows, and there is a distinct lack of face to face communication with their community. Josh affirmed that senior officers are willing to meet, but can't make promises on their behalf.
- Martin (who was on the original committee for the LUF submission) mentioned that the key hook for the original bid was a new cultural hub for the town centre. He wanted to know if the original committee should have oversight of the revised bid submission to decide whether it should proceed considering the lack of new cultural hub and whether Josh would help put pressure on the right people to support this suggestion. Josh advised that he doesn't want to be the MP that makes a suggestion to government that investing in the town centre is an adverse idea and lose the whole fund and any impact on the town altogether. He believes that an injection of funding on at least something that shows the town centre is ready for development, that entices private investment in further development.
- Josh advised that his primary objective is to move the venues out of council ownership, so that the community is in the driving seat of deciding what happens to them in the long term future. He all but agreed with the community that the council is not a suitable steward for the venues going forward.
- Josh has requested an extension to the consultation period, but it has currently been denied. He has asked for reconsideration, but is awaiting a response.
- Peter advised that a request for consultation extension was pitched to councillors at a meeting with Cannock Chase Arts Council last Wednesday. Anna Nevie categorically stated that an extension would not be granted. Peter advised that the attitude of both Anna and John Preece were appealing at the meeting.
- Peter advised the community that a list of 27 questions has been presented to the council with answers requested by 24 Dec. The council leader advised at the meeting that the theatre is still part of the LUF bid, but gave no indication in what capacity. It has also been requested that a pause on decision for the building to be put in place for 6 months.
- It has been discovered that IHL takes 15% of the council budget for their capacity, which is contracted for another two years.
- It was quoted that the maintenance costs of the theatre to bring it up to standard over the next five years would be £2.7m.
- A point was raised that often when a council tenders for a contract the quotes provided are often hyper inflated, as they're seen as an easy target and if a local consortium of contractors was used, it is likely the quote for maintenance would be a lot lower.
- Jamie raised the concern that the process the council has followed has been very disingenuous, as they've left the timeframe for consultation until the very last minute to push things through to balance a budget to suit their predetermined decisions.
- There is a full council meeting on 22nd January 2025. The public has the opportunity to ask questions of the council. The question has been submitted a minimum of a week before the meeting. If in attendance then question can be asked verbally for a response to be given, at which point a supplementary question can be asked without prior approval for an immediate response.
- Josh asked who started the change.org petition for the theatre, as they essentially have access to a mailing list of 16k people, but he's struggling to track them down.

- I asked where the stock condition survey could be found, Josh advised he will help locate the documents for the community.
- I also asked why IHL's reserved unrestricted funds are not being tapped into in the current situation, as this type of scenario is specifically mentioned in their public financial statement for these funds. Josh advised he will be raising this question with the council.
- Josh suggested that the venues should be submitted for inclusion on the list of Assets of Community Value.
- Josh has asked the question of the council of whether they would seek a one-off release of capital by selling the venues if they are closed. He advised their response was no, as long as there is a plan for alternative continuation of the venues in the long term.