

## ***Statement to Harborne Ward Forum by the Harborne Royalty Trust***

In view of the fire which has consumed much of the Royalty Cinemas structure we would like to provide the following update on the Trust and our position going forward.

The events of the early hours of Wednesday morning were massively upsetting to the Harborne Royalty Trust team after the great efforts we have put into this project but there is also relief that there appears to have been no injuries or loss of life. We have nothing but admiration for the emergency services and their efforts to save as much of the Royalty as possible.

How does the Trust proceed? We have decided there is still a job to do. We need to understand what can be salvaged and restored and we need to take account of the tremendous response we are getting to our consultation survey. We are heartened by that response, the messages of support and the relief expressed that we are not giving up.

In view of our initial restoration objective and seeing the damage caused by the fire it would not have been unreasonable for Trustees to have taken the view 'it's over' and wished to step down. We all have lives to lead and mostly day jobs to do. Instead there is a determination to carry on, not allow another 'Huntsman' and to become a conduit for local people's views on the future of the building. The resolve is now to find ways to bring back a substantial community facility to Harborne which can assist regeneration whilst retaining whatever remains of the Royalty's heritage. I am indebted to my fellow Trustees for their continued support.

We will also be completing our heritage delivery as part of the LIF funding. We are working with Professor Matt Houlbrook, Professor of Cultural History and Head of Department of History, School of History and Cultures, the University of Birmingham. The consultation is also providing an opportunity for participants to take part.

We have a nucleus of a strong team to take this project forward and a continuous stream of people offering to support or help us. We would like to thank you all.

The consultation events will continue and our next event is at Café Nero on Friday 28<sup>th</sup> at 4pm to 6pm and then Harborne Primary School on Saturday 29<sup>th</sup>. (time TBA) This is your opportunity to have your say.

Why is the consultation important? Because it will provide evidence for the future uses of the Royalty and the level of support. With those results the Trust are better placed to approach more funders and investors.

We have sought to engage with the owner, most recently in June 2018 this year when we wrote advising them of our forthcoming consultation and requesting access to enable our architect, surveyor, structural engineer and valuer to evaluate the building prior to making an improved offer.

An immediate concern is that only the necessary demolition of the Royalty takes place and yesterday we sent an offer to the owner and Council of the services of our historic building surveyor, architect and structural engineer on a pro bono basis. We want the public to be confident that all of the building and art deco features that can be saved will be saved.

The Trusts architectural proposals have already received great support from the public (to date over 90% want the Royalty restored as a community facility) and whilst we wanted to have completed the consultation and evaluation of the results, we are quite ready to meet with the owner or their architect, sit down around a table and have a constructive conversation on a way forward. The Trust, especially with future charitable status, will be able to access funding not accessible to the owner, opening up opportunities for the building not otherwise available and with a different not-for-profit financial model.

The Harborne Royalty Trust is an unincorporated organisation formed early in 2016. We will formalise our status when it is clear which model will best suit the project as it moves forward.

We fully anticipate we will be a not-for-profit group and none of those involved seeks to profit from our primary objective which is the restoration of the Royalty. We believe in this building, preserving its heritage and Harborne.

We are all volunteers giving our time freely to fulfil the objects of the group's constitution which is on the website [www.theroyaltyharborne.co.uk](http://www.theroyaltyharborne.co.uk)

The Royalty and our vision for its vibrant future remains a tremendous opportunity for Harborne and perhaps a pivot point for the future of the west end of the High Street.

Please continue to complete the online survey <http://www.theroyaltyharborne.co.uk/consultation.php> and we look forward to seeing local people at our remaining consultation events.