

## Wiltshire Council

### Cabinet

### Date of meeting

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**Subject:** Bass Connection - Salisbury

**Cabinet member:** Councillor Laura Mayes – Children’s Services

**Key Decision:** No

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### Purpose of Report

1. To consider a recommendation from Salisbury Area Board on the future of the Bass Connection music group in Salisbury.

### Background

2. When the Council adopted changes to the way it delivers youth services in Wiltshire it asked the Area Boards to help find suitable alternative accommodation for local groups that currently use the Council’s youth centres. In Salisbury this has been achieved with the exception of Spark Radio and Bass Connection, both of who use space at Grosvenor House in Churchfields Road, Salisbury. Bass Connection is a collection of young musicians, bands, and young people learning the technical aspects of music, recording and production. Other young people linked to the musicians and bands attend the sessions. The sessions involve practice, tuition, technical instruction and social activities within a supported environment. Because of the noisy nature of the activities and the large quantity of equipment involved it has not been possible to find a suitable alternative venue, despite discussions with local organisations – City Hall, Salisbury Arts Centre, Salisbury College and Salisbury City Council. Salisbury Area Board and the Salisbury Campus Operations Board have indicated that Bass Connection will be welcome to use purpose built accommodation within the Five Rivers Campus when it opens in autumn 2015. However, without a suitable alternative venue for activities in the short term Bass Connection will cease to operate. Salisbury Area Board has been seeking to find a way of supporting the young people until Bass Connection moves to its new home at Five Rivers.

### Main Considerations for the Council

3. Bass Connection  
Bass Connection is a mix of bands (Young Brando, Middle Name Kill, etc), young musicians and other young people interested in the music scene. The bands hire Grosvenor House for rehearsal (£28 per session). Supported youth work was provided by the Council staff on duty on those evenings, but essentially the building and music equipment acts as a hub for young musicians in the City and surrounding villages.

Bass Connections is a very highly regarded resource in Salisbury. Hundreds of young people have taken part in its activities and many have gone on to form bands and forge professional careers in the music industry. Up until 1st October, Bass Connection operated on two nights each week at Grosvenor House with support from youth development officers employed by the Council and other volunteers. During the local consultation on changes to the way the Council provides activities for 13-19 year olds, Bass Connections has been raised repeatedly by the public, supporters and the young people involved. Consequently the issue has assumed a high profile in the media and the Area Board has pledged to try and find a solution.

It is unfortunate that Bass Connection has been affected by changes to the Council's youth services, something completely beyond the control of the young people involved.

#### Position of Salisbury Area Board

Salisbury Area Board has been in discussion with the young people at Bass Connection and has been working hard to find a solution that will allow the service to continue. This has the unanimous backing of the members of the Board. With the impending closure of the youth service and the removal of the support workers, time has been short and options limited.

The Community Area Manager was asked by the Council to seek suitable alternative accommodation for existing users of the local youth buildings. Initial contact was made with The Sound Emporium (TSE) and a range of possible alternative providers to try and secure an alternative venue/host for Bass Connections. None of the alternative venues or potential providers (including TSE) were in a position to offer the space for the service and its substantial collection of valuable equipment. During August, TSE offered to put together a proposal to continue the Bass Connection service at Grosvenor House until it transfers to the Campus. With no other proposals coming forward the Board negotiated with The Sound Emporium (TSE) and a formal submission was received. The proposal would see TSE continue to support Bass Connection sessions at Grosvenor House until the building is required for disposal. In summary, the proposal would see:

- TSE running the sessions offering tuition, training, music based activities, accredited courses and supported youth work
- TSE locating an additional £18k of equipment into Grosvenor House – instruments, recording and production equipment for use by the group.
- TSE agreeing to a 3 month severance clause in any license, allowing the Council to void the building when needed for disposal
- TSE agreeing to operate Bass Connection until it relocates to the Five Rivers Campus subject to review after 6 months
- TSE agreeing to provide two qualified staff to run each 2 hour Bass Connections session.

- Under Option 2, TSE agreeing to extend the number of Bass Connections sessions to three each week.
- Under Option 2, the Council agreeing to allow use of Grosvenor House by TSE on other evenings to support its existing Salisbury School of Rock after school activities.
- The Council providing access to the building, secure storage for equipment and ensuring utilities remain connected and available during the period involved.
- The Council agreeing the legal terms of occupation and key-holder arrangements.

The Area Board considered this proposal at its meeting on 18th September and agreed unanimously to recommend that the proposal (Option 2) be adopted by the Council as a short term measure to secure the future of Bass Connection. Members of Bass Connection were present at the meeting and supported the proposal (although expressed regret that the existing youth workers would no longer be employed by the Council to work with them). In reaching their decision the Area Board was made aware of the Leader's Guidance and legal advice received on the day of the meeting that made clear that the proposal fell outside of the delegated powers of the Board.

In the week leading up to the Area Board meeting, alternative suggestions came forward from local groups Project Grove and the Rose Gale Trust, although no formal proposals have been submitted to the Board. At the meeting, an offer was made to the members of these groups to submit funding proposals for consideration. However, given the short time available, the Board made clear it had little option but to consider the proposal then on then table.

### The Sound Emporium

The Sound Emporium is a group of self employed musicians and music enthusiasts with backgrounds in teaching, training and production. TSE is based on the Bemerton Heath estate in Salisbury. It provides events, summer schools and educational activities as well as guitar, bass and drum lessons vocal coaching, stagecraft, song writing, poster & leaflet design, badge making, live gigs, competitions, talent shows, fundraising, digital music production and sound and lighting techniques. The Sound Emporium also runs the Salisbury School of Rock - twice weekly after school educational sessions for young people.

Although commercial in its structure, the Sound Emporium is a registered ASDAN Centre (Reg No: 35102). ASDAN was established as an educational charity in 1991 with awarding body status, providing courses to schools, colleges, training providers and youth centres across the UK. It's charitable purpose is: "The advancement of education, by providing opportunities for all learners to develop their personal and social attributes and levels of achievement through ASDAN awards and resources, and the relief of poverty, where poverty inhibits such opportunities for learners." In addition the Sound Emporium works alongside local charity Rise:61 who work with young people on Bemerton Heath in Salisbury to raise money for young people to access music provision, sporting and leisure activities (Registered Charity No.1158086).

The proposal received by TSE was checked by the Community Youth Officer to ensure that the group meets safeguarding and other requirements and she was satisfied with the assurances and documents submitted in support of the proposal, subject to the points incorporated into the Area Board's recommendation (below).

TSE has applied to join the Catalogue of accredited providers of positive activities for young people and this project will help underpin their future viability and enable them to grow their offer.

#### Salisbury Area Board recommendation

Salisbury Area Board's recommendation is set out below:

"In view of the legal guidance received today and explained to the Board by the Community Area Manager, Salisbury Area Board recommends that Wiltshire Council waives the requirements of the Leader's Guidance in this case in order that the Board may award a grant to The Sound Emporium to support Option 2 as set out in the proposal, subject to appropriate legal and property agreements being in place and to the following conditions:

1. Any use of Grosvenor House will be subject to final legal agreement with the Council incorporating a termination clause should the Council wish to pursue disposal of the building.
2. Funding is subject to satisfactory performance and evaluation after 6 months as outlined in this report.
3. Payment will be staged into £6,000 for the first 6 months and subject to satisfactory evaluation a further £6,000 to cover the remaining 6 months (subject to reasonable summer holiday closures/reductions).
4. The grant covers the provision of the sessions agreed and not the setting up and taking down of equipment prior to or after sessions.
5. The Sound Emporium will be required to assist with the migration of the Bass Connection service to Salisbury Campus when that facility becomes available.
6. The Sound Emporium will provide to the Community Officer:
  - Details of training undertaken and the date of DBS checks to ensure these remain current until the transition from Grosvenor House to the Campus.
  - Clarification that existing policies referring to 'children' cover young people between 11 and 19 (up to 25 in the case of young people with a learning disability).
  - A risk assessment relating to the proposed activities covering the following:
    - The maximum number of users per session

- How child protection and safeguarding policies will operate in practice taking account of the Council's current policy /practice on early warning and prevention as set out in the common assessment framework (CAF).
  - Evidence that any permanent electrical equipment installed into the building by The Sound Emporium has been or will be PAT tested.
7. The Sound Emporium will meet on site with the Community Youth Officer prior to the commencement of the service to discuss and agree operational arrangements.”

In support of its decision the Board has submitted the following points for consideration.

- Bass Connection is a very highly regarded and active music group in the City, providing opportunities for many young people to participate in music and technical production.
- The proposal has the unanimous support of the Area Board
- The Sound Emporium are a well regarded local provider of accredited ASDAN music qualifications and organiser of the popular Salisbury School of Rock
- Grosvenor House is likely to remain in operation until such time as the future of Spark Radio is determined.
- Bass Connection could relocate to Wilton Road if that would facilitate its continuation and enable Grosvenor House to be closed.
- This arrangement will facilitate the continuation of Bass Connection until the Campus opens in autumn 2015.
- The proposal would include supported youth work provision in addition to music and technical tuition.

### **Property considerations**

4. Following the Area Board's consideration of this matter, the Council has since reviewed and agreed a policy to be applied in the case of any use of redundant/vacant youth centres. In summary, this policy requires that the full cost associated with the use of the buildings should be recovered from any third party users who may be allowed access to the buildings in the period up until disposal. This is to ensure that third party users are not benefiting from a hidden subsidy and that the Council is not liable for additional revenue costs that it would otherwise avoid.

In the case of Grosvenor House, the cost of hiring the room for the sessions outlined in the Area Board's recommendation would be £3,750 to cover six months, or £7,500 pa (approx £29 per session under option 2). This cost was not considered as part of the Area Board's grant recommendation. Therefore it is currently unfunded.

Following discussions with the Chairman of the Area Board, Councillor Ricky Rogers, the following is suggested as a way forward.

If the Council is minded to support the Area Board's proposal, it could include a condition in any approval requiring the Board to secure the additional funding

required to meet the property costs, either from its budget for youth activities or through local fundraising. This would provide delegated authority to the Board to award a grant to the Sound Emporium subject to securing the additional funding required in any way it feels fit.

### **Safeguarding Considerations**

5. The proposal submitted by TSE addressed the Council's safeguarding requirements (See Appendix 2) and this was checked and verified by the Community Youth Officer.

### **Public Health Implications**

6. Positive social and cultural activities for young people are important for personal and social development. The Bass Connection activities provide an opportunity for young people to build confidence and develop skills in a supportive and safe environment. The discontinuation of Bass Connections would disconnect young people from an important social activity with potential negative consequences for the individuals involved.

### **Environmental and Climate Change Considerations**

7. Discontinuing Bass Connections would enable Grosvenor House to be closed. Grosvenor House is not up to modern energy efficient standards and the Council could save energy and carbon emissions by closing the facility as envisaged when activities relocate to Five Rivers Campus in autumn 2015.

### **Equalities Impact of the Proposal**

8. The users of Bass Connection come from a range of diverse backgrounds and TSE have a proven track record of delivering positive activities with young people from more deprived areas in the City.

### **Risk Assessment**

9. The Council faces a reputational risk should it decide to discontinue the Bass Connection service at Grosvenor House. The issue has become the focus of local media scrutiny, where it has been linked to the Salisbury Journal 'save our services' campaign. It may also be seen to undermine the Council's decision to devolve decision making to the Area Boards on youth issues.

### **Risks that may arise if the proposed decision is taken and actions that will be taken to manage these risks**

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| 10. | <b>Risk</b><br>Failure of TSE to deliver to satisfactory service | <b>Action to mitigate risk</b><br>Monitoring and 6 month review. |
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## **Financial Implications**

11. The Area Board has delegated funds to cover the cost of the grant proposed and, subject to further agreement by the Board, to cover the additional property costs.

## **Legal Implications**

12. Legal advice was provided to the Area Board and taken into account during the consideration of this matter. Primarily, the legal advice related to the authority delegated to the Area Board given the policy advice published by the Leader of the Council on the day of the Area Board meeting. In essence, the advice ruled that the Board did not have adequate delegated authority to waive the requirements of the grants policy and consequently the matter is referred to the Cabinet for decision.

Legal advice also related to the requirements of any legal arrangements with TSE to occupy Grosvenor House. This legal advice has been incorporated into the Area Board's recommendations.

In terms of ethical governance, the question is whether the Council feels it has any ongoing obligation to the young people who have previously enjoyed music at Grosvenor House. The Council has secured alternative accommodation for many other users of the youth service buildings, but the young people at Bass Connection are less well equipped and have no financial means to secure alternative premises by themselves.

## **Options Considered**

13. Salisbury Area Board has considered this matter carefully and is unanimous in its support for the continuation of Bass Connection.

Salisbury Area Board has explored a number of possible alternative venues for the service including the City Hall, Salisbury Arts Centre, Salisbury College and a local music group on the outskirts of the City. However, Bass Connection is a loud activity and comes with a lot of expensive and bulky equipment that requires secure storage and no suitable alternative accommodation has been identified to date. The Board continues to explore the possible relocation of Bass Connection to the smaller Wilton Road Youth Centre, to facilitate the early surrender of Grosvenor House.

## **Conclusions**

14. This matter has been referred to the Cabinet for decision for the reasons set out in the report.

## **Decision Required**

15. The Cabinet member is now invited to consider the recommendation submitted by Salisbury Area Board. In coming to a decision, the advice set out under paragraph 4 is particularly relevant and, if minded to support the recommendation, then it may be appropriate to apply a condition along the lines suggested.

**Carolyn Godfrey**  
**Corporate Director**

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Report Author: Steve Milton  
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12th October 2014

## **Background Papers**

The following unpublished documents have been relied on in the preparation of this report:

None

## **Appendices**

Appendix 1 - Report to Salisbury Area Board  
Appendix 2 - Proposal from the Sound Emporium and supporting papers