

**From:** Official Information  
**Sent:** Friday, 19 May 2023 3:15 pm  
**To:** S 7(2)(a)  
**Cc:** Official Information  
**Subject:** Final Response - LGOIMA 230910 - S 7(2)(a) - Founders Theatre and its closure

Kia Ora,

We refer to your information request below. Hamilton City Council provides the following response.

- 1. How much money was spent on maintenance and consultants on Founders Theatre, since it was closed by Mayor Julie Hardaker because Council staff failed to maintain the building.**

The cost of maintaining Founders site since the closure of Founders Theatre is provided below:

	Actual 2015/16	Actual 2016/17	Actual 2017/18	Actual 2018/19	Actual 2019/20	Actual 2020/21	Actual 2021/22	YTD 2022/23
Founders Theatre Maintenance Costs	99,126	64,931	142,977	45,284	41,228	50,729	54,809	32,692

*Note: 2017/18 this increase relates to the reclassification of costs from capex to opex*

The building was not closed due to lack of maintenance. Founders Theatre had an anticipated lifespan of approximately 50 years when it was built in 1962. Founders Theatre was closed by an order of Council's Chief Executive in March 2016, due to a range of immediate safety concerns with the flying system and its ability to carry loads to hoist scenery and lighting above the stage safely.

At the time of closure, staff were preparing a business case that was to propose advancing a refurbishment programme (\$13.8M) for Founders Theatre that would commence in the 2016/17 financial year (originally programmed for 2021 in the 2015-2025 10 Year Plan). Shortly after closure of the building due to stage house safety issues it was discovered that the building had significant seismic strengthening issues. Following that discovery, a fuller refurbishment plan was prepared to incorporate all strengthening work required, building code of compliance requirements and other refurbishments which all up took a retrofit cost to \$30M.

The Theatre has been appropriately maintained over its life, however the maintenance undertaken has become less and less effective as the theatre neared the end of its useful life and maintenance is not a substitute for required capital renewals.

The cost of consultants since the closure of Founders Theatre is provided under 3.

- 2. Name of the Council consultant and staff member who said it will cost so high to refurbish the building.**

The Property Group

- 3. How much money was spent on Founders consultants since the closure of the theatre.**

The majority of consultants' reports were arranged prior to closure, as listed in our response in 1, staff were preparing a business case for advancing approved funding for a refurbishment of Founders Theatre in 2016/17.

Three reports were received following the theatre's closure totalling \$71,780.20 + GST. They were:

- Founders Theatre Detailed Seismic Assessment Report – Dunning Thornton (\$49,610.20 + GST)
- Hamilton Memorial Founders Theatre Heritage Assessment Report – Richard Knott Limited (\$5k + GST)
- PWC Founders Theatre Summary of Issues Report (\$17,170 + GST).

The Property Group were asked to include consideration of the Founders site, into a report on Community Facilities needs and options in the Hamilton CBD. In relation to the Founders site their report included, engagement with

potential users and TOTI, independent analysis of capital and operational budgets, planning and land use considerations, consideration of benefits and disadvantages recommendation(s) on the optimum option(s) for a central Hamilton community hub. The inclusion of the founders site added \$50,000 to the cost of the CBD community facilities report.

**4. How much it costs to demolish and convert it to the wishes of the staff concerned into a green space and cost to maintain the green space.**

We disagree with your statement that the desire to remove the Founders Theatre building and create a new park space is “the wishes of the staff”. At a meeting on 8 December 2020, Council received a report on future options for the Founders Theatre following extensive consultation with the community. Community feedback (84% of submissions) supported the option to remove the Founders Theatre building and create a multi-purpose park as a part of the West Town Belt Masterplan. Council resolved to remove the theatre and create a multi-purpose park (\$3.57M) and noted this was Councils Preferred option for the purposes of the draft 2021-31 Long-Term Plan budget.

Since 2017/18, an operational budget amount has been built into Council’s budgets for the removal of the building and returning the site to greenspace. This is budgeted in 2023/24 at \$1.054M.

The \$4M capex budget is allocated to redevelop the site as a park space in accordance with the publicly preferred concept plan which includes, design work, and physical works to deliver an outdoor stage, landscaping, path connections, toilets, cultural narratives

**5. Why is that Council is against the community use of the theatre, when Council is wasting money on painting roads with unremovable paint for trials and spending on their pet projects to selected contractors and consultants. I need your reply**

Council has asked the community several times for a view on the potential future use of the site and is currently in discussions with TOTI in regard to their proposal. This remains outstanding with a decision due in June 2023.

You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman of this decision. Information about how to make a complaint is available at [www.ombudsman.parliament.nz](http://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz) or freephone 0800 802 602.

Kind Regards,

Tatiyana  
Official Information Team  
Governance & Assurance Unit | People and Organisational Performance  
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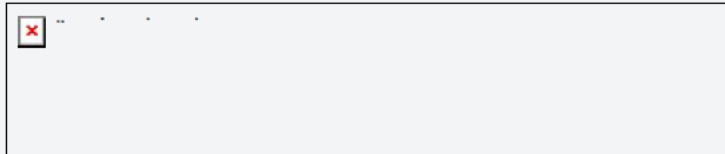
-----Original Message-----

From: [noreply@hamilton.govt.nz](mailto:noreply@hamilton.govt.nz)

Sent: Monday, 17 April 2023 8:35:49 am

To: [info@hcc.govt.nz](mailto:info@hcc.govt.nz)

Subject: [Mass email/Possible SPAM] General website enquiry - HCC-GEN-230417-VQNY2



## We've received an enquiry for you.

This request was received on 17 April 2023 @ 8:35AM.

Here's your reference number and the details:

### UUID

HCC-GEN-230417-VQNY2

### Name

S 7(2)(a)

### Email

S 7(2)(a)

### Phone number

S 7(2)(a)

### How can we help?

Founders Theatre

I would like to have the following information

1. How much money was spent on maintenance and consultants on Founders Theatre, since it was closed by Mayor Julie Hardeker because Council staff failed to maintain the building.
2. Name of the Council consultant and staff member who said it will cost so high to refurbish the building.
3. How much money was spent on Founders consultants since the closure of the theatre.
4. How much it costs to demolish and convert it to the wishes of the staff concerned into a green space and cost to maintain the green space.
5. Why is that Council is against the community use of the theatre, when Council is wasting money on painting roads

with unremovable paint for trials and spending on their pet projects to selected contractors and consultants.  
I need your reply

**Created**

17 April 2023 @ 8:35AM

If you have any questions in the meantime, feel free to call us on [\(07\) 838 6699](tel:078386699) or [email our customer service team](#).

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