



## Paul Athans

Prospective Parliamentary Candidate for Hazel Grove

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Leader of the Council  
Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council  
Stopford House  
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Stockport  
SK1 3XE

31 January 2024

Dear Councillor Hunter,

I write regarding the closure of Forum Theatre in Romiley and the apparent failure of Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council (SMBC) to find a solution to allow them to reopen.

The Forum Theatre is a much valued, well-used, and outstanding community asset. It has been closed since September 2023 due to the presence of Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) within the theatre building. SMBC has known of the presence of RAAC since 2017 however, I understand that the tenants, NK Theatre Arts (NKTA) were unaware. SMBC has claimed to be working to find a solution although I believe you have lacked both speed and competence.

As the owners of the building, it is beholden on SMBC to fix the RAAC and/or find another viable building for NKTA to operate out of. So far, you have failed to provide a workable solution for either option.

At the Werneth Area Committee meeting on 22 January 2024<sup>1</sup>, your Lib Dem Councillors chose to blame the Government rather than take ownership of the issue themselves. They talked at length about how it was not their fault but failed to provide the leadership or action the community needs.

Local people have reached out to me, in particular the members of the 'Free the Forum' group. They have told me that they fear NKTA is running out of money and feel any further dithering or delay puts the entire future of the Forum Theatre at risk.

I would like to understand the following:

- Why did SMBC not create a contingency plan when RAAC was first identified in 2017?

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<sup>1</sup> [Agenda for Werneth Area Committee on Monday, 22nd January, 2024, 6.00 pm - Stockport Council](#)

- Why has SMBC not provided a cost assessment for full, or even remedial works to take place to allow the Forum Theatre to reopen as soon as possible?
- A similar issue occurred in Peterborough. What representations has SMBC made to Peterborough City Council to discuss how they resolved the issue within three months?

Unfortunately, this situation appears to be a Lib Dem council putting party politics before the community. I urge you to stop delaying and act. This should not be a political issue. The Forum Theatre is a community asset, and its loss is not just impacting theatre goers, but parents, children, and local businesses that rely on the wide array of services the Forum Theatre provides.

To progress this at pace, I advise you take the following actions:

- Provide a minimum of two fully costed options (remedial and full) for works to take place to allow the Forum Theatre to reopen.
- Renew the NKTA's tenancy to give them the safety and security to know they can continue serving the community for years to come.
- Speak with Peterborough City Council to learn and implement best practice.

I am also working with our current Member of Parliament, William Wragg MP who is as committed as I am to reopen the Forum Theatre as soon as possible.

I hope this matter is given the serious consideration and prioritisation it deserves.

Thank you in anticipation of your assistance with this matter and I look forward to hearing from you shortly.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul Athans". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**Paul Athans**

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