# Café & Hospitality Opportunity at Culture House

## Call For Expressions of Interest

Culture House CLG invites expressions of interest and submissions from experienced café, food and beverage operators to provide Café, Bar, Event & General Catering Services at Culture House, Swords.

We are seeking an operator who can create and deliver a distinctive and appealing food and beverage offer that complements the onsite facilities and provides an excellent customer experience throughout the year to include operation of the Café and Theatre Bar at opening times sympathetic to the opening times of other Culture House spaces (generally 9am-10pm daily), the requirements of Culture House CLG, and the opportunities presented by the programme of events, as well as general catering services for meetings, performances, and events as required.

## About Culture House CLG & Culture House Swords

Culture House CLG will manage Culture House Swords, an innovative initiative developed by Fingal County Council.

Located at the junction of North Street and Seatown Road in central Swords, Co Dublin, Culture House will be a landmark cultural destination and a meeting house for everyone, a place where creativity, learning, artistic expression and community life come together under one roof. Conceived by Fingal County Council as the centrepiece of the Swords Cultural Quarter, it is being developed as an inclusive and accessible civic space that reflects both the rich heritage of Fingal and the ambition of a modern, growing county.

At the heart of the vision is a belief that culture belongs to everyone. Culture House will be more than a building; it will be a vibrant cultural ecosystem where artists, makers, performers, learners, community organisations and visitors can meet, collaborate and create. The development provides a county library, a flexible black box performance theatre (165 seats, 320 standing capacity), art gallery, maker space, arts and exhibition spaces, a variety of event and meeting spaces, a Café and Bar, all housed in an iconic building designed by award-winning architects O'Donnell and Twomey, and offering opportunities for participation, discovery, creativity and artistic excellence in a single welcoming destination.

Located beside Swords Castle in the centre of the North Dublin town, the large 5,683 sq. m. four storey high building is currently under construction with completion expected in Q1 2027.

Culture House forms part of Swords Cultural Quarter immediately adjacent to Swords Castle, a significant heritage and tourist attraction within the centre of the town, and to Fingal County Hall. The site is well served by public transport and is a short walk from a future Metro Station planned at Seatown station/ adjacent to the R132.

The public realm in the immediate area is currently undergoing a transformative upgrade which will enhance the setting of Swords Castle and allow for better integration of the town park into the town centre providing space for external events. Enhancements to the public realm on Main Street Swords are also currently being planned by the Council.

## The Opportunity

This is an opportunity to establish and operate a welcoming, high-quality café, theatre bar, and broader food and drink offering at Culture House that will serve audiences, performers, staff and the wider local community.

Café services will include the management and operation of the designated food preparation, servery and dining areas, including adjoining outdoor seating. The offering may encompass breakfast, lunch, afternoon and evening service and respondents are encouraged to propose creative dining concepts, including pre-theatre menus, tapas, small plates, sharing dishes and other options appropriate to the facilities and customer profile, including:

- Fresh, nutritious and attractively presented food, supported by a high-quality hot and cold beverage offering.
- Seasonal variety and ongoing menu development.
- Accessible, value-for-money choices for different budgets and age groups.
- Catering appropriately for dietary requirements, including vegetarian, vegan, gluten-free and dairy-free options.
- Accurate menu, pricing and allergen information.
- Responsible sourcing and opportunities to showcase Fingal produce and engage with the Fingal Food Circle and wider food sector.
- Consistent standards of food quality, presentation, customer service and cleanliness.

Respondents should provide sample menus and prices covering their proposed service periods, achievable within the capacity of the kitchen, equipment, storage and service areas.

The theatre bar will operate in coordination with the performance programme, including service before performances, during intervals and after performances, as required. Arrangements should accommodate concentrated demand and may include advance ordering, interval pre-booking and efficient payment and collection systems. The operator shall be responsible for obtaining and maintaining the appropriate licence required for its theatre bar activities before commencing those activities.

Event catering may include refreshments, light catering, receptions and more substantial food and beverage offerings for meetings, conferences, exhibitions, launches, performances, community activities and other events at Culture House.

Service delivery will be coordinated with Culture House management, taking account of event timings, attendance, dietary requirements, access arrangements and the use of shared spaces.

## What We Are Looking For

Culture House will be the key asset in the cultural offering of Fingal, and the catering offering on site should reflect this through a distinctive and innovative offering which is definitively of Fingal and attracts footfall to the Swords Castle area of the town. The Café and Theatre Bar should complement other facilities on offer at Culture House including the library, theatre, gallery, maker spacer and arts spaces, and meet visitors' expectations and market demand. The offering should be high quality, value for money, appropriate to the heritage surrounding and support locally sourced products where possible.

We are looking for an operator who can develop and deliver a service that is:

- Welcoming – creating a warm and accessible environment for visitors and the wider community.
- High quality – offering well-prepared food, quality coffee and a suitable range of hot and cold drinks.
- Distinctive – bringing a clear identity and personality to the café while complementing the character of the building and facilities.
- Flexible – able to respond to the programme and opening hours.

- Community-focused – where possible, providing practical opportunities for social value, including staff development, inclusive employment and engagement with community groups, food producers and social enterprises.
- Sustainable – demonstrating consideration for waste reduction, responsible sourcing, energy use and environmentally responsible practices.

## Your Proposal

Applicants are invited to submit a proposal outlining how they would operate and develop the café, theatre bar, and broader food and drink offering at Culture House.

Respondents should describe their proposed food and beverage concept and how it will create a distinctive, welcoming dining destination that complements Culture House and its cultural programme and address:

- The quality, freshness, nutritional value, presentation and seasonal variety of the proposed food and beverages.
- Sample menus and customer prices covering daytime service, pre-theatre dining, evening offerings and event catering, as applicable.
- Creative options such as tapas, small plates, sharing dishes or other concepts appropriate to the available facilities.
- Choice and value for money for different customer groups, budgets and dietary requirements.
- Opportunities to showcase Fingal produce and engage with the wider Fingal food sector.

## Submissions should include:

- Operator Experience – Details of relevant experience in café, hospitality, catering or similar operations.
- Café Concept – An outline of your proposed concept, atmosphere, customer experience and overall vision for the café. This will have to fit within the building set up using the facilities available.
- Food & Beverage Offer – Details of your proposed menu, including examples of food, coffee, drinks and any specialist or seasonal offerings.
- A marketing plan covering positioning, branding, launch activities, joint promotion with Culture House, customer feedback and measurable marketing objectives.

- Staffing & Operations – Your proposed staffing structure, opening hours (which need to fall within the theatre's current trading hours) and approach to day-to-day management including opportunities for social value, including staff development, inclusive employment and engagement with community groups, food producers and social enterprises.
- Sustainability – Details of your approach to local sourcing, waste reduction, packaging, energy efficiency and other sustainable practices.
- Financial Proposal – Details of your proposed commercial offer, including the proposed rent/licence fee and any other relevant financial information.

### How to Submit

Proposals and any requests for further information or clarification should be sent electronically to culturehouse@fingal.ie.

Please use the subject line: Café & Hospitality Opportunity at Culture House

Closing Date for Submissions: Friday, January 8th, 2027.

## Next Steps

### Proposal Evaluation

Culture House CLG will evaluate all proposals and consider the coherence, appeal and suitability of the overall proposition, the quality and variety demonstrated by the sample menus, customer value for money, and the credibility of the marketing approach.

### Negotiation & Awarding of Contract

Culture House CLG reserves the right to:

a) Move straight to a contract award decision, without negotiation.
b) To reduce the number of respondents invited to any negotiation phase.
c) To invite all firms to negotiation meetings.