



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL STRATEGIC CULTURE AND ARTS STEERING GROUP

Minutes of the meeting of the Strategic Culture and Arts Steering Group held on Tuesday, 5 February 2019 at 5.00 pm at the Park & Dare Theatre, Station Road, Treorchy, CF42 6NL.

County Borough Councillors - Strategic Culture and Arts Steering Group Members in attendance:-

Councillor R Lewis (Chair)

Councillor A Crimmings Councillor J Brencher
Councillor J Rosser

Co-Opted Members in attendance:-

Mr C Coppock

Officers in attendance:-

Mr P Mee, Director, Public Health, Protection & Community Services
Ms C O'Neill, Strategic Arts & Culture Manager
Mr A Williams, Theatre Operations and Development Manager
Ms W Edwards, Head of Community Services
Ms A Hayes, Arts & Creative Industries Manager
Ms A Gould, Theatre Programme and Audience Development Manager

7 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from County Borough Councillor S. Rees-Owen and Arts Council Wales representative, Ms M. Dunning.

8 Declaration of Interest

In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct, there were no declarations made pertaining to the agenda.

9 Minutes

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the 18th September, 2018 as an accurate reflection of the meeting.

10 Announcements

The Chair took the opportunity to praise the service area for their vast number of achievements since the previous meeting and asked the Strategic Arts and Culture Manager to provide Members with an overview:

- 5* review on Wales Online of the RCT Theatres produced pantomime Jack & the Beanstalk;
- The invitation to Brits off Broadway in New York to present RCT Theatres' co-production with Motherlode, 'Exodus';
- The celebration of the Coliseum's 80th Birthday with a well attended Gala

event which included high quality performances by local individual and groups in Welsh and English;

- The Chair of the Strategic Culture & Arts Steering Group's short listed for a Hearts for the Arts 2019 award;
- The securing of further Council Capital funding for the black box development at the Park & Dare theatre and;
- A positive meeting with Arts Council Wales regarding revenue funding where it was praised that RCT are meeting their Corporate Plan priorities.

Discussions ensued around the Brits off Broadway invitation with Members agreeing that there was a need to organise fundraisers to raise the 25K requirement for 2020 but to determine whether the opportunity met with RCT Theatres' International Strategy plans. The USA is not currently a priority with the ACW's Wales International's Strategy.

11 Terms of Reference

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the Terms of Reference of the Strategic Culture & Arts Steering Group which would be presented to Cabinet for information.

12 Work Programme 2019/20

The Strategic Arts & Culture Manager advised the Steering Group that the Work Programme is a fluid document which could be developed as and when to suit the topics of the time. The Steering Group were then provided with further information in respect of the current themes included within the Work Programme:

- **Serving our Communities** – The opportunity to discuss and recognise the needs of the community, the current perception of the arts and how audiences can be diversified.

The Steering Group were in agreement that the creation of the Community Hubs would enhance the communities' understanding of the arts and raise awareness that the arts are more than just the theatres.

- **ACW Investment Review** – The opportunity to discuss the way forward in developing an enhanced sustainable service.

The Independent Member spoke of the Arts Council Wales review in relation to the distribution of future funding in conjunction with its Corporate Plan priority of 'benefitting all'. The Member hoped that this would be an opportunity for an increase in funding to Local Authorities such as RCT, which has the second biggest population in Wales after Cardiff.

- **Arts & Health** – To discuss how the arts can be of a benefit to the wider health agenda.
- **Arts & Regeneration** – To discuss wider connectivity and how projects can be further entwined.

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the Work Programme for the Strategic Culture &

Arts Steering Group for 2019/20.

13 **Arts Bursary Scheme**

The Chair advised the Steering Group that the documents before them were an example of a neighbouring Authority's criteria for Arts Bursary applications and gave Members the opportunity to provide comment on the content for RCT's version prior to its creation. It was explained that the average grant award is in the region of £500 and provides individuals with the opportunity to begin or further enhance their experience within the arts.

Members of the Steering Group were in agreement that RCT's criteria should be inclusive of narrative outlining the various opportunities of the bursary and should be more user friendly, in line with the Corporate Plan. It was agreed that it should include fewer rules to ensure there are no barriers in place to prevent an individual from applying.

With regard to the age range of those applying for the application, suggestions were made which included raising the age to GCSE level, where young people have clearer aspirations in terms of their careers; no age limit to reintroduce older residents to the arts and; to young people from as early as 11 years of age to provide them with the opportunity of something new and shaping their knowledge of the arts from a young age. Members were of the view that it would be beneficial for the chosen age range to be piloted to ensure that the scheme is being utilised to its full potential.

The Steering Group spoke of the consultation which would need to be undertaken with various areas of the Council such as the finance department to ensure it doesn't overlap with alternative avenues of funding, and the YEP's and Music Service who could promote the bursary to its users.

Following discussion, it was **RESOLVED:**

- a) That a draft version of RCT's Arts Bursary Scheme is to be circulated to the Steering Group for approval;
- b) That the final Arts Bursary Scheme is to be approved by way of Officer Delegated Decision.

14 **Muni Arts Centre**

(Note: At this point in proceedings, County Borough Councillor J. Brencher joined the meeting.)

The Director, Public Health, Protection & Community Services provided the Strategic Culture & Arts Steering Group with details in respect of the Muni Arts Centre, Pontypridd and its recent closure due to governance and financial issues.

Members were reminded that following RCT's closure of the building in 2015, the lease was granted to a local community group via a community asset transfer. The Arts Centre continued to be a significant and valuable part of the community with local dance, music and art productions being shown on a regular basis. Unfortunately, due to significant financial challenges, the lease holders were unable to continue the management of the premises and as a result, the building

closed on 23rd December 2018. After careful consideration the Council determined that it was unable to provide additional financial to this private company.

The Director was pleased to advise that since its closure, an Expression of Interest process to grant the lease to a new tenant had been undertaken and had closed the previous day. It was explained that six expressions of interest had been received and were of a diverse range. The Group was informed that once business plans are submitted, they would have the opportunity to be a part of the scrutiny prior to a decision being made by Cabinet in the summer.

Members were in agreement that the building is a community asset and consists of powerful memories for local residents. The Local Member commented on the viability of the building, explaining that it is used by all age ranges and that the footfall is undeniable.

The Steering Group acknowledged the former governance issues but were confident that due to the development of the RCT Together over the past three years and the interest shown in the recent expressions of interest, the building could become a cultural asset to the community once again.

The Director suggested that colleagues from Regeneration attend the next meeting of the Strategic Culture & Arts Steering Group in order to provide context on the wider town centre regeneration and clarity on how buildings such as the Muni Arts Centre, the YMCA and the Taff Vale project can complement one another and promote artistic development in the wider community.

(Note: At this point in proceedings, County Borough Councillor J. Brencher declared the following personal interest “I am a Trustee at the YMCA”)

Following discussions, it was **RESOLVED** to note the update of the Director Public Health, Protection & Community Services.

15 To consider passing the following under-mentioned Resolution:

It was **RESOLVED** that the press and public be excluded from the meeting under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act (as amended) for the following items of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of the exempt information as defined in paragraph 14 of Part 4 of the Schedule 12A of the Act.

16 Artistic Business Plan and Artistic Collaborations

The Theatre Programme and Audience Development Manager provided the Steering Group with the RCT Theatres Artistic Business Plan for 2019-20.

The officer guided Members through a detailed list of upcoming productions and co-productions, consisting of high quality work in drama, dance and music.

Following a number of questions from Members, it was **RESOLVED** to note the content of the RCT Theatres Artistic Business Plan for 2019-20.

This meeting closed at 7.20 pm

CLLR R LEWIS

CHAIR.