



## **RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL STRATEGIC CULTURE AND ARTS STEERING GROUP**

Minutes of the meeting of the Strategic Culture and Arts Steering Group held on Thursday, 6 February 2020 at 2.00 pm at the Municipal Building, Mayor's Parlour, Gelliwastad Road, Pontypridd, CF37 2DP..

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

Councillor R Lewis (Chair)

Councillor J Brencher Councillor G Hughes

### **Co-Opted Members in attendance:-**

Mr C Coppock

Ms M Dunning

### **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, Service Director – Community Services

Ms A Hayes, Arts & Creative Industries Manager

Ms A Gould, Theatre Programme and Audience Development Manager

Handy, Graduate Scrutiny Officer

## **19 Welcome**

The Chair welcomed Members to the meeting and welcomed Councillor G. Hughes to his first meeting of the Strategic Culture & Arts Steering Group.

The Chair advised Members that the agenda would be dealt with out of sequence due to the confidential nature of certain agenda items and that Item 8 would be dealt with first.

## **20 Declaration of Interest**

In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct, County Borough Councillor J. Brencher declared the following personal interest: "I am a Trustee of the YMCA".

## **21 Minutes**

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2019 as an accurate reflection of the meeting.

## **22 Developing a framework for cultural assets provision in Pontypridd**

The Director, Public Health, Protection & Community Services provided Members with a presentation in respect of the restoration of the Muni Arts Centre and the potential synergies with the development of the YMCA.

The presentation outlined the structure of the Muni Arts Centre and the opportunities that have been provided by its original architectural design, such as making the Muni more energy efficient by the use of water from its roof. The Director emphasised that detailed negotiations have been held between the Council and Awen Cultural Trust to develop a capital scheme of works and to propose an ambitious long-term vision for the Muni, including the restoration of the original architecture and the significant enhancements to the facility to create an arts and entertainment venue of regional importance.

The Chair advised the Steering Group that the Cabinet have agreed a revenue contribution of £105k for 2020/21 for the restoration of the Muni Arts Centre.

The Service Director Community Services continued by providing the Steering Group with a presentation in respect of the Council's plans to redevelop the YMCA in Pontypridd. This venue will also include a performance space, albeit smaller in capacity to that of the Muni. The Service Director emphasised the importance of ensuring that both venues complement each other and the importance of retaining the fabric of the building. The Service Director informed Members of the plans for the redevelopment such as the plans for a studio theatre, a café and a gallery.

Discussions ensued and a number of Member praised the exciting and ambitious plans. A Member emphasised the importance of ensuring that there will be a disabled access entrance at the front of the YMCA. A Member also emphasised the huge opportunities ahead, particularly in respect of the metro and the opportunity to bring visitors into the valleys. The Steering Group agreed that the National Eisteddfod Wales in 2022 will be a huge opportunity to bring visitors to the region and that the metro and the Muni will allow the Council to capitalise on these opportunities.

A Member of the Steering Group cautioned that cultural assets only work if there is an economic base to make them work and emphasised the importance of ensuring that the redevelopments are robustly supported by the Council. Discussions continued and Members of the Steering Group emphasised the importance of capitalising on the number of visitors and students to the University in Pontypridd and the cultural benefits that this could bring to the region.

The Chair emphasised that working collaboratively with Awen in respect of the Muni is an ambitious long term vision and that the redevelopment fits into the Council's wider town centre redevelopment structure strategy. The Chair emphasised that the Cabinet is committed to sustaining its long term vision for the Muni Arts Centre and the YMCA.

The Steering Group praised the ambitious plans, however, a Member emphasised the importance of ensuring that the transport infrastructure is in place throughout the valleys to support the Council's strategy.

The Steering Group agreed that the demographic is changing in Pontypridd and agreed that the Council must maximise every opportunity in this area. Members

praised the Council's continued investment in the arts, particularly in times of austerity.

The Director, Public Health, Protection & Community Services emphasised the importance of transforming community assets and referred the Steering Group to the development of community hubs. The Director emphasised that a strategic framework for the provision of cultural assets only works when the assets complement each other. The Service Director Community Services commented that the arts can reduce the community's reliance on statutory services and can often enhance wellbeing in the community.

To conclude, the Chair thanked the Director, Public Health, Protection & Community Services for providing a detailed overview to the Steering Group and thanked Members for their feedback.

Following discussion, Members **RESOLVED** to note the updated report presented to Cabinet on the 17<sup>th</sup> December 2019 in respect of the community asset transfer of the Muni Arts Centre.

## **23 Programme Update and Highlights of the Spring Season at RCT Theatres**

The Theatre Programme and Audience Development Manager updated Members in respect of the theatre season to date and upcoming events at RCT theatres.

Members were informed that RCT Theatres has recently co-produced a tour with AdLib Cymru 'An evening with Shane Williams' which has seen many theatres reporting an influx in first time bookers and that it has been a successful season to date. Members were advised that events such as this have a ticket fee a charge of £20 a ticket, which was felt to be a reasonable ticket fee by members of the local community. The Theatre Programme and Audience Development Manager referenced the recent performance at RCT Theatres of the R&D of 'The Night Porter' and advised the Steering Group that it was well received by members of the community. There were three performances in the Park & Dare Theatre, which attracted 170 visitors from all over Wales and from a diverse range of backgrounds. The Manager advised the Steering Group that following these performances, they received 74 evaluation feedback forms, which demonstrated that the performances were well received.

Discussions continued and the Theatre Programme and Audience Development Manager referenced the positive step forward in respect of the Stiwdio 1 launch at the end of February in the Park & Dare Theatre. The Steering Group were also reminded about the upcoming National Eisteddfod Wales 2022 and the preparatory work being done by RCT Theatres in respect of the event. The Manager concluded by reminding the Steering Group of the season ahead and the upcoming programme of events.

Discussions ensued and a Member queried whether RCT Theatres had any plans in place to engage teachers with the local arts programme. The Theatre Programme and Audience Development Manager advised the Group that they will be continuing to work closely to develop a further programme of events with schools in the County Borough.

To conclude, the Chair thanked the Manager for the update, commenting that he looked forward to seeing the upcoming spring season at RCT Theatres.

**24 To consider passing the following 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 Item 5 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.

**25 Arts Council of Wales Investment Review**

The Strategic Arts & Culture Manager provided the Steering Group with a report on the Arts Services' Arts Council Wales Investment Review application and future focus.

Following a lengthy discussion, the Strategic Culture and Arts Steering Group **RESOLVED** that the feedback and comments of the Steering Group would be reported to the Cabinet at its March meeting to inform their decision.

**26 The Forte Project**

The Music Industry Co-Ordinator provided the Steering Group with a report on the progress of the Forte Project and future plans for enhancing its reach and impact.

Following a lengthy discussion, the Strategic Culture and Arts Steering Group **RESOLVED** to note the content of the report regarding the Forte Project and its future development.

**27 Chairs Closing Remarks**

The Chair thanked Members for attending and advised Members that they were welcome to visit the Mayor's Parlour to see it's original architecture following the conclusion of the meeting.

**This meeting closed at 3.43 pm**

**CLLR R LEWIS  
CHAIR.**