



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL STRATEGIC CULTURE AND ARTS STEERING GROUP

Minutes of the meeting of the Strategic Culture and Arts Steering Group held on Monday, 27 September 2021 at 2.00 pm at the Virtual.

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

Councillor R Lewis (Chair)

Councillor A Crimmings Councillor J Brencher
Councillor S. Rees-Owen Councillor G Hughes

Co-Opted Members in attendance:-

Mr C Coppock
Ms M Dunning

Officers in attendance:-

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

10 Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed Members of the Strategic Culture & Arts Steering Group to the meeting and noted apologies had been received from County Borough Councillor J Rosser.

11 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"

12 Minutes

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the Minutes of the 21st June 2021 as an accurate reflection of the meeting.

13 Serving our Communities during the COVID-19 Pandemic

The Strategic Arts & Culture Manager provided a verbal update on the position of the Arts Services during the Covid-19 pandemic. She informed Members of additional staff Members who had joined the team during the time and continued

to explain how the service had continued to offer a provision over the last 18 months.

The Theatre Operations and Development Manager provided an update on Theatres and informed Members of the plan to adopt a cautious approach to re-open. He acknowledged the high levels of cases still experienced by Rhondda Cynon Taf and the awareness of the impact any large-scale re-opening may have on case numbers and hospitalisations. He outlined details of plans to re-open cinema provisions on a socially distanced basis towards the end of October 2021 allowing the service to test systems and processes in place to ensure maximum safety of guests and staff can be achieved with a continual building of provision towards Christmas including themed films.

He continued to outline the plan for live shows informing Members of the intention to start in February 2022 with a capacity of 400-600 audience members although it was noted that during this time levels of CO2 would be monitored as numbers of audience members increase to continually ensure safety. The complexities of providing live shows in a safe environment were also covered with the Theatre Operations and Development Manager detailing how discussions will need to be held to determine cast sizes and backstage practicalities including refund policies. He concluded by informing Members of the intention to provide a cautious approach to resuming performances ensuring public health and safety is always at the forefront of decision making.

The Theatre Programme and Audience Development Manager also provided a verbal update for Members on the Christmas offer from the Service and gave details of the Pantomime. She advised that whilst frustrating that schedules have been moved from 2020 to 2022 external agents have been supportive of the decisions made. However, she also acknowledged the desire for these providers to return to providing full capacity events. She informed Members that filming for the Christmas Pantomime this year was progressing well with the schedule due to conclude this week. She thanked all those involved in the Pantomime and was pleased to report that the production had so far supported 24 freelancers. British Sign Language and captioning will be available on the production.

The Arts & Creative Industries Manager also provided Members with an update detailing the support they provided as part of the SHEPS programme during the Summer. Members were also informed of the positive outcomes achieved through the 'Summer of Fun' scheme of workshops held at Aberdare Coliseum. Members were provided with detailed information of various projects in partnership with Communities for Work and Town Centres and regeneration.

Members were invited to ask any questions and make comments. One Member queried the support of providing services in Welsh and whether the announcement to delay re-opening Theatres was premature given the current lockdown levels and comparison to other venues who are operating at full capacity. The Service Director – Community Services explained that the decision has been taken given the context of high levels of cases still prevalent in Rhondda Cynon Taf and with consideration for the facilities available within the Theatre buildings which she compared to some other facilities that may have more modern ventilation systems. She added that the situation was able to be reviewed should case numbers improve however the safety of guests and staff Members would continue to be the priority.

Another Member queried the links between Town and Community Councils and

the Arts programmes on offer. The Strategic Arts & Culture Manager advised that they are working with the Councils Events team to look at the offer for Christmas events in Town Centres and additional seasonal workshops where possible. The Service Director – Community Services also added that there have been initial strategic meetings between groups in Pontypridd to look at how collaborative working can be facilitated with regards to arts and culture events.

The Chair thanked Officers for their comprehensive updates and responses and Members noted the information provided.

14 An update from the Eisteddfod

With the aid of a power point presentation, the Eisteddfod Chief Executive provided Members with an update on the Eisteddfod 2024 to be held in Rhondda Cynon Taf. She provided background information to the Eisteddfod highlighting that it is the biggest cultural festival to be held in Europe attracting over 175,000 visitors annually. She outlined the aims of the Eisteddfod today to celebrate Welsh language and culture as part of a vibrant and welcoming event. The Chief Executive outlined the importance of having local influences on the Eisteddfod and the opportunity for Rhondda Cynon Taf to put its own stamp on the event. She highlighted the importance of working together with the Local Authority to ensure the inclusion of all communities and to achieve the desired outcomes of encouraging both local residents and visitors to the Eisteddfod. She provided Members with the detail of seven legacies that can be achieved through the Eisteddfod, including Community, Culture, Linguistic, Economy, Digital, Inclusivity and Volunteering.

The Eisteddfod Head of Communications continued the presentation outlining to Members details of the Eisteddfod Community Project including welcoming a dedicated Project Officer from Rhondda Cynon Taf. She informed Members of the strategic plan to create a community forum and work with groups in the local area to provide a taste of the Eisteddfod. Details of the 2 phases of work were provided to Members outlining the steps that will be taken to engage with groups county wide.

The Chair thanked the Eisteddfod Chief Executive for the presentation and emphasised the excitement across Rhondda Cynon Taf to be hosting the Eisteddfod 2024 and supported the strategic plan for the involvement of communities across the County Borough. Members echoed this excitement and welcomed the opportunity to provide an Eisteddfod that was inclusive of all residents. One Member asked about plans for the announcement of the location of the Maes for the Eisteddfod. The Chief Executive advised Members that plans and discussions were still being held regarding specific sites.

The Chair concluded the discussions by once again thanking the Officers for attending today's meeting to provide the presentation and echoed Members support for an inclusive and inter-generational Eisteddfod in Rhondda Cynon Taf in 2024.

15 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.

16 National Heritage Lottery Fund Projects Update

The Service Director – Community Services provided the Steering Group with an update in respect of the National Heritage Lottery Fund Projects.

Following a lengthy discussion, the Strategic Culture and Arts Steering Group considered the summary and assessment and **RESOLVED** to note the update contained in the report.

This meeting closed at 3.15 pm

**CLLR R LEWIS
CHAIR.**