



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL STRATEGIC CULTURE AND ARTS STEERING GROUP
Minutes of the meeting of the Strategic Culture and Arts Steering Group meeting held on Tuesday,
18 September 2018 at 11.00 am at the Coliseum Theatre, Aberdare, CF44 8NG.

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

Councillor R Lewis (Chair)

Councillor A Crimmings Councillor S. Rees-Owen
Councillor J Rosser

Officers & Representatives in attendance:-

Mr C Coppock - Independent Member
Ms M Dunning - Arts Council for Wales
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 A Hayes, Arts & Creative Industries Manager
Ms A Gould, Theatre Programme and Audience Development Manager

1 Welcome & Apologies

The Chair welcomed Members and Officers to the inaugural meeting of the Strategic Culture and Arts Steering Group and introductions were made around the table. The Chair took the opportunity to extend his gratitude to the staff and volunteers who had worked tirelessly to ensure the exhibition in the Cynon Valley Museum was a huge success.

Apologies were received from Councillor J. Brencher, Mr C. Hanagan and Ms W. Edwards.

2 Declaration of Interest

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

3 What is RCT Arts Service and what is its purpose?

With the aid of a PowerPoint presentation, officers provided Members of the Steering Group with a detailed insight into the work of the Arts Service. It was explained that following a recent service change, the department now sit under the Community & Children's Service Group which allows the various branches of the Group to work closer together and share knowledge.

The Strategic Arts and Culture Manager provided the Group with various interesting facts in respect of RCT's theatres such as the Park and Dare being a Grade 2* listed building and the Coliseum Theatre, which was celebrating its 80th birthday, being the only theatre with an orchestra pit. However, it was explained

that the Arts Service is inclusive of so much more than the popular theatres with a dedicated Arts & Creative Industries Team that aim to promote social, economic and cultural outcomes for the people of Rhondda Cynon Taf by working towards meeting the seven Wellbeing Goals of the Future Generations Act and recognising the need for communities to become more creatively active. Members were pleased to learn that in actively working towards these goals, the service has representation on the Cwm Taf Wellbeing Plan Working Group as part of the Cwm Taf Public Services Board to advocate the Arts in Health and Wellbeing. Other partnerships include the 'It's My Shout' training scheme and 'Arts Connect' which aims to promote the sustainability of arts in the region.

The Theatre Operations Development Manager spoke of the funding for the promotion of the Arts Service within Rhondda Cynon Taf, advising that it is provided by the Local Authority, Arts Council of Wales, Earned Income and Families First. In respect of Arts Council of Wales, the officer advised that there was a revenue funding agreement in place recognising RCT Theatres as venues and producing houses, with the inclusion of key targets to make the theatres more resilient. Members were pleased to learn that a number of areas had been identified for improvement such as:

- Identifying and implementing creative and professional training for the technicians to develop their skills;
- Creating a black box structure in the Park and Dare to further engage with the community and develop a sense of belonging;
- The development of the Strategic Culture and Arts Steering Group and the decision to include not only the theatres, but the whole work of the Arts service in discussions;
- To continue to develop an artistic programme and;
- To continue to develop an Audience Development Strategy.

Speaking of the Audience Development Strategy and with the use of pie charts, the officer evidenced the results from the recent MOSAIC and Arts Council of England Audience Finder tools. Members were interested to learn that in comparison to the growth rate of RCT, the audience within a 20 minute radius of the Park and Dare theatre were predicted to develop at a slower rate to those within the same radius of the Coliseum Theatre. This was largely due to the age demographic of the Rhondda being older in comparison to the Cynon Valley who had more families attending the shows. The Audience Finder tool also evidenced the types of art forms which were most popular in each area which the Chair commented was useful in forming the future strategy for engagement at the theatres.

The Theatre Programme and Audience Development Officer spoke of the work produced and co-produced by the Arts Service, explaining that the vision of the work had been adapted in the last four years. The officer spoke of the priorities which were identified in the '4P Plan':

Present

It was explained that the aim was to present work that has been produced/co-produced which has relevance to the local community through various different art forms/genres. The officer spoke of the high profile acts which had been attracted to the local theatres in the past year which could only further promote RCT. Members learned that an annual programme of hires by local schools and voluntary/amateur arts organisations is also presented at the theatres.

Produce

It was explained that the production house worked on supporting new and upcoming artists with the vision of them working locally and potentially internationally, such as 'Good Earth' co-produced with Motherlode Theatre which toured to New York in 2017.

Participate

It was explained that over 200 people participate in arts provision co-ordinated by the service each week and the aim was to adapt the services to reach a wider range of people through areas such as:

- Welsh Language – currently in the process of a three year pilot to work on translating classis English text and exploring the dialect of the Welsh Language in co-productions
- Disability Performing Arts workshops
- Working with schools such as Treorchy Comprehensive School on various projects such as the Mercury Theatre '35 Times' production
- Volunteering opportunities
- Graduate opportunities linked to the FE/HE courses within the creative industries sector
- Master classes run by the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama's Young Actors Studio which allow young people to perform on stage
- Go and See Scheme which challenges families perception of the theatres and its programme

Produce and Partners

The officer advised that the strategic aim is to work with likeminded companies, families and keen young people who would otherwise not have the opportunity to express their creativity in different art forms. Members of the Group were provided with a number of examples of key productions and co-productions which the theatres had been involved in such as Blue Scar, which Avant Cymru recently took to the Edinburgh Fringe.

The Arts and Creative Industries Manager spoke of the vast variety of programmes and workshops available within the service for young people, particularly through its commission from Families First for the delivery of the SONIG Youth Music Industry and Youth Arts programmes. Young people have access to projects and programmes as the SONIG's Forte Project which is run by the Arts Development Officer for Regeneration with additional funding from ACW and PRS, which would be in its fourth year in 2019; YPN which focuses on the development of bands and upcoming musicians; and the Youth Arts programme which focuses on engaging young people in singing, acting, rapping and much more. The officers explained that the workshops mainly target 8 – 25 year olds but were not limited to young adults with an interest. The officer provided the Steering Group with two case studies of young people who had grown up in the local community and engaged in a variety of the programmes available to gain resilience, confidence and relationships. The Steering Group were pleased to hear that these opportunities included referrals from the Families First Service and resulted in positive results for the young people, often completely changing their social skills for the better.

The Chair took the opportunity to thank the officers for the robust presentation, commenting that the vast amount of services available should be promoted and celebrated as a community service. The Chair praised the use of partnership work within the Council service areas, adding that targeted interventions

demonstrate positive results.

One Member spoke positive of the information received, agreeing that it was important for all areas of the service to be promoted. The Councillor spoke of her own personal experience with the arts, commenting that it had taught her to express herself and develop new skills.

One Member spoke of her background in working closely with the community, advising that for various reasons such as cost and transportation, many people are unable to experience the multitude of arts that the local theatres have to offer and that there was a need to educate further outside of the theatre parameters. The Member added that it would be beneficial for communities for an event to be held to broaden their cultural experiences. The Strategic Arts and Culture Manager spoke of the 'Night Out' scheme provided by Arts Council Wales in partnership with Local Authorities, which allows local communities and volunteers to hold professional productions in their areas which offers a guarantee against loss for events. The officer agreed that networking was fundamental in creating new experiences for the local community and could always be improved upon.

The Independent Member drew attention to the word 'Art' and stressed that there was a need for a new way of thinking about how culture can be further integrated into society, especially post Brexit. Praising Rhondda Cynon Taf for the efforts made to embed a practice to nurture individuals and bring them together through cultural experiences which will result in a new and effective way of thinking.

The Director, Public Health, Protection and Community Services spoke of the Authority's 3 year programme to create 'Community Hubs' across the County Borough. The Director advised that each 'Hub' would be bespoke to the individual area and would adhere to an early intervention/prevention approach to support vulnerable people. The Hubs would be tailored to the community, and in some instances run by the Third Sector, ie. Ferndale. The Steering Group were pleased to learn there was an opportunity for the arts to be central within the process.

Discussions ensued around potential opportunities for workers within different arts and cultural services to job swap. This would allow a person to gain an empathetic insight into a new role in order to deliver culturally to different services.

The Arts Council of Wales representative praised the work being undertaken by RCT to promote the sustainability of arts and culture within the area. The Chair added that with the City Deal, there was a potential for RCT to become more culturally appealing to communities North of Cardiff. Responding to comments regarding large investment being placed into big providers, Ms Dunning advised that an Arts Council Wales investment review would be undertaken in the future.

The Chair thanked the Steering Group for the robust discussion, commenting that there would be opportunity to further progress these topics at future meetings.

(Note: Following discussion, County Borough Councillor J. Rosser left the meeting)

4 Terms of Reference

Following discussion, Members **RESOLVED:**

- a) That the frequency of the meetings of the Strategic Culture and Arts Steering Group are increased to occur on a quarterly basis and monitored to keep up a positive momentum;
- b) That a more detailed Terms of Reference be presented at the next meeting of the Strategic Culture and Arts Steering Group for consideration.

5 Work Programme 2018/19

Following the Chair's suggestion, Members **RESOLVED:**

- a) That a work programme is developed around the strategic thematic areas of the Arts and Culture Service and that it is presented at the next appropriate meeting of the Strategic Culture and Arts Steering Group for approval.

6 Urgent Business

Councillor Rees-Owen took the opportunity to query whether there were any future plans to commemorate the late Welsh playwright, Frank Vickery. Acknowledging that this is a sensitive issue, Officers advised that there would be a tribute held on the 19th June, 2019 to celebrate Mr Vickery, who was a credit to Rhondda Cynon Taf. Although yet to be confirmed, the Steering Group spoke positively of a potential bursary scheme and studio name in the Park and Dare in Mr Vickery's honour.

This meeting closed at 12.45 pm

**CLLR R LEWIS
CHAIR.**