



## **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, 2 December 2019 at 2.00 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 S. Rees-Owen    Councillor J Rosser  
Councillor G Hopkins

### **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, Service Director – Community Services  
Ms A Hayes, Arts & Creative Industries Manager

## **8 Welcome**

The Chair welcomed Members to the meeting of the Strategic Arts & Culture Steering Group and thanked everyone for attending.

## **9 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".

## **10 Minutes**

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of 13<sup>th</sup> June 2019 as an accurate reflection of the meeting.

## **11 Arts Council Wales Designing Public Value for Purpose Programme**

The Strategic Arts & Culture Manager updated the Group in respect of the progress of RCT Theatres on the Arts Council of Wales Designing Public Value with Purpose Programme.

The Strategic Arts & Culture Manager reminded Members that 'Designing Public Value with Purpose' is a 7 month programme commissioned by Arts Council of Wales and developed and delivered by the Experience Business for three of its Arts Portfolio Wales performance arts venues. Members were reminded that following submission of an expression of interest, RCT Theatres, Theatr

Felinfach in Lampeter and Canolfan Ucheldre in Holyhead were the three venues chosen to participate in the programme. RCT will be focusing on the Park & Dare Theatre in Treorchy for the purposes of this programme. Speaking of the current position, the Manager advised Members that recent research has indicated that the Coliseum Theatre has a more engaged catchment within a 20 minute drive time, whilst the Park & Dare's catchment area shows that 85% have a low level arts engagement in the arts. The Manager therefore advised Members that the Park & Dare Theatre requires more of a hand-holding approach and targeted involvement.

In respect of the way forward, the Strategic Arts & Culture Manager informed Members that with the development of Community Hubs across Rhondda Cynon Taf, RCT Theatres are advocating for the Park & Dare Theatre's location within the town centre and adjacent to Treorchy Library as an opportunity to explore its potential as a Cultural Community Hub. Members were advised that the expected outcome is to connect communities, enable people to fulfil their potential; maximise people's physical and mental well-being; provide better, joined-up, cost effective and accessible public services; promote and protect communities, culture and heritage.

In respect of Public Value, Members were reminded of the two-day workshop that took place in June 2019, facilitated by 'The Experience Business'. Members were informed that following the workshop, a series of assignments were set for consolidating the outputs from the workshop and were shared at a Peer Learning day in September 2019. The Strategic Arts & Culture Manager informed Members that the next workshop focused on developing new public engagement initiatives based on a Theory of Change and identifying key prototypes to develop into a Theory of Action.

To summarise, the Manager reminded Members that participation in the programme has enabled the Council to understand its operating context within Treorchy and to determine five core values for RCT Theatre's Park & Dare Theatre; Creativity; Rootedness; Calon; Connectedness; and, Joy.

Discussions ensued and the Chair praised the programme, particularly the workshop sessions and the way in which Members were encouraged to think about RCT Theatres and its role in the wider community.

A Member cautioned putting the focus on residents in Treorchy and emphasised that RCT needs to encourage a wider net of visitors to attend the Park & Dare Theatre. The Member reminded the Steering Group that in the past, the Park & Dare Theatre used to nurture rising young talent and that the Council's focus needs to be on making the Theatre thrive again. The Member also cautioned the need to get a balance in terms of ticket prices and to ensure that the arts become affordable to everyone.

In respect of ticket prices, Members agreed that it is often a difficult balancing act, particularly in terms of budget constraints. The Strategic Arts & Culture Manager agreed that the Council will need to review ticket prices going forward, however, the Manager emphasised that ticket prices are often determined by the acts themselves or their agents.

In respect of putting the focus on Treorchy, the Manager advised Members that the Chamber of Trade, of which the Park and Dare Theatre are members, is developing 'Rhondda Chamber of Trade', which would widen the net beyond

Treorchy. Another Member sought clarification as to the definition of “catchment”. The Theatre Operations & Development Manager informed Members that the piece of work was commissioned to focus on Treorchy and the focus was to look at the demographic of residents in Treorchy and to see how they feel about the arts.

Discussions ensued in respect of the wider catchment area and the Chair noted that the South Wales Valleys Metro will encourage an influx of visitors to the Rhondda and to the Park & Dare Theatre. A number of Members praised the rollout of a Cultural Community Hub in the Park & Dare Theatre and emphasised the importance of making it visible to the wider community. A Member stressed the importance of reminding the community that the Hub belongs to them and creating a sense of community ownership. Members agreed that the creation of a Social Hub would encourage community engagement. The Director, Public Health, Protection & Community Services noted the importance of maximising the use of the building without compromising its core value. The co-opted member felt that young people are best equipped to deal with new experiences, however, he also emphasised that older people need the chance to familiarise themselves with any new structural and community developments.

Discussions ensued and Members agreed that a Cultural Community Hub would be a great opportunity to bring visitors into the local community. A number of Members emphasised the importance of linking up the Hub to the local library. Members noted the huge opportunities available to link up with local book clubs, churches and village halls. However, a Member noted that the vast majority of art experiences are out in the community such as in Churches and Chapels and that only a fraction of these events are being advertised by the Council. A number of Members noted that it is often a difficult balancing act for the Authority and that the new space in the Park & Dare Theatre is a huge step forward.

The Strategic Arts & Culture Manager referred the Steering Group to the workshops that were held in June and September and noted that the outputs from the meetings will be shared with the Peer Learning Group in March 2020.

The Chair concluded the discussions by informing the Group that an update in respect of the next steps will be provided during the next meeting of the Steering Group.

## **12 Arts Council Wales Resilience Programme and the Black Box Development**

The Theatre Operations and Development Manager provided Members with a verbal update in respect of the Arts Council Wales Resilience Programme and The Black Box Development.

The Manager updated Members in respect of the renovation work at the Park and Dare Theatre. The Manager informed Members that the building work was completed two weeks ago and that the bar area has been named ‘Stiwdio 1’. Members were informed that the official launch date is the 6<sup>th</sup> February 2020 (TBC).

Discussions ensued and the Steering Group were pleased to learn about recent developments in this area. The Chair noted that the space will be extremely useful for small productions. A Member queried whether any provisions had been made for the use of sound in the area. The Manager confirmed that the

technical manager at the theatre is in the process of reviewing it and he confirmed that the area will have its own use of sound equipment.

Discussions continued and the Chair queried whether the Local Authority would be a part of the Arts Council Wales funding programme. The Theatre Operations and Development Manager confirmed that RCT were the only Local Authority at the Arts Council Wales Resilience event in Cardiff and will therefore have a voice in respect of funding. The co-opted member praised RCT and its proactive approach to the Arts in the County Borough. Another Member emphasised the importance of encouraging young people in the County Borough to enjoy the Arts. The co-opted member agreed and noted that the Future Generations of Wales Act places an emphasis on the Arts and the importance of encouraging young people to engage in the Arts.

To conclude, the Chair thanked the Manager for the update, commenting that he looked forward to seeing the future renovations.

### **13 Arts Council Wales Investment Review**

The Theatre Operations and Development Manager provided the Strategic Culture and Arts Steering Group with a verbal update in respect of the Arts Council Wales Investment Review.

The Manager informed Members that the Arts Investment Review 2020 starts with a consultation phase, which ends on the 10<sup>th</sup> January 2020. The Manager confirmed that the link to the consultation had been sent out via the Graduate Scrutiny Officer and that a further update will be provided to the Steering Group on the 6<sup>th</sup> February 2020.

Discussions ensued and the co-opted member praised RCT and its Arts programme, however, he cautioned the possibility of further financial cutbacks in this area. The Chair agreed and noted that the Well-Being of Future Generations of Wales Act 2015 places an important emphasis on culture, arts and performance. The Service Director Community Services spoke of the Arts in RCT and emphasised the key role that it plays in shaping communities.

Discussions continued and a Member raised concerns in respect of the imbalance between boys and girls in the Arts Community. The Member emphasised how difficult it can be to get young boys involved in the Arts and stressed the importance of engaging and building confidence in young people.

The Chair thanked the Theatre Operations and Development Manager for the update and asked for future updates to be reported to the Steering Group.

### **14 Arts Investment in RCT 2018/19 and 2019/20**

The Strategic Arts & Culture Manager provided the Steering Group with a verbal update in respect of Arts Investment in RCT 2018/19 and 2019/20.

The Strategic Arts & Culture Manager confirmed that a report was submitted to Cabinet on the 17<sup>th</sup> of October 2019. It was confirmed that a link to the report had been sent out to Members of the Steering Group via the Graduate Scrutiny Officer.

Members were informed that Rhondda Cynon Taf Council's Arts Services RCT

Theatres are an Arts Council of Wales Arts Portfolio Wales client and received £150,821 revenue funding in 2018/19 and will be receiving the same amount in 2019/20. Members were told that the only other Local Authority run venues to receive annual revenue funding from the Arts Council of Wales are Blackwood Miners Institute (Caerphilly County Borough Council) and Theatr Clwyd (Flintshire County Council).

In respect of schools and Arts Council of Wales Investments, the Strategic Arts & Culture Manager informed the Steering Group that many schools in the County Borough have successfully been awarded funding through the Arts Council of Wales Creative Learning through the Arts programme. Members were reminded that the Creative Learning through the Arts programme has three funding options for schools; Lead Creative Schools, its Go and See and Creative Collaborations schemes, which are two funding options under the Experiencing the Arts fund.

In respect of other Arts Council of Wales investments in RCT, the Manager confirmed that Valleys Kids and Artis Community Cymuned continue to receive annual revenue funding from the Arts Council of Wales. Valleys Kids received £122,383 in 2018/19 and it remains the same for 2019/20 and Artis Community Cymuned received £199,960 in 2018/19 and it remains the same for 2019/20.

In relation to National Lottery funding, Members were told that to date in 2019/20, £136,218 has been awarded to national organisations serving Rhondda Cynon Taf.

The Strategic Arts & Culture Manager advised Members that Wales Arts Review were awarded £2,490 during 2018/19 for the development of its Young Critics and Youth Arts Forum. Members were also advised that the Arts Council of Wales have also invested £25,000 in Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board as part of its capacity building programme within Health Boards across Wales.

In respect of potential challenges ahead, the Strategic Arts & Culture Manager listed the 'Resilient Families Programme: Families First Commission' and noted that a decommissioning or decrease of commission would impact on provision of opportunities for children and young people to engage with and participate in the arts, as well as loss of knowledge and expertise within the Arts and Creative Industries Team. Furthermore, a restriction on the availability of lottery funding for the Arts Service and its RCT Theatres would impact on opportunities for residents to engage with and participate in arts and creative industries activity, such as music industry career development and live theatre productions created with and of relevance to them.

The Manager emphasised that the loss of or reduction to revenue-funding received and our Arts Portfolio status will impact on the live programme at RCT Theatres, co-production and production work, arts marketing and promotion, participation activity and staff. In respect of Creative Learning through the arts, the Manager advised Members that there has been no announcement from the Arts Council of Wales with regards to the programme and funds available post March 2020. Members were reminded that if this programme were to be discontinued or a reduction in the funding available, this would have an impact on schools accessing creative expertise and opportunities that would be key in supporting the new Expressive Arts curriculum.

To conclude, The Manager informed the Steering Group that it is hoped that access to funding from a range of sources will continue to be available so that residents can continue to benefit from engagement with the arts in all its forms.

Discussions ensued and Members of the Steering Group praised the continued investment in the Arts in RCT. A Member queried the future funding position in terms of Brexit. The Strategic Arts & Culture Manager acknowledged that there is a potential risk that RCT would no longer receive funding from the Arts Council Wales. However, the Manager also emphasised the strong position of the Council in terms of its Arts programme and referred Members to the National Lottery guidelines, which enable RCT to apply for funding in respect of the Arts and young people. The Arts and Creative Industries Manager confirmed that the Council will continue its work with Valleys Steps and Cwm Taf Health Board post Brexit. In terms of uncertainty, the Chair advised the Steering Group that officers at RCT have been working hard to build resilience. The Chair reminded Members that uncertainty in respect of Brexit is a part of the wider sector and that austerity has compounded the degree of economic uncertainty in the County Borough.

Discussions continued and a Member referred the Steering Group to the seven goals of the Well-Being of Future Generations Act and emphasised that funding of the Arts is of intrinsic value in society. Members agreed that musicality in schools is crucial in respect of a young person's development. Another Member reminded Members about the opportunities ahead for RCT in respect of the National Eisteddfod of Wales and emphasised that the Local Authority needs to be proactive in terms of its planning, particularly in respect of the Arts and young people.

Following discussion, the Chair thanked the officer for providing the Steering Group with such a detailed update, and asked for future updates to be reported to the Steering Group when necessary.

**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 Community Asset Transfer - Muni Arts Centre**

The Director, Public Health, Protection & Community Services provided the Steering Group with a verbal update in respect of the Community Asset Transfer of the Muni Arts Centre.

Following a lengthy discussion, the Strategic Culture and Arts Steering Group considered the summary and assessment and **RESOLVED** that the Director, Public Health, Protection and Community Services would provide the observations for Cabinet consideration on the 17<sup>th</sup> December 2019.

**17 Draft Work Programme 2019/20**

The Chair introduced the Strategic Culture & Arts Steering Group Draft Work Programme 2019/20 to the Steering Group and confirmed that going forward the meetings will be held in the Mayor's parlour, Municipal Building.

Following discussion, Members **RESOLVED** to approve the Strategic Culture & Arts Steering Group Draft Work Programme 2019/20.

**18 Urgent Business**

The Service Director Community Services informed the Steering Group that the Authority placed an external advert out for a post in respect of the National Eisteddfod 2022, however they were unable to appoint a suitable candidate. The Service Director informed the Steering Group that going forward a meeting is scheduled in the diary with the Artistic Director in respect of the National Eisteddfod of Wales 2022 and its associated Arts Programme of events. The Chair thanked the officer for the update.

**This meeting closed at 3.45 pm**

**CLLR R LEWIS  
CHAIR.**