



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL STRATEGIC CULTURE AND ARTS STEERING GROUP
Minutes of the virtual meeting of the Strategic Culture and Arts Steering Group held on Monday, 21
June 2021 at 2.00 pm.

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 Councillor G Hughes

Co-Opted Members in attendance:-

Mr Chris Coppock
Ms Maggie Dunning

Officers in attendance:-

Ms C O'Neill, Strategic Arts & Culture Manager
Ms W Edwards, Service Director – Community Services
Ms L Davies, Director, Public Health, Protection and Community Services
Ms A Gould, Theatre Programme and Audience Development Manager
Mrs S Handy, Members' Researcher & Scrutiny Officer
Mr K Stead, Assistant Creative Producer

Others in attendance:-

Mr Richard Hughes, Director at Awen Cultural Trust Ltd
Ceri Evans, Business Director at Awen Cultural Trust Ltd
Esyllt George, Arts & Health co-ordinator CTMUHB
Claire Nelson, Arts & Health CTMUHB

1 Welcome

The Chair welcomed Members to the first meeting of the Strategic Culture & Arts Steering Group for the 2021-22 Municipal Year.

2 Declaration of Interest

In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct, the following declarations of personal interests were made pertaining to the agenda:-

- County Borough Councillor J. Brencher declared in relation to item 4 "I am Director of the YMCA".

3 **Apologies**

An apology of absence was received from County Borough Councillor S. Rees-Owen.

4 **Minutes**

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the Minutes of the 11th January 2021 as an accurate reflection of the meeting.

5 **Forward Work Programme 2021-22**

The Members' Researcher & Scrutiny Officer presented the Forward Work Programme report to Members, which provided the Strategic Culture & Arts Steering Group with information on the key issues to be considered in the 2021/22 Municipal Year. Members were reminded that the Work Programme is a fluid document that can be amended to reflect any changing priorities throughout the year.

Discussions ensued and Mr Coppock, co-opted member, queried whether meetings could be held in-person and at different locations throughout the County Borough. The Members' Researcher & Scrutiny Officer reassured Members that if a particular agenda item required the need for a site visit then this could of course be arranged accordingly.

Following discussion, Members **RESOLVED** to approve the Forward Work Programme for the 2021-22 Municipal Year.

6 **An update on the progress of the Muni**

Mr Richard Hughes, the Chief Executive of Awen Cultural Trust, provided Members with an update in respect of the community asset transfer of the Muni Arts Centre to Awen Cultural Trust.

Members of the Steering Group were provided with a presentation in respect of the transfer, which included a number of photographs in respect of the design of the Muni going forward. It was emphasised that the venue needs to retain its identity and community roots but also establish a new market position. It was stated that the ambition of the Council is to celebrate cultural assets throughout the County Borough as a platform for growth. Members were informed that the partnership approach between RCTCBC and Awen is exemplified by the application to the UK Government's Levelling-up Fund.

Discussions ensued and the Chair thanked Awen for providing Members with such a detailed presentation. The Chair informed Members that the Local Authority is still awaiting the outcome of the Levelling-up Fund application to the UK Government. The Chair noted that the Muni is an iconic building and that the foundations are in place for it to be developed as a key building for cultural growth in the community.

Discussions continued and a Member queried what will happen to the Rose Window in the Muni. Richard Hughes advised Members that the Rose Window is a key heritage feature of the Muni and it shines a light in the vestry and he reassured Members that this will be preserved.

Another Member praised the presentation and noted that it would be an incredible boost for culture in the South Wales Valleys. The Member queried whether the seating arrangements would remain as they once were, whether the arcade gallery will be used as an arts gallery, whether disabled access will be a part of the building's structure and asked whether Awen have been working closely with the YMCA in respect of its vision for the Muni. Richard Hughes advised Members that there will be retractable seating in the auditorium and a fixed balcony. Richard Hughes also reassured Members that disabled access will be a key part of the new building, particularly in the use of lifts throughout the building and a designated change room. The Service Director Community Services informed Members that there is a meeting of cultural organisations in the Pontypridd area, which includes the YMCA. The Service Director assured Members that the Council is there to facilitate these meetings and that key issues on the forward work programme can be reported back to the Steering Group. Ceri Evans, Director of Business Development at Awen Cultural Trust, informed Members that programmes put on in the Muni will complement the cultural assets already in Pontypridd and emphasised the need to share resources and to work in partnership with others. The Member advised Awen that Transport for Wales would be a key partner to bring on board. Ceri Evans thanked the Member and advised the Group that Awen would be grateful for any suggestions that they may have going forward.

Discussions ensued and a Member queried how the Levelling up Fund would work in respect of the Muni. Richard Hughes advised the Steering Group that the application if successful will provide more opportunities for development of the Muni and that work delivery of activities? can carry on while awaiting the outcome of the application. The Chair advised the Steering Group that the Levelling up Fund application has been approved by RCTCBC's Cabinet and that officers from the Regeneration Department could attend future meetings to discuss the application in further detail, if successful ?

Mr Chris Coppock, co-opted member, noted that he was encouraged to see that the Local Authority was behind the cultural regeneration of Pontypridd. However, the co-opted member queried what the business model is for the Muni and explained that he would like to see some more definitive figures being brought forward to the Steering Group. Richard Hughes advised the Steering Group that Awen would not have got involved if the business model for the Muni was too speculative. He noted that over the next 5 years the contract is in place to deliver outcomes to Pontypridd and he emphasised how supportive RCTCBC have been to this project. Richard Hughes noted that whilst it is important to be commercially focused, this project is also an opportunity to focus on the community. Ceri Evans, Business Director at Awen, reassured Members that the business plan put forward to RCTCBC went through a rigorous checking process and was subject to scrutiny from a number of different angles. The Chair echoed this by emphasising that a lot of due diligence checks had been put in by RCT officers.

Following discussion, Members **RESOLVED** to note the update within the report.

7 An update from the Arts and Health Co-ordinator at Cwm Taf Morgannwg UHB

Members received an update from Esyllt George, Cwm Taf Morgannwg

University Health Board (CTMUHB) Arts & Health co-ordinator in respect of its new strategy for the 2021-22 Municipal Year.

Members were informed about the importance of partnership work and inclusivity and about the need to enhance commitment and engagement in the community. Members were advised that partnership work has led to social prescribing and wellbeing pathways in the community across RCT. The strategy for 2022– 2025 will be to continue to strengthen interdisciplinary, diverse and creative partnership work and to work with a model of holistic patient care. Currently funded by the ACW, the Health Board will be funding the Arts & Health Co-ordinator post going forward in recognition of the value this role brings to its service delivery for staff and patients.

Discussions ensued and the Chair thanked Esyllt for providing the Steering Group with such a detailed presentation. The Strategic Arts & Culture Manager informed Members that service areas within RCT meet regularly with third sector organisations and praised the partnership approach of the Health Board.

Another Member noted how much this partnership approach will be needed post the covid pandemic and commented how reassured she felt by the post of Arts & Health Co-ordinator at the Health Board. The Member queried whether the Health Board had considered having outdoor spaces in hospitals to provide some peaceful outdoor space for visitors and patients. Esyllt George, the Arts & Health Co-ordinator at CTMUHB, informed the Steering Group that the Health Board has started looking at 'happenings' between landmarks in Pontypridd i.e. creating units in the community between the YMCA, Ynysangharad Park etc. The Arts & Health Co-ordinator emphasised the scope to have different sub groups on the subject and to liaise with the Strategic Culture & Arts Manager in RCTCBC to develop this further.

The co-opted member, Mr Chris Copock, noted how encouraged he was by this strategy and noted how important creative imagery was in supporting health and wellbeing in the community.

The Chair thanked Esyllt George and Claire Nelson for attending and emphasised that we can re-visit this item in a future meeting.

Following discussion, Members **RESOLVED** to note the update.

8 Serving our Communities during the COVID-19 Pandemic

The Strategic Culture & Arts Manager provided Members with an update on the RCT Arts Service's work programme undertaken from January 2021 to date.

Members were informed that RCT Theatres remain closed to the public with capital and ICT improvement plans in process. The Strategic Culture & Manager emphasised that the 'Take pART' participatory offer continues to be provided at venues within the community. The Arts and Creative Industries Team have continued to support children and young people through online provision across a variety of art forms. Members were also informed that the Arts Service are partnering with Taking Flight, Flossy and Boo, Valleys Kids and National Dance Company Wales in the delivery of four Connect and Flourish projects within RCT. It was emphasised that the Arts Service will be considering its priorities going forward and understanding its operating context within the Council and the Arts and Cultural Sector within Wales.

The Chair thanked the Strategic Culture & Arts Manager for providing such a comprehensive report. The Chair noted the excellent work that the service is doing in respect of the upcoming Eisteddfod and noted that it is a credit to the service that the service is embedded in the new Corporate Plan.

Following discussion, Members **RESOLVED** to note the update in the report.

9 Urgent Business

There was no urgent business to report.

This meeting closed at 3.43 pm

**CLLR R LEWIS
CHAIR.**