



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 Thursday, 13
July 2023 at 10.00 am.

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

Councillor B Harris (Chair)

Councillor A Crimmings Councillor J Brencher
Councillor D Grehan

Officers in attendance:-

Ms C O'Neill, Strategic Arts & Culture Manager
Mr A Williams, Theatre Operations and Development Manager
Ms A Hayes, Arts & Creative Industries Manager

1 Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed attendees to the meeting of the Strategic Culture and Arts Steering Group and apologies for absence were received from the Cabinet Member for Education, Youth Participation & Welsh Language, the Director for Public Health, Protection & Community Services, the Theatre Programme & Audience Development Manager and the Principal Librarian.

2 Declaration of Interest

In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct, County Borough Councillor J Brencher declared the following personal interest in relation to the items pertaining to the agenda: 'Should there be any reference or discussions in relation to YMA, Pontypridd, I am a Former Trustee.'

3 Minutes

The Strategic Culture and Arts Steering Group **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 17th January 2023 as an accurate record.

4 Strategic Culture and Arts Steering Group Work Programme 2023-2024

The Senior Executive and Regulatory Business Officer provided Members with the Strategic Culture and Arts Steering Group Draft Work Programme for the 2023-24 Municipal Year.

The officer informed the Steering Group that the draft Work Programme was a fluid document, which could be amended to reflect any changes to business

needs throughout the year.

The Chair thanked the officer for the report and the Strategic Culture and Arts Steering Group **RESOLVED:**

1. To provide comment and approve the draft work programme as a basis, which can be amended to reflect any changing priorities throughout the year

5 RCT Theatres and Carbon Reduction Plans

The Strategic Arts and Culture Manager updated Members of the Strategic Culture and Arts Steering Group of the carbon reduction plans within RCT Theatres and how the service is supporting the Council in the delivery of its Think Climate Strategy 2022-2025.

The Cabinet Member for Environment & Leisure commented that as a Member of the Council's Climate Change Cabinet Sub-Committee, she was pleased to note that staff were identifying carbon reduction opportunities within theatres and passing the positive ways of working onto the groups who use the theatres, such as the use of biodegradable confetti. The Cabinet Member was pleased to note the partnership work with Corporate Estates, which results in both carbon and financial savings.

One Member spoke of the financial challenges faced by all Local Authorities and echoed earlier comments in respect of the savings identified. Referring to Section 4.7 of the report, the Member questioned whether there were any funding opportunities available to take forward the Theatre Green Book aspirations. The Manager acknowledged that ensuring sustainability within historic theatre buildings was an issue across the whole of the Arts sector and advised that Arts Council Wales had recently undertaken a survey of the capital needs across the sector and that funding could become available as a result, if deemed suitable by Welsh Government.

One Member was pleased to note the estimated annual energy costs savings to the Council and to the planet itself. Referring to the research detailed within Section 4 of the report, the Member questioned whether this was undertaken by RCT. The Manager informed the Steering Group that the research was undertaken by the sector and not specifically commissioned by RCT.

The Chair recognised that Wales had declared both Climate and Nature emergencies and felt that the report was a positive example of how Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council is committed to playing its part in tackling those emergencies.

The Chair thanked the officer for the report and the Strategic Culture and Arts Steering Group **RESOLVED:**

1. To consider the contents of the report and comment on the information provided.

6 Production and Co-production Programme of the Arts Service

The Strategic Arts and Culture Manager updated Members of the Strategic Culture and Arts Steering Group on the production and co-production programme of the Arts Service

The Manager drew Members' attention to Section 5 of the report and provided an overview of each of the following productions and co-productions:

- Turning the Wheel – a co-production between RCT Theatres and the writer and producer, Keiran Bailey;
- Knuckles – an RCT Theatres' co-production with Gurnwah Productions;
- Ink'd – an RCT Theatres' co-production with Gurnwah Productions;
- Sue (the Hippopotamus Who Doesn't Identify as a Hippopotomus) – an RCT Theatres' production developed with local creatives, Menna Rogers and Jemima Nicholas;
- RCT Pantomime – an RCT Theatres' production directed by Richard Tunley;
- Carwyn – in co-production with Cardiff-based writers and producers, Gareth Bale and Owen Thomas;
- No Man's Land – an RCT Theatres' co-production with local producer, Kyle Stead; and
- Gen Z Fest – produced by Kyle Stead, supported by RCT Theatres.

One Member looked forward to seeing the productions in the future. The Member noted that an objective of the service was for *'Welsh Language events and activities form an integral part of our artistic programme'* and questioned how many of the productions listed were available in Welsh and queried how much is spent on developing Welsh artists throughout the County Borough.

The officer advised that at least two of the above-mentioned productions had an element of the Welsh Language, whether that be a standalone Welsh Language project or an every-day, bilingual way of working. In terms of expenditure, the officer advised that there wasn't currently a high percentage spent on Welsh Language productions, which was partly due to the availability of product that is suitable for the venues and audiences. The officer spoke positive of the production of *'Shirley Valentine'*, which was presented in the Welsh Language at Park and Dare Theatre last year but emphasised that the whole sector had come to the realisation that both English Language and in particular, Welsh Language products must be of relevance to the audience. The officer also spoke positive of Garth Olwg, where most of the programmes delivered were through the Welsh Language, which provides the service with the opportunity to build on the audience at that venue to engage with more Welsh Language products. It was explained that the ambition was to increase the number of Welsh Language within the production programme in anticipation for the 2024 Eisteddfod and that the legacy of the Eisteddfod would result in an increase in Welsh Language programmes across the County Borough.

The Member thanked the officer for the response and questioned the work undertaken with young people through medium of Welsh in order to bring them together to develop work. The officer recognised that there was an opportunity to promote the language and develop work through young people and spoke of a recent *'Make It!'* showcase at the Park & Dare Theatre, which brought together a number of young creatives. The officer was encouraged to see several of the young people incorporating the Welsh Language as part of the production and using both languages interchangeably, which was accepted by the audience.

The Arts and Creative Industry Manager added that within the Arts and Creative Industry Team, many of the Welsh Language speakers were mentors and Workshop Leaders and were used to promote productions through the medium of Welsh. The officer spoke positive of the continuation of Welsh Language

Singer/Songwriter workshops within the service and explained that one of the Singer/Songwriters within the team had been supported and encouraged to develop her confidence in speaking Welsh so she can take the lead with other young people.

The Member recognised that the service had spoken of the 2024 Eisteddfod but noted that there were no Welsh Medium productions detailed within the programme and questioned if there were any specific ambitions of the service to build towards the Eisteddfod. The Head of Arts, Culture and Libraries advised that discussions were underway with the Eisteddfod regarding the possibility of developing a project, either in partnership or as an RCT project. Members were assured that money had been set aside to ensure a project would be included within the programme of events, to take place either before or after the 2024 Eisteddfod, as part of its legacy.

The Cabinet Member for Environment & Leisure spoke positive of the report and felt that the vision of the Arts Service, detailed at Section 4.2 of the report, was already evident when visiting the theatres. The Cabinet Member spoke of the cost-of-living crisis and was pleased to see that residents would have the opportunity to experience a first-class pantomime for an affordable price.

The Cabinet Member praised the service and the opportunities which can become available to people of all ages as a result of its varied programmes.

One Member echoed earlier comments in respect of the available pathways for local people and spoke of an individual who had performed on the Park & Dare Theatre stage and had gone onto perform at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival.

Referring to Section 4.2 of the report and objective 2 of the Arts Service Business Plan 2024-2027: '*We will create a community engagement plan that builds on the learning from our programme of community conversations, our work as part of the Designing Public Value with purpose programme*', the Member questioned how the community would be brought together under one strategic plan. The Head of Arts, Culture and Libraries advised that the Community Engagement Plan had stemmed from work undertaken with the community and that the service would continue its work. The Officer informed the Steering Group of the Creative Pontypridd Strategic Partnership Group, which had membership of cultural institutions within Pontypridd; and likewise, a newly established group in Treorchy; and explained that the groups would work collaboratively and engage with the community, with a particular emphasis on programmes of events for the 2024 Eisteddfod. The officer advised that the Community Engagement Plan would capture the learnings from the above-mentioned groups and community conversations to further the work across the County Borough. It was explained that due to limited resource within the service, the service would work with community organisations to learn from their work to ensure a breadth of community representation.

The Chair praised the report and was proud of the number of cultural opportunities within the County Borough.

The Strategic Culture and Arts Steering Group **RESOLVED:**

1. To consider the contents of the report and comment on the information provided.

7 Urgent Business

On behalf of the Strategic Culture and Arts Steering Group, the Chair took the opportunity to extend his gratitude and well wishes to the Arts and Creative Industry Manager who was due to retire from the Local Authority.

This meeting closed at 10.54 am

**CLLR B HARRIS
CHAIR.**

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