

ROLE OF CULTURE IN SUPPORTING SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES - POLICY REVIEW 2010/11:

REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CITY SERVICES

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES: SP: PROSPEROUS CITY

CORPORATE PRIORITIES: C101: Delivering Customer Focussed Services, C102: Being 'One Council', C103: Efficient and Effective Council, C104: Improving partnership working to deliver 'One City'

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to outline the background position on the Committee's policy review into the role of culture in supporting sustainable communities and set out details of the evidence gathering process.

2. Background

- 2.1 On 17 June 2010, the Committee agreed to undertake a policy review into the role of culture in supporting sustainable communities.

- 2.2 At its meeting on 21 September 2010, the Committee agreed the following terms of reference:-

(a) To clarify what we mean by terms such as "Sustainable Communities" and "Culture";

(b) To understand the role of Culture and Cultural activities in supporting sustainable communities, reinforcing community identity and combating social exclusion. To consider the part played by the voluntary and community sector (VCS) in promoting Culture and delivering associated services as a route to sustainable communities;

(c) To consider the Cultural offer available to residents of the city and any ways in which this can be improved or done differently, within the context of the current economic climate;

(d) To highlight examples of good practice within the city and among other local authorities and to include a cost benefit analysis of these when appropriate;

(e) To examine the role of Culture in supporting economic well being and attracting people to the city;

(f) To consult with the Environment and Attractive City Scrutiny Committee on their review of 'ThePlace' as/when appropriate.

3. Definition of Culture and Sustainable Communities and Culture

What do we understand by the term Culture?

3.1 The Department for Culture Media and Sport defines culture as:

- The performing and visual arts, craft and fashion
- Libraries, literature, writing and publishing
- Museums, artifacts, archives and design
- Built heritage, architecture, landscape and archaeology
- Sports events, facilities and development
- Media, film, television, video and language
- Parks, open spaces, wildlife habitats, water environment and countryside recreation
- Children's play, playgrounds and play activities
- Tourism, festivals and attractions
- Informal leisure pursuits

3.2 Culture is also seen as having a **value dimension** and is about:

- Relationships - between individuals and groups
- Shared memories, experience and identity
- Diverse cultural, faith and historic backgrounds
- Social standards, values and norms
- What we consider valuable to pass on to future generations.

3.3 The culture of a community or place represents a product of people's sense of pride, identity and connectedness. Cultural activity can provide a route for harnessing and developing local distinctiveness.

3.4 The DCMS definition provides a reminder that culture is not confined to dedicated cultural facilities, such as theatres, and the people who use them. Just as important are the less professionalised and less formal cultural activities in which everyone from all communities takes part, in homes, pubs, public spaces, schools, places of worship, and so on.

3.5 Likewise, culture is not always delivered by 'the cultural sector' One of culture's key strengths is the way it can add value to initiatives within other sectors. Research undertaken by the DCMS has highlighted the following:-

Physical development – cultural assets such as heritage sites and archive collections are the most tangible expressions of collective memory, and underpin sense of place. Artists and cultural animators can add value to the design process by facilitating effective consultations with local communities. Public art and high quality open spaces contribute to distinctive and attractive places.

Economic development – a vibrant local culture attracts investors and a skilled workforce, particularly within the knowledge-based economic sectors. It can also help people to develop new skills and retain graduates.

Tourism remains an important part of the economy, while the creative industries are one of their fastest growing sectors.

Community cohesion – cultural activities such as festivals and sports tournaments build local pride and often provide a focus for local volunteering. Cultural facilities often provide neutral meeting ground for groups experiencing conflict. For many minority ethnic and faith groups, culture, identity and faith are closely intertwined.

Education – cultural activities help people to find ways into lifelong learning and to acquire transferable skills. For example, museum and library professionals provide some of the most inventive ways to engage excluded and at risk groups.

Health – cultural activities positively affect health outcomes. Participating in sport directly improves health and combats obesity, while participating in many cultural activities is linked to increased physical and mental wellbeing.

Intrinsic value – the intellectual and emotional benefits that people gain from experiencing culture. This is the most important personal motivation for people to engage in culture: for example, people play the sports they enjoy, not just those that would help them keep fit; and they visit museums to appreciate the artefacts, rather than to boost the visitor economy.

- 3.6 The Council's Cultural Strategy states that "the enjoyment, entertainment and enlightenment it (culture) produces in us are valuable. It can change us, giving us new perspectives, confidence and skills. Involvement in cultural activities can also have an economic benefit, developing new skills and providing jobs as well as creating a lively economy. It can have health impacts making us feel better and fitter. Through cultural opportunities we can find out more about who we are, where we came from and where we want to be.

What do we mean by the term "Sustainable Communities"?

- 3.7 The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) defines sustainable communities as:

"places where people want to live and work, now and in the future. They meet the diverse needs of existing and future residents, are sensitive to their environment, and contribute to a high quality of life. They are safe and inclusive, well planned, built and run, and offer equality of opportunity and good services for all".

- 3.8 Sustainable communities are places where people want to live, work and socialise because they provide a good quality of life in attractive and distinctive localities, homes and public spaces, set within functional, safe and inclusive neighbourhoods that meet their diverse social and economic aspirations. Sustainable communities are about quality environments - but beyond that they are about people and their individual and collective quality of life. Culture is central to achieving these aspirations.

- 3.9 All communities have the capacity to be culturally vibrant and reflect their distinctive identities. Diverse and tolerant places are essential to a strong community. Every community, including the most disadvantaged, should expect to have access to cultural activities, opportunities for learning and self-expression, attractive and safe open spaces and a well-designed built environment that respects and enhances local character

4 Delivery of Culture in Sunderland

- 4.1 The cultural offer in Sunderland is made up of a broad range of activities and resources. These include:-

Arts and Creative Development

- Northern Gallery for Contemporary Art
- Music Programme
- Public Art
- Arts Centre, Washington
- Support to Creative Industries (including media and film)

Libraries, Heritage and Archives and Museums

- Public Library Service
- Learning opportunities
- Digital Inclusion
- Outreach/Services to minority groups
- Heritage Strategy and Development
- Local Studies
- Fulwell Mill
- Bowes Railway (ran by volunteers)
- Heritage Open Days
- Sunderland Heritage Forum – (voluntary groups)
- Local History
- Sunderland Museum and Winter Gardens
- F Pit Museum
- Monkwearmouth Station Museum

Sport and Leisure

Sport and physical activity does have a clear and lasting impact on every aspect of community life. It undoubtedly impacts on the physical and social health of communities. It regenerates estates, helps tackle crime, engages those who are hard to reach and raises achievement in our schools, colleges and universities. Further, our regional and national achievements in sport and physical activity give the city a sense of pride and character.

Sport is valued in its own right for the friendship, fun, challenge and enjoyment it brings. However, the benefits of sport and physical activity are far beyond the sporting arena. Sport and physical activity also has the power to change communities and help places thrive. Sport and physical activity brings people together, breaks down barriers and helps to build communities.

Further, sport and physical activity plays a key part in helping us live longer, healthier and more active lives within our community. Activities include:-

- Sports Centres
- Sports services and programmes
- Aquatic centre and swimming pools
- Community activities
- Wellness agenda
- Play and urban games
- Support to schools

Community Development

- Area VCS Networks (link with Area Committee)
- Provision of community activity at Area Based Centres
- VCS organisations specialising in cultural activities
- Heritage projects developed and managed by community groups and volunteers (e.g. Coalfields Heritage Project)
- Community Associations (community activity, wellness provision and learning activities)
- Provision of Play Grants

Tourism and Events

- Tourism Development
- Resorts
- Empire Theatre
- Tourist Information Centre
- Events Delivery and management
- Tourism Business

4.2 During the course of the review, each of the service areas will be asked to present detailed evidence in support of their work in order to better understand the role of culture in supporting sustainable communities, reinforcing cultural identity and combating social exclusion. Examples of good practice will be highlighted both from within the Council and from other local authorities.

4.3 Members have already received an update on the work of the Empire Theatre and the progress of the Wearmouth/Jarrow bid for World Heritage status. The Committee may also wish to receive evidence from a range of external partners including Sport England, English Heritage, Arts Council England, Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums, the University of Sunderland and some of the relevant Voluntary and Community Sector groups in the City.

5 Recommendations

5.1 That the information provided and the comments of members be included as part of the Committee's policy review.

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