

CULTURE & LEISURE REVIEW COMMITTEE

09th December 2008

A PLACE TO PLAY – A REVIEW OF MUSIC VENUES IN SUNDERLAND

REPORT OF THE CITY SOLICITOR

**Strategic Priority : Healthy City, Learning City
Corporate Improvement Objectives: CIO1 & CIO3**

1. Why has this report come to the Committee?

- 1.1 This report provides Members of the Culture and Leisure Review Committee with an update on the progress in relation to the policy review on music venues in Sunderland.

2. Background

- 2.1 At the Culture and Leisure Review Committee meeting held on Tuesday 14th October 2008 Members agreed to invite a selection of musical groups to attend the review committee to add to the evidence base as part of the policy review process.

3. Current position

- 3.1 As part of the research into the policy review, and to provide some of the evidence base on which the committees recommendations will be founded, it is proposed to invite a variety of music performers to the review committee over the coming months to perform and more importantly share their experiences of music performance in Sunderland.
- 3.2 One of the objectives of the review is to identify the major barriers to music performance and rehearsal. Inviting performers from a range of musical styles to the review committee will allow members to hear first hand the experiences of these performers in relation to the Sunderland music scene.
- 3.3 Members will be able to find out from performers what makes a good venue, what it is like playing in Sunderland and through the knowledge of experienced performers, who have played extensively across the region, be able to draw comparisons with other areas.
- 3.4 Focus groups have now been held with music promoters and venue owners and young people from the Oxclose Music Project.

4. Bishopwearmouth Choir

- 4.1 The choir was formed on the 18th November 1948 through an informal meeting held to discuss the formation of a choral society to present major choral works in Sunderland by the Rector of Bishopwearmouth Church, Rev.J.F.Richardson, and Clifford Hartley, the choirmaster and organist of the church.
- 4.2 The first concert took place on March 1949 with a performance of 'The Creation' by Haydn, the choir numbered over 80 singers. The Society began slowly and after five years had become established. By 1956 it was performing two concerts per year and using regular orchestral accompaniment. By 1960 with a membership of over 80 the Society was performing in the Empire Theatre, Sunderland, as well as in Bishopwearmouth Church.
- 4.3 It has since its inception performed almost 120 concerts, in addition to some for charitable purposes, and has since 1993 sung under the baton of Mr. David Murray, a highly experienced and professional musician. The Society rehearses weekly on Wednesday evenings, in The Minster Church Sunderland during the months of September to June and performs three concerts per year, all of which are held in Sunderland Minster.
- 4.4 A list of possible questions for discussion is attached to this report to provide members with possible areas for discussion with the group. The list of questions is provided only as a guide, and to the remit of the policy review terms of reference, Members may have other areas around the review issue that they would also wish to explore.

5. Timetable for the Review

- 5.1 Also attached for Members information is the review timetable which outlines the various activities and evidence gathering that has taken place and is to still to be undertaken as part of the review process.
- 5.2 Members of the review committee will be invited to attend the various focus groups and visits that are to be undertaken as part of the policy review and will be kept informed of all review activities as and when they are arranged.

6. Conclusion

- 6.1 Members may wish to give consideration to any particular aspects of music performance that they would like to ask the performers in relation to the policy review work.

7. Recommendation

- 7.1 That the Committee note the comments provided and that the evidence gathered is submitted and used as part of the research for the policy review on Sunderland venues.
- 7.2 That the Committee note the timetable for the policy review.

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Possible Questions for Bishopwearmouth Choir

Can you tell us a little about the choir and where you have played in Sunderland and elsewhere?

How does Sunderland compare with other parts of the region as a place to play?

From your own experiences is there a healthy audience in Sunderland for music?

Do you think Sunderland has the right mix/types of venues to cater for the city in relation to music styles, audiences and locations?

Do you think any existing venues have the potential to be developed to meet the requirements of Sunderland as a music city?

Could Sunderland benefit from a new venue in the city, is there that demand?

What barriers, as performers, have you experienced either playing in Sunderland or elsewhere?

How easy is it for music performers to get a gig and play in Sunderland?

How could Sunderland improve in music venues from a performer's point of view?