

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CITY SERVICES

THE ROLE OF ARTS AND CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT IN SUPPORTING
SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES - POLICY REVIEW 2010/11

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES: PROSPEROUS CITY

CORPORATE PRIORITIES: CI01: Delivery Customer Focused Services, CI02: Being 'One Council' CI03: Efficient and Effective Council, CI04: Improving partnership working to deliver 'One City'

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to outline the role of the Arts and Creative Development team in supporting the sustainable communities' agenda in Sunderland, to inform the committee review.

2.0 ARTS AND CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT TEAM

- 2.1 The Arts and Creative Development team delivers citywide, through its venues at Northern Gallery for Contemporary Art and Arts Centre Washington, through its Arts Development Function, and in its support for Creative Industries.
- 2.2 The Arts and Creative Development team deliver and support key outcomes for local communities and individuals with service planning and outcomes aligned to match Sunderland Partnership and City Council strategic objectives.
- 2.3 Our vision for the arts is to: **engage, inspire, create**

In order to sustain this vision, our strategic objectives for 2008 to 2012 have been:

- to support the development of Sunderland's creative sector in order to maximise the social and economic contributions it makes to our community
 - to increase opportunities for Sunderland's residents, visitors and businesses to become involved in creative activity
 - to develop and support creative projects which enhance the built and natural environment.
- 2.4 As part of the review of arts provision, the strategy will be updated to reflect the contributory role of the arts to the Economic Masterplan and strengthen linkages to other directorates and key stakeholders.
- 2.5 The Arts and Creative Development team comprises of specialist arts development officers and curators who work to promote and support a range of Art programmes,

initiatives and events that reflect the city's diversity of cultural interests and arts practice. The team works in partnership locally, regionally, nationally and internationally to maximise the impact of Arts activities and provision within the city.

The core functions include:

- directing and managing the delivery of an ambitious arts programme that increases choice and access to innovative contemporary art and artists
- facilitating the work of others and their contributions to the growth and development of arts and creative activities in the city
- devising and implementing policies and strategies that support the development, growth and sustainability of the arts and creativity in Sunderland
- providing advice, guidance and support in relation to the development, growth and promotion of arts within the city.

The Arts and Creative Development Strategy can be viewed at:

www.sunderland.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=1042

3.0 THE ROLE OF ARTS AND CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

3.1 The following detail examines how current arts provision supports sustainable communities, suggesting improvements to provision, and giving examples of best practice both from Sunderland and across the country.

3.2.1 Northern Gallery for Contemporary Art (NGCA) works in a number of ways to address the agenda of supporting sustainable communities. Firstly, by widening access:

- through working with schools from almost every part of the city to ensure diverse communities, socially and geographically, have access to arts provision.
- through audience development: the galleries exhibitions attract between 20-50% of first-time visitors, ensuring access is constantly broadening. Up to one-third of visits have been from outside the city.
- through programme: NGCA has worked with artists based in the city who look at regional and local identities and at the distinctiveness of social and natural environments.

3.2.2 NGCA is currently investigating taking on a more expansive role working outside of the gallery space, and will examine how to make use of unused or underused spaces in the city, in order to engage non-attenders as directly as possible. A good example of this working well is through the Brighton Photo Biennale which made use of both large unused spaces and prominent civic spaces such as both vacant department stores and shop fronts and billboards, in order to attract attention to the role of the arts in the city and to galvanise different communities in the city.

3.3.1 Arts Centre Washington (ACW) provides a high quality programme of accessible,

affordable and enjoyable events in all art forms: theatre, music, visual arts, dance, comedy, etc. ACW encourages access by all sectors of the local and wider Sunderland community to a full range of arts activities such as classes, courses, workshops and projects.

The Arts Centre:

- Delivers a high quality programme of events and activities specifically for children and young people giving a wide range of artistic experiences that help build confidence, widen horizons and promote aspiration.
- Helps Sunderland-based emerging artists to develop their practice through sharing resources, showcasing work and advice and provides resources for community arts groups, e.g. spaces to meet on a regular basis and present their work.
- Has created a volunteering programme enabling volunteers of all ages to become involved in the life of the arts centre.

3.3.2 In addition the Gallery at ACW regularly exhibits work from locally based artists providing a regional showcase for artists and crafts people.

3.3.3 In order to improve on this agenda, ACW, through grant applications, will be seeking to:

- Introduce a Film programme providing local residents with a more accessible cinema venue.
- Improve customer services via a computerised box office system.
- Improve physical resources, e.g. stage lighting equipment to improve quality and standards of events.

3.4.1 Arts and Creative Development engage in a wide range of initiatives to support the sustainable communities agenda, including:

- Individual projects which engage the general public in free positive activities which help combat social exclusion.
- Projects and activities can take place in local venues and localities. This allows the public to engage with arts activities at a local level initially, rather than depend on entering a traditional 'arts space' such as a gallery or theatre to access arts programmes. This progression route channels audiences towards engaging with even more creative experiences, again helping to combat social exclusion.
- Projects and activities bring communities and cross-generations together which contributes to community cohesion, while reinforcing and celebrating the community's identity.
- Providing opportunities for creative professionals to develop their practice and contribute to footfall within the city and the community's economy.
- Working with partners both within and outside the Council and with the community and voluntary sector to help deliver their outcomes through creative interventions, e.g. the wellness agenda, skills development, diversionary activities for young people at risk of offending, improving the public realm, supporting the city's economy, etc.

3.4.2 In order to improve the work in these areas the team are:

- Developing more partnerships in more communities to ensure meaningful projects are devised in collaboration to meet the needs of all parties.
- Increasingly utilising other teams areas of expertise and contacts to engage communities in creative activities and achieve crosscutting objectives by working in partnership, e.g. Youth Development Projects, Sports Development Team, Diversity and Inclusion Team.
- Delivering advance art workshops with communities attached to the Council's festivals and events programme, e.g. free art workshops leading up to the International Friendship Festival, SHINE and AV Festival to engage audiences in advance of and during these events.

3.4.3 Examples of projects devised and delivered by the team include:

- Empire Theatre Centenary Project - working with a range of groups, few of whom had entered the Sunderland Empire before. Photography and creative writing workshops took place initially in the group's own spaces and then moved to the theatre. An exhibition of their work is on permanent display at the theatre and participants were offered tickets to see a performance.
- Houghton Feast lantern parade workshop programme and opening event. Workshops take place with a range of community groups in their locality who then contribute to the opening ceremony where they also access live performances. Communities develop a relationship with the artists and the Arts Education and Outreach Officer.
- The Sunderland Live events have developed over the past two years working closely with local youth project facilitators, music promoters and musicians. Skills and confidence of these individuals have increased to provide a stronger music infrastructure for the city, meaning less support is required from the Council.
- Working with the Planning and Regeneration Officers to deliver improvements to public realm and engage communities to participate in the process and contribute to the developments within the built environment e.g. the Seachange Project along Marine Walk.

3.4.4 An example of national good practice is the 'Towner on the Town' project in Eastbourne. This arts outreach project links to the programme of the Towner Art Gallery, and is delivered as part of the East Sussex Youth Offending Team Intensive Supervision and Surveillance Programme. The programme aims to develop young people's personal skills, increase self-esteem and confidence in making choices. Indirectly, the programme aims to steer young people away from criminality through encouraging an interest in art. Eastbourne Council were awarded Beacon Status in 2006 for their work with hard to reach groups through this programme.

3.5.1 Our Public Art Programme commissions high quality, exciting art in public places to help transform the experiences of both residents and visitors, by:

- Installing temporary artworks in green spaces and coastline areas, creating a testing ground for more permanent projects.
- Commissioning art that celebrates the area's heritage, creating intriguing and appealing visual focal points.
- Increasing opportunities for residents, visitors and businesses to become involved in creative activity through community consultation events, online voting forms and inclusion on selection panels.
- Creating a 'collection' through exhibitions, events, publications, websites and developing strong connections between artwork, artists and the communities in which work is placed.

3.5.2 Example projects are:

- In 2009 the Ryhope Development Trust working with Sunderland City Council commissioned artist Andrew Burton to create two gateway features for the village. Working to the Trust's brief, Andrew created a piece that symbolizes elements of Ryhope's farming and mining past, and provides a notable entrance to the village
- With Support from ONE NorthEast and Sustrans, Sunderland City Council commissioned a series of artworks by Andrew Small to greet cyclists as they reach the final leg of the C2C cycle route. The project was completed in 2010.
- Two new twenty-five-metre community swimming pools were built in Hetton and Silksworth. Commissions were undertaken to create bespoke designs for the glazed sections of the pools. This work was funded through the Area Committees.

4.0 REVIEW OF ARTS AND CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

4.1 The Art and Creative Development provision is currently under review to ensure it is fit for purpose and able to respond to the City Council's strategic priorities and corporate objectives in the future.

4.2 The Arts Council of England received significant cuts to its budget from the Government and this has impacted on the Regular Funded Organisations across the country. In Sunderland this includes the City Council, Northern Gallery for Contemporary Art (NGCA) and the National Glass Centre (NGC). The cuts to grants for 2011/2012 equates to 6.9% which will need to be managed within cash limit. Arts Council funding for organisations beyond March 2012 will be through a new funding scheme to which the city council must apply if NGCA is to continue.

4.3 Performing arts development, particularly music, has been highlighted as a priority for the city and this area of work is currently being explored with key stakeholders including the Stadium of Light and regional and national promoters and musicians. The budget to support this area of work will need to be identified from within existing resources in addition to outside grant funding where available and partnership working.

- 4.4 Arts Centre Washington is exploring the potential of becoming a regional hub for creativity and children and young people. This will be subject to an application to Arts Council and will involve competition from a large number of other organisations currently working with children and young people in the region.

5.0 CONCLUSION

- 5.1 The information and examples provided above highlight the work that is currently ongoing in relation to Arts and Creative Development and the role played in supporting sustainable communities.

6.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 Members are requested to note the above for information.