

SPECIAL CABINET
22 NOVEMBER 2011

ITEM NO.

VISION FOR THE ARTS IN DARLINGTON

**Responsible Cabinet Member - Councillor Nick Wallis,
Leisure and Local Environment Portfolio**

Responsible Director - Richard Alty, Director of Place

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to present to Members the outcome of the Arts Enquiry Group, and seek endorsement for the proposed vision for the Arts in Darlington and approval of the proposals for strategic development of the Arts.

Summary

2. An Arts Enquiry Group was established in the spring of 2011, chaired by John Orchard under the auspices of Darlington Partnership to find a creative way forward for the Arts in Darlington. The Group was asked to come forward with recommendations to Darlington Partnership for a vision of Arts in Darlington and how this could be taken forward.
3. In addition, the group was also asked to look at options for arts venues and the factors to be taken into account to help the Council decide on the future of the Arts Centre building. This report does not cover the outcome of that work; it is in a separate report on this agenda, to be considered as part of the draft 2012-16 Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP).

Recommendation

4. It is recommended that :-
 - (a) Members endorse Darlington Partnership's vision for the Arts '*Creative Darlington: Investing in a Creative Community*'.
 - (b) Agree to continue in the draft 2012-16 MTFP the commitment that is within the current MTFP of £100,000 for strategic development of Arts.
 - (c) The Council employ one member of staff to drive forward the strategic arts development function to underpin the future collaborative partnership.

Reasons

5. The recommendations are supported to enable the vision for the Arts in Darlington to be taken forward in partnership with the public, private and third sectors.

Richard Alty
Director of Place

Background Papers

No Background papers were used in the preparation of this report.

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LCD

S17 Crime and Disorder	The content of this report will not impact on crime and disorder.
Health and Well Being	There is no direct impact on health and well being for residents as a result of the outcome of this report.
Carbon Impact	There is no impact on carbon emissions as a result of this report.
Diversity	No individual is adversely impacted on as a result of this report.
Wards Affected	The vision for the Arts impacts on residents from all Wards across the Borough.
Groups Affected	The strategic vision for Arts will have an impact on groups involved in Arts delivery across the Borough.
Budget and Policy Framework	The proposal has no impact on the budget framework as £100,000 is already built into the MTFP for strategic arts, however the purpose of this report is to set the strategic direction for the future of Arts across the Borough from which a new policy framework will be developed.
Key Decision	This is not a key decision.
Urgent Decision	This is not an urgent decision.
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	The provision and coordination of Arts does have an impact on the place of Darlington, contributing to the overall economy and environment and the perfectly placed priorities.
Efficiency	There is no impact on the efficiency agenda as a result of this report.

MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

Background

6. At the Council meeting on 3 March 2011, Members agreed to continue to operate the Arts Centre with a significant reduced subsidy whilst an alternative delivery model was investigated with partners.
7. This work has now taken place through the Arts Enquiry Group, which was established involving all partners under the LSP.

Purpose of the Arts Enquiry Group

8. The Arts Enquiry Group was established in the spring, chaired by John Orchard, under the auspices of Darlington Partnership, to find creative ways forward for the Arts in Darlington, by working together, in a context of reducing public sector resources. The Group was asked:
 - (a) To recommend to Darlington Partnership:
 - (i) A vision for Arts in Darlington; and
 - (ii) How this could be taken forward.
 - (b) To recommend to the Council, in the light of the vision, options for Arts venues and factors to be taken into account, to help the Council decide on the future of the Arts Centre building.
9. Key principles agreed at the outset were that the Enquiry Group process would:
 - (a) Consult with stakeholders as widely as possible throughout the life of the project.
 - (b) Develop a vision for Arts in Darlington that is consistent with local priorities and One Darlington: Perfectly Placed.
 - (c) Develop and articulate options for a sustainable offer and organisational models for a partnership approach to provision.
 - (d) Consider the premises implications of the vision, considering where and how provision would be best delivered.
 - (e) Assess potential options for the Arts Centre building.
 - (f) Act as ambassadors and advocates for the Arts.

Enquiry Group Process

9. The Enquiry Group set up 4 working groups to consider:
 - (a) Creative Darlington – recognising how and why the arts matter

- (b) Working Together – developing models and solutions through partnership working
- (c) Spaces and Places – understanding creative spaces and places
- (d) Voices and Views – ensuring broad engagement and consultation

10. The work of these groups, and the Enquiry Group, is now complete and has included:

- (a) A report from Globe consultants, on the Arts in Darlington and exploring governance and buildings options for future delivery of the Arts.
- (b) Consultation capturing views across a wide cross section of the community with over 1,500 survey responses and more than 150 individuals contributing to several focus group sessions. This has drawn together the views of arts providers, funders and supporters of the Arts. Darlington for Culture has also played a key role in initiating and promoting dialogue with the Arts community, on which the Enquiry Group has drawn.
- (c) Financial appraisal of options for arts venues and work on governance models to support those options.
- (d) Mapping of creative spaces and places to inform future planning of the arts.
- (e) Development and agreement on the vision for the arts, ‘Creative Darlington’ including the Strategic Arts Function.
- (f) Initial work on an action plan to deliver the vision.

Vision

11. The Enquiry Group’s Vision and approach to the Arts for Darlington is set out in ‘Creative Darlington: Investing in a Creative Community’, attached as **Annex A**. Whilst there have been differing views about some aspects of the Vision, the document attempts to give a clear strategic direction for creating the ‘fertile ground’ in which the Arts can flourish and contribute to Darlington life, whilst reflecting the range of views.

12. Recognising the contribution the Arts can make to One Darlington: Perfectly Placed, the vision is that:

Darlington will be a place where art happens, where the arts matter and where the arts and creativity are central to Darlington’s future identity and economic success.

13. The Vision looks to create, over time, for a range of different art forms and audiences, a ‘virtuous circle’ or ‘cycle of development’, illustrated in the diagram on page 6 of **Annex A**, which will:

- (a) INSPIRE people to engage with and enjoy the arts, whether as participants in creative activity or as audience.
- (b) GROW and retain audiences, talent, enthusiasm, creativity and production in Darlington.

- (c) CELEBRATE together through high quality arts activities.
 - (d) ACHIEVE excellence and specialist practice for which Darlington is recognised and respected, and which helps to attract further interest and investment in inspiring, growing and celebrating the arts.
14. The vision identifies two particular strengths to build on initially, reflecting the importance of both inclusion and excellence:
- (a) Encouraging a BROAD AND DIVERSE ARTS OFFER, responding inclusively to the wide-ranging interests and needs across the borough.
 - (b) Reinforcing the SPECIALIST PRACTICE in Children and Young People’s Arts, with emphasis on the performing arts; this specialism will be a beacon, as it is now, attracting national recognition to the arts in Darlington.
15. Over time, the ‘spotlight’ can be shined on other arts sectors, to see how the ‘virtuous circle’ can be applied to develop those sectors.
16. The Vision document has an initial action plan, to be developed further. This requires capacity for and leadership of strategic arts development.
17. Darlington Partnership agreed the Vision at its Board meeting on 14 September 2011.

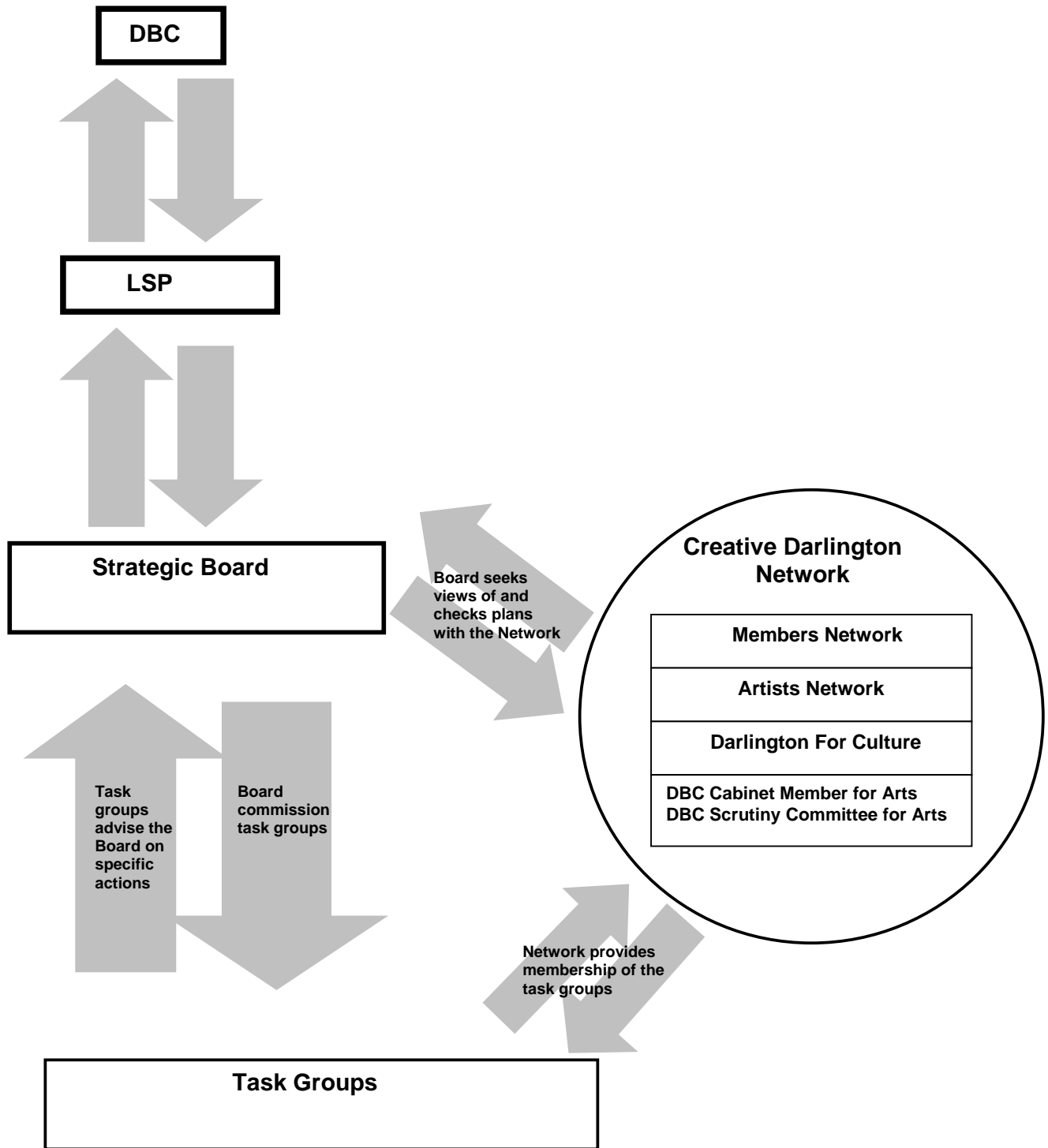
Strategic Arts Development

18. The Strategic Arts function will drive the cycle of development referred to above. The Enquiry Group has identified the need for a range of activities, summarised on pages 7-9 of **Annex A**, that will be needed to do this and to support a sustainable arts offer. Important elements envisaged for the strategic arts function include capacity building in the third sector, marketing and audience development, generating investment and co-ordinating funding expertise, engagement of local regional and national partners, information exchange and technical support. This function is required in order to look strategically how to develop different arts sectors over time; and then to implement that development of arts sectors by facilitating or commissioning a range of partner organisations. This is akin to a ‘Darlington Together’ approach.
19. The Council’s current Medium Term Financial Plan has currently allocated £100K funding for the delivery of the Strategic Arts development function.
20. Opportunities for creating new funding for the arts in Darlington are continuing to be explored. Sharon Paterson, Associate Dean, School of Arts & Media, Teesside University, has agreed to work with some high profile business people, other businesses, Darlington for Culture and the Arts Council to explore the potential for businesses to invest.
21. Two options for the governance of the strategic arts development function were considered by the Enquiry Group:
- (a) The Council could make staff (funded by the £100k in its budget) available to carry out this role, with the staff working with and steered by a new partnership.

- (b) The creation of a 'Darlington Arts Development Trust' including, amongst others, all the organisations mentioned in the previous bullet. The Trust could seek other funding in addition to the funding for staff from the Council. (Option (a) could be a step on the road to a Trust taking responsibility.)
22. It is proposed that the £100k available from the Council would be split partly to fund staff (employed by the Council, but working to a partnership group) to drive forward the Strategic Arts function, and partly to use to underpin future collaborative partnerships, fundraising or strategic development of the arts, potentially using external specialists to 'shine the spotlight' on the development of particular sectors.
23. It is envisaged that a Creative Darlington Partnership Board will be created to drive forward the strategic development of Arts. It would translate the Inspire-Grow-Celebrate Achieve arts cycle into effective action.
24. The infrastructure of Creative Darlington would be such that it was a sub-group of the LSP consisting of a task-appropriate Board, a Creative Darlington Network aimed at providing a forum for consultation, innovation and best practise sharing and Task Groups for research and development as well as action on the ground. All groups within Creative Darlington would have their own terms of reference and membership agreement.
25. With influence and inspiration moving between the three groups, as the directional arrows demonstrate below, the model allows for a happy mix of strategy coming from the top informed from the bottom up.

Proposal For The Strategic Function: Creative Darlington

Schematic structure



The Role of the Chair

26. It is envisaged that in the first instance there may be a shadow chair pending the appointment of a permanent chair. From research it is clear that the choice of chair is significant as regards the achieving of long term goals and therefore it is crucial that they are appointed in accordance with the overarching long term aims. In this case due to the major economic drivers it is proposed that the chair appointed has considerable business and/or arts experience in order successfully to advise and steer the board toward logical and prudent economic and quality arts outcomes. They must have time to attend meetings which in the first case will fluctuate in frequency depending on the work load of the board before becoming more standardised as work develops. In addition, they must have capacity to act in an ambassadorial role, brokering relationships and securing the prominence of the strategic work where necessary or appropriate.
27. The chair will work closely with the Creative Darlington Manager on the ongoing development of the strategic work, upcoming actions and the associated networks and task groups.

The Board

28. The primary role of the board would be to integrate, advocate and drive arts development across Darlington. They would do this in the first case by developing and implementing the goals of the Creative Darlington visioning document and by providing the strategic long term vision for a continued Darlington Arts Offer. The board would be responsible for co-ordinating the 'Moving Spotlight' which would provide strategic focus on specific art forms as and where necessary; the board would be responsible for all strategic decision making and actioning.
29. The Board would be expected to seek the views of, check its plans annually with, and so retain some accountability to:
 - (a) Darlington Partnership;
 - (b) The Council, as primary funder, and democratically-elected community leader;
 - (c) The wider creative Darlington Network
30. It is envisaged the board would consist of up to twelve people, including a chair. These board members would be high level strategic figures selected for their breadth of experience, relevant skills set and their associated ability to raise the profile of arts in Darlington locally, regionally and nationally; they would be active members of the cultural and business ecology and be able to fulfil an ambassadorial role representing the Borough in regional and national critical dialogue and activity. In addition, board members would be encouraged actively to attract funding themselves as well as work with the Creative Darlington Manager assisting in the sourcing of additional funding streams. Examples of such members may include: Arts Council England, Arts & Business Regional Director, Turning Point Coordinator, National Portfolio Organisation Bridge Organisation, Council Portfolio Holder, University Representative, Head of the Civic Theatre, Dance City (or Tees Valley Dance) Director and up to three people drawn from business.

31. The board will be responsible for and will authorise all expenditure of strategic funds through the Creative Darlington Manager appointed to work with the chair and coordinate the strategic work.

The Creative Darlington Manager

32. The role of the Creative Darlington Manager will be to implement and deliver the vision for Creative Darlington, by facilitating the development of strategic partnerships and collaborative working. They will support the chair and board of Creative Darlington in the implementation and delivery of the Vision for Creative Darlington and ensure that it is constantly refreshed and to work proactively according to their direction.

The Creative Darlington Network

33. The Creative Darlington Network intends to provide a forum for engagement and consultation and would consist of:
- (a) The Members Network - a network of members drawn from arts groups, commercial organisations and the third sector.
 - (b) The Artists Network - as was advocated in the enquiry consultation process, a network for individuals to develop professional practice and arts provision through networking, peer support, sharing of information, collaboration and advocacy.
 - (c) Darlington for Culture – providing representation for the community of Darlington.
 - (d) The Council, through the relevant Cabinet Portfolio Holder and Scrutiny Committee.
34. The network would be able to feed into the work of the Board on a regular basis, as described in paragraph 29 above.

Task Groups

35. Task groups would be formed on the direct commission of the board to provide the means for further research and development, as well as in some cases the mechanism for action on the ground. Their constituents would be chosen from the Creative Darlington Network for their skills set, expertise and abilities to tackle one particular task. These tasks would directly link to those outlined in the visioning document and may also potentially include the development and facilitation of a youth forum to inform and assist strategic vision and activity delivery. The task groups would be changeable, goal orientated and time limited. A task and finish structure would be agreed in order to ensure tasks remained on target and integrated into the vision underpinning strategic working.

Arts Buildings

33. The enquiry process has generated a substantial degree of debate around the future of the Arts Centre and the other options for delivering an arts venue or arts venues in the town. A separate report deals with the options for the Arts Centre.

Consultation

34. A significant amount of consultation was carried out in developing the vision for Arts, which included all interested parties attending a number of sessions and finally a proposal being agreed through the Arts Enquiry Group and the LSP Board.
35. The proposed Creative Darlington Board and Network was endorsed by the Darlington Partnership Board on 9 November 2011.
36. Economy and Environment Scrutiny Committee considered, at its meeting on 8 September, the work of the Arts Enquiry Group. The recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee are detailed in **Annex B**.