

CULTURAL PROVISION REVIEW GROUP

12th July 2013 2013

PRESENT – Councillors Cossins, Harman, Lawton, Long (in the Chair) and Wright.

OFFICERS – Richard Alty, Director of Place, Stephen Wiper, Creative Darlington Manager and Karen Graves, Democratic Officer.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE –

Purpose of the Meeting – To obtain a briefing following the announcement of the end of Project Vane.

Points Discussed and Considered -

- Richard Alty advised the Group that Cabinet had recently agreed to sell the Arts Centre building following the announcement that Project Vane was unable to obtain the required finance for the redevelopment of the former Arts Centre. The failure of the Project Vane proposal to secure Arts Council England capital funding had disappointed Project Vane and the Council.
- Any capital receipts would be put back into the provision of the arts. Consultations with local people and the arts community are being undertaken by the Council working with Darlington for Culture to determine how this money should be spent. A community survey with options agreed by the Council and Darlington for Culture would be promoted by Darlington for Culture and sent to the Council's Citizens Panel.
- One option was that a proportion of the money could be used as match funding to support an application for Arts Council England Capital funding to develop provision in Darlington. The third round of the current Capital programme for large grants, and the second round for small grants, will open to applicants in October 2013. Arts Council England has advised that from 2015 there will be a fourth round of the Capital investment programme. The application deadlines for the third round of the current Capital programme for large grants have not been provided yet. It was noted the application process is very competitive and that the Council needed to be ready.
- It was stated that Arts Council England's Capital investment programmes are currently focused on developing the sustainability of their National Portfolio Organisations. Theatre Hullabaloo, a pioneering theatre company creating quality work for young audiences, is the only National Portfolio Organisation based in Darlington. Any application for significant Capital investment from Arts Council England would require Theatre Hullabaloo involvement.
- An evaluation of Darlington's current art facilities indicate that the loss of the two small-scale theatre spaces located within the Arts Centre has left a gap in current provision.

- Some years prior to its closure Arts Council England gave a grant of around £0.5 million to the Vane Terrace Arts Centre to improve facilities for performing arts for Children and Young People. Ensuring a studio theatre-type space is provided and that children and young people's performing arts offer is retained in Darlington will reduce the risk that this grant has to be repaid.
- In addition to a community survey on options agreed by the Council and Darlington for Culture, Creative Darlington has co-ordinated two seminars to be held on 29th July 2013 to sense check options for how money should be utilised and to discuss what the next steps should be. Both the Council and Darlington for Culture would present at these sessions.
- Stephen Wiper advised that the Community Survey responses and a note of the seminars would give an indication of how the proceeds of the sale of the Arts Centre were to be spent in addition to information gathered through the recent Arts Enquiry process. The results of the survey and a note of the seminars would be available early August 2013.
- Following a question the group were advised that the current programme of European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) funding ended in 2013 and a new programme was currently being put together, however, at this stage it was uncertain what the criteria would be and this information would not be available for a few months and funding would not be available until around mid-2014. ERDF was primarily focused on employment and economy outputs.
- A Member stated that he felt that it was wrong to fund just one form of the Arts and that a suitable studio-theatre type space should aim to benefit both children and young people and other users. A flexible space was needed. He also requested that other forms of funding be explored such as the Big Lottery and sponsorship deals.
- Members agreed that it was unfair for the whole of the capital receipts to be focused on developing the arts offer for children and young people and noted that any application for Arts Council England Capital support would be strengthened by match funding secured from other sources.
- A member stated that rehearsal space was a must for any theatre company and that if that space could be provided a rent could be charged. He made reference to a Swedish model, the Stockholm Studio Theatre and requested that any new building be modelled on that Theatre.
- Finally it was stated that Councillor Wallis, portfolio holder for Leisure and the Environment, relevant Officers and representative from Darlington for Culture be invited to the next meeting of this Review Group when it was hoped that the results of the consultations would be known.

IT WAS AGREED – (a) That the current position with regard to cultural provision in the Borough be noted.

(b) That the next meeting of the Review Group be held once the results of the consultation are known.