

## PLACE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

18<sup>TH</sup> December, 2014

### Creative Darlington Report

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Creative Darlington has been working with a firm of consultants on 'Organisational Development' and received their Interim Report on 24<sup>th</sup> November.

The consultants have spoken to a wide variety of people, the Board Members, DBC staff, DfC, various partner organisations. I was interviewed as Observer to the Board.

The Interim Report outlined the situation as it now appears beginning with the views of existing Board Members. The Board was put together quickly in response to the closure of the Arts Centre and other threats to the status of the arts in the Borough following budget cuts in 2012. Those recruited as representatives of regional organisations feel some lack of clarity about their role and some have found it difficult to give the necessary commitment of time. Opinions as to the role of Creative Darlington were also diverse.

The report includes a review of partners, potential partners and funders.

The current vision, core purpose and priorities were also examined and subjected to challenge.

The workload of the Creative Darlington Manager was also assessed. It was found that a significant proportion of his time is occupied by matters to do with the operation The Bridge Centre for Visual Arts, Crown Street Gallery and the Borough Art Collection. His other roles include advocacy for the arts, pursuing funding opportunities and strategic arts development activity as well as financial and other administration.

The report outlines a series of governance arrangement options and funding opportunities associated with each option. It then goes on to pose a series of questions about the role, activity and strategy of Creative Darlington:- as follows.

Role: needs more focus, should it operate services, should it develop audiences or support others to do so?

Finance: should CD generate funds or support others? Should it receive funds from DBC and disburse these?

Ownership: how is ownership expressed? Shares, stakes, stakeholders?

The following recommendations have emerged .

Creative Darlington Board should :-

Review mission and support specific objectives through strategic planning, prioritisation and performance management. Through a core group and then in consultation with a wider

board.

- Provide strong and clear leadership.
- Support and challenge CD manager.
- Have clear systems for reporting and terms of reference for Board and partners.
- Consider ceasing to deliver services and concentrate on strategy and development role.
- Generate funds.

On the question of organisational structure – the recommendations are as follows:-

Reduce Board to an executive board of 7 – 2 DBC; 1 DfC; 1 Teesside University and others as appropriate.

A larger forum to meet annually.

Clear terms of reference and accountable responsibilities.

Active Chair with accountability and a strong and public face.

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Dorothy Long 8/12/14.