

CREATIVE DARLINGTON BOARD

Monday 29 February 2016 at 3.00pm
Town Hall, Darlington

MINUTES

Present:

Ada Burns

Laura Case

Caroline Darnbrook

John Dean

Sharon Paterson (chaired meeting)

Bill Vince

Councillor Nick Wallis

Lynda Winstanley

Stephen Wiper

Apologies:

Seth Pearson

1. Minutes of last meeting

1.1 Minutes were accepted as a true and fair reflection of the meeting. Outstanding actions not covered elsewhere in the minutes are shown below.

1.2 **Action 7:** Creative Darlington had met with Darlington for Culture to register an interest in developing a Grants for the arts proposal linked to creative activity in the Indoor Market. Since this interest was registered there have been changes in the Grants for the arts application process and the council's budget proposals have been announced, which might impact on the operation of the Indoor Market. An interest in applying through the new Grants for the arts system will need to be registered if Darlington for Culture and Creative Darlington wish to proceed with this application.

Action 8: An Arts Forum event focused on Making space for art and creative enterprise in Darlington will be co-ordinated by Creative Darlington to take place on Monday 23 May 2016 as part of Darlington Arts Festival 2016.

Action 11: Creative Darlington has received a request from the Jabberwocky Market for £5000 budget support which they would allocate to developing new commissions and artist's residencies within the next round of Jabberwocky Market activity in Darlington. It was noted that Creative Darlington's support for audience development work around the performing arts will involve the Civic Theatre, OddManOut, the Jabberwocky Market and Theatre Hullabaloo and that the Council's budget setting process would inform what resources might be allocated to the Jabberwocky Market.

2. Darlington Borough Council's mid-term financial plan's impacts on culture

2.1 The meeting agreed to address this item at the start of the agenda rather than

under any other business, given its importance in setting a context for Creative Darlington's vision and future work.

- 2.2 Ada Burns presented a paper focusing on how the budget proposals might impact on Creative Darlington which was discussed by the board. Ada advised the board of the scale of the reduction in government funding which Darlington Borough Council will have to manage and that the Council has a legal obligation to set a balanced budget. An approach had been taken re focusing on core services which the local authority has a statutory obligation to provide and how these can be provided as efficiently as possible.
- 2.3 The Council is in the process of setting its budget for 2016/17 to 2019/20. The Council's Cabinet met on Thursday 11 February to discuss a range of proposals, and this will be the start of a consultation that will run until the end of May 2016. A variety of budget cuts are proposed, some of which might be ameliorated to some degree by Future Fund proposals.
- 2.4 Councillor Nick Wallis advised the board that the proposals are driven by our requirement to set a balanced budget and recognised valuable services may be affected. 2025 offers a significant opportunity to promote Darlington's heritage and culture going forward, but various services will need to be reshaped given the scale of the known reduction in government grant. Further savings may be required, if government grant is reduced further or if new service responsibilities, potentially with reduced budgets, are allocated to local authorities. This might impact on the Council budget further before 2019/20.
- 2.5 The board discussed the potential impact of the budget proposals on particular services, including Darlington's library service (with Crown Street Art Gallery and the Borough Art Collection currently managed through Creative Darlington), the OpenArts Studio programme and operation of the Bridge Centre for Visual Arts.
- 2.6 Discussion noted there is a proposal to cut the Creative Darlington budget in 2016/17. This cut may not get implemented in full because there are proposals to include the service within the Futures Fund. There is a Futures Fund proposal to allocate a £100,000 budget to Heritage and Cultural Development which would have two priorities, these being to –
 - (a) Provide some match funding and capacity to ensure Darlington benefits from the Tees Valley Investment Strategy "place and culture" themes working with the residual Economic Growth capacity and focusing on the town's rail heritage.
 - (b) Provide some match funding and capacity to lever in external funding to support community, and Darlington Hippodrome based arts activity.
- 2.7 Subject to budget consultation Creative Darlington may have a budget in 2016/17 for the period running April to September 2016, with the Culture Fund becoming operational thereafter.

- 2.8 The meeting considered the ongoing role of Creative Darlington and agreed there was value in retaining a cultural partnership mechanism rather than reinventing one, given the importance of partnership working in generating successful proposals which secure funding. The meeting noted Creative Darlington's current priorities are aligned to the proposed priorities of the Culture Fund, but that it may be timely to review how we fit within emerging sector partnerships, including What Next?.
- 2.9 Darlington Borough Council welcomed this approach and anticipated being able to continue to provide administrative support to the Creative Darlington board in 2016/17.
- 2.10 It was recognised that Creative Darlington's engagement with One Darlington had improved and might be further developed. There was some discussion around whether other operational models, including social enterprise, might be reconsidered by the Creative Darlington board and Council.
- 2.11 The board noted progress from the Tees Valley task and finish group report on culture and areas which may support delivery of the Creative Darlington vision. It was noted that the combined authority proposed to allocate a budget to support culture and that an investment strategy will need to be developed. It was noted that big ideas will be needed and that we need to ensure Darlington's strategic vision for culture informs these discussions. Creative Darlington is an established mechanism which might assist this process.
- 2.12 The Council advised that its ambition and commitment to the Creative Darlington vision remain intact. Opportunities for the Creative Darlington vision to impact more fully on the public realm and in future capital developments were noted, as were opportunities for the sector to engage more closely with commissioning opportunities.
- 2.13 It was noted that Arts Council England recognise the challenges faced by local authorities and are working with authorities which are demonstrating ongoing commitment to culture in challenging circumstances. The Council's proposal to commit core budget to the restoration of the Civic Theatre and operation of the Hullaballoon is noteworthy in this context.
- 2.14 Sharon Paterson advised the meeting of the success of the north east universities in working together and with their respective Local Enterprise Partnerships to secure European funding) to promote activity including the Creative Fuse North East programme.
- 2.15 **Action 1:** Creative Darlington Manager to add the Council's budget proposals for the Civic Theatre and Theatre Hullaballoon to the paper presented by Ada Burns.

3 Creative Darlington board update

- 3.1 The Creative Darlington Manager advised the board that he had received notification from Martin Barkley that he is standing down from the Creative

Darlington board prior to this meeting. Martin will shortly be standing down as Chief Executive of the Tees & Esk Wear Valley NHS Foundation Trust. The Creative Darlington Manager has recently sent an e-mail thanking Martin for the valuable contribution he has made to our work to date. The Tees & Esk Wear Valley NHS Foundation Trust had not appointed Martin's successor at the time of the February 2016 Creative Darlington board meeting.

- 3.2 The meeting noted and endorsed Sharon Paterson's offer at the November 2015 Creative Darlington board meeting to become our permanent rather than interim chair. Since the November 2015 board meeting Sharon and the Creative Darlington Manager had met with a number of board members, to see how we can take the Creative Darlington vision forward. Meetings with other board members will follow.
- 3.3 The meeting welcomed Caroline Darnbrook from Darlington Building Society onto the Creative Darlington board.
- 3.4 The meeting noted that for future meetings and subject to their availability and our agenda either Laura Case or Miranda Thain would represent Theatre Hullabaloo, rather than both.

4. Creative Darlington priorities for 2016/17 – 2025 and audience development for performing arts while capital programmes ongoing

- 4.1 The Creative Darlington Manager had met with Darlington Civic Theatre and Theatre Hullabaloo to consider the development of an audience development proposal. The proposal is likely to focus on the work and sustainable development of Darlington Civic Theatre/Hippodrome, Theatre Hullabaloo and the Hullaballoon, the Jabberwocky Market and OddManOut theatre company, Darlington's heritage, providing cultural opportunities for the c 14,000 Darlington residents aged 15 and under. It is expected to involve Audience Agency and leave a legacy in terms of audience data and engagement. Lynda Winstanley advised there are opportunities to explore Darlington's heritage within this proposal (including Charles Dickens engagement with Darlington) and to attract new audience through a range of options, which might include a town centre based showcase event.
- 4.2 Creative Darlington has allocated budget to support the development of a strong Grants for the Arts application, it is expected the Civic Theatre will commission Laura Case to progress this brief.

5. Budget update and planning for 2016/17

- 5.1 The Creative Darlington Manager presented a paper. No questions were raised by the board.

6. Developing finance for arts activity opportunity

- 6.1 A paper was presented by the Creative Darlington Manager and discussed by the board.
- 6.2 Board discussion identified the importance of Creative Darlington focusing resources on our strategic priorities and that it was not practical to continue to promote an open application process Developing Finance for Arts Activity scheme in 2016/17.
- 6.3 Board discussion noted the offer of £5000 from a business to support the development of a small arts grants scheme in Darlington. The Creative Darlington board felt that this budget may be best managed by Darlington for Culture and should not be directly managed by Creative Darlington.
- 6.4 Creative Darlington is happy for our existing Developing Finance for Arts Activity guidelines and criteria to inform the development of any new small grants scheme, which might be introduced, and could help in promoting this scheme and contribute to the decision making mechanism, if required and subject to resources.
- 6.5 **Action 2:** Creative Darlington Manager to liaise with Darlington for Culture and the Darlington resident whose business has offered support for the small arts grants scheme, re the introduction of the scheme in 2016/17.

7 Risk Management

- 7.1 Risk management is now a standing item on the Creative Darlington board meeting agenda. The primary risks to the implementation of the Creative Darlington vision currently are financial, given the Council provides the strategic arts budget and there is a proposal to cut the Creative Darlington budget in 2016/17.

8. Any Other Business

- 8.1 None was raised.

9. Activity report

- 9.1 Paper presented for information. The Creative Darlington Manager confirmed that Ellie Turner and Adam Lopardo would deliver surgeries in Darlington on 17 March 2016, given their expertise in securing finance for arts activity from trusts, foundations and sponsors, rather than because of any changes to the geographies of community foundations.

10. Progress against action plan

A paper was presented for information. No questions were raised by the board.