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LEARNING AND CULTURE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a remote Special Meeting held on 22nd July, 2021.

The Committee agenda is available [here](#).

The recording of the meeting is available [here](#).

Present: Councillor G.C. Kemp (Chairman); Councillor Ms. R.M. Birch (Vice-Chairman); Councillors S.J. Griffiths, N.P. Hodges, T.H. Jarvie, Mrs. J.M. Norman, Mrs. S.D. Perkes, L.O. Rowlands and N.C. Thomas.

Co-opted Members: Dr. M. Price (Roman Catholic Church) and Mrs. J. Lynch-Wilson (Parent Governor – Primary Sector).

Non-Voting Observer: Mr. I. Cramb (Vale Youth Forum).

Also present: Councillors L. Burnett (Cabinet Member for Education and Regeneration), Dr. I.J. Johnson and E. Williams (Cabinet Member for Legal, Regulatory and Planning Services).

276 ANNOUNCEMENT –

Prior to the commencement of the business of the Committee, the Chairman read the following statement:

“May I remind everyone present that the meeting will be live streamed as well as recorded via the internet and this recording archived for future viewing”.

277 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE –

These were received from Councillor A.C. Parker and Mr. H. Gapper (Welsh Medium Education).

278 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –

No declarations were received.

279 CALL-IN – COUNCILLOR DR. I.J. JOHNSON – CONSIDERATION OF THE RESPONSES TO THE ARTS CONSULTATION, AND SUBSEQUENT RECOMMENDATIONS – CABINET: 21ST JUNE, 2021 (MIN. NO. C599) –

Councillor Dr. Johnson, not a Member of the Committee, had requested that the report (which had been considered by Cabinet on 21st June, 2021) be called in for consideration for the reason that “The context in which the original Arts Consultation

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took place in early 2020 is now barely recognisable” and the report “should be discussed by the Learning and Culture Scrutiny Committee so that officers can better ascertain opinions and relevant issues from elected Members and interested parties before they bring together an options report.”.

In introducing the call-in, Councillor Dr. Johnson outlined the context in which the original Arts Consultation had taken place in March 2020, and the reason for his subsequent calling in of the June 21st report to Cabinet. He highlighted the importance of including and hearing the thoughts of Committee, the wider public and those engaged with the Arts at the start of the development of an options appraisal rather than later in the process. Councillor Dr. Johnson noted several contextual changes since the original Arts Strategy consultation had taken place, acknowledging that it had taken place prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and prior to the Council having taken on board the Penarth Pier Pavilion.

Councillor Dr. Johnson continued by highlighting several points he wished to raise:

- The results of the original consultation had been gathered in April 2020 but it had taken a year and a quarter for a report on the matter to be brought to Cabinet;
- A new reserve had been created for Arts, Culture and Libraries, and he wished to understand more regarding the aims and goals of this;
- He asked if an update could be provided regarding the recruitment of staff for the Penarth Pier Pavilion;
- In February 2020 Full Council had discussed proposals regarding history and heritage and it had been agreed that this would be included within the Arts Strategy going forward, however he felt this had not been covered in the most recent Cabinet report.

The Chairman subsequently invited the Head of Strategy, Community Learning and Resources to address Committee and his response could be summarised as follows:

- The timescale of a report having been brought to Cabinet reflected the reality of the impact that COVID-19 had had on the Directorate;
- Regarding Penarth Pier Pavilion, the facility had come to the Council during the pandemic, and it had been thought appropriate to bring it to the Directorate given previous discussions about supporting the Arts. The position of Pavilion Manager had been advertised, and an individual with experience in sales and marketing, running events and the Arts was due to start the role in August;
- The Arts and Culture reserve had been created following feedback that investment needed to be made in Arts Central and the service as a whole;
- The Pavilion had provided opportunities to test suggestions made during the consultation, for instance income generation activities, and this had provided clear avenues to bring regular revenue streams into all galleries including Arts Central;
- A makerspace would be established in Penarth this summer and was intended as an outlet for 21st Century Arts;

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- The Directorate intended to carry out an options appraisal but this would not be done in isolation. The written representations received for this meeting and previous discussions by the Scrutiny Committee were useful, and work remained to be done regarding determining what the possible operating models would look like;
- Following the acquisition of the Pavilion new community groups were also being engaged with, providing additional opportunities for feedback. Once the options appraisal was complete it would be subject to the usual process of consultation;
- The Penarth Music Festival had provided an opportunity to test live music events and had worked well, and discussions were underway to identify what infrastructure would be required at Arts Central to accommodate similar event;
- Digital exhibitions had taken place during the pandemic and the exhibitions were now in physical form at Arts Central;
- Widening access to the Arts was high on the agenda, particularly in the context of COVID-19 and the Arts being an outlet for wellbeing. There had been pilots of library events being brought down to the Pavilion with a view to bringing in families, and there were programmes of work for similar testing events at both the Pavilion and Arts Central;
- Matters relating to heritage would be reflected in the options appraisal going forward.

Following the Officer's response, the Cabinet Member for Education and Regeneration, with permission to speak, advised that the Officer had understated the impact of COVID-19 on the Directorate and the timing of the report, and the delay had been justified. The Cabinet Member continued by emphasising that Cabinet's recommendations reflected that the report was a consultation report and the next step would be the development of an options appraisal which would come back to Cabinet and to Scrutiny for further discussion. It was beneficial to have had the experience of the consultation and what post-pandemic life looked like, and the Cabinet Member noted that the experience gained so far with the Pavilion demonstrated that the Arts were embraced when they were made accessible.

The Chairman subsequently invited the member of the public who had registered to speak to address Committee.

Mr. Dennis Clarke, Chair of Art Central Friends (ACF), stated that discussions on this matter had begun in 2019 in response to the proposed closure of Art Central, and he was pleased to note the report now consistently referred to 'Arts' Central in the plural. ACF and other relevant groups wished to see a programme of events which celebrated the spectrum of Arts available in the Vale of Glamorgan, including the tutoring of budding artists and school children. Penarth Pier Pavilion had come into consideration since 2019, and ACF wished for this to contribute to a learning curve in order to avoid the Pavilion's previous failures going forward. Beyond Arts Central and the Pavilion, the rest of the Vale had much to contribute and had to be incorporated into any plans being developed. Mr. Clarke indicated there was a common goal of extending learning, Arts and culture in the Vale and allowing more Vale residents to benefit from this, to see more integration of Arts and culture in education and to see a more vibrant and sustainable Arts culture in the Vale which in turn would benefit tourism. The question remained whether the Vale had the

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ambition to achieve this goal, and Mr. Clarke suggested an independent body of appropriate representatives was required to push this forward under the Council's oversight.

With there being no points of clarification raised by Committee, the Chairman thanked Mr. Clarke for his time and referred to the two written representations which had been submitted by members of the public. The representations had been circulated to Members ahead of the meeting and had been made available on the Council's website alongside the meeting agenda.

In response to Mr. Clarke's representation, the Head of Strategy, Community Learning and Resources stated that he agreed with everything the speaker had said. The Officer commented further that the Vale of Glamorgan was ambitious, noting that a newly established Local Authority trading company had returned £500k into schools, the Pavilion and its café had turned over more than £70k since it was launched, and schools had been involved in the works there with one school having won a heritage prize. He also agreed that the wider Vale needed to be taken into consideration with many outlets and venues available for use, and from an educational perspective the Officer oversaw the 21st Century Schools project and therefore knew of the environments available for use through this scheme.

The Officer also stated that how the Directorate would work with external organisations going forward would form part of the upcoming review, and that the development of an Arts curriculum was being reflected in education.

The Chairman subsequently invited comments from Members and these could be summarised as follows:

- Councillor Hodges referred to the 2020 consultation report, which advised of suggested sources of funding for a museum in Barry, and queried whether any work had progressed in this area and whether the Council would look to seek alternative sources of funding to support it. He also indicated that pop-up exhibitions would not work as effectively as a more permanent establishments.
- Councillor N. Thomas recalled that discussions regarding a museum in Barry had widened to the need for museum provision on a county-wide scale, and the use of public and private space across the Vale for pop-up exhibitions. He highlighted that the Arts encompassed performance and street Art as well as more traditional interpretations, and that the Vale already had successful venues such as the Pavilion. Councillor Thomas viewed it as the Local Authority's responsibility to support these outlets and welcomed next steps.
- Councillor Mrs. Perkes was pleased to hear of the success of the Pavilion and the income generation achieved by the Big Fresh Catering Company. She wished to see something similar to the Chapter Arts Centre in Cardiff which encompassed many areas of the Arts and brought in a wider demographic, and given the Pavilion's success thus far queried if experience gained there would be implemented with Arts Central.
- Mrs. Lynch-Wilson stated that schools had missed receiving visitors from artistic fields, and emphasised the need for the Vale to be ambitious and sell itself sufficiently.

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- Councillor Mrs. Norman expressed the view that the Arts had been elitist in the past, and it was important to ensure they were open and accessible to every strata of society going forward and that everyone had the opportunity and facility to express themselves.
- Dr. Price had worked extensively helping Local Authorities and other organisations to create social enterprises, and he stated he would like to help if there was anything he could do. He noted the importance of making a profit from these venues and the activities within them, and that there were opportunities to work with Arts organisations across the Vale, with those in locations in the Western Vale also needing to be integrated into the strategy.

The Chairman acknowledged it was important to ensure that there was a vibrant Arts community in the Vale, encompassing all forms of the Arts.

In response to queries raised regarding the demographic of those using the Pavilion, the Cabinet Member for Education and Regeneration, with permission to speak, advised that the user base had been diverse. In terms of income generation, the Cabinet Member referred to the notion of profit with a purpose, and that there was a need to create a surplus as this was the only way to protect venues for the public going forward.

The Chairman invited the Head of Strategy, Community Learning and Resources to make further comment, and his response could be summarised as follows:

- It was the Directorate's ambition to develop an ecosystem around the Arts which had revenue streams, diversity, variability in what was presented and where, and which widened access;
- Working in partnership with other more knowledgeable individuals and organisations would be a key part of this process;
- It was clear the Vale needed to sell and promote itself better;
- Due to COVID-19 the Directorate had been required to work with speed and intensity with others across the Council in order to bring the venues under discussion back into operation, and this meant that discussions had already taken place regarding matters such as bespoke social media channels and websites;
- Bidding for funding and finding new revenue streams was a priority going forward and was part of the strategic plan, with some bids having been approved as part of the Council's 'Summer of Fun' programme;
- It was the intention to bring an update to Committee in the Autumn, subject to any developments as a result of COVID-19 which could impact the Directorate.

The Chairman subsequently asked Councillor Dr. Johnson whether he wished to make any remarks following the debate, and Councillor Dr. Johnson thanked the Head of Strategy, Community Learning and Resources for his responses. He highlighted that the Council needed to consider its responsibility in terms of the wider ecosystem of organisations, locations and styles of Art across the Vale, and that a discussion regarding finances would be required, referring to Arts Council Wales funding and the relatively small number of grants received from this source previously. Councillor Dr. Johnson acknowledged the importance of the role of the

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curriculum, but also that Art was for people of all ages and abilities, and should not just be viewed through the lens of education. He also highlighted that Arts Central was in the middle of a town with Communities First funding and as such should be a priority in terms of widening access.

With Members having fully considered the report and representations received, it was subsequently

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the decisions of Cabinet on 21st June, 2021 be endorsed.

Reason for decision

Having regard to the contents of the report and discussions at the meeting.