

Management Committee

16 August 2016

Council support for arts development in Weymouth & Portland

For Decision

Portfolio Holder:

Cllr Jason Osborne – Tourism, Culture & Harbour

Senior Leadership Team Contact:

M Hamilton, Strategic Director

Report Author:

T. Hurley, Leisure Commissioning Manager

Statutory Authority

Localism Act 2011 – ‘general power of competence’.

Purpose of Report

1. To present to the committee options for the future role of the council in the development of arts activities as part of a cultural tourism offer for the borough.

Officer Recommendations

2. It is recommended that Management Committee:
 - a) endorses the principles and themes set out in paragraphs 19, 21 and 22 of this report and instruct officers to allocate available resources accordingly and in consultation with the briefholder;
 - b) considers the allocation of more significant resources to the development of an ambitious programme of arts activities in the borough and instructs officers to come forward with costed proposals before the end of 2016;
 - c) approves the use by officers of part of the council’s current arts budget to assist with the drafting of a costed programme of arts activities referred to in recommendation (b).

Reason for Decision

3. To guide the development of the council’s approach to the arts in the borough.

Background and Reason Decision Needed

4. Programmes of arts activities and artistic improvements to the public realm can have a significant impact on the reputation of an area and bring economic benefits as a result of national investment (e.g. Arts Council England) and by attracting higher spending visitors. This report consider how the borough can benefit from investment in the arts and proposes that either the council acts as an enabler, with other organisations taking the lead and within the constraints of currently available resources, or decides to develop a costed but ambitious approach which will require the allocation of more substantial finances from the council's reserves.

(a) Current arts organisations and facilities in the borough

5. When considering the potential role of the council in the development and promotion of the arts in the borough, it is important to take account of the wide range of activities undertaken by others, ranging from small, community based-activities to significant, nationally-funded arts festivals.
6. At present, there are currently a broad range of arts activities taking place in the borough, mostly without direct support from the borough council. Although there are many local artists (e.g. Artwey CIC), the key arts organisations (many publicly funded) that operate in the borough include:
 - a) B-Side is a not-for-profit organisation supported by the Arts Council and which organises a biennial contemporary arts festival on Portland. The festival will take place again in September 2016 and next year B-side will also be organising an outdoor arts festival in Weymouth with funding from the Creative Local Growth Fund.
 - b) Activate is a Dorset-based performing arts agency with a track record in staging major outdoor events, most significantly it organises the Inside Out festival that takes place every two years and was featured prominently during the Cultural Olympiad. As part of the 2016 Inside Out Dorset festival, Activate is bringing the *Chorus* art installation to the Pavilion forecourt on 17th and 18th September in partnership with B-side. In 2017, Activate is organising major events in Dorset as part of the *Coasters* national programme for arts in seaside locations. One of these may take place next year in Weymouth subject to securing match funding and Activate are keen to work on this project with B-side and the Weymouth BID. A key aim of the *Coasters* event is to attract visitors from outside of Dorset.
 - c) Artsreach is a not-for-profit organisation supported by the Arts Council and arranges events on Portland as part of its countywide programme of live performances in rural locations.
 - d) Arts Development Company – the ADC is a new community interest company established by Dorset County Council and which is managing a fund of £964,000 (Creative Local Growth Fund) provided by the Arts Council and the European Regional Development Fund. The aim of the fund is to support creative businesses in Dorset and promote cultural tourism. As part of this three year programme, three new high-quality

outdoor arts events will be held across Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole, and one of these may be the event to be undertaken by B-side in 2017 in Weymouth (see above).

- e) Dorset Arts Weeks – biennial open studio event across the county with many participating artists in the borough.
- f) Weymouth Pavilion Community Interest Company has a 10-year lease on the Pavilion (until 2023) and operates a varied programme of events, functions and performances. The organisation receives an annual grant of £30k for the duration of the lease in recognition of the additional car parks income generated for the council by Pavilion customers.
- g) Portland Sculpture & Quarry Trust (PSQT) – based at the Old Drill Hall this not-for-profit organisation runs a series of sculpture activities and projects.
- h) Festival organisers – e.g. *Weymouth Leviathan* (maritime literary festival first held in 2016), Weymouth Folk Festival, and the *Inside Out* festival organised by Activate (partly taking place in Weymouth in September 2016).
- i) Mass Extinction Monitoring Observatory (MEMO) – a company limited by guarantee established to promote and inspire an understanding of the environment and to create a large stone structure which will embody the images of all species to have gone extinct in modern times, carved by sculptors all over the world.

7. The borough also benefits from a range of venues, both indoor and outdoor, which are well equipped to host arts activities and performances – these include:

- Weymouth Pavilion.
- Bay Theatre, Weymouth College.
- Royal Manor Theatre.
- New facilities at IPACA's Maritime House campus.
- Drill Hall, Portland.
- Private galleries.
- Community halls.
- Weymouth Library.
- Open air sites (e.g. Weymouth Beach, High Angle Battery, Nothe Fort, Tout Quarry Sculpture Park & Nature Reserve, Lodmoor)

8. It can be seen, therefore, that the borough has a broad range of arts organisations and venues which provide the community with opportunities to experience both traditional and contemporary art. In particular, through the current and planned activities of B-side and Activate the borough will host major outdoor arts festivals and events over the coming years – all without the council itself incurring significant expenditure.

(b) Current role of the council in arts development

9. The following is a review of the council's role in arts development undertaken by various services and mostly in an 'enabling' capacity and involving minimal expenditure.
10. **Officer time.** Following the deletion of the Arts Officer post over ten years ago, the council has mainly supported the arts through the contribution of other services and budgets, although during the 2012 Games there was significant investment in arts events and programming. At present the officer time that can be attributed to arts development is as follows:
 - a small proportion of the Leisure Commissioning Manager's 1.5 days per week allocated to the borough council;
 - community craft activities facilitated by the Community Development Officer;
 - activities undertaken in conjunction with the Events team (advice, promotion and securing permission for use of land).
11. **Budget.** The council currently has a cultural budget of £2,200 per year. This is also used to assist with museum development issues in Weymouth and Portland.
12. **Arts development initiative** (two year project). In 2015, the council allocated £6,000 in both 2015-16 and in 2016-17 to be used to assist local artists and groups to develop funding applications to the Arts Council and other grant schemes. In 2015-16, this budget was used to commission specialist support (arts and fundraising) to local groups and artists. In addition, £1,200 of this budget was used to commission the international acclaimed artist Luke Jerram to develop a series of proposals for public arts installations and activities for the borough. The 2016-17 budget (£6,000) has not yet been allocated and it is proposed that this, along with an underspend of £3,895 from last year, is used to test out some of the proposals set out in this report.
13. **Tourism promotion.** Through its contribution to the Visit Dorset website the council helps to promote cultural activities to residents and visitors (<http://www.visit-dorset.com/whats-on/arts-events>). Local organisations can publicise their activities via the website's events calendar.
14. **Public art audit** – this was undertaken by the Leisure Commissioning Manager in 2015 and the information was used to provide content for the *Visit Dorset* website and council's tourism leaflet.
15. **Studies** commissioned in 2016 for the Western Dorset Growth Corridor with funding from the Dorset LEP – the studies focused on public realm, sites for events and festivals, and museum and heritage. These studies will help to inform the implementation of the Town Centre Masterplan for Weymouth.
16. **Planning process** - the Local Plan includes policies relating to the aesthetic enhancement of the public realm and these are elaborated upon

in the Weymouth Town Centre Masterplan. In addition, the planning process can secure the provision of public facilities as part of a development (e.g. public access to arts facilities at IPACA Southwell campus).

17. **Property** – the council allows its property to be used for a range of arts activities and events – including Weymouth Pavilion and outdoor sites. The council has also enhanced the public realm under its ownership – e.g. laser light scheme ‘Light Veils’ by artists Vong Phaophanit and Claire Oboussier on the Esplanade.

(c) Opportunities for the future role of the council in arts development

18. Careful consideration needs to be given as to what more the council could do to promote the development of the arts in the borough in the coming years, taking into account the need for the council to reduce its overall revenue budget, local government reorganisation and the activities of other arts organisations (e.g. B-side and Activate). Members can consider a modest approach using currently allocated resources (£9,895) or pursuing a more ambitious agenda, with the council taking the lead and developing a programme which will require significant resources.
19. **Key principles.** Whichever approach members decide to take, it is proposed that the key principles behind the council’s involvement in arts in the borough should be:
 - a) **Partnership:** the majority of funding required must come from external sources (e.g. Arts Council England), with the council contribution being in the form of ‘in kind’ support, i.e. officer time and, perhaps, the use of council property (although the latter is usually charged for).
 - b) **Economic development:** activities and events should support economic development in the borough and attracting higher-spending visitors across the year, particularly outside of the peak season.
20. These two principles can be used to develop two pronged approach to arts development with the potential for both ‘quick wins’ and longer-term plans for infrastructure improvements. Based on the above review of current activities and facilities, and taking into account recent specialist studies for the Western Dorset Growth Corridor funded by the Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership, it is proposed that the council’s key interest in arts development should focus on cultural tourism and public realm. These two themes are considered in more detail below.
21. **Theme One: Cultural Tourism** – the use of high quality, contemporary arts activities attract more, higher-spending visitors to the borough. The study on outdoor festival and events undertaken by B-side identifies the potential for such activities to redefine visitors’ perception of a town. It is proposed, therefore that the council seeks to pursue the following actions within current budget limitations:
 - a) Support the major arts events planned by B-side and Activate in 2017, as described in section 5 above, through some match funding (from the council’s arts development budget) and officer expertise. These

events should be treated as a way of testing the impact of such events on visitor numbers and their economic impact, and also to inform the council's approach to the arts in future.

- b) Working with partners (such as B-side and Activate) to take forward small-scale activities (music, performance etc) in order to animate public spaces within town centre and also build upon the ideas commissioned from the Bristol-based artist Luke Jerram.
- c) Co-operate with the Arts Development Company to promote the Creative Local Growth Fund and the support it can provide to the tourism industry to better understand the opportunities arising for arts.
- d) As part of the forthcoming review of the Events & Festival Policy the council should place an emphasis on encouraging more arts festivals and outdoor events in those public areas controlled by the council.

22. **Theme Two: Public Realm** – the enhancement of the built environment with public art and good design (e.g. lighting, street furniture and materials):

- a) Take forward public art and high quality urban design as part of any structural enhancements of the harbourside area and wider implementation of the Weymouth Town Centre Masterplan – this will be subject to external funding and building upon the studies funded by the Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership.

(d) Next steps

23. **The council as enabler.** Given that the role of all local authorities in Dorset may change before the end of the decade, the council may wish to see its support for arts events and festivals over the next 12 to 18 months as a way of informing the role of the council in future. Due to the presence of significant, highly-regarded arts organisations operating in the borough, the council may not need to take a lead role but rather act as enabler, helping these organisations to focus their work in Weymouth and Portland for the benefit of residents, local businesses and visitors.

24. Management Committee is asked to endorse the principles and themes set out in section 19 and 21 above and instruct officers to allocate available resources accordingly and in consultation with the relevant briefholder. In particular, it is proposed that the council allocates a portion its remaining arts budget (£9,895) to support the 'Coasters' event planned by Activate in 2017 (and thereby helping to secure significant Arts Council investment in the borough). The exact amount to be allocated to this event will be subject to discussions with Activate and agreed with the Briefholder.

25. **Developing an ambitious arts programme.** Building on the role of enabler, as outlined above, the council may wish to take a more significant role in leading on both cultural tourism and in enhancing the public realm. Such a lead role, with the council commissioning new works and activities, would require significant financial resources, beyond the capacity of the current budget. The recommendations of this report provide members with the option of instructing officers to develop an ambitious arts programme,

in partnership with local professional arts organisations and using a portion of the current arts budget, and for this to be presented to Management Committee before the end of 2016.

26. To assist officers with the development of an ambitious arts programme, it is suggested that member briefings are arranged with input from leading local arts organisations, such as Activate and B-side, to consider the impact of events and festival undertaken in the area over recent years and options for the future.

Implications

27. **Corporate Plan.** *Empowering Thriving and Inclusive Communities.* The need to develop an arts strategy is also identified in the Management Committee's Action Plan.
28. **Financial.** Decisions on the future level of support for arts development in the borough will have implications for the council's budget setting process 2017-18. Any decisions need to be considered in the context of council's need to make significant reductions across all services (totalling £4.1 million) in its annual revenue expenditure by the end of the decade in order to achieve an annual balanced budget.
29. In 2016-17 the council has an arts development budget of £9,895 and this can be deployed to implement the proposals in this report – although in all cases match funding will be required. This funding could be used to provide match funding for outdoor arts events planned by B-side and Activate in 2017.
30. **Equalities.** Consideration will need to be given to ensuring that any arts projects that the council supports are accessible to all sections of the community and are affordable to those on lower incomes.
31. **Economic Development.** Arts events and installations can make a significant impact on a local economy with evidence for elsewhere in the UK of culture programmes contributing to economic growth.
32. **Risk Management (including Health & Safety).** The primary risk is the council's ability to make a commitment of future financial support for arts development in the borough given that this is a discretionary service and the council's need to reduce its annual revenue expenditure by £4.1 million before the end of the decade.

Consultation and Engagement

33. In drafting this report, officers have consulted with the Briefholder (Cllr Osborne) and key local arts organisations including B-Side, Activate and the Arts Development Company.

Appendices

34. None.

Background Papers

35. Proposals for public art in Weymouth – Luke Jerram 2015.

Footnote

36. Issues relating to financial, environmental, economic and equalities implications have been considered and any information relevant to the decision is included within the report.

Report Authors: Tony Hurley (Leisure Commissioning Manager).

Telephone: 01305 252317

Email: thurley@dorset.gov.uk