

# Development Committee

Monday, 25th January, 2010

## SPECIAL MEETING OF DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Humphrey (Chairman); and  
Councillors Campbell, Ekin, N. Kelly, Kirkpatrick,  
C. Maskey, Mullaghan, Rodway and Stoker.

In attendance: Ms. S. McCay, Head of Economic Initiatives and  
Acting Director of Development;  
Mr. T. Husbands, Head of City Events and Venues and  
Acting Director of Development;  
Ms. K. Sweeney, Tourism, Culture and  
Arts Manager; and  
Mr. N. Malcolm, Committee Administrator.

### Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported from the Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor Lavery) and Councillors M. Browne and McCausland.

### Presentation by the Arts Council of Northern Ireland

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

#### “Relevant Background Information

**Members will recall that they agreed to receive a presentation from the Arts Council of Northern Ireland in order to gain a greater understanding of the Arts Council’s contribution to Belfast’s Culture and Arts sector, to determine their future priorities for arts development in Belfast and to progress towards establishing a collaborative and integrated approach towards new opportunities, especially in light of the Review of Public Administration. Rosemary Kelly, Chairman, and Roisin McDonough, Chief Executive, will be in attendance.**

#### Key Issues

**The purpose of this report is to provide Members with current issues relating to the culture and arts sector in Belfast and relevant background on the Arts Council of Northern Ireland.**

**Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure's Inquiry into  
The Funding of the arts in Northern Ireland**

DCAL made the decision to hold an inquiry into the funding of the arts on 8th January, 2009 and agreed the terms of reference for the inquiry on 29th January, 2009. Advertisements requesting submissions by 27th February, 2009 were placed in the local newspapers on 3rd February, 2009. In addition, the Committee agreed to write to 134 individuals and interest groups to request submissions on a number of areas set out in the terms of reference and establish how and to what level the arts are funded in Northern Ireland by the public and private sectors, the impact of this funding and how monies are allocated across the various artforms. Belfast City Council actively participated in this process.

The Committee came to the conclusion that there was a lack of information regarding how much money the public sector invests in the arts and that research was required to ascertain how much Government Departments, other than the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure, spent on the arts.

It also concluded that, in order to increase funding for the arts, an inter-departmental approach was required, as the social and economic benefits of the arts met the objectives of a range of Departments. The Committee also concluded that more money should be reallocated to community and voluntary arts, given their impact on regenerating communities and providing people with opportunities for participating in arts activities. There was also a particular concern that arts groups in communities without a history of arts funding should be proactively encouraged to access available monies and to that end recommended that the Start Up programme operated by ACNI continued and be developed. A full list of recommendations is available on [Modern.gov](http://Modern.gov).

**Culture and Arts Impact in Belfast**

According to the recent DCAL Committee inquiry into the funding of the arts in Northern Ireland, Belfast City Council has the highest per capita spend at £28.94. It should be noted that Belfast City Council's approach differs from many other local authorities in that it provides direct funding to arts organisations as well as managing arts venues.

In 2008/09, Belfast City Council's direct investment in culture and arts organisations resulted in audiences of 6,128,571 and 177,165 people participating in the arts. It also supported 1,830 jobs – 304 of which were full time as well as 961 cultural volunteer positions.

### Arts Council of Northern Ireland Strategy 2007-2012

The Arts Council is the lead development agency for the arts in Northern Ireland and offers a range of funding opportunities through the Exchequer and National Lottery funds. ACNI is a non-departmental public body of the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure and is governed by a board, 'the Council', which sets the strategic direction for the Arts Council and oversees the work of the Executive.

The Arts Council of Northern Ireland's vision is to place the arts at the heart of Northern Ireland's social, economic and creative life.

The Arts Council's current strategy focuses on the following four themes:

#### Theme 1: Art at the heart: promoting the value of the arts

- improve recognition of the contribution artists and arts organisations make to society
- influence Government regarding the contribution the arts make to the achievement of a range of policy objectives
- gain broad acceptance of the need for increased funding for the arts in NI
- achieve international recognition for the arts in NI

#### Theme 2: Strengthening the arts

- improve the wellbeing of individual artists
- strengthen and develop arts organisations
- strengthen and develop the arts infrastructure

#### Theme 3: Growing audiences and increasing participation

- expand the range of opportunities for people to enjoy the arts
- expand the range of opportunities for people to take part in the arts
- encourage more young people to experience the arts

#### Theme 4: Improving our performance

- become a more client-focused organisation
- develop structures and processes to achieve business objectives
- develop people in line with business strategy
- strengthen governance and accountability within ACNI

The Arts Council takes an artform specific developmental approach, dedicating resources through staff and action plans in the following areas: drama and literature, visual arts, community and participatory arts, music, dance, traditional arts and youth arts. Further resources are invested through Re-imaging Communities, the Creative Industries Innovation fund, the Cultural Olympiad initiative and Connections, a £1.78 million programme funded by Legacy Trust UK, an independent charity set up to help build a cultural and sporting legacy from the 2012 Olympic Games. The Creative and Cultural Skills Council is also based at ACNI – providing a link between industry, Government and education to identify skills gaps and develop solutions.

ACNI is currently conducting a mid-term evaluation of its 5 year strategy.

#### Integrated Cultural Strategy 2007 – 2010

Belfast City Council's Integrated Cultural Strategy was developed following extensive consultation and has been implemented in partnership with the Arts Council of Northern Ireland and the Department for Culture, Arts and Leisure. It has moved culture and arts to a more central position on the urban regeneration agenda.

Key outputs have been:

- the establishment of Multiannual Funding for flagship cultural organisations to introduce greater sustainability
- the development of a public art framework and installation of a series of public art pieces through the Artist in Residence
- the creation and support of a Festivals Forum for the City through delivery of a Festivals Action Plan
- delivery of the 'Test Drive the Arts' initiative in partnership with Audiences NI to remove barriers to accessing the arts for people living in the most deprived areas of Belfast
- Capacity building training with A&B
- Establishment of the Cultural Capital Infrastructure Fund

Belfast City Council has a close working relationship with the Arts Council of Northern Ireland in a number of areas including:

- RISE – the landmark sculpture for Broadway Roundabout by Wolfgang Buttress
- Re-imaging Communities and Renewing the Routes Public Art

- Culture Night – ACNI and Belfast City Council each invested £25K in this highly successful pilot festival in September 2009 providing free, family-focused arts and cultural events in Cathedral Quarter
- Nashville – since 2009 ACNI has sat on the Belfast Nashville Sister Cities Steering Group
- Test Drive the Arts / Audience Development

And there will be further partnership work taking place in 2010 on Music and Literary Tourism initiatives.

We would now recommend that Belfast City Council agrees a process for engagement with the Arts Council of Northern Ireland in developing the new Integrated Cultural Strategy for Belfast.

#### Cultural Infrastructure

Three key infrastructure projects are receiving support from the Arts Council of Northern Ireland:

- £1.45m towards the £7.2m refurbishment of the Crescent Arts Centre, which when it reopens in Spring 2010, will have twice the amount of space available previously.
- £5.25m towards the new £17.5 million MAC arts centre in Cathedral Quarter. When it opens in 2011 the six storey high centre will house two theatres, a large visual space, dance and rehearsal studios, café and public access areas. (BCC contribution £550k approximately)
- £2.25m towards the new £18m Lyric Theatre. Scheduled to open in 2011, the new six storey venue will house new auditoria, a flexible performance studio, lobby areas and bars. (BCC contribution £1.25m)

ACNI is also currently lobbying for the creation of a National Gallery for Northern Ireland.

The Arts Council has also worked with Belfast City Council to provide support for the Black Box as a temporary cultural space in Cathedral Quarter in the interim period whilst the new MAC is built.

#### Resource Implications

There are no resource implications.

#### Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee seeks to agree a process for engagement with the Arts Council of Northern Ireland in developing the new Integrated Cultural Strategy for Belfast.

### Decision Tracking

**A process for developing the new Integrated Cultural Strategy for Belfast will be developed by March 2010.**

**Date: March 2010**

**Officer: Kerrie Sweeney**

### Key Abbreviations

- A&B – Arts and Business**
- ACNI – Arts Council of Northern Ireland**
- CAL – Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure**
- DCAL – Department for Culture, Arts and Leisure**
- MAC – Metropolitan Arts Centre**

The Committee was advised that a deputation from the Arts Council of Northern Ireland was in attendance to address the Committee. Accordingly, Ms. Rosemary Kelly, Chairman, Ms. Roisin McDonough, Chief Executive, and Mr. Nick Livingston, Director of Strategic Development, were admitted to the meeting and welcomed by the Chairman.

Ms. Kelly thanked the Committee for agreeing to meet with the deputation. She pointed out that, like all public bodies, the Arts Council needed to work in partnership with other organisations in order to maximise the use of the funding which it received from Central Government and reminded the Members that the Arts Council and the Council's Development Department had worked successfully together on a number of projects in the past.

Ms. McDonough pointed out that the Arts Council was approximately half-way through its current five year plan, entitled "Creative Connections". The vision which underpinned the plan was "to place the arts at the heart of our social, economic and creative life". To achieve this, it intended to engage more fully across all areas of society and had translated this into the funding criteria for its programmes by encouraging organisations to develop their education and outreach services, especially in urban and rural areas of social deprivation.

Ms. McDonough pointed out that a number of Belfast-based artists achieved world-wide acclaim and that, although 78% of people in Northern Ireland had indicated that the Arts should have public funding, the Arts Council of Northern Ireland was, per capita, the lowest funded Arts Council in the United Kingdom. She reminded the Members that the Arts Council had invested in significant capital works in recent years, including the Museum Arts Centre, the Grand Opera House, the Lyric Theatre, the Ulster Hall and the new Metropolitan Arts Centre. She advised the Committee that, since cultural tourism was an important economic driver, the Arts Council was working with both the Northern Ireland Tourist Board and Tourism Ireland to promote such events. In addition, due to the considerable contribution which the arts made to the Province's economy, the Arts Council supported creative industries and was grateful for the co-operation which it had received from the Council in this regard.

She pointed out that the current Programme for Government required the Arts Council to grow by 2011 audiences and participation rates by 2% and the organisation was endeavouring so to do, although the current economic situation was hindering this, since people had less disposable income and were therefore buying less tickets for events than had been the case previously. She explained that the Arts Council required arts organisations to meet this percentage increase in audiences and that the Re-imagining Communities scheme and the Culture Night which had been held recently in the Cathedral Quarter had helped in this regard as people who had not previously been involved in the arts had participated in both events.

Ms. McDonough stressed that the Arts Council was keen to work with the Council on its Integrated Cultural Strategy and stated that the branding exercise which the Council had undertaken in 2009 provided a good platform to move forward. She concluded her presentation by pointing out that the Arts Council believed that Northern Ireland required a National Art Gallery. Although its strategic case for this facility had been turned down due to lack of funding, it was endeavouring to ascertain if the Belfast Central Library could be used for that purpose and were keen to work with Belfast City Council on this proposal.

During a lengthy discussion, the representatives from the Arts Council answered a range of questions from the Members and made the following points:

- (1) 56% of the overall funding provided by the Arts Council was spent in the top twenty super output areas across Northern Ireland, which were those areas suffering most deprivation;
- (2) arts organisations generated an income for themselves through ticket sales;
- (3) much of the community-based culture and arts in Northern Ireland did not require public subsidy, as it was self-regulating. The Arts Council was of the opinion that it would be unhelpful if it were to seek to regulate arts in the community;
- (4) the Arts Council provided funding to the Arts and Business organisation in order to encourage the private sector to become involved in supporting the arts;
- (5) the arts sector in general in Northern Ireland did not possess the necessary skills to access significant levels of private sector funding;
- (6) Northern Ireland required a world class orchestra, which was why the Arts Council, together with Belfast City Council and the British Broadcasting Corporation, provided considerable funding to the Ulster Orchestra. Without such assistance the Orchestra would not be able to operate;

- (7) the Ulster Orchestra, whose musicians acted as teachers within communities across Northern Ireland, had endeavoured to obtain funding from other local authorities in Northern Ireland but to no avail;
- (8) only 5% of the work produced by Northern Ireland's artists was on display at any one time and this artwork, which had been paid for by public funding, should be on public display. This was not the case, due to the lack of a National Art Gallery, which would cost between £60 and £70 million to construct; and
- (9) the Youth Lyric, which had been operating since the Theatre had opened, was an example of good practice. The Arts Council was confident that, when the Lyric Theatre re-opened, it would further encourage young people's involvement in the arts;

At the conclusion of the presentation, the Chief Executive of the Arts Council undertook to provide to the Committee information regarding the funding which had been provided by the Arts Council to the most deprived areas within Belfast. The Chairman then thanked the representatives of the Arts Council for attending the meeting and for the manner in which they had answered the Members' questions.

Chairman