

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the Arts and Culture Forum held at the Thelma Hulbert Gallery, Honiton, on Thursday 12 September 2013

Present:

EDDC Councillors:

John O'Leary – Culture Champion (Chairman)

Tom Wright - Deputy Portfolio Holder Environment

Phil Twiss – Portfolio Holder Corporate Services

Town representatives:

John Dyson - Sidmouth

Douglas Hull – Axminster (Vice Chairman)

Stephanie Jones – Seaton

Jo Talbot – Ottery St Mary

Vernon Whitlock - Honiton

Community representatives:

Gerri Bennett

Nikki Milican

Officers:

Angela Blackwell, Thelma Hulbert Gallery Curator

Denise Lyon, Deputy Chief Executive

Charlie Plowden, Countryside and Leisure Manager

Alethea Thompson, Democratic Services Officer

Angela Stokes – IntoLace exhibition artist

Apologies:

Councillor:

Vivien Duval Steer – Equalities Champion

The meeting started at 4.05 pm and ended at 5.45 pm.

***22 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of the Arts and Culture Forum held on 6 June 2013 were confirmed as a true record.

***23 Declarations of interest**

Forum Member	Minute number	Type of interest	Nature of interest
John Dyson		Personal	On the sub committee of Sidmouth Town Council considering the Manor Pavilion and a member of the Manor Pavilion Theatre Steering Committee.
Douglas Hull		Personal	Member of the Axminster Drama Club, the Axminster Museum and Axminster Heritage.

***23 Declarations of interest (cont'd)**

Forum Member	Minute number	Type of interest	Nature of interest
Denise Lyon		Personal	Belonged to Friends of the Thelma Hulbert Gallery (THG).
John O'Leary		Personal	Member of the Manor Pavilion Theatre Steering Committee, the Exmouth Pavilion Advisory Forum and he belonged to Friends of the Thelma Hulbert Gallery.
Vernon Whitlock		Personal	Belonged to Friends of the Thelma Hulbert Gallery and Friends of the Beehive.

***24 Welcome and introductions**

The Chairman welcomed all those present to the meeting and invited everyone to introduce themselves.

Particular welcome was given to Angela Stokes, the artist involved with the forthcoming IntoLace Exhibition at the Thelma Hulbert Gallery (THG). She attended the first part of the meeting to explain the exhibition and answer questions from the Forum.

The IntoLace exhibition began on Saturday 14 September and would be on display until 2 November 2013. The following points were made:

- An Arts Council bid of £8,000 had been applied for and granted.
- 25 women had been chosen from 120 applicants, and paid to decorate all of the THG windows with net curtain designs.
- During this process the women shared stories and a video was made.
- The women's responses would all be available in the project space, as well as other information and history about the women, project and the building.
- There had been great community involvement, links and partnership working.
- The gallery would be working with local schools during the exhibition. This included lace making demonstrations.
- There had been great press coverage already and a good social media presence.
- Figures for the exhibition were expected to be very positive.

The Thelma Hulbert Gallery Curator went on to highlight a few recent achievements including:

- The latest exhibition, the Evolver Prize had been the second best attended exhibition, with many new visitors. Six pieces of art work had been sold.
- The gallery's best ever attended day was 19 July 2013, with 236 visitors. This was an open event and involved an exhibition with Millwater School.

The Forum congratulated and thanked the Thelma Hulbert Gallery Curator for all her involvement with the exhibition.

*25 **Thelma Hulbert Gallery progress report**

The Forum considered and discussed a draft version of the THG progress report, which would be presented to Cabinet on 30 October 2013.

The THG Curator emphasised the huge difference the marketing officer had made to the success of the gallery. The Forum acknowledged that marketing was at the heart of the gallery's strategy. It was felt that the strategy should be integrated into the economic development strategy, along with the provision of other arts and cultural offers in the district. The strategy needed to be more holistic, rather than just about the THG. It was noted that there was a grant of £10,000 from the Arts Council to develop a strategy for the THG.

The Countryside and Leisure Manager explained that he had recently met with EDDC's ICT team, which recognised that greater flexibility was needed for websites such as the THG, than was available through EDDC's current site. ICT indicated that they would be willing to look at providing a website through an external provider. It was important to bring together all the unique art and cultural offers as a starting point so that the public were aware of what EDDC was offering. Good links and presence would be required on the EDDC homepage. Although there was the issue of resource, progress was being made.

Other points raised during the meeting included:

- The gallery needed to be on the Tourist Information Centre (TIC) 'things to do list'.
- The gallery should link with and advertise in local B&Bs and other tourist accommodation.
- An art and culture trail around East Devon was needed.
- A multi ticket advertising all the free places to visit around the area could be produced, similar to the National Trust's passport.
- The positive achievements of the Marketing and Funding Officers were acknowledged.
- A permanent marketing and fundraising officer was required to generate publicity, gain contacts and develop relationships.
- Facebook and Twitter were great forms of communication.
- The THG had 730 Twitter followers.
- The importance of postcode analysis and gaining email addresses from visitors.
- The first THG e-newsletter had been sent out that day.
- An article promoting the gallery could be included in the Housing Matters newsletter, which was sent to all EDDC housing tenants.
- The gallery was showing increasing visitor numbers and increasing revenue.
- The health and well being benefits of the gallery should be highlighted.
- The more visitors the gallery received, the more staff/volunteers would be required.
- A lot of interest had been received from businesses interested in running the refreshment area of the gallery.
- There was an option for 'pop up' food stalls and events in the outside area.
- The branding and logo of the THG were good, but its name was cumbersome.
- Members discussed the gallery's name, whether it should be changed, and if so what the options were.

***25 Thelma Hulbert Gallery progress report (cont'd)**

- Members discussed signage options (including funding responsibility) for the building, which included increasing the size of the existing AA signs, using private land to erect signs on and adding new signs when the car park changed its name. DCC would not permit the use of additional AA signs.

Members felt that a huge difference had been made to the image of the gallery and that all the hard work put in over the past few years was finally coming together. The THG progress report needed to emphasise the positive work being done for visitors, tourists and the disability groups. It was critical to present the figures accurately and appropriately. There also needed to be a vision for the future as well as acknowledging the actions accomplished. The biggest challenge was resource, both in terms of finance and time.

Recommendations for the report to Cabinet were suggested and discussed and these would be built in by the Deputy Chief Executive and the Countryside and Leisure Manager. A draft version of the report would be sent to all members of the Forum for their input, before the final version was submitted for the Cabinet agenda.

RESOLVED:

- 1 that the Forum's comments be incorporated into the Thelma Hulbert Gallery progress report by the Deputy Chief Executive and the Countryside and Leisure Manager, and
- 2 that a draft version of the report be circulated to members of the Arts and Culture Forum for their input, before being presented to Cabinet in October 2013.

***26 Date of next meeting**

The Chairman thanked all those present for attending the meeting.

RESOLVED:

that the next meeting of the Arts and Culture Forum be held at 4.00 pm on Thursday 21 November 2013 at the Manor Pavilion Theatre, Sidmouth.

Chairman Date