

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the Arts and Culture Forum held at the Knowle, Sidmouth, on Wednesday 5 March 2014

Present:

EDDC Councillors:

John O’Leary – Culture Champion (Chairman)
Tom Wright - Deputy Portfolio Holder Environment
Vivien Duval Steer – Equalities Champion

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
David Chapman – Exmouth
Maddy Chapman - Exmouth

Community representative:

Gerri Bennett

Officers:

Angela Blackwell, Thelma Hulbert Gallery Curator
Denise Lyon, Deputy Chief Executive
Charlie Plowden, Countryside and Leisure Manager
John Golding, Head of Housing
Stephanie Lewis, Assistant Democratic Services Officer

Kevin Brownridge – Senior Consultant, Perfect Moment

Apologies:

Councillor:

Andrew Moulding

Nikki Milican – Community Representative

The meeting started at 10:30am and ended at 12:40pm.

***27 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of the Arts and Culture Forum held on 12 September 2013 were confirmed as a true record.

***28 Declarations of interest**

Forum Member	Minute number	Type of interest	Nature of interest
Douglas Hull		Personal	Member of the Axminster Drama Club, the Axminster Museum and Axminster Heritage.

***28 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.

***29 Welcome and introductions**

The Chairman welcomed all those present to the meeting. The Deputy Chief Executive welcomed and introduced Kevin Brownridge, Senior Consultant from Perfect Moment, who had produced the Thelma Hulbert Gallery business strategy. The aim now was to reduce the Gallery's reliance on local authority funding. The remit of the business plan was to assess whether the THG had a viable future with reduced Council funding.

***30 Thelma Hulbert Gallery business strategy**

The forum received a presentation from the Senior Consultant of Perfect Moment, Kevin Brownridge, on the new business Strategy.

He emphasised the benefit of arts to the individual, for community cohesion and for the benefit of the local and national economy. The Thelma Hulbert Gallery (THG) fulfilled a critical role within East Devon with high quality exhibitions and respected education work. The Gallery had developed a good reputation with the Arts Council.

The Senior Consultant advised that the key problems with the Gallery included:

- understaffing
- low investment and reliance on local authority funding
- (until recently) lack of marketing expertise
- Difficult fit with the local authority – it was difficult for the gallery to be flexible and entrepreneurial as it was constrained by Council governance and procedural issues.

The business strategy had been devised to address the significant changes to the Gallery's economic circumstances and the necessity to find new ways of working to ensure that it maintained a position as one of Devon's important publicly funded galleries. The forum was advised that the THG was in a difficult financial position as the District Council was looking to reduce its current funding of £110,000 per annum, the most significant financial support the gallery receives.

The Senior Consultant informed the forum that the intention was to ensure the gallery not only survived the current cuts to local government funding but that it was able to respond to the challenges that this presented and through the delivery of a

*30 **Thelma Hulbert Gallery business strategy (Cont'd)**

new business strategy, was able to increase its resilience and the level of service provided locally and regionally.

The forum was advised that as a non-charging gallery with no other major income, the current level of investment had left the gallery thinly staffed and unable to develop its services. The Senior Consultant explained that in order to increase its potential the gallery needed to invest in:

- **Developing an education team** – this would help to develop the gallery's key strengths and free the Curator to work on sourcing exhibitions/artists, supporting audience development and fundraising.
- **Marketing** – Members noted this as being a key area of development for the gallery, which had been significantly improved since the part-time marketing post had been created and filled. In order to increase visitor numbers it was vital to increase current marketing resources.
- **Exhibition Programme** – the forum noted that the current exhibition programme had been of superb quality and the gallery had attracted some well known international British artists such as Elizabeth Frink. This had been achieved on a minimal budget; however if the THG aimed to attract better known artists it will need greater financial investment.

Members were advised that in order to attract the external funding it required, the THG would need to move into the charitable sector. The District Council was not in a position to provide the required level of increased investment and being part of a Local Authority reduced the amount of external funding which could be accessed to support the work of the gallery. Few major Trusts and Foundations would fund Local Authority activities and there were insufficient funds available from other public sector resources.

It was therefore recommended by the Senior Consultant that the THG become a Charitable Incorporated Organisation which was part-funded by East Devon District Council. The gallery would then be in a position to apply for funds from a variety of sources including Trusts and Foundations as well as other public funding sources such as the Arts Council England and the Rural Development Programme for England.

Summary of Strategy:

Members noted that funding for the THG had been agreed at the same amount for the next financial year 2014/15. This would allow the gallery time to:

- Set up new governance procedures, recruit a board of trustees and register the gallery as an independent charity
- Put in place the first stage of fundraising – bids to the Arts Council England and Esme Fairbairn Trust.

Members were advised that the success of the funding bids was absolutely critical to the future of the gallery. Should the THG fail to attract sufficient resources then the business strategy was unlikely to be viable. It was also vitally important for the charity to be set up as soon as possible with a strong board of trustees recruited.

***30 Thelma Hulbert Gallery business strategy (Cont'd)**

The three year plan set to start in 2015/16 would deliver the following:

- Increase visitor numbers by more than 50% from 6,900 to over 12,000 by 2017/18
- Increase the number of school pupils and young people using the gallery annually from 1,000 to 3,500.
- Deliver a community programme which will run at least four projects a year
- Increase profits from the shop and art sales from £7,000 in 2013 to £18,000 in 2017/18.

Staffing:

The Senior Consultant informed the forum that in order to deliver these targets a larger staff team would be required, to include:

- Curator/Manager (0.93)
- Gallery and Shop Officer (1.0)
- Marketing Officer (0.5)
- Fundraising Officer (0.5)
- Education Officer (1.0)
- Trainee Education Worker (1.0)

Financial:

The financial position of the gallery would improve substantially whilst at the same time the level of investment from EDDC would reduce.

- The turnover of the gallery would increase from £129,000 in 2012/13 to £193,000 in 2017/18 – an increase of 50%
- In 2012/13 EDDC invested £112,000 into the gallery which was 87% of the gallery's income and achieved visitor numbers of 5,711. This resulted in a cost to EDDC of £19.66 per visitor
- By 2017/18 the required EDDC investment will be £51,161 which is 27% of the gallery's projected income, and will achieve visitor numbers 12,700. This will cost EDDC £4.03 (20% of the cost per visitor in 2012/13).

During debate a number of issues were raised including:

- The Countryside and Leisure Manager and Deputy Chief Executive were working with the ICT department to ensure that all the art and culture offers available in East Devon would be clearly highlighted on the new EDDC website.
- Achieving a charity status should take approximately 6-10 weeks.
- The gallery needed to be more entrepreneurial and a community asset rather than a local authority asset.
- THG should make a charge for materials and ask for more realistic contributions on family days
- The location of the gallery made it hard for people to find
- The car park will be renamed The Hulbert Gallery car park.
- Steetscene will create large painted footprints to the gallery from the Lace Walk car park and more signs will be put in the town centre.
- Members of the THG Board would need to be dynamic and have skills, expertise and connections to be successful.

***30 Thelma Hulbert Gallery business strategy (Cont'd)**

- The gallery needed to be on the Tourist Information Centre (TIC) 'things to do list'.
- An art and culture trail around East Devon was needed.
- A permanent marketing and fundraising officer was required to generate publicity, gain contacts and develop relationships.
- There needed to be a more joined up approach with the Town Council to highlight what was on offer in Honiton.

***31 Date of next meeting**

The Chairman thanked all those present for attending the meeting.

The Countryside and Leisure Manager informed Members that a part-time Arts Officer post would be advertised shortly and that it would be beneficial to hold the next meeting once this appointment had been made. This role will look at arts and culture throughout East Devon and will discuss with Members at the next meeting what the goal for arts and culture in East Devon should be.

RESOLVED: that the next meeting of the Arts and Culture Forum be arranged when the Arts Officer post has been filled.

Chairman Date