

West Wiltshire District Council

Cabinet

5 May 2004

Arts Development Policy Project Group

1. Purpose

To seek Cabinet's approval for a policy project group to propose longer-term policies for the arts development service.

2. Background

Under the Council's constitution, Cabinet has to approve the establishment of a policy project group (PPG). Over the last year, a number of issues have been identified that have a potential impact on the arts development service.

The Council has recently adopted a Cultural Strategy, which will be incorporated in the forthcoming Community Strategy. The recent BVPI Satisfaction Survey revealed that cultural facilities were considered important by one in five people and were considered to be the District Council service most in need of improvement.

The service reviews that took place in the autumn of 2003 led to a reduction in the arts development budget. Therefore the current arts service plan identifies the need to determine long-term priorities and focus for arts development.

3. Key issues

The PPG will be asked to consider the future role of arts development and its key audiences, and suggest how the Council may wish to prioritise this service's work over the next three years. The group will meet no more than three times between May and July 2004.

Councillor Ernie Clark will chair the group and decide on its membership - this will include up to three non-executive members and up to two representatives from outside the Council, such as local arts organisations.

The PPG, which will be supported by the arts development officer, the leisure manager and other officers as appropriate, will aim to consult with the community, staff, members and the local arts community (organisations and practitioners).

Advice from the PPG and feedback from the consultation exercises will be fed into a draft arts development plan. This will be presented to Cabinet at the earliest opportunity, which is expected to be August 2004.

Financial implications: The setting up of the PPG will have no impact in itself. Currently, there are no funds available to engage a consultant. The financial consequences of any recommendations made by the group should form part of the consideration of those issues.

Legal issues: There are a number of funding arrangements already in place, but many of them will need to be reviewed and/or renewed within the next few years. If funding arrangements are to be revised, then it is likely that most of the changes can be accommodated at the time when existing arrangements are renegotiated.

Other implications: Consideration to ensure equality of access to the arts service will form part of the PPG's work

Human Rights: The human rights implications of the actions recommended in this report have been considered and are acceptable and the checklist has been addressed.

4. Options

A number of approaches to developing an arts strategy have been considered. These have included:

- **Engaging appropriate consultants to undertake the work** - this process would incur additional costs in the region of £8,000 and would not directly involve members.
- **Officers working closely with the portfolio holder for leisure and rural affairs** - there would be no engagement with non-executive members and no involvement from external organisations.
- **Awaiting the outcome of the community strategy** - the Local Strategic Partnership's community strategy, into which the cultural strategy has been absorbed, is likely to be completed in July 2004 and the arts strategy will feed into this process.
- **Awaiting the outcome of the recreational needs assessment** (agreed at the Cabinet meeting on 11 February 2004, minute no.238) - the brief for this has not yet been completed and, whilst it will include an assessment of arts facilities, it is not anticipated that it will be completed in time for the next budget setting.
- **Working through a PPG** - this would not incur any additional costs and it would ensure the involvement of non-executive members, external organisations and officers. In addition, the work of the PPG will be completed before the next budget setting and will therefore assist members in service and financial planning for 2005/06. This is therefore considered to be the most appropriate way to seek clarity and develop proposals for the future role of arts development within the Council.

5. List of background papers

Cultural Strategy

Draft Arts Development Service Plan 2004/5

BVPI General Satisfaction Survey Results 2003

Cabinet report - Recreational Needs Assessment - 11 February 04 minute no.238

6. Recommendation

Cabinet is asked to approve the setting up of a PPG and to agree the remit, membership and timescale outlined in section 3 of this report.

✍ Plain English guidance given - LK 19/4/04

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