

**West Wiltshire District Council**

**Cabinet**

**29 September 2004**

**Arts Development Plan 2005-8**

**1. Purpose**

To report on the outcome of the arts development policy project group, which was set up to recommend longer-term policies and focus for the arts development service.

**1. Background**

A policy project group (PPG) was set up in May 2004 to look at the current arts development service and to develop the Council's long term priorities and focus for this over the next three years. The PPG met three times between May and September, with the aim of reporting back to Cabinet before the next budget setting round and to assist members in service & resource planning for 2005/06 and beyond.

Councillor Ernie Clark chaired the group, which included Councillors Davis and Repton and representatives from the arts community, and was supported by the arts development officer and leisure manager.

The PPG consulted the community about how the arts service currently operates and its future potential. In addition, it reviewed previous consultations including People's Voice, BVPI general satisfaction survey 2003 and additional work undertaken for the community strategy in June 2004. The outcome of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) report was also taken into account.

Given the authority's historical low level spend, its lack of annual inflationary budget increases and the budgetary cut to arts development for the financial year 2003/4, the PPG felt it prudent to look at the level of resources available and compare it with resources and priorities of other local authorities.

The PPG identified the key themes arising from the consultation process, which form the basis of a draft arts development plan (appendix 1). This identifies longer-term priorities for arts development for 2005/6 and beyond.

**1. Key issues**

The consultation revealed that the current service is valued. It also found that its support to arts infrastructure, development and project delivery is as important as the advice and information element.

Current areas of work were considered high priority, particularly the Wiltshire Youth Arts Partnership (WYAP), support to key arts organisations and local groups, and providing opportunities to participate.

The consultation also revealed that youth development, rural isolation and cultural diversity should be high priority areas for the service to address in future. Other areas considered as medium priorities were community safety, tourism and economic development, health, disability equality and the physical environment.

Another finding identified the need for the Council to enter into longer-term funding and partnership arrangements with the groups and organisations that it supports, particularly ensuring the stability of key organisations. This approach is consistent with neighbouring authorities.

Therefore, the key themes emerging from the consultation are young people, rural areas and achieving more activities and facilities (including cultural/cinema) through supporting key arts organisations, local groups and participatory projects. Young people were also identified as a future priority in the Council's CPA report. Comparisons with neighbouring authorities reveal that they have also identified similar priorities.

It was concluded that this Council has an historical low level spend on the arts and generally spends less per head of population than many neighbouring authorities. The operational spend per head of population (excluding salaries and support costs) generally varied from 25p to £1.61, with our spend being 35p.

These variations are due to a number of reasons, including historical commitments, the number of arts venues supported, and the demographic make-up of authorities. Whilst true comparisons are difficult to achieve, there are certainly similarities in approaches to arts development. It is also acknowledged that investment in arts activity does 'lever in' external funding and greater inward investment.

For example, a total year's investment of £11,000 from the arts development budget in WYAP and Rural Arts Wiltshire has led to core funding from other organisations of £53,500 into these countywide partnerships, which gave the capacity to raise £139,500 from other funding sources for projects. Further examples of financial leverage can be seen at appendix 2.

There is no doubt that many external funding bodies will look at the level of commitment from the District Council in their assessment of both core and project funding applications from organisations. As an example of this, the Arc Theatre is working towards becoming an Arts Council England Regularly Funded Organisation and it is highly unlikely that they will consider this should the District Council not demonstrate strong commitment.

Therefore, in order to deliver the proposed arts development plan, to meet the identified community need and to have the ability to attract external funding, the PPG recommends that the arts development budget is increased by £18,000 in 2005/06 (an increase of the operational budget from 35p to 50p per head of

population). The main areas of investments are identified in the attached arts development plan for 2005-08.

This plan will direct the service's work through the annual arts development service plan, which will outline the tasks and outcomes set for each of the priority areas. Progress will be regularly monitored and the arts development plan will be reviewed on an annual basis.

**Financial implications:** Any request for additional resources must be evaluated as part of the annual Service and Resource Planning process, which starts at the end of September.

A number of options exist for the future delivery of the service, accepting option A would add around £18,000 to the Council's revenue budget.

Clearly, the option chosen will need to take into account the Council's difficult financial position for 2005/06 as detailed in the Medium Term Financial Plan appearing earlier in the agenda.

**Legal issues:** The authority has been using service/partnership agreements where appropriate. The agreements have been successful and will continue to be used where appropriate.

**Other implications:** Equality of access to the arts service is addressed in the arts development strategy 2005-8

**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.

## **1. Options**

- a) ***Adoption of the draft arts development plan with increased resources*** - this would mean a focused plan for delivering the arts development service. It will help to attract external funding and improve the current facilities and opportunities identified as issues in the 2003 BVPI consultation results, CPA report and acknowledged in the Cabinet's priority "Access to Recreation".
- b) ***Non-adoption of the draft arts development plan and no change to the current budget level*** - this would result in a limited change in service delivery. It may be possible to change the service's direction, but with no further investment being made the value of current funding is less and attracting additional external funding will be non-existent. This may result in existing facilities reducing their level of service at a time when cultural opportunities have been identified as an area of need. The BVPI target would need to be amended to reflect this.


## **1. List of background papers**

People's Voice consultation results June 2001 and March 2004  
BVPI general satisfaction survey results 2003

LSP conference and market research results June 2004  
PPG papers - including notes of meetings, consultation questionnaires and results of community and local authority consultations  
Comprehensive Performance Assessment report  
Cultural Strategy  
Arts Development Service Plan 2004/5  
Draft Corporate Plan 2005 - 2010  
Corporate Plan Priority Drivers - Access to Recreation Audit Trail

## **1. Recommendation**

Cabinet is asked to approve the attached arts development plan for 2005-08 in line with option (a) of this report.

 Plain English guidance given - LK

9/9/04

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