

Fy Nghyf / My Ref: NRS/RM/ACW/15.10.15

Dyddiad / Date: 6 November 2015

Sian Tomos
Director – Enterprise and Regeneration
Arts Council of Wales
Princes Park II
Princes Drive
Colwyn Bay
LL29 8PL



Dear Sian

**ECONOMY AND CULTURE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 15 OCTOBER 2015:
Arts Council of Wales**

Thank you for attending the October meeting of the Economy and Culture Scrutiny Committee, where Members had the opportunity to explore the potential of the Arts in Cardiff to promote city regeneration and the well being of citizens. I will be grateful if you could also pass on the thanks of the Committee to David Alston and Lisa Matthews for their contributions and for addressing the questions that arose during the meeting. The Committee had a few comments and observations which are set out below.

Members firstly would like to thank you for your willingness to engage with the Committee, and with the Council, and hope that this engagement will serve as a prompt to open up further discussions with wider areas of the Council. We will be writing separately to the leader of the Council to highlight areas we feel the Council would benefit from opening a dialogue with the Arts Council. Our initial thoughts are around urban design and public planning, but it is clear to us from the meeting that the Arts Council has a broad reach and is involved in a range of projects and initiatives. If there are any specific areas of work you particularly feel the City of Cardiff Council could be working in partnership with the Arts Council of Wales, please do let us know.

During the meeting we discussed work the Arts Council of Wales is undertaken in other local authorities in the area of regeneration and urban design. Members were disappointed to hear that no bids for this work had been received from Cardiff, particularly given the scale of development and construction work ongoing across the city. Is this opportunity to work with the Arts Council one that is still open – or has the timeframe for submissions been missed? Could you also please provide us with examples of the projects the Arts Council is involved in and the criteria that a successful application must meet?

Members of the Committee are mindful that the Council owns and operates two important arts venues in the city centre, in the shape of St Davids Hall and New Theatre. The Council is developing plans to procure new management arrangements for these venues, and our Committee will be responsible for the scrutiny of these arrangements. We are aware that the buildings currently support a wide range of community and elite cultural infrastructure, and are keen to avoid inadvertently losing any cultural capacity through this procurement. We would be grateful to receive any advice, policy briefings or information that you hold or could signpost us towards in this area.

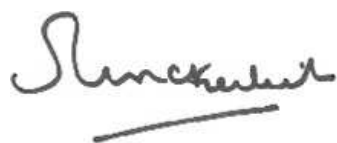
It was clear to Members that the Arts Council is involved in a number of community based projects across the city, such as Re:Imagine India or De Gabay. It seems to us that if the Arts Council and Cardiff Council had a closer working relationship, sharing community knowledge and links, these projects may be able to have a longer term impact or legacy – this is not to undermine or question the value of the projects delivered individually, but to suggest that more could be achieved by working cooperatively, sharing resources and expertise. We would encourage you to seek dialogue with the Council when planning community projects, and recommend that you seek the involvement of local elected members or the appropriate Cabinet member to arrange this.

Members of the Committee were interested to hear that research is being undertaken into the softer benefits the arts can deliver – such as within the remit of health and social care. We would be interested to read the findings of the work undertaken by University of Bangor when a report becomes available, and would ask that you make our Principal Scrutiny Support officer Nathan Swain aware when it is published.

The Members of the Economy and Culture Scrutiny Committee recognise that a vibrant arts scene is essential in attracting individuals to work and study in Cardiff (or indeed to locate their business here), and significantly contributes to the quality of life, or liveability, of a city. At a time when the necessity to work in partnership is growing, we hope that this involvement with scrutiny would serve as a catalyst for projects to be delivered in partnership between the City of Cardiff Council and the Arts Council of Wales in the future.

I look forward to receiving your feedback on the above comments and observations.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rod McKerlich', with a horizontal line underneath it.

Councillor Rod McKerlich
Chairperson, Economy and Culture Scrutiny Committee

cc Members of the Economy and Culture Scrutiny Committee
Leader, Cllr Phil Bale