



### **Report on Axis Ballymun Funding to the NW Area Committee and the Arts and Cultural Sub Group and CRES SPC.**

The purpose of this report is to address challenges to the long term Dublin City Council financial support of Axis, Ballymun by recommending the transfer of funding in 2024/2025 from the responsibility of the Ballymun Social Regeneration Fund to the Culture Recreation and Economic Services Department. This is a policy decision reflecting Axis importance and impact locally, citywide and nationally.

Axis, Ballymun is the multi-award winning Arts and Community Resource Centre synonymous with the cultural and community life of the local area and an exemplar nationally of best practice in the synergy of Arts and Community Development. The Centre is on long term fifty year Lease from Dublin City Council to Ballymun Arts and Community Resource Centre Development Ltd who in turn lease the building to Ballymun Arts and Community Resource Centre Ltd T/A Axis. Both companies are Registered Charities with common core Trustees. Axis applies annually to the Ballymun Social Regeneration Fund via an on-line process, along with up to twenty plus other local organisations of various sizes every year and annually renews its Service Level Agreement with Dublin City Council to provide Arts and Community Centre Services under this fund.

Axis employs 19 staff full time and 13 staff part time many of whom live locally. Additionally up to twenty contract staff at any one time depending on programming. The organisation also receives funding from Pobal, The Arts Council, Creative Ireland, the HSE and others and is continually asked to support Dublin City Council throughout the North West Area and in the Arts Office, Libraries and the Parks Section. Any additional funding from other sources is project based and the Social Regeneration Fund is Programme centred only. This has led to particular difficulties for Axis when addressing Capital funding and ongoing maintenance of the plant and building. There is continuing erosion and risk to the Social Regeneration Fund coupled with increased applications annually.

There is no model locally or nationally that corresponds to Axis. Arts Centres such as Draiocht in Blanchardstown, Civic in Tallaght and The Pavilion in Dunlaoire have less than half the physical footprint of Axis and focus primarily on night time activity in the Arts only. Axis combines an Arts Centre of scale with a Community Resource Centre of similar scale housing a subsidised Café, Creche, Community Tenants and Conference Centre with a Theatre, Gallery, Dance Studio, Music Recording and Rehearsal Studio. This combination of Community Services and Arts Services has been Axis great strength; where children from the Creche visit the theatre and the Dance Studio regularly, where local schools have an Axis Artist in Residence, where Artists and mental health professionals work together in a Grief Café, where teenagers from Belfast visit their counterparts in Ballymun. This list of programmes is twenty two years old now and Axis deserves to be placed on a secure annual funding programme. Just as audiences from outside Ballymun sit with local residents in the theatre, Axis working in Ballymun and through Ballymun citywide greatly helps the area to

open up to the City and nationally and helps those outside Ballymun appreciate a dynamic and thriving creative local community.

The Social Regeneration Fund in Ballymun has been under pressure since the end of the Regeneration. Originally a fund of €2.4M was provided by Central Government from 2012, it decreased to €1.7m by 2015 and by a further 25% annually from 2018, this led to Dublin City Council funding the 25% reduction annually from 2018 which meant we took over the interim responsibility of the full fund in 2021.

Axis annual funding from the Ballymun Social Regeneration Fund has decreased from €604K in 2011 to €441K in 2023 while in recent years the cost of living and the demand on its services have increased. The Social Regen Fund has seen applications increase and continuing signals from DCC Finance that the fund cannot be seen as permanent. This document is seeking to address this unsustainable financial pressure on a core institution for Ballymun.

Following a review of the Ballymun Social Regeneration Fund in 2020 and the approval of a restructuring of the fund by the North West Area Committee in October 2020 discussions have been ongoing between the Area Manager NW, The Executive Manager CRES, The City Arts Officer with the Assistant Chief Executive CRES and Planning initiated by the Area Manager in the last three years. All recognise Axis' unique contribution to Ballymun and the City and there is a willingness to mainstream Axis' annual funding. A meeting of Area Councillors January 19<sup>th</sup> 2024 agreed in principle that Axis' annual allocation granted for 2024 of €441K will be transferred to CRES from the Area Office. From 2025 onwards Axis funding will be a matter for CRES and the Social Regen Fund will decrease by €441K. For its part Axis has indicated that it is in favour of this mainstreaming process as it provides the possibility of funding keeping pace with increasing costs in the years ahead.

Axis has during its history brought local people to perform in South Africa, The US and Europe and brought Artists from all over the world to collaborate with Artists in Ballymun. This was the vision of Axis founders who were local residents and organisations in Ballymun in partnership with the Local Authority. In 2026/27 Dublin City Council will seek to serve its many new residents in new Housing developments in Ballymun. Having an Arts Centre of international reputation focused locally is a service and an institution worth securing.

**Ray Yeates**  
**City Arts Officer**  
**26<sup>th</sup> February 2024**