



Arts & Cultural Advisory Group

Arts and Cultural Advisory Group Notes of Meeting held on Monday 29th January 2024, 9.30 a.m. City Hall / Hybrid meeting

Present: Cllr. Cat. O'Driscoll; Cllr. Patricia Roe; Mary MacSweeney; Ray Yeates; Ciara Dardis; Michael Dempsey; Adekunle Gomez, Ross Keane; Sunil Sharpe, Ciaran Taylor,

Apologies: Ruth McGowan.

In Attendance: Paula Farrell

Chair: Cllr. Cat O'Driscoll

Minutes of previous meeting held on 6th November 2023 were approved.

Matters Arising: As yet a meeting with the Temple Bar Cultural Trust Committee and ACAG has not been confirmed. Cllr. O'Driscoll confirmed that she would reissue the invitation to the chair of the Trust to an upcoming ACAG meeting.

Regarding Africa Day, Cllr. O'D confirmed the Chair of the Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) stepped down at the end of 2023. The Councillor confirmed that she will arrange a meeting on the matter with the new Chair of the LCDC in due course.

Cllr. O'D noted the work and contribution of the Public Art Officer, Ruairi O'Cuiv, who recently retired and relayed the well wishes of the Arts Cultural Advisory Group to him in his retirement.

Hugh Lane Gallery Report:

Michael Dempsey presented the Hugh Lane report.

Current Exhibitions: The Andy Warhol *Three Times Out* exhibition ended on 28th January 2024. The exhibition attracted **over 135,000** visitors over its three months duration. Cllr. O'D congratulated the Gallery on the success of the exhibition and in particular on the multi generational public engagement that it fostered.

- **Future Exhibitions** include **Sarah Purser** (1848 – 1943), **Activist, Collector Artist**. This exhibition will present the life and work of the artist from three different perspectives: artist, collector and activist and will run from June – October 2024.
- **Education:** A programme of talks, film screenings, art workshops, community engagement and more has been curated by Gallery's Education team exploring themes arising from Andy Warhol *Three Times Out* and includes an ambitious programme of events taking place in DCC Public Libraries throughout the city.

- **Young Visionaries:** Building on its programmes for teens and Transition Year students, *Young Visionaries* is a new collaborative project developed by the Fulbright scholar Allison Carey where TY students will learn about curatorial practice within the context of the Gallery. The group will be encouraged to reflect on their own perspectives as young citizens and the larger role art plays in society and execute their own curatorial vision, which will be exhibited within the Hugh Lane Gallery.

Libraries report:

Ciara Dardis reported for Dublin City Libraries and noted that the **Dublin Literary Award Longlist** for the 2024 has been revealed. 16 of the authors are debut novelists and 4 novels by Irish authors. The shortlist will be unveiled on 26th March 2024 and the winner will be announced by the Lord Mayor of Dublin on 23rd May, as part of the International Literature Festival Dublin.

- The **One Dublin One Book - "Snowflake"** by Louise Nealon has been announced as the One Dublin One Book choice for 2024.
- **Storyteller in Residence** - Following a successful competition, Simone Schümmelfeder has been appointed as the Dublin City Libraries **Storyteller in Residence for Children** for the period of February-May 2024. Simone combines storytelling with a variety of offerings including puppetry, science and creative writing as well as "Silent Stories" for non-native speakers and "Sensory stories" and workshops. She also trains both adults and children in storytelling. She will host sessions in Libraries in Pearse St, Rathmines, Inchicore, Kevin St, Marino and the Central Library as well as outreach to other community groups throughout February.
- **Creative Hubs** - which offers high quality arts experience for children and families will now also take place in the Central Library as well as Ballyfermot, Cabra, Coolock libraries. The Hubs hosts a programme with The Ark, with performance and workshops in dance, drama, visual art and storytelling. Cllr. O' D noted her appreciation of the Irish language component of the events.
- **Irish language / St Brigids day** - In honour of Lá Fhéile Bríde, Rathmines Library will host Aedín Ní Thiarnaigh, journalist and presenter of RTÉ's *Faoi Bhláth*. Aedín will share the folklore, customs and traditions associated with the festival.
- **Lunar New Year** - On February 9th the Central Library will host a Poetry day in honour of the Lunar New Year – the event invites emerging writers to share their work and promotes the Mongolian language through poetry.

The Arts Office Report:

Public Art:

Ray Yeates presented the Arts Office report. He noted the importance of appointing a new Public Arts Officer with the right skill set and depth of experience following the retirement of the Public Art Officer, Ruairi O'Cuiv. A temporary Public Arts Officer will be appointed until the position is permanently filled. Mary McSweeney confirmed that the appointment of a new Public Arts Officer will be a priority.

Cllr. O'D asked that the ambition to finish the Public Arts Register of the statues and monuments under the care of the City Council, which was begun by the former Public Art Officer, not fall off the agenda going forward. A technical issue relating to getting the data onto the TMS cataloguing system has to date prevented this information becoming publicly accessible. The maintenance of public art also needs to remain to the fore. The Councillor noted that the maintenance of the '*Meeting Place*' sculpture is now with the public realm team and it will in due course take pride of place again in Liffey Street.

Brigit 2024 February 1-5th

This year will see the debut of the **Brigit: Dublin City Celebrating Women Parade**, on Bank Holiday Monday 5th February. The parade will start at **Wolfe Tone Square**, traverse through Henry Street and culminate at the GPO. The parade will start small but the ambition is that it will ultimately revival the St. Patrick's Day parade in the city.

Dublin Lunar New Year February 3 – 11th. RY noted that this year's festival will feature *all* of the Asian community. It is also the first year that will include participation by South Korea. The festival aims to celebrate and showcase the best of Asian-Irish culture in Ireland. The 9-day celebration will come to a conclusion on 11th February (Lunar New Year's Day) with a major flagship event taking place in Meeting House Square, Temple Bar.

Creative Hubs Spring Programme has now expanded to the Central Library. The spring programme will now run across the four libraries, (Central, Cabra, Ballyfermot and Coolock) from February through to May and feature Drama and Storytelling, Circus, Spoken Word, Textiles, Visual, Music and Dance, with school and family programmes. The programme is co-ordinated on behalf of Dublin City Council, by The Ark.

There were 5 successful awardees for the 2024 **Incubation Space Awards**. The award is intended to enable innovative artists / arts companies / collectives - working in any artistic discipline - to research and develop new works or collaborative methodologies, through the provision of a dedicated work-space in Unit 4, James Joyce Street.

Creative Ireland 2024 - Cruinniú na nÓg will take place on 15th June this year. The open call for artists and organisations to propose events for the day will be live from 25th January until 21st February after which time a full program of events will be devised in consultation with local young people. This year there will be a special focus on inclusion supported by an additional Inclusion Bursary funded through Creative Ireland.

Fiona Keane and The North West Partnership have come together to deliver SPARK North West, a project that aims to bridge generational gaps, foster creativity, story sharing and artist collaborations. **Music in Finglas** is a project whereby the Arts Office is supporting local musician Casey Harris to deliver accessible music programmes in the Finglas area. Dublin City Arts Office was awarded additional Creative Ireland funding for 2024 for a Shared Ireland project. The final report for the **North West Area Research**, part of Dublin City Council's Partnership Framework with the Arts Council, Turley and Thrive to conduct research on hard and soft infrastructure in the North West area, is now in draft form.

Artane Place Artist Workspaces:

Dublin City Council Arts Office have been working with Xestra management to convert unused spaces into artist workspaces. Unit 35a, which will provide ten studios for artists, is awaiting final works from ESB. Artists will be able to move in shortly after this work is done.

Creative Places Darndale has entered into the final year of the Arts Council award period and plans are underway for the 3rd years programme. The steering committee is currently working on the application for funding for year 4 and 5 and developing a strategy for these further years of the project. The Arts Office has been supporting **St Agnes CCMA** in the development of a 5-year strategic plan for 2024-2029. The strategy is proposed to be launched in March 2024 as part of the ten year celebrations of St Agnes'. A new website will be launched at the event.

The LAB Gallery:

Two Steps, Twice exhibited at **The Lab Gallery** from 13th Dec – 6th Jan 2023/2024. This was an ARC Masters Student show featuring new works and projects by Lorraine Elder, Breege Fahy, Laura Flood, Madeleine Hadd, Aisling McConville, Sorcha McNamara, Padraig Sinnott, Emer Wang. The opening night attracted 260 visitors.

VTS (Visual Thinking Strategies) - Three VTS sessions took place with Claire Halpin during the exhibition Shahid شَاهِد, (14th Sept - 4th Dec 2023). The participating schools included Vincent's BNS, Vincent's GNS and Central Model SND.

Proposal to transfer funding for Axis Ballymun in 2024/2025 to CRES:

Ray Yeates spoke to members on the matter of funding for AXIS Ballymun specifically regarding the challenges to the long term Dublin City Council financial support of Axis by transferring it's funding in 2024/2025 from the responsibility of the Area Office and the 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 and will involve a change of policy. The endorsement of which is being sought at ACAG before it goes to the SPC for approval. A discussion of the proposal followed.

RY clarified that the Social Regeneration Fund in Ballymun has been under threat since the end of the Regeneration. Originally a fund of €3M was provided by Central Government (it became the responsibility of DCC in 2017) it decreased to 1.7M in 2023. Axis annual funding from DCC 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. For the Area Office the Social Regeneration Fund has seen applications increase and continuing signals from DCC Finance that the fund cannot be seen as permanent. There is now a need to address this unsustainable financial pressure on a core institution for Ballymun. The position is that in order to have sustainable funding going forward, it will need to be mainstreamed by the City Council. RY suggested that the model of funding for Axis could be similar to that of Smoke Alley. The scale of Axis is a consideration. How to mainstream it is key. Other organisations have bespoke models of funding depending on their history and how they evolved. Axis currently sees a turnover of 2.2 million and is rates exempt. Following the mainstreaming of funding, annual reports for Axis would go to the Culture Recreational Economic Services (CRES) section of the Council. The Service Level Agreement will transfer it to the Arts Office and emphasis will be placed on collaboration with the Local Area Office in the future.

RY informed the meeting that the development of Axis was founded by local people and the Local Area Partnership and began with the City Council giving it a 50 year lease on the land to be used as a resource for the arts and community. It did not follow a particular funding model originally and following a funding crisis in its first year which saw a conflict between its art and community functions, it was united under one budget for both arts and community to great success. Axis is a registered charity which is run by its Directors, the Local Area Committee and its members. This model of governance is good has worked well. It currently encompasses 8 community tenants, a reception area and café, a crèche, studio area and a conference centre.

SS made enquiries about the level of local community engagement with Axis, if there would be new ideas to monetise it going forward, if it could be used for venue hire and if there was the potential for the conference centre to be used by the Travel Lodge Hotel near the airport. RY said that the conference centre currently has a roll in holding political and community meetings and clinics for local TD's. The Travel Lodge is currently being used as a refugee centre. The community there also uses the facilities at Axis and programming at Axis takes reflects this. Following a question from Ciaran Taylor who asked if consideration should be given to the separation of funding of arts and community if it is coming under a different funding model. RY confirmed that the funding model will not be new, just a continuation of what is currently in place. It is under one management and works side by side with other agencies on site such as the HSE. The 'duel' client model in place at Axis works very well. Separating that would set it up against itself. The philosophy being that arts are a community resource and community is an arts resource.

The proposal to address challenges to the long term Dublin City Council financial support of Axis, Ballymun by transferring it's funding in 2024/2025 from the responsibility of the Area Office and the Social Regeneration Fund to the Culture Recreation and Economic Services Department was endorsed by AGAC. The proposal now goes to the Arts and Recreation SPC for consideration.

Ray Yeates confirmed that 29th January is the deadline for submissions on the tender for a Project Manager led Integrated Design Team for Artists Workspaces at No.'s 8 and 9 Merchant's Quay. This Design Team will also work on the former Eden Restaurant and site

for the Artist's Studios on Bridgefoot Street. A further tender for a construction company will issue by June 2024 with works to begin before the end of 2024. Sunil Sharpe enquired if No's. 8 and 9 Merchant Quay are currently vacant and if these properties could be used for temporary meanwhile use. RY confirmed that a call out to this end was made in 2023 but ongoing fire issues in the buildings prevented it from being pursued. Currently there is no safe way to open Merchants Quay buildings however RY confirmed that the buildings are intermittently being used for filming. Filming on site for 3 to 4 days is permissible. Cllr. Roe noted that the length of time the process is taking is unfortunate.

In answer to an enquiry from SS about the Citizen's Commissioner, RY confirmed that this was an innovation began by the former Public Arts Officer, Ruairi O'Cuiv which addressed if a citizen can curate art. The first pilot project for Citizen Commissioners in Darndale is reaching Stage 4 (of 6) whereby the participants, having engaged with different art forms including through active engagement are now entering the phase of the programme where they become involved in mini commissions across different art forms. The second Citizen Commissioners pilot project is in Dolphin House, Dublin 8. This process is also at Stage 4 and is building on work already undertaken with residents and groups. The process for the appointment of an arts-coordinator for Dolphin House is outstanding.

Following the request for an update on the matter of increasing arts grant funding from Ross Keane, RY confirmed that a Development Fund was the preferred option over an increasing arts grants on an individual basis. Adding that the remit of the Council is to improve the city overall. In weighing up the impact of the arts and the intrinsic value of art the City Council wants what will be most impactful for the city and its citizens as opposed to focusing on individual works in the city. RK alluded to the confusion there is among artists and art organisations regarding how to go about getting art funding and asked how the process of applying for funding can be improved and made more transparent. RY clarified that the arts grants application process involves internal and external assessors, a sub-committee of City Councillors and final approval at a Council Meeting. He noted that arts funding processes are good and robust and involve as many Open Calls as possible. Organisations with good resources can lobby strongly however RY also wants there to be a place for 'unheard voices'. Cllr. O'D noted that funding increases are outlined in the City Budget negotiations which begin each summer. Innovations are made in April with a view to getting specific funding in to the Budget between September and November.

AOB:

AK commended the 'Storyteller in Residence' initiative in the Libraries. Referencing the recent riots in Dublin city he reiterated the benefits of telling each other's stories to reach out between communities. He enquired as to whether there is a case to be made for organisations like Ark to run programmes based on literature and storytelling with a view to connecting communities. Ciara Dardis confirmed that the Storyteller project based in the Central Library is an ARK collaboration that engages with children. There is also ongoing work with the Libraries in the Community team who are focused on building relationships in the city and introducing children to Library facilities.

Cllr. O'Driscoll hopes that there will be an update on the Little Amal project to bring to the next ACAG. RY said that the plan is to have the project come to Dublin by the end of May. A production team from Belfast will be involved in the event. They are currently looking at a site in Ringsend for the event. Cllr. O'D suggested that projects such as Little Amal could be incorporated in to Local Authority Integration Teams currently being set up.

SS drew attention to the fact that the numbers of people coming in to the city centre have remained low in the post covid phase and also following the Dublin riots at the end of 2023. Costs also remain high which is also effecting people's ability to afford to come in to the city to socialise. RK asked if a collaborative approach of all stakeholders in the city could get underway to examine this situation and address the reasons why less people are coming in

to the city centre. He welcomed the reissuing of the invitation to representatives of Temple Bar Cultural Trust to attend an upcoming ACAG in the spirit of collaborating on issues concerning the city. Cllr. O'D will also invite Karl Mitchel, the manager of the City Recovery Task Force, to attend an upcoming ACAG meeting.

The next Arts Culture Advisory meeting has been confirmed for Monday 29th April at 9.30am.