

# **CULTURE, ARTS & HERITAGE EXECUTIVE ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**TUESDAY, 4 FEBRUARY 2025 - 4.00 PM**



**PRESENT:** Councillor E Sennitt Clough (Chair), Councillor Miss S Hoy (Vice-Chairman), Councillor S Count, Councillor L Foice-Beard, Councillor P Hicks, Councillor Dr H Nawaz and Councillor M Purser

Officers in attendance: Carol Pilson (Corporate Director and Monitoring Officer), Phil Hughes (Head of Leisure Services/SRO March Future High Street Project) Jamie-Lea Taylor (Creativity & Culture Officer ) and Helen Moore (Member Services and Governance Officer)

## **CAH7/23    PREVIOUS MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of 17 September 2024 were confirmed and signed.

## **CAH8/23    CREATIVITY AND CULTURE DEVELOPMENT OFFICER UPDATE**

Jamie-Lea Taylor provided an update on Creativity & Culture Development as follows:

### **Amplifying Community Art & Culture Project**

- Fenland Culture Fund Round Two. A collaborative project funded by UK: SPF and ACE. It was launched in-person this time at a celebratory event held on 20th November with the afternoon opening with a reading from 2024 FPL winner Hannah Teasdale, and previous recipients brought work to show and talk about and celebrate what they had achieved with the fund. The second round was then open for entries until 13th January. Support was offered in-person if people wanted to access it, and more commonly by phone and email. 55 applications were received, which had increased from the 42 in round one. The decision-making panel were selected and they met Friday 31 January 2025 so notifications to applicants are expected this week. The budget available has been slightly increased to £55K and the panel have awarded this budget in full, with the Council looking forward to seeing a range of new projects, activities and investments take place in Fenland across the year.
- The Council have been offering a series of free workshops for those working or volunteering in the arts, culture and heritage sector in Fenland. These training sessions are responding to identified support needs in the local sector specifically around marketing skills development. The first of these sessions was called Understanding Audiences in Wisbech in November with a Social Media & Email Marketing workshop held in March in January 2025, and the next session is about Practical Strategies for Data and Ticketing which will be in Chatteris later this month. So far these have been well attended, been both a great opportunity to offer this high-quality, professional education to the local cultural workforce for free, but also, the Council has found there has been a real benefit to bringing people together around a table, in a room, to share, learn and network.

### **Arts Council England (ACE) Place Partnership Application.**

- This is one of ACE's most significant funding streams and following a huge amount of work from partners over a very extended period of time, Fenland submitted an EOI and found out in October that it was accepted and were invited to submit a full application which was submitted at the end of November 2024.
- The lead applicant is Clarion Futures with FDC as a strategic partner as well as several other partners as there are varying degrees of partnership options which is allowing the opportunity for those that can invest time and skills alongside partners which have actual cash match investment too.
- If successful the project will start in April of this year and last for three years finishing in 2028, with there being two main areas of focus which are about improved infrastructure and cultural leadership development in readiness for multi-art form, landscape wide, quality festival programming at the end.
- The Council are expecting a decision by the end of this month whether they have been successful.

Members made comments, asked questions, and received responses as follows:

- Councillor Nawaz asked, once this funding finishes, what happens then? Jamie-Lea Taylor responded, the Shared Prosperity Fund itself has been in place a long time but there is other funding available, and she was just waiting to hear some news as to whether she has been awarded it or not. She continued, with the Whittlesey project in particular, it is almost a bit of a pilot project as there has been good connections with health funded projects previously, the learning was taken away and eventually a good case study produced to then look at fund raising additionally going forward, and because with the Whittlesey one there is a substantial amount of funding to get this started and fuel the project to continue if it is what the town wants to continue with.
- Councillor Nawaz referred to the Section 106 money and the SEAL funding as a possible option for funding. Carol Pilson stated this is not something that can be accessed by Fenland District Council, but she was happy to ask the question. Councillor Hicks confirmed Section 106 money is ring fenced for education. Councillor Count confirmed this information is correct but agreed it would be right to ask the question and inquire where the money goes and if they are willing to split the money to invest into some community run events, suggesting it was worth following up with the County Council. Councillor Nawaz recommended that the committee followed this up. Councillor Hoy confirmed that she had the spreadsheet with the information needed and agreed as a committee it would be worth investigating timelines and specifically how the money is being spent. Carol Pilson committed to investigating the spend plans regarding the Section 106 funds with the Head of Planning and would circulate her findings to the committee once the information has been collected.
- Councillor Count asked for an example regarding the various artists being given a commission to develop a project pack that individuals could take home. Jamie-Lea Taylor explained that the project proposed is in its infancy and until the artist respond to the call out pitch and what their specialism is and what type of art form, the work in a pack can then be created whether that is in textiles, for example a crochet pack, which is then sent home to a person and they spend a few weeks using the tutorial video that the artist has provided and in a few months' time when the physical workshop happens everyone brings their individual crocheted squares that they have made at home to create a bigger piece of work together which is just one example because it depends on the artist and the work they offer. Councillor Count expressed concern regarding the amount of funding involved and what the Council is actually paying for, as if someone visits a craft store there are rows of craft kits of all varieties and costs and he would like to understand how this is going to be different to something that could be purchased off the shelf and is there added value to having an artist involved with advice and follow up, which is not be available from a store. Jamie-Lea Taylor responded the physical material in the packs is only a small element of what the whole project will look like and as this is a Health and Well-being group the benefit will come from

working with the Doctor's surgeries and within those groups, to engage with people that would not normally turn to arts and creativity to support mental health and well-being. She continued by engaging with people and bringing them together so they can learn from an artist, the artists will be commissioned to put videos together and host advice and network sharing to give people support and encouragement and then there will be two physical meetings a year to bring people together to share their experiences and work plus offer further workshops. Jamie-Lea Taylor continued from a Cultural Strategy perspective, local freelancers are hopefully going to gain jobs out of this project by working within their town or in their area to run projects for local people which means longevity wise if they have had that experience the Cultural Strategy could look at how they might be able to self-fund their projects for further income generations models to continue that going forward. Councillor Count stated he was looking forward to seeing the evidence.

- Councillor Hicks stated he runs a Facebook group called 'What's on in Cambridgeshire' for the community to share all the arts and culture events being held locally and that Jamie-Lea was welcome to use this page to promote the items she has spoken about today.
- Councillor Hoy asked what work had been done with the Town and Parish Councils regarding the Place Partnership Application? Jamie-Lea Taylor stated there was a workshop held in March Town Hall and all levels of local authority were invited including all the Towns which was a great way to get people together and find out what they wanted to put forward for their towns, local town venues and organisations have come forward but not Councils specifically. Councillor Hoy responded that she had wrote about Wisbech Town Council along with colleagues and she could not understand why this had got lost. Jamie-Lea Taylor reassured Councillor Hoy that the paperwork is not lost and the nature of the project is for the whole of Fenland and not just targeting one particular place, She continued that until the Council knows what that is going to look like with the projects, the strands and the art forms which will determine a lot as they go through the three years of the programme to pick where places might actually become venues.
- Councillor Hoy expressed her concerns that Town and Parish Councils do not seem to be included in the decision making and fear they may not get involved. Jamie-Lea Taylor responded that all the Town and Parish Councils have been on the journey and received updates regarding this project as much as possible at this point.
- Councillor Sennitt Clough asked if there was still an opportunity for Wisbech Town Council to get involved with this project? Jamie-Lea Taylor confirmed there was an opportunity. Councillor Hoy stressed that she did not feel Fenland District Council were helping Wisbech Town Council enough with its Arts and culture. Carol Pilson stated that the application has gone into the arts Council and her understanding is that it is not so rigid that it identifies fixed amount of events or participants, so when the Council knows if the Culture Partnership has been successful there will be a lot more work to be undertaken which will lead to more details of what specific projects will be led on by which partners and a further call to arms to ask people again what specifically they can offer in terms of those thematic groups.
- Councillor Sennitt Clough asked Jamie-Lea Taylor to give more detail of how this project would look if the funding was successful? Jamie-Lea Taylor stated that the project consists of two sides; the first being based around improving what cultural leaders there are in the District now and for the future but upskilling and empowering them and giving them all the support they need within that three year period and there is also a 6 weeks culmination at the end, which is about festival programming because the Council know that is already successful with everything that already happens in the District. The first year will be based around cultural leadership and identifying who would like to go on that programme, who would benefit from that programme and who might be an emerging artist that the Council would like to take through that programme with the objective of having someone really strong who could continue on within the Fenland area after 2028. In year two of the project in 2026 the Council would look at spending some of that budget through five strands which consist of, Community, Heritage, Visual Arts, Literary and Performance and there will be organisations or project partners that can come on board and lead on those strands with the aid of a commission budget, with this will come shared learning for the cultural sector with

increased confidence and ambition plus for audiences and residents to enjoy some different items on offer ready for year three and by that point when the project comes to an end that cohort of cultural leaders who have gone all the way along would have had some strong experiences and practices to be taken forward and continue so the project does not stop after three years.

- Councillor Hicks asked if the changes to Local Government will affect this project, and how proactive is the Council going to be contacting other local councils physically and not relying on the social media sites? Jamie-Lea Taylor responded the project will be running right up to the last official Council Day. She continued if the project is successful her role will change as more of her time will be spent on this project which means in terms of her officer role that will still be continuing alongside those five strands that were mentioned earlier and if she has time, she would be happy to make calls to the local councils.
- **Members noted for information the Creativity and Culture Development Officers update report.**

### **CAH9/23    FENLAND POET LAUREATE AWARDS**

**Members received a Fenland Poet Laureate Awards update presented by Jamie-Lea Taylor a follows:**

- a total of 71 entries have been received, 34 in the adults and 37 in the youth category.
- The ceremony is to be held again at March Town Hall on the evening of Friday 21<sup>st</sup> March.
- Poets who are shortlisted will be invited to attend and winners will be announced on the night.
- There has been a huge amount of both entries and enquiries from people that are not eligible because they are out of district or even the county.
- This committee has until midnight on Monday 10<sup>th</sup> February to respond, and then the judges will come together to make their final decisions. From there Jamie-Lea Taylor will work again with the Communication and Design Team to produce the anthologies and everything else needed for the awards ceremony event.

**Members noted the information reported.**

### **CAH10/23    REGIONAL FLAG DESIGN COMPETITION**

**Councillor Sennitt Clough presented information on a Regional Flag Design Competition as follows.**

- She had recently had a meeting with the Flag Institute to clarify a couple of questions that have arisen since this idea went to Full Council.
- The first concerns the Fenland District Council Flag which came into being in the 1970's after the last big boundary change, this is not a community flag but a Council banner so that flag would not be able to represent a community or a region and there were also some issues with it being incorrectly adapted from the crest on the carpet in the Council Chamber.
- The second question concerns the flag that was proposed at the last Full Council Meeting that was designed within the last few years by a person from Ely. This flag design has not been accepted by the Flag Institute as their preference is where no historical design exists for a community flag the development of a design is through public competition, this maximizes public involvement in the process and mandate for future adoption. The Flag Institute also make reference to any design meeting standards.

**Members made comments, asked questions, and received responses as follows:**

- Councillor Hicks stated that he felt this was a good idea and has had lots of positive comments from residents about a regional flag.
- Councillor Purser stated he agreed this was a good idea and would give a regional identity. He continued he felt there should be a couple of items included within the competition to reflect the Fenland history, like the Fen Tigers, and that this is the only area in the Country where the motto is in Dutch as it was the Dutch who drained the Fens many years ago and there are also several historical figures which originate from the Fenland area who could be included as well as the local farming.
- Councillor Nawaz agreed with the proposal but stated there is only so much that can be reflected within a flag and looks forward to seeing what would come out in the public consultation. He continued to ask who will have ownership of the flag? Will it be the Fenland District as it exists now or a broader Fenland area which reaches beyond the Fenland Council, and will they be involved in the public consultation how will the changes to Local Government impact on this project? Councillor Sennitt Clough responded the idea would be that this is a flag that represents the Fens as a region because it would not be tied to the District, the Council would be working with the Flag Institute and they would guide the Council of all on the policies and procedures to get it officially accepted by the Flag Institute if this project goes ahead and would be run outside of any Council role and governed by the Flag Institute.
- Councillor Hicks stated that Fenland is a very big area, would there be a consideration for an area to be ring fenced so there is a boundary within the flag.
- Councillor Purser commented that not everyone has been in favour of the flag, but he displays a Cambridgeshire pin on his jacket and is proud to wear it as a Fen man and felt the flag would bring a sense of pride to the area.
- Councillor Count stated that he could take pride in a place without having a flag to wave around and he finds the more that branding is advertised, the more diversity it can encourage. He continued when looking at the Fens probably for most people the reason the name is still alive is because there is a Fenland District Council but the geography is very different as it is to do with the watery mess that was here before the Dutch drained it and the Fenland residents were nicknamed the Fen Tigers by the Dutch at that point in time. Councillor Count added there is a lot to be proud of in this area and that would not change for him whether there is a flag or not, but he does worry that when tax payers entrust the Council with their money and there is officer time spent in committees talking about this what is going to be gained and what value will it bring to the area as he did not think it was cultural or heritage and he felt it was empire building for a few individuals. Councillor Sennitt Clough responded she felt that because there was so much community chatter about this issue, she felt it was the right item to bring to this committee to have an open and frank discussion about it.
- Councillor Foice-Beard asked who will be collating and judging the designs if this project was to go ahead? Councillor Sennitt Clough responded if this was to go ahead that would be the next round of conversation to be had after it is decided if it is something the Council wishes to take forward.
- Councillor Hoy stated that she was aware that there had been some community chatter but warned against over doing the idea as she knows in Wisbech the main issues raised are the Casino building, crime, street drinking and drugs in the area and agreed with Councillor Count that there is too much time being spent on a flag when there is so many more important jobs to be done first.
- Councillor Hicks responded that was the opposite to what he hears in his ward of March Town and felt the other issues mentioned are for other meetings and not to be addressed at the Culture, Arts and Heritage meeting.
- Councillor Nawaz commented that the price of things is not everything and price is different from value, and the value that anything embodies is very subjective and lies within the hearts of the individuals and he recommended that this should go out to public consultation as it would be useful to know how much time, money and budget will be thought about as this may well add as a distraction from those bigger issues mentioned even if it is momentarily.

- Councillor Count added that he agreed with virtually all that has been discussed and if this was to go through, he was quite prepared to go ahead with it.
- Councillor Sennett Clough stated that she would go back to the Flag Institute with the views shared at this meeting and bring some further updates to the following meeting to discuss further.

**Members noted the information reported.**

5.16 pm

Chairman