

Swindon Culture and Creative Group

Minutes of meeting held 7th February 2008

Present:

Carole Bent – Bent Gallery
Steve Causer – Frequency/SwinCity/Shuffle
Joanna Heaven – Course Leader Travel and Tourism, Swindon College
Vanetta Joffe – Artist
Mike Pringle – Swindon Cultural Partnership
Stuart Webb – Create studios, Swindon Borough Council

Apologies:

Anne Dixon – Customer to Advocate/Sugarhill/Sunsplash

- 1 **Welcome and introductions**
- 2 **Swindon Culture and Creative Group (SCCG) and the Cultural/Economic Partnerships**

Mike explained that the SCCG had been created as a crossover between the SCP and the SSEP and was managed by the SCP under strategic direction from the SCP board of directors. Group believed that SSEP could only work with employed champion/worker – e.g. Open Studios failed when reliant on over-burdened volunteers. SCCG ahead of game because of SCP involvement.

Group would like more information about SSEP activity elsewhere and better understanding of things like support, finance etc..

ACTION: Mike

- 3 **Purpose of SCCG & Terms of Reference**

Reference was made to a document created for the SSEP (see appendix) which outlines the role and purpose of the Group. It was decided that Terms of Reference could be established, if necessary, as the Group found its feet.

Group felt that it should not be strategic or talking shop. Some members want to be action driven others are restrained because of resource issues. However, all believed Group could 'make things happen.'

- 4 **Membership – who else do we need?**

Was felt that Group should remain small with invitations to people from specific subject arenas on ad hoc basis. Suggested 'guests':

Diana Hatton – Arts Consultancy
Keith Falconer – English Heritage
Rhona Jack – Marketing

Council offered support – not available at this meeting. Need to chase up.

ACTION: Mike

Would be good to have someone from big business on board.

Was also suggested that it would be worth talking to the Advertiser about the possibility of a reporter being 'allied' to the Group.

ACTION: Mike

5 **Overview of current activity**

Brief discussion of current activity, touching on:

- Swindon Music Forum
- Cultural handbooks – publications and websites
- Creative industries incubation hubs
- Town centre cultural hub
- Innovation Expo 2010
- Communities engagement project

Agreed that Mike should create list of activities and circulate so that members can indicate areas where they might be able to offer help, guidance, involvement etc..

ACTION: Mike

6 **Action plan and next steps – discussion**

A number of areas were deemed to be of specific importance:

Intelligence:

Needs of people in Swindon (both urban and rural)
Culture's place in the economic agenda
Understanding (measuring) indifference to cultural activity
Internal research
Regional activity
Negative spaces – how can they be changed?
Lots happening
Understanding arrogance/mediocrity/lack of confidence

Ideas:

Models from other towns, sectors etc. – e.g. Hay-on-Wye 'Penguin' deck chairs, Iran's plant-a-flower project
Sky map – constellation of activity
Need to encourage and support ideas
Great ideas often fizzle out
What is Swindon's Aardman Animation?
More commercial e.g. Swindon Collection on tour

Inspiration:

Sparkling interest of people who don't seem to care
Revitalization not regeneration
Tourism is about people
Swindon may not be lovely – but it could be!
Encouragement

Communication:

Problems with all areas
Need to develop mutual understanding across cultural groups
Awareness of things happening
Bland banners and not enough of them
More co-ordination with tourism – local as well as external
Perception is based on visitor's eye, not necessarily ours
More communication across SSEP Groups
Who do 'I' talk to make something happen?
Better signage

Diversity:

It is the range of different activity/people that makes Swindon great
Much local tourism concerned with business – needs growth
Schools, colleges etc.
People with different cultures, religions, physical needs etc.

7 Future meetings

Agreed that meetings are held, initially, on a monthly basis to stimulate activity.
Meetings to be held at **4.30 at the offices of the New Swindon Company**
unless notified of any change.

Next meeting: **Thursday 6th March**

Following meeting: **Thursday 3rd April**

Appendix

Role and purpose

To develop and unite the cultural offer

Background

The Culture and Creative group has developed through the recognition that economic growth must include extensive, high-quality leisure provision for the staff and families of the businesses in the Borough. The Group is run in collaboration with the Swindon Cultural Partnership and works across many of the outcomes of the Local Area Agreement, as well as providing liaison with cultural bodies in the region and at a National level.

Priorities

Established formerly in 2006, the Swindon Cultural Partnership has identified a number of areas where culture plays an important role in Swindon. In response, the Culture and Creative Group is currently developing specific aims and objectives to support both the cultural offer and the needs of local businesses, particularly in regard to changing the external perception of the town. In outline, the Group's aims includes:

- Championing cultural diversity across all levels of Swindon
- Working with the regeneration partners to ensure cultural infrastructure
- Provision and circulation of information and knowledge sharing
- Identifying and developing positive opportunities for business
- Developing strategic links with other partnerships and regional bodies
- Liaison with local, regional and national media
- Planning for a National Innovation Expo in Swindon in 2010
- Developing workspaces for creative entrepreneurs

Underlying all the Group's activity is an aim to create a positive cultural identity within Swindon, with the widest possible definition of 'culture'. While art, drama, music, heritage etc. are clearly important, the Group also supports the many alternative leisure activities that take place throughout the Borough's many and varied communities.

Membership

The Group is composed of several layers:

Patronage – the Group is gradually building up a list of Patrons

Board of Directors – the Group takes strategic guidance from the Board of the Swindon Cultural Partnership, which includes the Leader of Swindon Borough Council, the Editor of Swindon Advertiser, as well as representation from the Arts Council and a number of local businesses and organisations.

Culture and Creative Group – champions from business and the community who both inform and implement cultural plans and activity at a tactical level.