

In preparing this report the relevance of the following factors has been considered: prevention of crime and disorder, equality of opportunity; and legal, financial, environmental, health, respect for human rights, personnel and property considerations.

DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

SAFE AND SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES IMPROVEMENT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

21 November 2007

Report of the Chief Executive

Review of the Arts Service

1. Purpose of the Report

To inform Members of the outcomes and recommendations made in the review of the Arts Service.

2. Information and Analysis

The Members of the review working group (Cllrs Bambrick, Ratcliffe, Jackson and Taylor) have developed outcomes and recommendations following their review of the Derbyshire Arts Service.

Member initially interviewed Ann Wright, Assistant Head of Arts for Derbyshire County Council, who explained that the purpose of her team was to bring more cultural quality of life to local communities by taking art forms and making them more accessible to local people and to support the delivery of the Council's services and priorities through the arts.. This work took several forms, including;

- Work with Youth Service and Education – working in schools and youth groups to encourage learning through the arts
- Two officers, one specialising in reading, the other in writing, worked on many projects such as reading clubs (there were well over 100 in the county) and writing workshops
- Derbyshire Poet Laureate scheme, which is funded by the Arts Council, commissions a poet to create 2 -3 poems a year and to run workshops and performances etc. It is hoped that the funding will continue to enable the appointment of a new poet laureate when the current one's time expires
- Contributing to the Derbyshire Cultural Strategy which involves all the District and Borough Councils, as well as the County Council.
- Development of the "Arts Derbyshire" website which was currently being developed to provide a directory of Arts related events, performances, exhibitions and organisations throughout the county
- Links with the Creative Industries Development Officer whose role was to support creative, arts and craft businesses
- Participating in the Derbyshire Arts Officers' Group and Derbyshire Arts Partnership which draw together Arts Officers from most of the

District/Borough Councils. The group works to jointly develop new arts projects for specific areas (eg. “Live and Local” which promotes live performances in villages or communities – and Derbyshire Film which facilitates the showing of films in village and community halls). *It was noted that both Derbyshire Dales District Council and South Derbyshire District Council did not currently employ a specific Arts Officer. When questioned by Members, Ann confirmed that it was likely that these areas did not receive the same amount of Arts provision as those with a specialist Arts Officer, although the voluntary sector did pick up some of the work, for example in the case of People Express in South Derbyshire*

- Participating in the **Derbyshire Arts Development Group** which is an association of Arts groups and Local Authority Arts officers which meets 5 times per year.
- Working closely with voluntary sector Arts groups around the county.

The Derbyshire Arts Service has a budget of £275,261 (2007/008) of which £187,619 is for grants to the voluntary sector arts groups.

It was noted that most of the work the team does depends on external funding and much of Ann’s time was spent on sourcing this funding. The team had a small, collective budget with which to match-fund external grants. Over the last 5 years the team had attracted £1.5million into the county via the Arts Council, Heritage Lottery Fund and regeneration sources.

DCC adopted a Public Arts Policy in 2005 which lead to the creation of an “artist in residence” scheme whereby an artist worked with the Council’s Design Services Team on new-build and large re-furbishment projects.

The Derbyshire Arts Development Group is an association of Arts Groups and Local Authority Arts Officers which meets 5 times a year. It was established to work together on projects which they couldn’t work on independently. It is aimed at organisations only, not individual artists.

One of the projects is an arts marketing scheme which offers advice on promoting and marketing art work and events. Another is the Visual Arts project which involves taking art displays out to village hall and community centres for weekend exhibitions. An Arts Consultant has been employed to develop a proposed programme of visual arts and to attract funding for the project.

Work with the Voluntary Sector

There are a number of voluntary groups around the county who work to provide arts and cultural activities, mainly to disadvantaged people or those who live in rural areas and would not otherwise have access to such facilities. The County Council has a budget (£160,788 in the current financial year) with which it offers support to these groups. As well as supporting a group in most areas of the county, the budget offers grants to other organisations (some based outside the county) which provide facilities for Derbyshire people. Included are an annual grant to the Buxton Festival and support to the Firebird Trust which is based in Lincoln but supports community music projects in the county.

During the course of this review questionnaires were sent to all the groups supported via the Arts Service. They were asked their opinion of the support they received from the Arts Service and the majority of those who responded were very supportive of the service, commenting in particular on the financial support the Council offered which allowed groups to obtain match funding for many projects and also the availability of advice from the Arts Service. This was particularly highlighted by one group which appreciated being “sign posted” by the Arts Service to other County Council services with which they could work.

It has to be reported that one response was critical of the contact it has with the Arts Service. The main gist of the response related to the amount of funding the group received, although this was equitable with that granted to other organisations, however a couple of points were raised which could probably be addressed by the Cultural and Communities Department. One referred to the administrative process for paying grant installments, whereby some installments had been received late. However, on further investigation with the Cultural and Community Services Department, this was caused by an organisation not submitting the required quarterly financial information which triggered each payment.

Another comment referred to the need for a Community Arts Forum, in preference to the DADG. The DADG had, in fact, previously set up a Community Arts sub-group which had unfortunately folded due to lack of interest. The Arts Service team was of the opinion that most community arts groups were content to network through DADG.

The review working group was of the opinion that the DADG was valuable and should continue but it could be asked to review the possibility of establishing a Community Arts Forum.

On the whole, the support and financial assistance offered through the Derbyshire Arts Service was much appreciated by the voluntary sector groups. Without the grants awarded each year some groups would cease to function and all would have to reduce their service provision.

The review working group wishes to see the financial support to the voluntary arts sector (which is currently increased each year in line with inflation) continued.

How the Derbyshire Arts Service Links with other County Council Priorities

Throughout the review, Members of the working group were aware of a cultural mapping exercise which the Cultural and Community Services Department had commissioned. This looked at the County Council's involvement in the provision of cultural services, locally, regionally and beyond.

The working group considered it was vital that the review of the Arts Service should include the findings of this project. The key findings and recommendations of the project are therefore set out below;

(Taken from "Derbyshire Cultural Mapping Project Summary Document" – September 2007)

Derbyshire Cultural Mapping Project – Summary Document

1. The brief:

1.1 The overarching purpose of the work was driven by Derbyshire County

Council's desire to map cultural provision in the county area, and to commission additional work to support the Council and its partners in leading and co-ordinating the activities of the cultural sector in Derbyshire.

1.2 There were six specific areas of work to be addressed which were to:

- Map the extent and scope of cultural activity.
- Identify existing and potential partners and stakeholders, and existing agreements.
- Collate evidence of the impact of the cultural sector on strategic policies and action plans (locally and sub-regionally).
- Establish the scope and value of the County Council's involvement in the development of cultural services regionally and beyond.
- Review the currency and relevance of the Derbyshire Cultural Strategy to strategic agendas.
- Make recommendations for the creation of a cultural consortium.

1.3 There were two specific deliverables required which were:

- A report evidencing the value and impact of cultural services' contribution to shared-priorities and other county-wide strategies.
- Specific recommendations for the Cultural and Community Services Department in delivering its cultural leadership roles, including proposals for a cultural consortium.

1.4 In the commissioning process it was agreed that these would be met through a suite of reports as follows:

- 01 Derbyshire Cultural Mapping Project – Summary Document.
- 02 The value and impact of cultural services' contribution to shared-priorities and other county-wide strategies, and the value and benefits of culture generally.
- 03 The currency and relevance of the Derbyshire Local Cultural Strategy (2002-2007) and recommendations regarding the creation of a cultural consortium.
- 04 Existing and potential partners and stakeholders, and existing partnerships in the cultural sector in Derbyshire. The scope and value of the County Council's involvement in the development of cultural services in the East Midlands and beyond.
- 05 A Map of Culture in Derbyshire.

1.5 For the purposes of the project "culture" was scoped as including:

- Arts
- Archives
- Countryside & parks
- Libraries
- Museums & galleries
- Sport

The historic and built heritage and tourism were specifically excluded from the scope but inevitably the work has touched on these important areas of cultural activity. Although Derby City was not formally included in the scope of the project, meetings were held with key officers and there is wide agreement of the significance of Derby-based cultural activities to a much bigger geographical area than the city.

2. Methodology:

- 2.1 The work has been made in accordance with PRINCE2 project management principles using a project initiation meeting to fully scope the work, weekly situation and issues reports, and review stages with the commissioning officers.
- 2.2 The first phase of the project involved data and information being gathered from a variety of published (hard-copy and electronic formats) and unpublished information sources, largely gained through literature searches, but also through interviewees and referred contacts.
- 2.3 This phase also included 50 face-to-face and telephone interviews with stakeholders, partners and potential partners who generously gave their time at short notice. A number of partnership meetings were also attended. A list of interviewees is included at Appendix1. Interviews generally lasted between 1 and 2 hours, and were occasionally followed up to clarify points of detail. Interviews inevitably ran into the planned second phase owing to holiday commitments in July and August, and previous commitments and workloads. Although it is not possible to include all the detail shared in interviews in the final reports, they have all informed the general picture for culture in Derbyshire.

- 2.4 The conclusions and directions indicated in this report are based on the results of the literature searches and the interviews with stakeholders, partners and potential partners.

3. Key findings and conclusions:

General:

- 3.1 **Culture in Derbyshire is rich, varied and wide-reaching across all the county's communities.** The area has world class landscape and built heritage, and many regional and national exemplars in its cultural services, activities, programmes and projects.
- 3.2 **The capital infrastructure of culture is considered to be under developed,** with the major physical manifestations (excluding the built heritage) being confined largely to the City of Derby, Chesterfield and Buxton. However, this needs to be considered in relation to the geography of the county, and the proximity of parts of Derbyshire to major regional cultural centres such as Manchester, Nottingham, and Sheffield and perhaps even Birmingham.
- 3.3 Despite this, **cultural provision has adapted extremely well across the length and breadth of the county.** The local authorities of the county and other public sector bodies, together with community, voluntary and independent sector organisations have shown themselves to be flexible, creative and passionate about developing and delivering life-improving cultural opportunities. There are strong partnerships within specific elements of culture at county and local levels, which are working hard to improve and develop opportunities through policies, programmes and projects. These opportunities vary greatly according to local needs and circumstances but overall there is a vibrant and rich cultural mix woven into the fabric of people's lives.
- 3.4 **There are clearly some problems with the concept of "culture"** for some people, but the case studies break the concept down into activities and events which deliver benefits and change in communities. These can be used to powerfully advocate the value and benefits being delivered from the cultural sectors, and draw back the veil of invisibility which seems to mask the benefits they deliver to Derbyshire's communities.
- 3.5 Key statistics include:
- Over 68% of all adults in Derbyshire are interested in arts and cultural activities
 - Nearly 21% of all adults in the whole of Derbyshire are actively participating in sport for at least 3 times a week x 30 minutes moderate intensity
 - These generate millions of sessions in leisure centres, e.g. Derby over 1.34 million, Derbyshire Dales 390,000, Erewash 640,000, South Derbyshire nearly 400,000.
 - Over 4.9 million physical visits are made to libraries in Derbyshire as a whole each year, plus over 350,000 hits of web site information
 - Nearly 205,000 people are active registered library members

- Derbyshire Record Office has over 10,000 reader visits each year
 - And produces nearly 45,000 items for readers to use each year from
 - Since 2003/04 the arts have levered in over £1.5 million to support programmes
 - In 2005/06 participation in the arts exceeded 367,000 people
 - There are 977 creative industry companies and individuals active in Derbyshire covering nearly 1200 different activities.
- 3.6 The **case study analysis** of cultural activities in Derbyshire, and the scale and reach of cultural activities provides strong evidence of their connectivity and contribution to the strategic themes, priorities and the principles underpinning the strategic partnership. What the case studies show is a shift in the relationship between strategic priorities and cultural activities, with a significant shift towards strategies and priorities driving the work of the cultural sector, rather than the cultural sector only trying to fit what it wants to do into a policy framework.
- 3.7 **The Derbyshire experience reflects the considerable body of national and regional evidence of the value and benefits of culture.** Although the debate about the intrinsic and instrumental value of culture will no doubt continue, national research shows the linkages between policy and practice; the former driving the latter.
- 3.8 With such strong evidence-based **research it is perhaps surprising that the profile of the cultural sector is not higher in the strategic ‘mix’.** Within Derbyshire County Council’s corporate plan and CPA self-assessment, culture features strongly, and the contribution of its cultural services is made explicit to organisational goals through specific targets and deliverables. However, within the themes of the sustainable community strategy and the local area agreement, the role and explicit contributions of culture is relatively light.
- 3.9 Although **culture is a thread running through all four shared priority themes**, and therefore perhaps too cross-cutting to warrant a ‘theme’ in its own right, it would be reasonable to expect culture’s contribution to be more substantial within the strands of the strategy. It is the contribution of sport and physical activity which tends to be the strand of culture that makes the most tangible contribution through specific targets and indicators. Is this because the contribution of culture is simply not a priority for the wider strategic partnership for Derbyshire (the Derbyshire Partnership Forum), or is it that the partnership does not fully appreciate the contribution that culture can, and does make to its priorities?
- 3.10 **The analysis of local, regional and national activity only serves to underline the vibrant and rich cultural mix which is deeply woven into the fabric of people’s lives in Derbyshire.** For many, cultural activities are simply taken for granted as being there, and no one ever stops to consider what life would be like without culture (no sport, no music, no films, no books, no places to walk, no records of community history, no paintings, no museums, no libraries etc..)

- 3.11 **The challenge is to make the “invisible thread” of culture a visible and celebrated deliverer** of stronger and safer, healthier and sustainable communities across all ages and stages of Derbyshire people’s lives.

Partnerships and the value of the County Council’s involvement in the development of cultural services in the East Midlands and beyond:

- 3.12 There is a **considerable range of strong and effective partners and stakeholders in the cultural sector in Derbyshire.**
- 3.13 **Less than half the local authorities in Derbyshire have promoted cross-cutting cultural partnerships** to support the work of Local Strategic Partnerships. Where they have been established there is generally good evidence of their influence and success in connecting cultural to local strategic priorities.
- 3.14 **Sport and arts sectors have well established partnerships**, and there are various interest and support groups feeding into them. Heritage, tourism and countryside also have a range of partnerships. **However, there are no particularly clear linkages between the sectoral bodies** (nor are they expected by the sectors), but in some cases the strategic relationships are not always particularly easy to discern, even across the sectors.
- 3.15 **In any consideration of a new cultural partnership the principal challenge will be to develop a membership which will provide a strategic focus for culture as a whole**, leaving existing partnerships to concentrate on strategic development and delivery for their specific sectors.
- 3.16 **The County Council has a utilitarian approach to its active engagement in regional and national development for cultural services.** There is a strong expectation that any engagement should result in a positive return for the people of Derbyshire, and it has been selective in the scale of its engagement. To date there has been no discernable involvement in cross-cutting cultural agendas, but **the value and impact of Derbyshire’s engagement in Library, Arts in Education and Sport is considerable and widely acknowledged outside Derbyshire.** These services have high profiles and strong regional and national reputations. This value can be evidenced not only in terms of regional and national development, but in the tangible returns for Derbyshire on the selective investment of the Council’s time and money.

The Derbyshire Local Cultural Strategy and a new Derbyshire Cultural Consortium?:

- 3.17 Since the Derbyshire Local Cultural Strategy 2002-2007 was produced, **the world of local government and communities has moved on.** It was conceived as a five year strategy, but there has not been a strong driver for a major review of the strategy in the intervening period. Nonetheless the Derbyshire Cultural Strategy has provided a real measure of support for the sectors, and informed the development of some other Derbyshire strategies
- 3.18 **There are still elements of the strategy which remain relevant**, particularly the scope of culture, the vision, and its underlying principles. What has

changed is the strategic policy framework for local government in England, and particularly the firmly embedded shared priorities themes.

- 3.19 **The 2002 Strategy provides some excellent descriptions of the nature of culture in Derbyshire**, and although this can be usefully updated, the principle of using examples to explain 'what is culture?' is still very appropriate.
- 3.20 **The broad objectives of the strategy are in need of some revision** to accommodate the need for greater advocacy, explicit linkages to today's strategic policy themes and the performance improvement agenda, but the underlying outcomes are still shared by partners and stakeholders.
- 3.21 Most partners and stakeholders now want to evidence **the contribution that culture makes to the major themes contained within community strategies**, organisational plans, the LAA and LSP's.
- 3.22 Although **the views of stakeholders and partners about the need for a new strategy are mixed**, there is recognition amongst politicians, senior managers and practitioners that in general culture does not feature particularly strongly in key partnership strategies. **Without a strategic framework, the focus for culture could become invisible.** The Derbyshire Cultural Strategy has provided a real measure of support for the sectors, and informed the development of some other Derbyshire strategies.
- 3.24 **There is a very strong desire to avoid producing a large-scale document** which fails to deliver improvement through action planning, delivery and outcomes for Derbyshire people. There are also strong feelings that a revised cultural planning document must acknowledge existing strategies which are already being delivered by strong partnerships (e.g. Sport, Arts, some LSP's), and avoid duplication.
- 3.25 The last cultural consortium for Derbyshire was built around the creation of the Local Cultural Strategy. **There are mixed feelings about the creation of a new partnership body for Derbyshire, with arguments for and against.** This is partly informed by the number of partnerships which now exist (confusing), and the varied experiences of partnership working in the county.
- 3.26 It is important to all stakeholders and partners that **the creation of a new cultural body should add value to existing cultural sector work** and not duplicate the work of existing sector specific partnerships.
- 3.27 **The strongest support is for a body that is connected to the governance of the Derbyshire Partnership Forum** to avoid a disconnected, stand alone cultural partnership which does not influence strategic thinking, priorities and action plans. There are precedents for this within existing arrangements and there is an opportunity to do this given current plans to further develop governance arrangements for the Derbyshire Partnership Forum.
- 3.28 There appears to be **scope for exploring the development of a cultural partnership which focuses on a number of strategic priorities (including performance improvement across the sector), provides a holistic and authoritative focus for culture across the county and which is connected to the strategic partnership agenda, processes and structures in the county.**

- 3.29 A cultural partnership would best serve the sector **by agreeing a broad vision with a few strategic objectives and advocating the case for a specific target for culture being included in the 35 improvement targets, which it would drive through performance improvement.** There is a big issue across the cultural sector regarding consistent impact and outcome measurement, and the most commonly repeated issue has related to engagement – particularly targeted access and participation in culture. Given the wealth of evidence which now demonstrates the value and benefits of culture, and its potential and actual contribution to targets and outcomes linked to shared priorities, a focus is needed to use this.
- 3.30 It is **worth considering how membership of such a body could provide the highest possible strategic focus for culture.** Although there is a great capacity and commitment to partnership working in individual cultural sectors, the majority of potential participants have no desire to sit around yet another table with familiar faces.
- 3.31 In exercising a role in cultural leadership, **the County Council needs to consider how it can effectively encompass the whole of the cultural sector.** This is particularly a challenge for the lead department of Cultural and Community Services given that the responsibility for some key elements of culture are located in other departments of the Council e.g. sport and countryside (unless a new partnership was to narrow the definition of culture).
- 3.32 **It is also important that the County Council remains sensitive to the process of exploring a new partnership with potential partners.** Views on the success of partnership working are mixed. All successful partnerships need to produce mutual benefits for partner members. There is a need to establish a strong set of values which on the one hand avoids the lead partner feeling that they are simply there to deliver the wishes of the rest of the partnership (*“taking you where you don’t want to be”*), and on the other, the rest of the partnership feeling that the lead partner takes all the credit and kudos for partnership successes (*“need to be able to trust their motives”*). These are opposite ends of the spectrum, but despite this there is an overwhelming desire in Derbyshire to make partnerships succeed by making a difference, proving their worth and avoiding becoming talking shops.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

Relating to a cultural consortium for Derbyshire:

It is recommended that consideration be given:

- 4.1 To exploring the prospect of a Derbyshire Cultural partnership with the Cabinet Member for Cultural Services through the Cultural Services Cabco (portfolio) meeting.
- 4.2 To organising a workshop of stakeholders and potential partners to explore the twin concepts of new Derbyshire Cultural Partnership supported by a revised strategic planning framework for culture (see 4.8), and following this:

- 4.3 To presenting proposals to a future meeting of the County Council's Cabinet, following consultation with potential partners and stakeholders; proposals to include terms of reference for a new cultural partnership, governance arrangements, a vision for culture in Derbyshire, the scope of culture and an initial set of priorities for action.
- 4.4 Following this, and based on the assumption that any new body needs to connect to the Derbyshire Partnership Forum's (DPF) structures and process, a proposal and presentation be made to the DPF to seek its support and endorsement for a new Derbyshire Cultural Partnership.
- 4.5 To support a new partnership, and through a stakeholder and partner consultation process, a new strategic document is developed for culture which is:
- short.
 - succinct.
 - sharply focused on improvement.
 - delivering a shared vision for culture in Derbyshire (a vision including but beyond local government).
 - focused on small number of strategic priorities.
 - clear on actions, accountabilities and timescales.

The focus would be on improvement built around strategic cross-cutting themes. In this way people will have confidence in the ambitions and actions of a strategy being delivered, and in the strategy remaining a vibrant and evolving tool in delivering change and improvement in the cultural sector.

The Review Working group would like to acknowledge the work undertaken by Mr David Lathrope in producing the Derbyshire Cultural Mapping Project

The Arts Review working group wishes to support the conclusions and recommendations of the Derbyshire Cultural Mapping Project.

How the Derbyshire Arts Service Contributes to Derbyshire's Sustainable Community Strategy – 2006 – 2009.

Derbyshire's second Sustainable Community Strategy (2006 – 2009) has been developed by the Derbyshire Partnership Forum and builds on the first strategy and the successful implementation of the Derbyshire Local Area Agreement.

The priorities of the strategy reflect what matters to local people (researched through consultation) in improving the quality of life in the county.

The strategy developed 4 key themes;

- safer and stronger communities
- children and younger people
- healthier communities and older people
- sustainable communities

and aims at securing big improvements in 4 key areas;

- reducing anti-social behaviour
- engaging young people in positive activities
- tackling obesity
- ensuring a clean and attractive environment

It is evident that the facilities provided by the Derbyshire Arts Service, and the groups it supports, directly impact on some of these key areas – and contribute to others. For example, the development of arts projects aimed at young people throughout the county helps to “engage young people in positive activities” and has an immediate impact – but, if targeted at the appropriate young people, can also contribute to “reducing anti-social behaviour”.

When considering the wide range of arts activities promoted throughout the county by the Derbyshire Arts Service, there are many elements of the Sustainable Community Strategy which benefit.

Many of the arts and cultural initiatives promoted by the Arts Service and its partners are aimed at disadvantaged people and those areas of the county where there is deprivation. By engaging people in arts and culture, they are not only offered leisure and entertainment activities but also the opportunity to try their hand at new talents and skills. Access to the arts, music and other similar media could enable some people to develop skills sufficient to make a living.

The work the Arts Services does with the County Council's Creative Industries Development Officer contributes to the economic well-being of the county. Through this function, local creative business people are offered business advice and support to sustain their economic well-being. Creative industries are those based on individual creativity, skill and talent. They are also those that have the potential to create wealth and jobs through developing intellectual property and include;

Advertising, film and video, architecture, music, art and antiques markets, performing arts, computer and video games, publishing, crafts, software design, television and radio, designer fashion

One major aspect of this support is the potential for developing Creative Industries Workspaces at strategic venues in the county. These would offer creative businesses appropriate workspace to develop their businesses. As many arts and crafts ventures depend on visitors and tourism, initial projects are being considered in the areas of the county where these are likely to be prevalent, eg. along or near the Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site “corridor”.

Improving the business opportunities for creative industries enhances the development of local economies and local tourism.

As well as engaging young people and offering practical support to small creative businesses, the Arts Service provides facilities for many other facets of the county’s population. A working group Member attended a meeting of the DCC Officers’ Arts Day which was held in July 2007 and which gave employees of the County Council the opportunity to showcase the work they did in connection with the arts, and how the Arts Service could support other, mainstream services provided by the County Council. Subjects discussed included;

- the Derbyshire Poet Laureate project
- the Arts and Crafts curriculum of the Adult and Community Education Service
- the Creative Industries Strategy and the artsderbyshire website
- the Artist-in-Residence working with the Design Services Team
- Young People’s Arts Awards and Inspire Creativity
- Fundraising

Through these events and similar discussions, the Derbyshire Arts Service offers arts facilities as a tool for other service providers. Most prominent examples are work with schools and colleges and other educational services but they also include facilities for people with learning difficulties to enable them to express themselves through arts media.

Many of the arts projects promoted or supported by the Arts Service are aimed at people who live in rural communities, or who live alone and may be isolated within their own communities. Involvement in the arts – particularly community arts projects – helps to promote more supportive and cohesive communities. Many people who are involved in community arts projects say that the “bringing together” of people in their locality is one of the greatest benefits.

In addition to developing community cohesion, the work the Arts Service generates in the rural and remote areas of the county allows access to arts and community programmes “on the doorstep” for people in the county’s villages and smaller towns. Not only does this generate community identity, but, more practically, removes the necessity for people to travel to access arts facilities.

Two good examples of work in this field are “**Live and Local**” which encourages local volunteers to promote live performances in their village or local community and “**Derbyshire Film**” whereby films are shown at village halls and community centres, again promoted by local people. Currently most communities get around 6 films per year (usually one per month during the winter)

This aspect of community support again links strongly with the aims of the Derbyshire Sustainable Community Strategy. When local people were being consulted during the Strategy development it became apparent that they “*valued*

community based activities, such as involvement in local clubs, sports, arts and culture, as they help bring people together to build confidence and skills” (ref. Derbyshire Sustainable Communities Strategy – Safer and Stronger Communities section)

Finally, arts and cultural activities based in local communities can contribute to the provision of “effective prevention and diversionary programmes” which was one of the priorities of the Sustainable Communities Strategy to “reduce crime and the fear of crime; reduce anti-social behaviour; reduce harm caused by alcohol and drugs and create safer and more cohesive communities”

The review working group acknowledges the strong contribution the work of the Derbyshire Arts Service makes towards the priorities of the Derbyshire Sustainable Communities Strategy.

Arts at the Strategic Centre

Arts at the Strategic Centre (A@SC) is a self assessment tool for positioning and embedding the arts at the strategic centre of local authority service provision. Developed by the Arts Council in conjunction with the Improvement and Development Agency (I&DEA) it identified a need to evaluate how local authorities, as the main provider collectively of arts facilities, were putting arts at the strategic centre of their delivery.

The Arts Council and I&DEA claim that the benefits of using Arts at the Strategic Centre can bring the following benefits to an Authority;

- increased awareness, understanding and recognition across the Authority of both the intrinsic value of the arts and its instrumental value in contributing to cross-cutting agendas and delivery of other services
- support for ensuring that the arts are incorporated effectively in organisational structures and working arrangements, strengthening strategic management in terms of positioning the arts within key cross-cutting agendas to help achieve corporate priorities and targets
- a clearer focus and higher profile for the arts within the authority and key partnerships, in particular the Local Strategic Partnership
- a better strategic engagement and working relationships with Arts Council England
- a clear assessment of strengths and weaknesses in the strategic positioning of the arts as a platform from which to improve

This will assist the Arts Service to achieve;

- greater influence with elected members, senior managers and other services
- an increase in capacity for the arts
- better and more relevant arts activity in the area

The review working group would like the Cultural and Community Services Department to explore the potential benefits to Derbyshire in using the Arts at the Strategic Centre concept.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The review considered that Derbyshire is unique in that, although it is in close proximity to a number of cities, offering access to its population to many arts and cultural facilities, it is also a rural and urban county with diverse topography, geography and culture.

The county offers unique tourism opportunities which attract thousands of visitors, both local people and tourists, each year. The promotion of a diverse arts and cultural programme will enhance the tourism economy of the county and this is dependant on a thriving local arts base.

The review concluded that the Derbyshire Arts Service provides valuable resources for many people who either live in, or visit the county. It can be seen that the projects and programmes the Arts Service promotes or supports contribute greatly to the well-being of local communities and economies. Its links with other services, whether provided by the County Council or other agencies, helps to ensure as many people as possible have access to arts and cultural facilities, especially in areas of disadvantage or deprivation.

The work of the Arts Service, in conjunction with their partners in local communities, contributes to many of the County Council's priorities, especially those of the Derbyshire Sustainable Communities Strategy, 2006 – 2009.

Working on a relatively tight budget – currently £87,642 after grants are made to the voluntary sector groups - with many activities funded from external sources, it is considered that the Arts Service offers very good value for money.

This review concludes that the Derbyshire Arts Service should continue to provide and develop arts and cultural facilities throughout the county. The review therefore submits the following recommendations;

- 1. The work of the Derbyshire Arts Development Group (DADG) be acknowledged and continued,**
- 2. The DADG be asked to review the possibility of developing a new Community Arts Forum**
- 3. The financial support offered to the voluntary sector arts groups (which is currently increased each year in line with inflation) be continued and that grant installments continue to be paid promptly following receipt of the required financial information from voluntary groups**
- 4. The conclusions and recommendations of the Derbyshire Cultural Mapping Project be supported**
- 5. Acknowledgement be given to the strong contribution the work of the Derbyshire Arts Service makes towards the priorities of the Derbyshire Sustainable Communities Strategy**
- 6. The Director of cultural and Community Services explore the potential benefits of developing the Arts at the Strategic Centre concept in Derbyshire**

Cllr Walter Burrows
Chair of Improvement & Scrutiny Committee – Safe and
Sustainable Communities