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| Date | Friday 19 May 2023 |
| Time | 11.00 am – 2.00 pm |
| Location | Arts Council England, 82 Granville Street, Birmingham B1 2LH |
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| Present | Sukhy Johal (Chair), Emily Bowman, Parminder Dosanjh, Julie Finch, Cllr Jayne Francis (from 12.20 pm), Pippa Frith, Ayub Khan, Jennifer McKie, Jaivant Patel, Tanya Raabe-Webber (plus PA Jackie Cooley) Laura Dyer, Mark Done, Sue Elwell, Kathy Fawcett, Maureen Gaynor, Sharon Joinson, Sarah Kennedy, Peter Knott, Harinder Matharu, Toby Norman-Wright, Hugh James, Simon FitchPresenters (item 3): Sarah Brigham, CEO & Artistic Director, Derby Theatre, Caroline Barth, Creative Learning Director, Derby Theatre, Sam Rushton, Derby CAN Producer, Tandeka Williams, Participant of Derby CANObserving (item 3): Renata Salazar, Relationship Manager, Theatre |
| Apologies | Pawlet Brookes, Cllr Abi Brown, Cllr Barry Lewis, Cllr John Reynolds, Rebecca Blackman, Thomas Wildish, Liz Johnson |
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**Notes**

**Midlands Area Council Meeting**

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| 1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

1.1 The chair welcomed Council Members and Management Team to the meeting.1.2 Apologies were noted as above.1.3 Parminder Dosanjh was welcomed to her first meeting as a new Area Council member. All attendees introduced themselves. 1.4 Cllr Jayne Francis, as a new Area Council member, introduced herself when she arrived a little later to the meeting.1.5 ***The Chair informed members that there would be further recruitment later in the year to the two Local Authority representative vacancies***. |  |
| 1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

2.1 The chair explained that the full Declarations of Interest register is circulated for every meeting and members are required to keep their declarations up to date.2.2 A print out of the paper will be available at the next meeting. |  |
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| 1. **PRODUCING HUBS**

3.1 Sarah Brigham, Caroline Barth, Sam Rushton and Tandeka Williams gave a presentation at the meeting to talk about the work of Derby Theatre and to update members on work achieved through its funding received from the Young People’s Performing Arts fund and Performing Hubs fund. 3.2 They talked specifically about Derby CAN (Derby Creative Arts Network), a project where organisations create theatre and live events in partnership with people living in Derby and the surrounding areas. Through this project artists are linked up with groups of local people to co-create artistic and cultural events that mean something to the community. The results are then presented in community spaces, on the stage and on tour. The network is made up of theatres, arts organisations, businesses, artists and community groups.3.3 They also talked about their Reimagine project where young people dream up performances in their own neighbourhoods and tell their own stories. At their Reimagine hubs, thousands of young people have made art, music and performance together. This also enables young people to learn new skills and create something and gives them an opportunity to find out more about creative careers.3.4 The Chair thanked the group for their informative and interesting presentation, saying that it was good to get a real sense of the passion and reality of creating a partnership of equals. |
| 1. **MIDLANDS AREA UPDATE ON PRIORITY PLACES**

4.1 The Senior Relationship Manager leads for priority places presented members with an update. 4.2 Hari talked about progress in Stoke-on-Trent. He said that a first NLPG advice session had taken place with a collection of 70 different artists and NPOs. The responsibility of NPOs to work beyond their activity area is already happening in Stoke and we are talking to those who are involved. The City Council has been successful in their application to the Cultural Development Fund (£5m) for an extension to the Potteries Museum & Art Gallery, and in their Libraries Improvement Fund application for work in Stoke Library (£300k). A Place Partnership application has been made to us and is being assessed, a PID to support the Made in Stoke philanthropic network is also being developed. A working group Chaired by Lord Parkinson is being arranged. 4.3 Mark updated members on Ashfield, Mansfield, Bolsover, Chesterfield and NE Derbyshire priority places. He gave an overview on the state of play and activity that has happened. Investment in 2022/23 has increased significantly compared with 2018/19; we have new NPOs, Mansfield DC, Opus Music and Unanima Theatre; we have funding outside the portfolio for Creswell Heritage Trust; increases for NPOs working in the area, Inspire, Junction Arts, Live & Local; continued investment in CPP; and we’ve also seen a shift in project grants. He gave an overview of key shared objectives including support with government funds for culture, encouraging ambition for ACE funds, and supporting capacity and encouraging partnerships. Next steps and opportunities include having a strategic approach to advice-giving for NLPG and DYCP, supporting capacity and making connections, and next steps with Cultural Compacts and Local Cultural Education partnerships.4.4 Sarah updated members on the Black Country. There are four boroughs within the Black Country with many cultural assets. We are now thinking about how we can increase investment and engagement, which both remain comparatively low. She said that progress to date showed an increase in NPO investment of 75%, based on uplifts to the current cohort and 7 NPOs in the area increasing to 12. There is a clear indication that Children and Young people are a priority for NPOs and partners, particularly in relation to our increased investment and interest in Place Partnership funds. We now have culture compacts in each borough. There has been success looking at library facilities, and a large award has been made to Sandwell through LIF. There are risks around maintaining the current cultural infrastructure, which includes museum collections and potential changes in the glass quarter within the Dudley borough. Other opportunities include a strong interest in developing spaces for artists and creative businesses, including a recent CDF investment in Walsall, and a waiting list for studios for artists in Wolverhampton. Many NPOs outside the Black Country, particularly in Birmingham, want to do work in the area. Regarding health and wellbeing, there is also a very strong opportunity around the Midland Metropolitan Hospital. Sarah’s objectives for this year include establishing ways of working with the Black Country place team, a programme of advice giving on project grants working with Creative Black Country and establishing an action plan (or plans) for the Black Country priority places.4.5 Kathy talked about progress in East Lindsey and Boston. She said that East Lindsey was a very large district, sparsely populated with a predominantly white British demographic as well as a significant proportion of East Europeans. The main economy is around tourism and agriculture. One of its aims is to bring about a more skilled economy and to develop a year-round tourism offer. East Lindsey and Boston have both received significant funds through Government place funding which will support the cultural infrastructure. In Boston we have gone from no NPOs to one and from one to three in East Lindsey which will provide revenue support for cultural hubs and new capital developments such as the Colonnade, Mablethorpe and the Embassy Theatre, Skegness. Our next move beyond NPO investment is to build capacity through support for setting up a cultural reference group or cultural compact. The areas have excellent creative people and an exciting set of partners including the Creative People and Places programme Transported, but we will also encourage key stakeholders such as local authorities to look outside of the sector at opportunities for partnerships with the education sector, commercial/business sector and the third sector. Mablethorpe for instance is building a Campus for Future Living with the University of Lincoln and Nottingham Trent University as partners with potential to identify creative health and well-being opportunities. We know local stakeholders have good information on the visitor economy but know a lot less about audiences and audience engagement with culture, so we need to help them to look at ways to progress on this.  Whilst there is lots to do there are also plenty of opportunities with strong potential for transformational change in terms of the cultural offer. 4.6 Simon updated members on work that was taking place in Nuneaton and Bedworth. He noted the high levels of deprivation within the borough in marked contrast to some other parts of the county.  He summarised the previous level of National Lottery Project Grant awards which had been comparatively low.  Some increased investment had recently taken place most notably as part of the 2023-26 NPO process which saw the borough’s first NPO: Warwickshire Library Service.  The Midland’s first National Lottery Project Grant Place Partnership award had also been made to the Borough Council for a two-year project that will build on the legacy of *Sanctuary*. This project was a national moment of commemoration that took place in Bedworth’s Miners’ Welfare Park in May 2022.  The local authority is currently developing a cultural strategy which is due to be published shortly.  The intention is that the priorities identified within that will inform the discussions with key partners as to how the Arts Council focusses its resources over the next 3 years. This could include targeted advice giving to creative practitioners and potential partner organisations to increase the number of fundable applications the Arts Council receives from applicants in the Nuneaton and Bedworth area.4.7 The Chair said that this shows that our priority place work is a two-way process and that we are learning how best to deliver. He added that we will have a future discussion to look at risks and that we should have a conversation regarding priority places on an annual basis. |
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| 1. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S UPDATE/AREA DIRECTOR’S UPDATE

5.1 Laura and Peter spoke to the Executive Director and Area Director report which included supporting Grassroots Live Music, Music Education Hubs, an update on Coventry UK City of Culture, Arts Council’s Development Agency Change Programme, an update on the Birmingham and Nottingham offices, NPO/IPSO briefings, and Area Council news, with additional information as follows.5.2 Laura Dyer referred to her update on Music Education Hubs. A member of Area Council was concerned specifically about the timeframe for applications with the summer end of term approaching.  5.3 Simon Fitch referred to the Coventry UK City of Culture item. He said that it was very sad that the Trust had gone into administration. Coventry is concerned that this will reflect badly on the City in terms of funders and Simon has done his best to ensure them that this is not the case. He stressed that great things happened and will continue to happen in Coventry. We need to be careful that the narrative about the Trust does not detract from what has happened previously. Sharon added that there had been very little media attention. 5.4 Peter informed members that Midlands staff had attended an away day recently at Attenborough Arts Centre, Leicester which the Chair also attended. The emphasis of the day was on place making. He said it was a very enjoyable and productive day with a feeling of support amongst staff. 5.5 Peter said the NPO/IPSO briefings for both CEOs and Chairs had now taken place at MAC, Nottingham Contemporary and the Belgrade in Coventry. Overall, these were received very positively and attendance was very good. Area Council members who had attended fed back that there was a sense of excitement and a real desire for networking. Attendees were pro-active in asking questions and coming up with solutions. RMs were commended for their responses to questions at the round table sessions. |
| 1. CHAIR’S UPDATE

6.1 The Chair said that there had been a National Council conversation highlighting the fact that the agendas for Area Council meetings had been of necessity very much CRF and NPO led. They are hoping that over the next year or so a strategic item about the Midlands area can be discussed. We do not want to focus so much on a national agenda item but on that items impact on our region. Therefore, we are going to look to make room on the agenda for the next year or so around regionalising the conversation.6.2 The Chair highlighted that Nick Serota had not had the opportunity to attend a Midlands Area Council meeting and he and the chair were keen to address that over the next period. 6.3 The Chair informed members that at the last National Council meeting there was a long discussion around governance as part of their annual review of effectiveness. External facilitators were supporting the process. The Chair was keen to ensure the opportunity for members to comment and feed into a review of the Chair’s own performance.6.4 He said he would like to thank members, particularly members on RAG and DAG for their work on the inclusion report. 6.6 Laura added that there will be an Area and National Council away day in November. This may replace the planned Area Council meeting.7. MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING FROM THE AREA COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 1 MARCH 20237.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 1 March 2023 were agreed as an accurate record.7.2 There were no matters arising. |
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| 1. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

8.1 There was no other business. |  |
| 1. **DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

**2023*** Wednesday 12 July
* Friday 29 September
* Tuesday 14 and Wednesday 15 November (AC/NC Away Day)

**2024*** Wednesday 6 March
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