

Worthing Arts Council: A strategy for the arts in Worthing



Introduction:

In 2007, Worthing Arts Council member Dan Thompson for the Revolutionary Arts Group proposed a strategy which aimed to raise both the aspirations and achievements of Worthing Arts Council.

This new strategy continues from that work, ensuring that Worthing Arts Council fulfils its original aims and objectives - and reaches its true potential in coming years.

Objective: Increase membership by 25% by July 2008, and encourage more creative industries to join - this includes commercial artists, graphic designers and the new media sector. Ensure significant gaps in the membership are filled.

This objective has been more than achieved, with a membership of less than 20 organisations increased to 50+. Significant gaps in the membership – for example, other representative groups in the town such as the Sunny Worthing Arts Group and Worthing Chamber of Commerce – have been filled. There is still less creative industries membership than was anticipated, but more professional practitioners are represented.

Objective: Ensure the good partnership work started with the Frink campaign is continued, by forming a Public Art Group; a partnership between Worthing Arts Council, The Worthing Society and Worthing Borough Council to ensure high standards for all public art projects in Worthing.

Worthing now has a public art panel, and Worthing Arts Council is well represented here, ensuring it has played a role in public art and public realm regeneration.

An additional objective was to open discussions around establishing an 'empty shop' strategy, to include regular window displays in vacant units, and the Revolutionary Arts Group have led this work and taken it to a national policy level.

Objective: Ensure Worthing Arts Council has a robust structure to enable it to act as a grant-giving body, and lobby for Section 106 and other funding to be distributed via Worthing Arts Council.

Worthing Arts Council has been successful in securing funding to distribute to members: after the success of the Ice Prince Arts Festival, further funding schemes are being developed and will be online in autumn 09.

Objective: The members of Worthing Arts Council are groups, clubs and organisations - and they represent around 5000 participants and members. Ensure that those 5000 are first aware of Worthing Arts Council, and are then kept informed about Worthing Arts Council's activity.

There is still more work needed to ensure members of groups which belong to Worthing Arts Council are informed of the greater work of the council, and this objective needs greater support from Worthing Arts Council members who sit on the committee and attend open meetings.

Objective: Fully support all Worthing Arts Council members to contribute fully to the annual showcase [Artists and Makers Festival] and use funding where available to ensure the sustainability of the Festival.

The Artists and Makers Festival stopped running in 2008, after becoming unsustainable. However the period since 2007-2009 has seen a growth in festival activity in the town, much of it – like the Worthing Open Houses – arising directly from the Artists and Makers Festival.

2009 Summary:

This is a strategy for Worthing Arts Council, covering work from July 2009 – July 2010. It should be evaluated in June 2010, and a new document put in place at that time.

This document works within the original aims of Worthing Arts Council, which form the group's constitution. Worthing Arts Council was formed to foster and to promote the arts in Worthing, aiming to:

- Serve as a co-ordination body for members
- Assist with activities by members
- Arrange advertising and publicity
- Encourage the use and development of educational facilities
- Form relationships with similar bodies elsewhere
- Increase the accessibility of the arts locally

Strategy Aim:

To develop the membership and activity of Worthing Arts Council, ensuring the group plays a key role in the development of Worthing's arts community and creative industries, and helps its members deliver activity which strengthens Worthing as a place to live, work and holiday.

Strategy Objectives:

Objective: Formalise the structure of Worthing Arts Council, to enable continued growth and a robust ability to handle increased membership and further funding.

- Revise the current constitution to ensure committee roles and responsibilities are clearly defined. (by September 09)
- Produce a committee induction pack, so committee members are aware of roles and responsibilities. (by March 10)
- Devise, produce and distribute a membership pack, outlining the work of Worthing Arts Council and ways in which members can become involved. (by September 09)
- Find suitable venues around the town for monthly open meetings, and produce an annual meeting programme. (by Jan 10)

Objective: Continue to act as a grant-giving body, using this to ensure high-quality artwork and events are delivered across the borough.

- Ensure current funding is given in a clear, transparent and easy-to-access scheme. (by Oct 09)
- Where possible use funding to support and develop existing festivals and key calendar events throughout the year, creating 'Regularly Funded Events' if possible. (by March 10)
- Monitor all funding given, and maintain high standards for activity, while respecting artists freedom to test new work, experiment and sometimes fail. (by Sep 10)
- Develop new funding streams with partners such as Worthing Borough Council and Adur District Council to allow future grant-giving activity. (by Sep 10)

Objective: Increase the capacity of Worthing Arts Council to communicate with its membership, future members, media and partners

- Produce an options appraisal looking at communications strategies. (by Nov 09)
- Ensure in the meantime that all communication is effective, reaches members and delivers a strong, clear message. (Immediate)
- Reconsider the tender to build a larger website than the existing stand alone, one-page site, possibly using 'mash-up' technology to draw content from members' websites. (by Nov 10)

Objective: Explore the opportunities created by the Adur and Worthing council partnership working to see Worthing Arts Council work with existing forums and arts organisations

- Informally map similar arts provision in Adur District. (by Mar 10)
- Monitor festivals and regular events across Adur District. (by Mar 10)
- Produce a summary with strategic recommendations. (by AGM Apr 10)

Objective: Lobby for spaces, both permanent and temporary, for use by members to deliver arts activity across the borough.

- Continue to back the empty shops strategy, and ensure this is developed to 'skill up' as many groups as possible to maximise use of void space. (by Dec 09)
- Identify the need from Worthing Arts Council members for studios, rehearsal rooms, performance spaces, galleries and other arts spaces; use funding to ensure this research is completed. (by Dec 09)
- Look at options for either taking control of, or supporting members as they take control of, council-owned assets for example light industrial units, beach chalets, kiosks or shops to achieve the above. (by AGM Apr 10)
- Consider use of outdoor spaces, and how this use could be enhanced by interventions, for example an inflatable stage or bandstand. (by AGM Apr 10)
- Campaign for wider, affordable access to Worthing Leisure buildings including the Museum & Art Gallery, Leisure Centres and Worthing Theatres, particularly where these are under-utilised by Worthing Arts Council members. (by AGM Apr 10)
- Ensure members communicate, to facilitate access to spaces they manage for other Worthing Arts Council members. (Immediate)