

Report to
Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee

14th July 2010

Report of
Councillor Blundell

Title
Report Back on the Work Of Outside Bodies – Coventry Heritage And Arts Trust 2009-2010

1. Purpose of the Report

At their meeting on 10th May 2005, the Cabinet approved a process of reporting back to the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee on the work of those outside bodies appointed to by the City Council. This reports sets out details of the work of Coventry Heritage and Arts Trust over the preceding twelve months and details of attendance by the City Council's representatives.

2. Recommendation

To continue to appoint 2 councillors to the Coventry Heritage And Arts Trust.

3. Information on work of Outside Body

- 3.1 The Coventry Heritage & Arts Trust (the Trust) was founded in April 2008 in order to manage the three key heritage and arts sites in the City- the Herbert Art Gallery and Museum, the Lunt Roman Fort and the Priory Visitor Centre. The Herbert Art Gallery and Museum is Coventry's creative media centre and history centre as well as art gallery and museum, and provides the principal focus of activity.
The Lunt Roman Fort is the only reconstructed Roman wooden fort in Britain and dates from around AD60 and is thought to have been built as a result of the battle between Boudica and the Roman Legions. The Priory Visitor Centre & Undercroft houses the remains of Coventry's first Benedictine Monastery, dissolved by Henry VIII, and following a dig from Channel 4's Time Team displays the remains of many of the medieval buildings, finds and excavations.
- 3.2 The Trust formally assumed responsibility for the services from Coventry City Council in July 2008. Its future is secured with core funding from both the City Council and as one of the five major museums in the West Midlands, funding from the Museums Libraries and Archives Council.
- 3.3 The Herbert Museum & Art Gallery reopened in October 2008 after a £20m Capital redevelopment Project was undertaken. Whilst some facilities had remained open during the phased redevelopment, visitor numbers had reduced from c100,000 in 99/00 to c 55,000 in 07/08.
- 3.4 Under the management of the Trust, The Herbert has sought to establish itself as one of the West Midlands major art galleries & museums through an ambitious programme of work that could not be found elsewhere in the region and thereby develop audiences both from Coventry & throughout the region.

3.5 In the first year of its life, the Trust has seen a dramatic increase in audiences at the Herbert which totalled 220,000 in the full year. During 2009/10 the Trust built on this success and visitor numbers have risen to 319,000-a 45% increase on the previous year. Across all 3 sites, visitor numbers rose by 40.52%

3.6 The Trust has established notable partnerships with the V&A, National Museums Liverpool, British Museum & Natural History Museum amongst others, and through the associated exhibitions, is attracting national, regional and local attention to its work, including the recent award 'Best of the West Midlands' for its Peace & Reconciliation Exhibitions and nomination for the Museums & Heritage Awards for its permanent galleries.

3.7 Community and Education work is a major part of the Herbert's work with extensive education & outreach programmes for children and disadvantaged communities, with the media facilities offering both professional sound and video recording facilities proving particularly effective in work with young people.

3.8 Following the first few months of operation, the true running costs of the Herbert became clear and additional support for the Herbert has been agreed by the Council to meet these.

3.9 The current financial climate continues to pose its problems and the Trust has recently completed a further restructure to reduce costs.

4. Benefits to the city council from the appointment

4.1 Coventry City Council is a major sponsor of Coventry Heritage And Arts Trust, which is a significant contribution to the cultural life of the city and an important vehicle to deliver educational programmes.

5. Attendance record and remuneration for the appointment.

5.1 Coventry City Council's representatives for Coventry Heritage and Arts Trust are Cllr. John Blundell and Cllr. Abdul Khan. During the last year (2009-2010) Cllr. John Blundell has attended four meetings, and Cllr. Abdul Khan has attended one.

5.2 There is no remuneration associated with the appointment

List of background papers

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Papers open to public inspection

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Schedule of City Council Appointments to Outside Bodies