SOUTH DUBLIN COUNTY COUNCIL



**REPORT OF THE ARTS, CULTURE, GAEILGE, HERITAGE & LIBRARIES STRATEGIC POLICY COMMITTEE**

**MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 2nd NOVEMBER 2022**

**Venue: North Clondalkin Library & Microsoft Teams**

**In Attendence:**

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| **Members** | **Council Officials** |
| Cllr. Alan Edge (Chair) | Jason Frehill | Director of Service |
| Cllr. Peter Kavanagh  | Paul Fusco | County Librarian |
| Cllr. Alan Hayes  | Ms. Orla Scannell | Arts Officer |
| Cllr. Mick Duff |  |  |
| Cllr. Teresa Costello |  |  |

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| **Sectoral Members** |
| Elaine Vince O'Hara |

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| **Apologies** |
| Ms. Freda Manweiler, Cllr. Kenneth Egan |

**The meeting was Chaired by Cllr Alan Edge.**

Chair Cllr. Alan Edge opened the meeting at 17:34 following a tour of the North Clondalkin Library and its facilities.

**Item 1: Confirmation of Minutes**

The [minutes](http://intranet/cmas/documentsbyitem.aspx?itemid=76702) of Arts, Culture, Gaeilge, Heritage & Libraries SPC meeting held on 7th September 2022 were proposed by Cllr Alan Edge and seconded by Cllr Peter Kavanagh.

**Agreed.**

**Item 2: Libraries Development Plan**

Paul Fusco, County Librarian, presented a [draft overview](http://intranet/cmas/documentsbyitem.aspx?itemid=76703) on the South Dublin Libraries Development Plan 2023 – 2027 – Our Library Our Future prepared in conjunction with ThinkActionable Consultants. The draft plan sets out South Dublin Libraries (SDL’s) purpose to inspire, support and enable the people of South Dublin to live, learn and thrive by removing barriers to knowledge and information and creating space to think, talk and explore. It affirms SDL’s aspiration to become a benchmark for what a public library can be in terms of engagement, relevance, innovation, and impact. The plan sits within a framework which includes the Libraries Capital programme, the Right to Read programme, Healthy Ireland etc. The high-level overview presented provided an insight into the key challenges and insights identified and the areas and objectives that the plan will be focussed on over the next five years.

The key elements include Expanding and Inspiring our community, Energising our Collection, Curating and Creating our Heritage, Rejuvenating our Physical and Virtual Space and Empowering our Staff. It sets out the Areas we will focus on, how to achieve success in these areas, the capabilities needed to support our efforts and the managerial support required to achieve success. Priority will be given to two distinct areas: growing our active and new membership by focusing on teenagers and young adults and responding to the great challenges facing our communities, societies, and the planet today and into the future.

Underpinning the plan’s success will be its flexibility, it’s responsiveness and it’s appointed Area champions who will be key drivers of the plan’s objectives. South Dublin Libraries will appoint a champion for each Area who will advocate and be responsible for delivery of its objectives and who can draw upon management and staff support and expertise. Each area is interlinked to form a comprehensive and impactful plan. Pathways are outlined to achieving success including the capabilities needed and the leadership and management required to support it. Identifying staff as one of South Dublin Libraries biggest assets, the plan looks to innovate, energise, expand, and empower.

Paul Fusco spoke about the importance of the plan’s success in ensuring that libraries continue to evolve, expand, and become vibrant, adaptable community hubs that have a broader membership base and with multiple uses. He placed particular importance on libraries heritage role, acting as hubs of local heritage both old and new, built, and social. He also spoke of the importance of fostering the Irish language, initially among staff. Paul also proposed that the draft plan be presented to the AGMs in advance of the next Council meeting to get broad input and feedback.

Following the presentation, chair Cllr Alan Edge invited questions from the members.

Cllr Peter Kavanagh, Cllr Alan Hayes, and Cllr Mick Duff commended the plan, it’s focus and flexibility. They acknowledged staff as Libraries greatest asset, liked the idea of edgier spaces and endorsed empowering staff to promote the Irish Language. Cllr Kavanagh agreed with identifying the challenges faced by Libraries and while not trying to become edgy spaces, being open to change and where successes were noted and would recommend the plan’s endorsement to the Council.

Cllr Alan Edge agreed with the Cllr’s comments and endorsed the idea of appointing area champions and the use of action plans. He concurred that the venue reflects the design – edgy spaces being engaging. Responding to Paul Fusco’s reference to South Dublin Libraries score of 53 on the NPS scale, he queried any NPS trends that could be measured across Libraries nationally and Paul will revert on this. Cllr Alan Edge liked the idea of Libraries curating our heritage and discussed their interaction with our existing and new heritage centres.

Jason Frehill noted that learning from the achievements of Think Big Space and the numbers who have already availed of the service that libraries are a resource as a heritage centre which can be used to capture the social history of the next generation and endorsed the idea of their use as hub locations to research family and local history for current and future generations.

Paul Fusco noted that South Dublin Libraries had always been considered creative and innovative, that a flexible adaptive plan was required to build on that and that the new Strategy design wise reflected that. Referencing the difficulty of planning for a situation such as the Covid pandemic he noted that plans need to be adaptive to society’s challenges. He felt that we can take inspiration from how LGBT events were championed and advocated for by staff and that a similar response could be achieved in promotion of the Irish language as referenced in the captured surveyed staff responses.

Responding to Cllr Peter Kavanagh’s enquiry regarding support for staff Champions, Paul Fusco noted that management roles within SDL currently transcended geographic locations and with a small core group based in HQ. He envisaged, the role of Area Champions would naturally map to existing Senior Executive Librarians taking advantage of their areas of expertise and that multiple working groups could be established to assist and support their role. He noted that working groups currently exist within SDL, like the membership group, which encompasses staff across grades and branches.

Paul Fusco confirmed that active membership had risen to 15% assisted through a concerted membership drive but that reaching the National objective of 30% would be challenging.

Ms. Elaine Vince-O’Hara thought the Area Champions were a great idea and suggested that links could be built between SDL and the ETB in common areas such as the Environmental and Sustainability Awareness and contact points could be suggested.

Paul Fusco responded to other questions asked.

Chair Cllr Alan Edge proposed that the Draft Libraries Development Report be put forward to the Council meeting in December and it was seconded by Cllr. Mick Duff.

The report was **Noted**.

**Item 3: Culture and Creative Strategy – Presentation and Discussion**

Orla Scannell presented a [Summary Report](http://intranet/cmas/documentsbyitem.aspx?itemid=76704) on the South Dublin County Culture and Creativity Strategy 2023 – 2027, which is a high level strategy that was prepared in collaboration with consultant Carla Fazio. The plan is moving into the final phase of preparation now and it will provide a framework for ongoing engagement for key policy stakeholders. The aim of the strategy is to strengthen community, economy, space and place by designating Culture and Creativity as the keystone to South Dublin County development and regeneration work. The strategy is a roadmap for the future growth and development of South Dublin by modelling How to place Culture and Creativity at the core of the work.

The vision of the Creative Ireland Programme 2023 – 2027 is to mainstream creativity in the life of the nation, so we can realise our full creative potential thereby promoting individual, community and national wellbeing. The programme will prioritise its work around five aspects which are Creative Youth, Creative Communities, Creative Industries, Creative Health and Wellbeing and Creative Climate Action and Sustainability.  It looks to leverage creativity to strengthen wellbeing, advance social cohesion and support economic development.

The new South Dublin County Cultural and Creative Strategy 2023 – 2027 looks to build on the partnership between SDCC and Creative Ireland expressed through Creative Communities and identifies roles for delivery of the strategy by the Culture and Creativity Team through Advocating, Collaborating, Innovating, Supporting, Giving a platform to and Reflecting. It sets out the ambitious Creative Ireland vision for South Dublin County and identifies the key strengths it will draw on in delivering that vision. It identifies how Creative Communities work through policies, practices, participation and partnership and outlines the four strategic priorities for South Dublin County which will enable us to use culture as an agent for social transformation and change. These priorities are Inspiring spaces, Celebrating Diverse Identities, Equal voices and Leaving it Better.

The South Dublin Culture and Creativity Team are in place to guide and oversee the implementation of this strategy, which will begin next year.

Following the presentation, questions were invited from the members.

Cllr. Alan Hayes thanked Orla for the presentation and noted the strategy’s broad based which transcends people and physical spaces and might therefore be relevant to other SPC’s. Orla Scannell acknowledged that the wide remit of the strategy required ongoing consultation and interaction with other areas such as Planning, Community, LCDC’s etc. She confirmed that further work was anticipated next year to highlight and prioritise areas of work and collaboration so that the SDC Culture and Creative Strategy becomes embedded within their strategies. Acknowledging Cllr. Edge’s reference to the difficulty in measuring outcomes where the core of the strategy aligned more to a vision statement, Orla Scannell confirmed that the Strategy met the requirements set out by the request by Creative Ireland who want to see more strategic alignment with other departments and agencies and for that to be reflected within Council plans nationally.

The report was **Noted**.

**Item 4: Action Items**

Chair Cllr. Alan Edge invited contributions for Action Items.

1. **Libraries Development Plan.**

Cllr Peter Kavanagh enquired as to the level of input possible at the Area Committee Meetings. Cllr Alan Edge noted that the Libraries Development plan, which has now been recommended by the SPC in it’s current format, be available for discussion at the ACM’s in advance of the December Council meeting.

Paul Fusco agreed with Cllr. Peter Kavanagh that an action plan is needed to support the Development Plan and confirmed that ThinkActionable Consultants will be directly involved with devising the first Action plan in the new year.

This item was **Noted**.

**Item 5: Any Other Business**

Chair Cllr. Alan Edge requested items for Any Other Business.

Cllr Alan Edge noted the benefit of visiting North Clondalkin library and confirmed that the SPC rules didn’t encompass changing SPC venue’s and sought views from members regarding the possibility of holding future SPC’s in differing locations. Cllr. Mick Duff thought varied locations was a good idea, giving insight into our facilities. Paul Fusco concurred and confirmed that Libraries could facilitate it.

Cllr. Alan Edge expressed his thanks on behalf of the SPC to Cllr. Peter Kavanagh, who is stepping down, for his contribution and dedication to date and wished him every success in the future. All members of the SPC acknowledged and thanked Peter for his work and commitment and would be sorry to see him go but wished him well

The requests were N**oted**.

Chair Cllr. Alan Edge thanked members for their attendance.

**The meeting concluded at 18:45**