SOUTH DUBLIN COUNTY COUNCIL



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

**MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 3rd May 2023**

**Venue: South Dublin County Council IT Conference Room & Microsoft Teams**

**Attended:**

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| **Members** | **Council Officials** |
| Cllr. Alan Edge (Chair) | Mr. Jason Frehill | Director of Services |
| Cllr. Mick Duff | Ms. Lorna Maxwell | Director of Services |
| Cllr. Teresa Costello | Mr. Paul Fusco | County Librarian |
| Cllr. Mark Lynch | Ms. Orla Scannell | Arts Officer |
|  | Ms. Geraldine O Meara | Senior Executive librarian |
|  | Ms. Rosena Hand | Senior Executive librarian |
|  | Ms. Meabh Butler | Assistant Arts Officer |
|  | Mr. Declan Healy | Communications Manager |

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

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| **External** |
| Mr. Donal Shiels, Artistic Director, The Civic Theatre |

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

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

Chair Cllr. Alan Edge opened the meeting at 17.34 and welcomed everyone including Cllr. Mark Lynch.

**Item 1: Confirmation of Minutes**

The [minutes](http://intranet/cmas/documentsbyitem.aspx?itemid=78926) of Arts, Culture, Gaeilge, Heritage & Libraries SPC meeting held on 1st February 2023 were proposed by Cllr. Mick Duff and seconded by Cllr. Alan Edge .

**Agreed.**

**Item 2: Civic Theatre – Introducing Artistic Director Donal Shiels**

Cllr. Alan Edge, welcomed Mr. Donal Sheils who has been Artistic director of the Civic Theatre for the past seven months. Donal Sheils spoke with enthusiasm about his role and the myriad of opportunities available for promoting increased community engagement across all ages, through multiple artistic disciplines and genres and by using multiple spaces with increased collaboration with Libraries, the Arts, Rua Red and Tallaght Community Theatre.

Reflecting on the current year’s successes to date, Donal expects this year’s attendance will exceed last year’s total of over forty thousand at the Civic’s performances and artistic functions.

Looking to capture new audiences, in March, the Civic hosted a very successful, innovative and experimental stage show called PL AI – a performance piece where an artificial intelligence generated script was instantly created from audience prompts and then acted by three actors. This novel event was free, open to all ages and drew considerable media attention.

The Scratch mini festival for children is currently running and The Civic Theatre is looking forward to hosting three preview Edinburgh Fringe festival performances before they head to Scotland. Donal spoke about their commitment to providing opportunities for local artists across multiple disciplines and making Art more accessible across all demographics. To that end, Donal spoke of their plans to move more events into the community to help break down barriers and increase visibility. A new Dance Company in Residence – Honey and Lemon - will provide a focus on dance and be available for outreach & community events. Promotion of diverse musical genres will also include a focus on Classical music and Opera. Donal noted Comedy events ongoing popularity and the importance of the local amenities, such as parking, transport and food outlets in encouraging repeat attendances. Looking forward to a very busy and diverse line up of events including the Comedy Circus, Victor – Kid V rapper, Performing Arts summer school and the Redline Festival, Donal re-iterated that The Civic is keen to explore opportunities through technology such as V.R. and to forge ongoing links and dialog with organisations such as Tallaght University. With audiences returning, Donal acknowledged the challenge of keeping audiences engaged and reinforced The Civic’s continuing focus on maintaining community links, pursuing new audiences and reaching out to new communities such as Adamstown. The Civic is also looking forward to the newly developed County Hall square and the collaborative opportunities that will bring.

Looking to the Civic Theatre itself, Donal noted that staff in the Civic, although benefiting from a remote working policy continue to attend primarily in person. Changes to The Civic Theatre’s board are ongoing with an expectation that a full new board will be in place by year end and a three year Art’s Council business plan is being developed.

Chair Cllr. Alan Edge thanked Donal for the amazing work being done, acknowledged The Civic’s happy working environment, welcomed the opportunities created for local artists and was excited about extending its reach through Music, technology and the new Dance Group in Residence.

Cllr. Mick Duff and Mr. Jason Frehill also congratulated Donal’s enthusiasm and vibrancy and wished him well with the upcoming programmes and looked forward to outdoor space performances and opportunities brought about through improved links with Rua Red, Libraries, Arts and ongoing links with Tallaght community Theatre.

Mr. Donal Sheils responded to questions raised, re-affirmed that he welcomed feedback and input to future plans and stated that he felt there was scope to examine collaborations and opportunities around the new County Square space, Halloween festival, a possible future music festival and the use of food and the medium of dance and music to break down barriers.

The report was **Noted**.

**Item 3: Arts Office – Cruinniú na nÓg programme 2023**

Ms. Meabh Butler, Assistant Arts Officer, presented a report on [Cruinniú na nÓg](http://intranet/cmas/documentsbyitem.aspx?itemid=78928) which empowers children and young people to develop their creative expression by providing opportunities for them to participate in free creative activities in their local area. It’s Ireland’s national day for ‘doing’, ‘making’ and ‘creating’ and funding is provided by Creative Ireland and this year is the first time that Northern Ireland takes part. This year Cruinniú na nÓg will take place on Saturday 10th June across the country. The SDCC Arts office ran an open call for projects in February of this year and received 28 applications from individuals and organisations throughout South Dublin. The open call was for any and all creative activities, performances, readings, workshops, interactive installations, etc to take place either on the 10th June and shoulder dates. 18 Projects across short- and long-term categories in Adamstown, Lucan, Clondalkin, Perrystown, Tallaght and Greenhills were chosen by a selection panel that consisted of a 9 year old and an external arts advisor from outside of the county and activities awarded include theatre, music, visual arts and circus. Building on last year Meabh discussed closed interactive workshop events for children attending Tallaght children’s Hospital called ‘Umbra – shadow of light’. Also included were Freshly Ground Theatre who present ‘Sióg’ where fairy folklore and the environment will be explored through creative making sessions and ‘Creative Circus with Fadi Zmorrod’ where creative circus workshops aim to foster diversity through dance, movement and creative activities. ‘Belonging’ for children and young people who have recently arrived in Ireland, together with local artists, will create panels of symbols and words representing themselves which will be shown in Rua Red on Cruinniú na nÓg. ‘Meabh noted that public announcements regarding the full final itinerary will be made on May 18th and that ‘Song Tales’ a musical extravaganza, wand making and storytelling creative workshops will form part of Lucan’s Ruaille Buaille Music festival which will extend to Adamstown this year.

Following the presentation, Cllr. A. Edge, Cllr. Mick Duff, Cllr. Mark Lynch and Ms. Elaine Vince O'Hara thanked Meabh and congratulated the exciting range of diverse projects across the community and County and the inclusion of children in the selection process. Meabh responded to questions.

The report was **Noted**.

**Item 4: Our Library, Our Future – SDL Champions**

1. Rosena Hand, Senior Executive librarian, presented a report on her new champion role in [Equality, Diversity & Inclusion](http://intranet/cmas/documentsbyitem.aspx?itemid=78929) (EDI) within South Dublin Libraries (SDL) which overlaps with Geraldine O Meara’s champion role for Innovation & Creativity. Rosena addressed the five areas of Workforce Diversity, Physical Accessibility, Celebrating Neurodiversity, reaching out to Marginalised communities and Plans going forward. SDL’s staffing level of 110, breaks down as 95% white Irish, 83% over 40, 64% female and with English, Irish, Polish, Greek, Spanish and Afrikans spoken. Rosena noted that under-representations and disparities can be examined in more detail when the breakdown of the 2022 census figures are available. Rosena examined SDCC resources including Social Inclusion Officer, Access & Equality Officer, disability advisory & Consultative officer and an active LGBTQ+ staff network. She listed existing policies and procedures which aim to ensure diversity, inclusion and equality within the workplace and asked How do we encourage a more diverse workforce into SDL? Rosena spoke about SDL compliance with regulations for physical accessibility into SDL service point for wheelchair users. She outlined the measures taken to improve access for users with visual impairment, including staff awareness training & branch audits by NCBI, collaboration with NCBI in an expanding collection of Braille books and the Pilot of ‘The Fact Factory’ magazine. Rosena addressed the commitment of SDL to improving access for neurodiverse patrons which includes ongoing staff training, adapted physical environments, specialist equipment, sensory tools, accessible garden areas, adapted collections, specialised neuro diverse programming and events, ongoing collaborations with specialist organisations and finally outreach events. SDL have an extensive range of assistive technology including Tovertafel tables ( Neurodiverse/dementia), TTRS programme (assisting with Dyslexia & Dyspraxia), Tilt & Touch Table (learning &Sensory needs), C-pen scanners (reading & understanding)and Acorn tablets targeted to be Age Friendly. Looking ahead Rosena discussed planned rebranding of TTT (Toys Technology Training) to ‘Neuro Diverse South’, possible additional sensory equipment including a ‘Sensory Cubbie’, expansion of SDL neuro-diverse childrens collections and support collections for adults. Rosena discussed outreach and services to support marginalised communities including non-nationals and the travelling community. Rosena outlined SDL plans, using the Champion roles to build on current resources, adapted space, staff training, collections, collaborations, programming and community outreach to further the aim of embedding EDI in SDL services.

Cllr. Alan Edge thanked Rosena for a very engaging presentation and held questions and contributions until after the next presentation.

1. Geraldine O Meara, Senior Executive librarian, presented a report on the [Innovation & Creativity](http://intranet/cmas/documentsbyitem.aspx?itemid=78929) champion role, it’s aims, objectives and place within the Libraries Development Plan . Geraldine explained that Innovation has been deemed a critical requirement for all Public Service Organisations to progress the development and delivery of services both today and for tomorrow. SDCC has presented its Innovation Strategy 2022-2024. The strategy aims to harness the power of innovation to deliver world class public services in South Dublin. For libraries, Innovation is about delivering today and shaping tomorrow and they now aim to foster a culture of Innovation, to develop processes and practices in this area, to encourage the development and use of technology to deliver high quality services and support collaborations and partnerships between the library and both local and national organisations. Geraldine noted that to **foster a culture of innovation** we need to lead with vision, empower staff and challenge the norm. Libraries will offer staff opportunities to develop and upskill. This in turn will equip them with the tools to innovate. Library staff recently attended Maynooth University to meet with students completing an innovation Masters Class. Before meeting the students had been given an overview of SDL and the challenges facing the library service. They were tasked with looking at our Library Development Plan from a Design Innovation viewpoint and then presented their ideas for the future of the library service to some of our library staff. The staff hugely enjoyed the session and feedback was positive . They were given the opportunity to go outside the library environment, to engage with non-users and think about libraries and our services are delivered from another perspective. As a result of this trip to Maynooth an Innovation library working group has been created.

Geraldine gave examples of how the innovation approach was successfully applied through pilot projects, including the extended opening hours of Palmerstown Library Hub and the Neurodiversity Programme and said **pilot projects** will continue to be used as a tool in delivering innovative services.

South Dublin Libraries also recognises the potential for **collaborations and partnerships** as a source of innovation and creativity. The Think Big Space partnership with AWS was highlighted and video clip shown of STEAM in action in the space. Think Big Space won an excellence in local government award last year in the innovation category. This shows us that working in partnership across sectors and organisations can scale up innovation.

In order to continue to foster innovation, support and encouragement for new ideas and experimentation will be provided. Staff training and skillsets will be captured on a skills database and we will regularly assess and evaluate the library’s culture of innovation.

Geraldine and Rosena gave a Demonstration of innovative assistive technology that is now available in South Dublin Libraries, to all those in attendance. Technology and equipment shown included the Tovertafel “magic table”, C Reader Pens, Fact Factory Magazine for those with reading difficulties and Sensory boxes.

Cllr. Alan Edge, thanked Rosena and Geraldine for their amazing, informative, fun and inspirational presentations and stated that Libraries were at the forefront in pushing innovation, diversity and equality.

Cllr. Mick Duff, Cllr. Mark Lynch and Ms. Elaine Vince O Hara congratulated both and expressed their appreciation of the excellent learning supports available through libraries which promote inclusion through such fun mediums.

Mr. Paul Fusco thanked Rosena and Geraldine for their interactive presentations, for the enthusiasm of the Libraries management team in adopting the new Champion roles and expressed his wish for other role champions to present at the September SPC when it will be possible to report back on the work done to date.

Mr. Jason Frehill said the work being done by Libraries was inspirational and that the entire team was pushing the boundaries of innovation the nature and scale of which was of national significance.

The reports were **Noted**.

**Item 5: Corporate Communications – Irish Language Act Update**

Ms. Lorna Maxwell, Director of Services, introduced herself and Mr. Declan Healy, Communications Manager, and their role in the implementation of the Irish Language Act and promotion of Irish within the Council and County. Declan presented [an update](http://intranet/cmas/documentsbyitem.aspx?itemid=78930) on the Irish Language Requirements as set out in the Irish Language Act 2003, whose main objective is to promote the use of Irish Language for official purposes in the state. South Dublin County Council (SDCC) has an Irish Language Scheme (ILS) in place till December 2023, which outlines, through a comprehensive list of services, what services SDCC will offer through Irish, through English and Bilingually. Declan outlined the specific requirements under the Act and also the Official Languages (Amendment) Act, 2021 enacted in December 2021 and enforced in January 2023 and discussed how that will effect service delivery.

Under The Amendment Act, which strengthens the language rights of Irish speakers, there is a new statutory obligation, for public bodies in relation to advertising, general communications and commercial communications which engage with the public. SDCC will comply with the requirements of 20% of all advertising/communications done in Irish, 5% of advertising budget outlay on Irish Language specific channels, self-auditing and an annual submission to An **Coimisinéir** **Teanga.** To assist with meeting these requirements and to raise awareness, SDCC will engage an Irish Language Officer who will also assist with in-house translation services. Certain Departments must ensure that communications are done in both languages and self-audit this. Professional translation services will be required for official documents. Demand for Irish Language services will increase so more Irish Language speakers will be required. Staff training, service delivery and budget for translation services will be impacted.

Cllr. Alan Edge thanked Declan for his presentation and invited questions from the members.

Cllr. Mick Duff welcomed the return of an Irish Language Officer and would like to see in-house training which Councillors could also benefit from. Ms. Lorna Maxwell confirmed that libraries currently provide Irish Language courses and would encourage staff to attend.

Cllr. Alan Edge congratulated the work done to date and how proactive SDCC are being with supporting the implementation of the Act, acknowledged the additional time and resources required and enquired about the demand for reports provided in Irish.

Ms. Lorna Maxwell and Mr. Declan Healy responded to questions raised, confirmed current demand was small for Irish Language reports and acknowledged the need to balance the use of public means to effectively support Irish Language speakers and the requirements of the implementation of the updated Irish Language Act.

The report was No**ted**.

**Item 6 : Action Items**

Chair Cllr. Alan Edge invited contributions for Action Items.

No items were raised.

**Item 7: Any Other Business**

Chair Cllr. Alan Edge invited contributions for Any Other Business.

No items were raised.

Chair Cllr. Alan Edge thanked members for their attendance.

**The meeting concluded at 19:10**