

SOUTH DUBLIN COUNTY COUNCIL



REPORT OF THE ARTS, CULTURE, HERITAGE, GAEILGE & LIBRARIES SPC

MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 2ND SEPTEMBER @17:30

Venue - South Dublin County Council IT Conference Room & Microsoft Teams

Attended:

Members	Sectoral Members
Cllr. Louise Dunne (Chair)	
Cllr. Dean Donnelly	
Cllr. Eoin Ó Broin	
Cllr. Gino Kenny	
Cllr. Sarah Barnes	

Apologies:

Elaine Vince O'Hara, Emma Kennedy, Cllr. Glen Moore, Noel Gavin, Yemi Ojo.

Officials present:

Sile Coleman, Acting County Librarian
Brenda Shannon, Acting Senior Executive Officer
Sarah McHugh, Senior Executive Librarian
Maolíosa Boyle, Artistic Director, Rua Red
Gerry Horan, NOISE Music Programme Manager

Minute-taker:

Geraldine O'Meara, Senior Executive Librarian

The meeting was Chaired by Cllr. Louise Dunne.

Chair Cllr. Louise Dunne opened the meeting at 5.33pm, welcomed everyone and thanked Cllr. Sarah Barnes for facilitating as chair at the last Arts Culture Gaeilge Heritage & Libraries SPC meeting held on the 6th May.

Headed Item 1: Confirmation of Minutes

The minutes of the Arts Culture Gaeilge Heritage & Libraries SPC meeting held on 6th May 2026 were proposed by Cllr. Sarah Barnes and seconded by Cllr. Dean Donnelly.

Agreed.

Chair Cllr. Dunne enquired and confirmed there were no matters arising.

Headed Item 2: Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty

Ms. Brenda Shannon, Acting Senior Executive Officer, delivered a presentation on the implementation of the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty within South Dublin County Council.

The presentation outlined the statutory obligations placed on public bodies under Section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014, requiring public bodies to have regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and treatment, and protect the human rights of staff, service users and policy beneficiaries.

Members were advised that the Duty applies across the protected grounds under equality legislation, including gender, age, disability, race, religion, sexual orientation, membership of the Traveller Community and socio-economic status.

The presentation highlighted the distinction between the ongoing obligation under Section 42(1) and the strategic planning and reporting requirements under Section 42(2). It also outlined the Council's Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty Framework, which was updated and published in December 2025.

The potential of the Duty to promote a proactive and evidence-based approach to equality and human rights, improve accessibility of services, enhance employee wellbeing and support organisational culture change was discussed.

Members were provided with an overview of the Council's methodology for implementation, including equality and human rights impact assessments, staff training, consultation with staff and service users, and incorporation of Duty principles into key plans, policies and strategies. Examples provided included the Age Friendly Strategy, Tenant Participation Strategy, Staff Mobility and Transfer Policy and Sustainable Procurement Policy.

The role of SPCs in supporting implementation of the Duty was outlined, particularly in verifying that equality and human rights impact assessments are undertaken as part of the development of policies, plans and strategies.

Chair Cllr. Louise Dunne thanked Ms. Brenda Shannon for her presentation and invited questions from Members.

Chair Cllr. Dunne asked whether the presentation would be delivered at future Council meetings to allow councillors an opportunity to consider the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty Framework and raise any questions arising.

Ms. Shannon advised that training for councillors could be arranged. She explained that the current approach was to introduce and highlight the framework through each Strategic Policy Committee in the first instance, before considering any further briefing sessions.

Chair Cllr. Dunne welcomed the inclusion of socio-economic disadvantage and poverty considerations within the framework and sought clarification regarding the nine equality grounds.

Ms. Shannon explained that the framework reflects all nine grounds covered under equality legislation. She noted that individuals may experience discrimination across more than one ground simultaneously, for example age and sexual orientation, and that this intersectionality is recognised within the framework.

Ms. Shannon further advised that the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty Framework incorporates the latest guidance issued by the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission and ensures the Council's approach remains compliant with its statutory obligations.

Ms. Shannon confirmed that links to the framework would be circulated to Members and invited anyone with further queries to contact the Council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion team at edi@sdublincoco.ie.

The report was **Noted**.

Headed Item 3: The RePlay Festival and Creative and Active programme

Mr. Gerry Horan, SDCC Arts Office, delivered a presentation on the Creative and Active Programme and the inaugural RePlay Festival.

Members were advised that Creative and Active is a place-based programme designed to connect creativity, physical activity and community life through free, local opportunities, promoting participation, social connection and positive use of public spaces.

The programme is delivered through two strands:

- A youth-led programme focused on music, dance and movement.
- An "Activate a Space" model which delivers pop-up and seasonal activities in public spaces and community settings.

An update was provided on programme delivery to August 2026.

- 104 workshops had been delivered across 12 locations.
- 272 participants had engaged in the music strand.
- The dance strand had recorded 185 participant attendances and was expanding to a fifth location.

The presentation highlighted the programme's positive impacts, including increased confidence among participants, development of creative skills, progression opportunities through performances and showcases, and strong partnership working between arts, community, schools, sports organisations and youth services.

Members also received an update on the inaugural **RePlay Festival**, which took place at Parthalán Place on 15 August 2026. The free, all-ages street arts festival attracted 1,873 attendees and featured over 50 performers, artists, vendors and community groups. Activities included skateboarding, roller skating, live music, DJs, street

dance, mural and graffiti activities, family programming and sensory-friendly activities.

The festival was supported by a programme of outreach and engagement activities including skate park initiatives, community upcycling projects, music development workshops and youth-led content creation. Members noted that the festival provided a significant public platform for participation, street culture and community engagement in South Dublin County Council's newest civic space.

The presentation concluded by outlining key learnings from the programme, including the importance of participation-led activity, early community outreach, linking local programmes to public events and strengthening evaluation and impact measurement.

Members welcomed the success of both the Creative and Active Programme and the RePlay Festival and acknowledged their contribution to community development, youth engagement and cultural participation across the County.

Chair Cllr. Louise Dunne congratulated Mr. Gerry Horan on the success of the programme and invited questions from Members.

Cllr. Eoin Ó Broin thanked Mr. Horan for his presentation and noted the breadth of activity delivered through the programme. He enquired about how the skateboarding activities had been promoted and communicated to participants.

Mr. Horan advised that both Noise Music and Sofft Productions had promoted the activities through their established social media channels and networks, helping to reach the target audience.

Cllr. Ó Broin also asked for Mr. Horan's views on incorporating musical play features, such as outdoor xylophones and drums, into Council parks and playgrounds.

Mr. Horan responded that he was very supportive of opportunities to integrate music into public spaces wherever possible and welcomed initiatives that encouraged creative engagement in everyday settings.

Chair Cllr. Louise Dunne noted that she had not encountered advertising for the programme and queried whether it had been targeted primarily at the participating communities. She also asked whether there were plans to expand the programme to additional areas in 2027.

Mr. Horan advised that the programme had been largely promoted within the communities involved through local partners and participating organisations. He further noted that there are plans to expand the programme next year, including partnerships with Irish Beatbox and additional skateboarding organisations, and that work is ongoing to identify suitable spaces to support this expansion.

The report was **noted**.

Headed Item 4: Red Line Book Festival 2026 Preview

Sarah McHugh, Senior Executive Librarian, delivered a presentation on the upcoming **Red Line Book Festival 2026**.

Members were advised that 2026 marks the fifteenth anniversary of the festival, which will take place from 12 to 18 October 2026. The programme will comprise more than 40 events across 13 venues and will feature over 70 writers and performers.

The festival programme will include events covering fiction, crime writing, politics, memoir, history, poetry, music, performance and family programming. Featured guests include Sarah Waters, Emmet Kirwan, Sophie Hannah, Mary Kennedy, Justine Stafford and others.

Members heard that events would take place across the County including:

- Tallaght Library
- Ballyroan Library
- Castletymon Library
- Clondalkin Library
- North Clondalkin Library
- Palmerstown Library
- Lucan Library
- The Civic Theatre
- Rua Red
- Parthalán Place
- Áras Chrónáin and other venues.

The presentation highlighted the Festival's continued commitment to accessibility through free library events, free children's programming, affordable ticket pricing and expanded Irish Sign Language interpretation. The popular Family Fun Day will also return as part of the programme.

Members were advised that the Festival's work extends beyond the festival week itself, through initiatives including the Songwriter in Residence Programme, poetry competitions and workshops.

Members welcomed the breadth of the programme and the continued countywide reach of the Festival.

Cllr. Eoin Ó Broin asked whether there was any data available on where festival audiences travelled from and the geographic reach of the festival.

Ms. McHugh advised that attendance data indicates that the majority of festival audiences attend events within their local library area. She noted that the festival team is seeking to gather more qualitative audience data as part of this year's festival. While audiences are known to attend from neighbouring local authority areas, including Dublin City and Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown, the majority of attendees are from South Dublin County. She also highlighted that shuttle buses were provided from the North Clondalkin area to selected events in The Civic during the previous festival to support access and participation.

Chair Cllr. Louise Dunne asked whether the writers' workshops would be delivered online or in person.

Ms. McHugh confirmed that all workshops would be delivered in person. She noted that some workshops are scheduled in the evenings to improve accessibility for those unable to attend during daytime hours. Ms. McHugh further advised that there are no online events in the current programme, reflecting a broader return to in-person cultural events. However, she noted that the inclusion of online events may be considered as part of future Red Line Book Festival programmes.

The report was **noted**.

Headed Item 5: Relevant, Relatable, Radical: Rua Red South Dublin Arts Centre Strategy 2026-2032

Maolíosa Boyle, Director, Rua Red South Dublin Arts Centre, delivered a presentation on the organisation's new Strategic Plan 2026-2032.

The presentation outlined the development of the strategy, which was informed by a two-year consultation and engagement process involving staff, board members, artists, stakeholders and community representatives.

Members heard that since opening in 2009, Rua Red has become a key component of the County's cultural infrastructure, welcoming approximately 230,000 visitors annually and hosting over 4,600 events, exhibitions, workshops, classes and performances each year.

The strategy is built around the values of being Relevant, Relatable and Radical and reaffirms Rua Red's role as a contemporary arts centre committed to inclusion, diversity, artistic excellence and community engagement.

The six strategic goals set out within the plan are:

1. To be a human-centred organisation that welcomes everyone.
2. To commission new work in the context of contemporary social and cultural issues.
3. To question and re-imagine who art is for in a changing world.
4. To provide space, support and opportunities for artists to work in a respectful and dignified environment.
5. To learn and grow with communities.
6. To develop and expand Rua Red's facilities and infrastructure.

Key priorities include increasing cultural participation, supporting artists through fair pay and studio provision, strengthening engagement with under-represented communities, expanding educational partnerships and contributing to the social, cultural and economic development of Tallaght and South Dublin County.

The presentation also highlighted future ambitions to expand studio accommodation, strengthen sustainability measures, increase collaboration with partners and continue developing Rua Red as a welcoming, accessible and internationally recognised arts centre.

Members welcomed the strategy and commended the organisation's commitment to artistic excellence, inclusion and community engagement.

Chair Cllr. Louise Dunne thanked Ms. Boyle for her presentation and invited questions from Members.

Chair Cllr. Dunne welcomed the strategy and particularly the principle that “Art is for Everyone”. She reflected on her own experience of having little interest in art during her school years, contrasting this with her more recent enjoyment of exhibitions and cultural events. She referenced a visit with her grandson to the Mountain People Exhibition in Rua Red and noted the positive impact it had on his engagement with art. She commended Rua Red for its work in encouraging young people and families to participate in and enjoy the arts.

Chair Cllr. Dunne also asked about visitor numbers at Rua Red, noting that attendance can be lower during the summer months, and enquired whether the organisation reduces its programme of events during this period.

Ms. Boyle advised that Rua Red continues to deliver a full programme throughout the year, including during the summer months, despite seasonal fluctuations in attendance. She explained that the organisation develops a range of engagement initiatives, such as the Mountain People Exhibition, which provide different entry points for audiences to experience and engage with contemporary art. She noted that

offering diverse and accessible programming is an important part of attracting new audiences and encouraging wider participation.

Chair Cllr. Dunne suggested that Rua Red may wish to present its new strategy to the Economic Development and Tourism SPC, noting the important contribution that arts and culture make to tourism and place-making within the County. She also expressed support for the future expansion of arts infrastructure in South Dublin and the provision of additional space to accommodate larger arts and cultural events.

The report was **noted**.

Headed Item 6: Any Other Business

Chair Cllr. Dunne invited contributions for Any Other Business.

No additional items were raised.

Chair Cllr. Louise Dunne thanked members for their attendance and contributions..

The meeting concluded at 6.46pm.