

**27 November, 2012**

**Growing the creative industries in Walsall**

**Ward(s)**                      All

**Portfolios:**    Cllr A Andrew - Regeneration

**Executive Summary:**

Previous reports to the panel looking at this topic have presented feedback from focus groups with creative industries based in Walsall and data from a number of creative businesses that have contacted Regeneration over the last seven months with various queries and requests for assistance. This paper presents a number of options for addressing demands and barriers identified by those companies with a view to presenting selected activity to be discussed by cabinet for potential implementation by Walsall Council.

**Reason for scrutiny:**

The Creative and Digital Industries sector is a significant employer in the UK and contributes a similar proportion of National GDP to the manufacturing sector, with strong growth potential being predicted.

It is recognised that areas such as Bristol, Manchester and Birmingham have established a vibrant and growing creative and digital industries sector. The Regeneration and Scrutiny Panel has expressed a wish to explore how Walsall may exploit the opportunities created through this sector for our economy.

It is also understood that the sector can support the place-making and cultural offer of areas where it is established, such as town centres, which in turn attracts both visitors and employers.

**Recommendations:**

**That the Panel presents to Cabinet a list of actions that could be implemented by Walsall Council to help grow its creative and digital industries based on the list of suggestions contained within this report.**

**Background papers:**

John Howkins (2007) *The Creative Economy: How People Make Money From Ideas*  
Department of Culture, Media and Sport (2011) *The Creative Industries Economic Assessment*  
Department of Culture, Media and Sport (2008) *Creative Britain – New Talents for a New Economy*

Office of National Statistics (2010) *UK Business – Activity , Size and Location*  
NESTA (2008) *Beyond Creative Industries*  
*Walsall Local Economic Assessment* (2011)  
*Black Country Local Economic Assessment* (2011)  
Previous papers from 2012 to Walsall Council Regeneration Scrutiny and  
Performance Panel on *Growing the Creative Industries in Walsall*

### **Resource and legal considerations:**

Resource and legal considerations will be presented in an options appraisal if agreed by the panel. The report authors will prepare the reports in the recommendation as part of their existing work programmes.

### **Citizen impact:**

There are considerable benefits for citizens from growing the creative and digital industries in Walsall, most notably around employment opportunities in areas that are matched more closely with the aspirations of young people, the potential for the sector to attract investment in leisure and retail activity, and new community-led development activity funded by Arts Lottery and Heritage Lottery.

### **Environmental impact:**

Any environmental impact of general support for the creative and digital industries is likely to be negligible. There may be instances of where specific support for one-off events or festivals will generate noise or car parking issues for example, but these would be managed via existing procedures such as licensing.

### **Performance management:**

Supporting the creative and digital sector has the potential to improve outcomes in Council priority areas by assisting economic growth, engaging people through arts and culture to improve health and well-being and improve community cohesion.

Together with the ability to link to existing key employment sectors as creative industries support growth by playing an important role within these sectors.

### **Equality Implications:**

No impact assessment has been prepared in association with this report.

### **Consultation:**

Various artists and business owners in Walsall

### **Contact Officers:**

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## Report

### 1. Responding to customer demand from creative businesses and people

1.1 Since starting work preparing information to present the Regeneration Scrutiny and Performance Panel around supporting Walsall's creative industries, a total of 19 creative businesses have contacted Regeneration Services with various business support needs. In addition, the Creative Development Team has met with nine local designer-makers, six practising artists/photographers and around 10 others through the Caldmore Housing Artists' group.

1.2 The demands of those customers are presented in the table below, together with solutions that the Council is already delivering or developing:

Customer demand	Existing activity
Help me organise events	Walsall Town Team, District Centres Team, Walsall Music Festival, Creative Development Team, Countryside Services
Help me promote my goods/services	Website, pop-up shop, night market, <a href="http://www.finditinwalsall.co.uk">www.finditinwalsall.co.uk</a>
Help me find and win business opportunities	<a href="http://www.finditinwalsall.co.uk">www.finditinwalsall.co.uk</a>
Help me recruit skilled staff	Support into jobs fairs, Walsall Works
Help me find accommodation	Property search
Help me develop my staff	Working with Walsall College/WACC to identify demand and develop training

### 2. Tackling barriers faced by creative businesses and people

2.1 If the sample group were facing barriers outside their immediate control to meeting their demands, we have recorded them below, again with possible solutions:

Barriers	Possible solution
(Perceived) lack of suitable premises	Publicise property search service more widely, engage with commercial agents and landlords to increase effectiveness, encourage agents to market to C&D sector, Council to broker shared leases with interested tenants
Size of sector makes it difficult to attract sufficient numbers to events	Publicise Black Country-wide, more intensive marketing (phone, direct mail), engage with existing support providers to hold events in Walsall
Networking events attended by other service providers rather than potential clients	Organise industry-specific and invitation only events, promotion of social networking as an alternative
Lack of demand for goods/services	Encourage diversification and innovation, support for marketing, promotion of existing business support
Lack of existing or potential skilled labour	Assist training providers to identify demand and funding to develop training courses, support businesses to create their own training provision (through Ownership of Skills pilot etc)
Low visibility of cultural events (esp. compared to Birmingham)	Expand event provision, improve quality, more niche activity

	Increased marketing (including Creative Walsall website, art trails, social media)
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**3. A list of options to take to cabinet**

3.1 The table in Appendix shows activities which could be developed and delivered by Walsall Council either independently or together with partner organisations to meet the demands and remove the barriers identified by customers above, together with existing examples.

3.2 Further investigation of the options considered most suitable by members, including a more comprehensive understanding of required resources and potential sources of funding, will be presented to cabinet.

Activity	Examples	Impact	Cost
Niche festivals	<a href="#">Supersonic Festival</a> “For one weekend each year Digbeth’s arches vibrate with strange, wonderful sounds as the Custard Factory becomes the focal point for one of the UK’s most distinctive and respected music festivals”	M	M
	<a href="#">Battle of Ideas</a> (London, but at various locations nationally) “The Battle of Ideas festival [was] initiated by the Institute of Ideas. The purpose remains to make virtues of free-thinking and dissent, and spark public conversations on the key issues facing society. We aim to foster an atmosphere of intellectual freedom, and the open-ended exploration of the ideas that are shaping policy and culture.”		
Markets (niche craft etc)	Walsall Night Market	H	M
Pop-up shops	Created in Birmingham <a href="http://www.createdinbirmingham.com/bullring-shop/">http://www.createdinbirmingham.com/bullring-shop/</a> “The Created in Birmingham shop (in the Bullring) stocked photography, illustration, tees, tote bags, jewellery, books and all sorts of other things that had been made locally. It also featured events and collaborations.”	L	M
Marketing for the creative & digital sector in Walsall. E.g website, arts trail, social media presence	The designGAP is part of “a not-for-profit organization, which assists creatives with the promotion of their work made in the UK. All designGAP members are listed on <a href="http://www.creativegaps.co.uk">www.creativegaps.co.uk</a> . All members are based in the UK and have been selected for their contemporary and innovative creativity”.	M	H
	Rochford Arts Trail <a href="http://www.rochford.gov.uk/leisure_culture_and_tourism/events_and_activities/rochford_art_trail">http://www.rochford.gov.uk/leisure_culture_and_tourism/events_and_activities/rochford_art_trail</a> “The Rochford Art Trail supports over 100 local artists to connect with local businesses by exhibiting artworks in shop windows, retail premises and public spaces around the town of Rochford. Local residents and visitors to the area can follow the trail using a specially created map.”	M	L
Walsall creative industries network (real or virtual)	Creative Enterprise <a href="http://creativeenterprisecoventry.wordpress.com/">http://creativeenterprisecoventry.wordpress.com/</a> “is a new support initiative, part funded by the ERDF, aimed at creative graduates, new enterprises and established businesses based within the West Midlands. We are offering a range of free services and opportunities, including networking events, workshops, mentoring, consultancy, business advice and guidance and workspace.”	H/M	H/M
	West Midlands Creative Sector LinkedIn group – online group hosted by LinkedIn aimed at creative businesses across the West Midlands. It currently has approximately 500 members.	L	L
Workshops targeted at the sector in identified topics	Birmingham Screen Image Network <a href="http://www.bsin.co.uk">www.bsin.co.uk</a> “is a network for practitioners of moving image production. It is aimed at those who produce video, film and other associated moving image media. It meets monthly and is intended as a free informal networking opportunity for people to pitch, promote, share ideas, ask questions and mutually benefit from those around the table.”	L	M
Employment fairs targeted at the sector	<a href="#">Walsall Jobs Fair</a> “The Walsall Jobs Fair took place at Walsall College’s Wisemore Campus on Thursday 22nd September, attracting hundreds of enquiries from people interested in permanent vacancies and temporary work over the Christmas period.”	M	M
Collaborative	Brokering relationships between artists looking to rent studio space but who cannot afford to commit to a	L	L

projects	lease individually.		
	Support for collaborative funding bids between artists or creative businesses to access grant funding for large amounts of capital expenditure	L	L
	<a href="#">Group attendance at trade shows</a> “Join Hong Kong's GREAT Week of Creativity - a major event for UK companies looking for business opportunities in Hong Kong, Mainland China and into wider Asian Markets. Organised by UKTI, the Foreign Office and the British Council, The GREAT Week of Creativity will see one of the largest combined UK business delegations ever to visit Hong Kong and a range of support is available to companies wishing to participate.”	L	M/L
Learning & Development; collaborative activity between designers and manufacturers	Employer-ownership of skills <a href="http://www.ukces.org.uk/news/Press-releases/2012/Sep/165m-skills-boost-from-employer-ownership-pilot">http://www.ukces.org.uk/news/Press-releases/2012/Sep/165m-skills-boost-from-employer-ownership-pilot</a> was set up to “encourage employers to take the lead in designing, developing and delivering the training and employment solutions they need.”	M	L
	<a href="http://www.graduateadvantage.co.uk/employers">http://www.graduateadvantage.co.uk/employers</a> “Graduate Advantage is adept in supporting high growth SMEs looking to take on graduates for the first time. We have had graduates complete internships in all business sectors with projects”	L	L
	Wolverhampton University placements <a href="http://www.wlv.ac.uk/default.aspx?page=30244">http://www.wlv.ac.uk/default.aspx?page=30244</a> “The University of Wolverhampton offers a range of Voluntary and paid internships that can help you attract first class talent in your organisation.”	L	L
	<a href="http://www.mentorsme.co.uk">www.mentorsme.co.uk</a> “Mentorsme connects companies with mentoring organisations that can support and guide their growth.”	L	L
“Jelly” – collaborative co-working targets at the sector	<a href="#">Coffee Birmingham</a> . “Jelly is a regular monthly event for solo workers, freelancers and people who want to work out of the office for a day to come together to work and chat. Just bring your laptop, grab a coffee (and maybe a cake) and get to work in a lovely friendly atmosphere with like-minded people.”	L	L
Co-working space targeted at the sector	<a href="#">The Moseley Exchange</a> “Our coworking space is ideal for those who work as independents, or perhaps work from home part-time but still seek to be part of a friendly and supportive community of coworkers. Or maybe you just need some local office space and a place for meeting colleagues or clients – we have that too! Many of our members are “solopreneurs” or new business start-ups.”	L	H/M
Incubation specific to the sector	<a href="#">Oxygen Accelerator</a> “Oxygen Accelerator is a tech accelerator. A 13-week intensive mentor led bootcamp, followed by 13-weeks of incubation that culminates with a series of investor days where we will help you pitch to a large, carefully selected group of Angel investors, VCs and Private Equity groups for next stage funding”	L	H/M