

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL**Report by Strategic Lead – Communications, Culture & Communities****Cultural Committee: 25 February 2019**

Subject: Future operation of the Backdoor Gallery in Dalmuir**1. Purpose**

- 1.1** This report presents a proposal to undertake a scoping exercise to inform the future operation of the Backdoor Gallery in Dalmuir, including branding and marketing.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1** The Committee is invited to:
- note the contents of this report;
 - approve the proposal to undertake the scoping exercise;
 - agree that recommendations for next steps will be reported to a future Cultural Committee.

3. Background

- 3.1** The Backdoor Gallery is located in Dalmuir Library in Clydebank. Established in 2004, the gallery provides a venue which hosts a mixed programme including touring exhibitions, shows by local artists and works from the WDC collections. The Backdoor Gallery has, over time, hosted a number of prestigious touring exhibitions such as works by Picasso and Matisse from the Hayward Collection, and by Elizabeth Blackadder and John Houston from the City Art Centre, Edinburgh.
- 3.2** In recent years the Backdoor Gallery has shifted in focus to provide a platform for emerging and amateur artists from West Dunbartonshire and the surrounding communities to showcase their work. The Gallery hosts seven exhibitions per year of works by local artists or groups, with the majority of exhibitions featuring works for sale at a range of price points.
- 3.3** The establishment of a Cultural Committee, and Cultural Capital Fund, in 2017 has led to the development and delivery of an ambitious cultural programme for West Dunbartonshire, which will launch in 2020. As outlined in other reports to this Committee the programme involves establishing a West Dunbartonshire Museums and Galleries brand with local venues.
- 3.4** A key factor in determining the nature and scale of future exhibitions in the Back Door Gallery programme is the cost associated with appropriate insurance cover. The Council's heritage collections are covered by its own fine art insurance policy and typically works displayed in The Backdoor Gallery are added to this policy, with minimal or no additional cost to the service.

4. Main Issues

4.1 The Backdoor Gallery has proven itself to be a versatile exhibition space since its launch in 2004 and has potential to become a destination venue, hosting an enhanced exhibition programme as part of a more ambitious West Dunbartonshire cultural programme. In support of this, a range of improvement works from both an aesthetic and security perspective are likely to be necessary.

4.2 In order to fully understand the improvement works required for a future Backdoor Gallery offering, and identify both opportunities and constraints of the venue a scoping exercise is proposed. This exercise would include activity to:

- review existing use of the building (exhibitors and visitors) in order to understand current audience needs and expectations
- review the branding and marketing of The Backdoor Gallery to include potentially renaming the gallery to better reflect future aspirations for the space.
- identify comparator venues and seek input from professional colleagues to anticipate and understand possible challenges and/or opportunities associated with any model of future operation
- identify and engage with possible new partners, including cultural institutions; further and higher education institutions; artist collectives; and individual artists in order to anticipate future exhibitor needs
- engage with relevant sector bodies to ensure compliance with any relevant professional standards
- liaison with professional colleagues within the Council to inform costings around any physical improvement works

4.3 There are a number of factors which are key in shaping expectations with regards the future of The Backdoor Gallery:

Security

4.4 If there is a desire to secure high value works on loan from other major public collections, consideration must be given to how insurance costs can be met. As an alternative to commercial insurance, borrowing institutions can access the Government Indemnity Scheme, which provides cost-free indemnity cover for loss or damage to art or cultural items on short or long-term loan. Access to this scheme is, however, contingent on the borrowing institution's ability to comply with the standards set by the National Security Advisor (employed by Arts Council England, who administer the scheme UK-wide).

4.5 To inform the parameters of the scoping exercise, input was sought from the National Security Advisor in the first instance. An appointed Security Consultant made a site visit in October 2018, resulting in a number of recommended potential interventions to increase the level of protection and security for works on display. Overall, however, recommendation was made that only low value works are suitable for display in the venue.

Environmental

- 4.6 In accordance with national standards and to meet lender requirements, environmental monitoring equipment and controllable lighting are likely to be required in support of any programme that would include the display of external loans from cultural institutions.
- 4.7 Taking cognisance of the information provided in 4.2 – 4.6 above, it is recommended that approval is given by Committee to undertake this scoping exercise. This scoping exercise, to be carried out internally, will inform a report and suite of recommendations in relation to future operation of the Backdoor Gallery for consideration at a future meeting of this committee.

5. People Implications

- 5.1 There are no direct people implications arising from this report.

6. Financial & Procurement Implications

- 6.1 At this stage, there are no financial or procurement issues associated with this report. The scoping activity will be carried out by the existing team using existing budgets. There may be a future impact with regards finance and procurement in light of any decisions taken by committee following reporting of the scoping exercise. Any such impact will be detailed in a future report to the Cultural Committee, with the proposal that recommendations be realised via the Cultural Capital Fund following approval by the Committee.

7. Risk Analysis

- 7.1 Should this scoping exercise not be undertaken, there is a risk that future programming of The Backdoor Gallery will fail to augment or enhance West Dunbartonshire's cultural programme and that the potential of the venue to contribute positively to raising the profile of West Dunbartonshire Museums and Galleries Service be compromised.

8. Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA)

- 8.1 An Equality Impact Screening did not indicate any further action required in relation to any recommendations.

9. Consultation

- 9.1 This proposal to undertake a scoping exercise to consider the renewal and relaunch of The Backdoor Gallery has been developed by the Team Lead Arts & Heritage, with specialist input from officers across Libraries and Cultural Services and from Asset Management.

10. Strategic Assessment

- 10.1 The proposals within this report support the following strategic priorities:

- Efficient and effective frontline services that improve the everyday lives of residents.

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Date 21/01/2019

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Appendix: None

Background Papers: None

Wards Affected: All