

Services to the Community Commission

Swindon Arts Scrutiny Task Group Review
November – December 2003



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Acknowledgements

The Swindon Arts Task Group would like to acknowledge the hard work, dedication and enthusiasm of Swindon Arts over the years. Specifically that of the Director, Rosa Matheson; Personal Assistant Wanda Dobson; and all Members of the Board.

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Councillor Maurice Fanning, Chair the Board

Councillor Lisa Hawkes , Member of the Board

Martin Warnes, Martin Warnes Designs, Board Member

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Tina Kelly, Local Artist Designer

Judi Jones, Local Artist

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Glossary

Abbreviation

EU
FTE
ICIA
PA
RFO
SA
SBC
SLA
SWOT

Meaning

European Union
Full Time Equivalents
Institute of Contemporary Interdisciplinary Arts
Personal Assistant
Regularly Funded Organisation
Swindon Arts
Swindon Borough Council
Service Level Agreement
Strengths, Weaknesses, Threats, Opportunities 'SWOT analysis'

Term

Family Group

Meaning

Swindon's comparative family group of authorities as determined by the audit commission

The New Swindon Company

Swindon's urban regeneration company

Regularly Funded Organisation
Council England

'RFO' are organisations that receive regular funding from the Arts

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1. Executive Summary

1.1 Background

The Swindon Arts Task Group was established by the Services to the Community Commission on October 13th 2003 in response to the concerns of various Members of the Council.

The task group met for the first time on October 29th 2003 where the chairman (Cllr Steve Allsopp) was appointed and the terms of reference set. There after the task group subsequently met every week until its recommendations were finalised at the meeting of December 4th 2003.

1.2 Aims & Objectives

The Task Groups Aim was to:

'Conduct an objective investigation providing an in depth analysis into the operation and value of Swindon Arts in supporting the Council's Cultural Strategy and to make recommendations that relate to it's future operation and the level of support provided by the Council' (section 2.2.1).

The Task Groups Objectives were to:

'Develop evidence-based options that address:

- The operation and value of Swindon Arts in supporting the Council's Cultural Strategy
- The future role of the organisation in the provision of cultural activities in Swindon
- Consideration of the relationship between Swindon Arts and Swindon Borough Council (specifically the Cultural Services section of Lifelong Learning)
- The current financial management arrangements of Swindon Arts and future funding by the Council' (section 2.2.2)

1.3 Review Structure

By the nature of the issues that faced Swindon Arts, the task group were working to a very tight deadline. The organisation has only enough funds to meet their operational costs until the end of January 2004; this in effect meant the task group had to report their findings to Cabinet on December 17th 2003.

The task group had an initial planning meeting on October 29th 2003, there after it had five meetings at which they considered evidence from a range of expert witnesses and internal advisers before making their recommendations.

1.4 Review Findings

The task group considered a wide range of evidence from community groups, local business, Swindon Borough Council officers, key stakeholders and partners of Swindon Arts, as well as regional arts organisations.

The task group's key findings are presented in the form of a SWOT analysis:

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enthusiasm and commitment of the Director • Current business links • Inclusive approach • Growth of festivals • High rate of return for the level of investment • Independence • Support of participants • Support of Swindon public • Sense of innovation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor financial management • Poor level of funding from the Council • Lack of integration into cultural strategy of SBC • Problems with the delivery of the strategic vision • “Director” – single point of success/ failure • No short/ medium term plan • No long term plan • Inability to core fund • Lack of strong board governance • Lack of support for the current model from SBC Arts officers and regional organisations • Limited company support and withdrawal of funding partners from Swindon (economic circumstance) • Resources (staff) stretched thinly • Lack of focus
Threats	Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reductions in funding from SBC and other funding partners • Do nothing and Swindon Arts will fold in February 2004 • Negative broader impact on the arts in Swindon • Public perception that Swindon Arts is SBC • Inability of the Board to govern effectively • Who delivers to grass roots art organisations • New models are being seen as more positive by external funding agencies (e.g. comparative to the Bristol Cultural Development Partnership) • Total reliance on the Director • Closure of Swindon Arts could mean a loss of money to the arts in Swindon (approximately £70k in cash and £32k in kind from the business sector) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Swindon Arts stabilises (attracting a minimum of £35k from SBC and/ or other partners) • Prospect of EU funding opportunities (for projects) • Further growth of festivals • Realising the cultural renaissance that is about to happen to the town - we may never get an opportunity like this again <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Wyvern Theatre re-tender ➢ University of Bath in Swindon (ICIA) ➢ The New Swindon Company ➢ Westfield development ➢ Growth in town centre living ➢ New Library/ Art Gallery ➢ National Trust headquarters • Strengths of current Arts organisations (e.g. Swindon Dance) • Business appreciation of the need of cultural/ image change for Swindon

1.5 Review Recommendations

For further detail see section 5.3

- There is a need for a cultural forum to be established for grass roots arts and community organisations. It is recommended that Cultural Services officers of the Lifelong Learning section of the Cultural Change directorate establish this forum.
- That the festivals currently delivered by Swindon Arts are protected, delivery through Swindon Borough Council or an external body core funded by Swindon Borough Council 2004/05. Extreme urgency surrounds the 2004 festivals; at current there will be neither a Jazz Festival nor a Think Art Festival as there have been no funds for the planning and development.
- In the Cabinet report of 17th December 2003, the Cabinet are asked to choose which of the following 4 options for the future of Swindon Arts, as identified by the Task Group, should be pursued bearing in mind that the majority on the Task Group favoured ‘option 4’ as providing the most sustainable future for independent arts development in Swindon. However there was a strong minority view for ‘option 1’ in light of the support expressed by community groups and direct recipients of Swindon Arts. Which

ever option is selected it must be acknowledged that Swindon Arts has to change, as the current model is no longer sustainable.

The Options: (See section 5.3 for further detail)

1. Swindon Borough Council puts £35k into Swindon Arts (for core funding costs, this figure is in addition to current funding)
2. Swindon Borough Council puts in less than £35k
3. Swindon Borough Council does nothing
4. A Cultural Development Partnership for Swindon is formed

In putting these recommendations forward the task group would like acknowledge the contribution that Swindon Arts has made to the cultural sector in Swindon over the years.

2. Introduction

2.1 Background

Following a request from various Members of the Council the Services to the Community Commission was asked to consider a scrutiny review of Swindon Arts at the meeting of the Commission on October 7th 2003. Swindon Arts was recommended for investigation by the Commission because of the financial difficulties that it faced which threatened the future of the organisation. Swindon Arts is beneficiary to an annual grant from the Lifelong Learning (Cultural Services) division of Swindon Borough Council. The Commission provided the Chair (Cllr Derique Montaut) and the Vice Chair (Cllr Laura Holiday) with delegated authority to meet with the Leader of the Council (Cllr Mike Bawden), Deputy Leader (Cllr Ian Dobie) the Chief Executive (Simon Birch) and the Chief Executive of The New Swindon Company (Peter Andrews) to determine whether a task group should be established. It was concluded at this meeting on the October 13th 2003 that a task group should be established and for it to make its recommendations to Cabinet on December 17th 2003. See appendix (6.2)

The Swindon Arts task group met for the first time on October 29th 2003 where the chairman (Cllr Steve Allsopp) was appointed and the terms of reference and the scope agreed. There after the task group met every week until its recommendations were finalised at the meeting of December 4th 2003.

2.2 Project Information

See Appendix 6.3 for the full Swindon Arts terms of reference agreed on October 29th 2003.

2.2.1 Aim

The aim of the task group was “to conduct an objective investigation providing an in depth analysis into the operation and value of Swindon Arts in supporting the Council’s Cultural Strategy and to make recommendations that relate to it’s future operation and the level of support provided by the Council.”

2.2.2 Objectives

Using this as a directive, the Task Group then set itself an objective to:

“Develop evidence-based options that address;

- The operation and value of Swindon Arts in supporting the Council’s Cultural Strategy
- The future role of the organisation in the provision of cultural activities in Swindon
- Consideration of the relationship between Swindon Arts and Swindon Borough Council (specifically the Cultural Services section of Lifelong Learning)
- The current financial management arrangements of Swindon Arts and future funding by the Council.”

2.2.3 Scope

The scope of the review does include: -

- Governance of the Board;
- Governance of the Organisation;
- Financial management and operation of Swindon Arts;
- Business objectives of Swindon Arts (and the overlap with the business objectives of the SBC Cultural Services section of Lifelong Learning);
- Evidence of alternative model(s) of Arts provision, with a proven sustainability from within the “family group” of local authorities.

The scope of the review does not include: -

- Detail relating to the structure of arts and cultural activities in Swindon.

2.2.4 Outputs

- Outline of findings about history of financial and operational management;
- Evaluation of current position;
- Recommendations to Cabinet that detail the future of Swindon Arts and the cultural provision in Swindon.

2.3 Report Overview

The report is divided into the following sections as shown in Table 1:

Executive Summary	Provides an overview of the project and an outline of the key findings
Introduction	Provides the background and the context for the report; reviews the structure of the report
Methodology	Set out the approach taken and methodologies adopted in course of the investigations/ review
Assessment	A detailed picture of the current circumstances of Swindon Arts, looking at the operation of the business and its financial management and sourcing of funds, resulting from the Task group's investigations
Recommendations & Conclusions	Explanation of how the task group developed and reported their conclusions and recommendations
Appendices	Contains glossary of terms and appendices referred to in text.

Table 1: Report Overview

3. Approach/ Methodology

3.1 Review Structure

The Swindon Arts scrutiny review can be divided into three distinct phases as detailed in Table 2. Phase 1 established the terms of reference, work programme and planning of the project for the review. At phase 2 the task group considered all of the evidence (written submissions, questioning witnesses, considering existing material that was relevant to the investigation). At the final stage, phase 3, the task group determined their findings and made their recommendations based on the evidence received.

Phase	Activities
Phase 1 Consolidation & Work Plan October 2003	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Task group established • Chairman appointment • External person co-opted • Setting of the terms of reference • Identification of expert witnesses and internal advisers • Identification of existing consultation and information
Phase 2 Evidence Gathering November 2003	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparation for meeting with witnesses (questioning approach) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ External witnesses ○ Internal advisers • Assessment of written submissions • Comparison with other local authority models (via research) • Desk research into existing documentation
Phase 3 Recommendations November – December 2003	Two task group workshops to develop findings and recommendations

Table 2: Review Structure

3.2 Reporting

The task group was established by the Services to the Community Commission. The Swindon Arts Task Group was provided with the authority to present their findings direct to Cabinet. This was feasible because the task group was politically balanced (1:1:1), plus one co-opted member from The New Swindon Company. Time constraints meant that it was not practical for the task groups findings to be reported back to full commission before going to Cabinet. The Chair of the task group (Cllr Steve Allsopp) did however meet with the Chair of the Commission (Cllr Derique Montaut) prior to presenting the final report to Cabinet. It is scheduled that Cllr Steve Allsopp will attend the next Services to the Community Commission (27th January 2004).

3.3 Information Sources

The Task Group used a range of investigation methods and sources to inform their work: -

3.3.1 Witnesses

- Information from Swindon Borough Council employees through discussions and interviews at Task Group Meetings (see Appendix 6.5);
- Discussions and written depositions from external organisations (see Appendix 6.6).

3.3.2 Consultation

- Requests for written submissions from the wider arts community of Swindon (see Appendix 6.3);
- Discussion and Co-option of an employee of The New Swindon Company;
- Discussions between individual members of the task group and the Swindon arts community.

3.3.3 Comparison

- Discussion with a selection of authorities within the Local Authority family group
 - Milton Keynes
 - Reading
- Advice from Arts Council England South West on good comparative models within our region and subsequent discussions
 - Bristol Cultural Partnership

3.3.4 Documentation/ Research

A range of documents have been discussed during the Task Group meetings, as well as distributed to Task Group members. These are detailed or attached in the appendices.

3.3.5 Documentation of Evidence

The majority of all evidence received is contained within the Appendices; the task group did however receive additional pieces of evidence, which the providers wish to remain private and confidential. The task group have chosen to respect the wishes of all information providers, so some information has not been documented in the final report. None of the undisclosed pieces of evidence demonstrated a view that changed the outcome of the review in any significant way.

4. Current State Assessment

4.1 What is Swindon Arts?

Swindon Arts, under the name of Thamesdown Foundation for the Arts, was founded in 1990 as a partnership between local businesses and Thamesdown Borough Council¹. Swindon Arts is a company limited by guarantee and is a registered charity. The organisation seeks to use the arts to support social, educational, cultural and economic development in Swindon².

Mission: To enable access to the Arts for the people of Swindon

Vision: To create an Arts organisation that will serve the local community and promote the Arts through a variety of mediums, activities and practices

Motto: Make it happen

4.1.1 Why was Thamesdown Foundation for the Arts established?

Thamesdown Foundation for the Arts was set up to raise money from local businesses and the private sector to distribute 100% of this money as grant aid to local community arts projects, especially small scale 'grass roots' activity.

Findings

- The original vision of Swindon Arts was to bring 'the arts to the people of Swindon'.

4.2 Business Activity

4.2.1 Awards to Arts Organisations

Swindon Arts offer awards to local arts projects. The awards are open to local or national arts groups or organisations, working on either an amateur or professional basis for projects carried out within Swindon.

There are two types of awards:

1. Creative Arts Awards

Awards of up to £1,000 in full or part funding for a local Arts project.

2. Arts in Education Awards

Arts in Education awards of up to £5000 are made to fund projects that last a minimum of one school term, that enable young people to explore the art form and develop their creativity skills.

Findings

- The quality of grant applications have deteriorated over the years, this may be due to a number of factors:
 - Limited promotion of the Swindon Arts award programme
 - Proliferation in grass roots arts organisations applying directly to the Arts Council, Lotto and other funding bodies for grants directly.
 - Concentration and development on the festivals, staffing resources have meant that Swindon Arts have not been able to do all things.

¹ In 1997 Thamesdown Borough Council became a single tier unitary authority, which became Swindon Borough Council.

² Swindon Arts: Striving to Survive, presentation by Board Members, 12th February 2003.

4.2.2 Creative Pathways

Through Creative Pathways social inclusion and self-empowerment projects, Swindon Arts seeks to initiate and deliver community and educational projects that link different communities, tackle social exclusion and other examples of community isolation³.

4.2.3 Festivals

Swindon Arts have been involved with the organisation and delivery of short festivals since 2001.

The Festivals

Jazz Festival:

The Jazz Festival's ethos is 'Jazz for Everyone'. The festival seeks to bring new audiences to jazz and wider range of jazz styles to jazz styles in Swindon. The Jazz Festival has taken place in each consecutive April since 2001.

Think Art Festival:

The Think Art Festival seeks to create opportunities to extend the artistic practice of individual artists through events and competitions. The Think Art Festival has taken place each consecutive June since 2001.

Film Festival:

The aim of the Film Festival is to bring new audiences for non-mainstream films and develop a 'particularity', which differentiates itself from other film festivals.

Film Festival 2001: Took place in early October

Film Festival 2002: Event planned for November but was cancelled

Film Festival 2003: Event planned for November will be organised and managed by an external body, but in co-operation with Swindon Arts.

Findings

- The festivals have been well received by the general public and have received good press coverage.
- A strategy is required for the development of festivals.
- The festivals could benefit from better planning and evaluation.
- The festivals had two objectives: -
 1. Raise the visibility of Swindon Arts and its work to its current business donors and to potential future donors;
 2. Achieve, as a consequence of increased visibility, significant increases in donated income, which would be used to fund more community arts projects.Only the first objective has been achieved.

4.3 The Organisation

4.3.1 The Board

A Board of Trustees directs the company.

Composition of the Board of Trustees: -

- Three Councillors appointed by Swindon Borough Council, each Member is annually appointed each May;
- Five members of the business community are appointed at the Annual General meeting and govern for 12 months and are chosen by the Trustees;
- Up to five additional members, co-opted by the Trustees.

(See Appendix 6.13 for the current composition of the Board)

³ Swindon Arts: Striving to Survive, presentation by Board Members, 12th February 2003.

4.3.2 Paid Employees

Swindon Arts employs two permanent members of Staff that equate to 0.8 FTE staff:

1) Director – 3½ days per week

The Director is employed on a contractual arrangement as a Consultant

2) Personal Assistant – part time

The PA is employed by Swindon Arts on a part time contract.

Findings

- The organisation works proactively with the Council and other organisations and stakeholders.
- In practice the role of the board is severely limited in regards to day-to-day management of Swindon Arts. The organisation has been director led with individuals shaping policy and strategy as opposed to Board level governance.
- The Board is made up of representatives of the companies who donate, and the companies decide who to nominate. Unlike most Boards it has not been assembled in order to achieve a range of specialist business skills. This is a weakness and has resulted in being guided by the Directors decisions.
- The Director of Swindon Arts has been a major strength (in enthusiasm and commitment) of the organisation in recent years.
- The organisation lacks a strategic focus: -
 - No long-term business plan, which it has been working to or against. Swindon Arts have a strategic plan, but have been unable to deliver because of resourcing issues.

4.4 Financial Management & Circumstance of Swindon Arts

4.4.1 Funding from Swindon Borough Council

Swindon Arts is not a funded service of Swindon Borough Council. Swindon Borough Council has a Service Legal Agreement with Swindon Arts, which clearly identifies the conditions for which an annual grant of £4,904 is paid to the organisation.

Swindon Arts is one of a number of Arts organisations that receives a grant from the Arts Management Budget (of the Cultural Services section of Lifelong Learning) to deliver a specific service, which is monitored through a Service Level Agreement and subject to six monthly review (see Appendix 6.13). Organisations currently receiving funding include Sixth Sense Theatre Company, REACH Inclusive Arts, Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra and The Swindon Festival of Literature.

Appendix 6.15 details organisations that contributed to the core running costs of Swindon Arts in 2002/03. The chart at this appendix also details the sponsors for specific projects or festivals.

Findings:

- A Service Level Agreement exists between Swindon Borough Council and Swindon Arts (appendix 6.13).
- Funding from Swindon Borough Council has deteriorated over the years. The organisation was initially funded in the region of £50,000 per annum.
- In the financial year 2003/04 Swindon Borough Council provided Swindon Arts with a grant of £4,900.00.

4.4.2 In Kind Benefits

Swindon Arts receives various benefits in kind:

Benefit Received

Provision of office space

Provision of a telephone line (approximate value £600 p.a.)

Administration of payroll

Accountancy and finance advisory service

Provider

Clear Channel

Swindon Borough Council

Swindon Borough Council

Swindon Borough Council

4.4.3 Other Funding Streams

In addition to the grant awarded from Swindon Borough Council, Swindon Arts seeks to raise funds from the business community to help support its activities. Appendix 6.15 details the sponsors for 2002/03. The organisation has also applied for funding from the Arts Council South West (an unsuccessful application) and European funding applications.

Findings:

- Swindon Arts has been unsuccessful in covering their core costs on an annual basis
- Some of the major sponsors of Swindon Arts have withdrawn from the town due to economic changes (EMI, Anchor, downsizing of Motorola). Funding streams have reduced dramatically since 1998/9.
- There are various European funding opportunities for Swindon Arts to apply for funding for arts projects which have a young persons and social disadvantage focus. These opportunities are for specific projects only (i.e. not for core funding).
- The Arts Council England have some resources for the stabilisation and organisational development for arts organisations that request assistance, but this is only for regularly funded organisation (SA is not an 'RFO' by the Arts Council) and only if 'saveable'.
- In order to acquire additional funding the organisation needs to be financially robust.

4.4.4 Financial Management

An in kind benefit from Swindon Borough Council is an accountancy and financial advisory service. The support and advise of a Senior Accounts Officer accounts for approximately 1 – 1½ days of this persons time per month. Extra time is given to Swindon Arts when there are festivals and for the preparation and attendance of board meetings. The Senior Accounts officer works closely with the Director of Swindon Arts.

Findings:

- Accountancy and Finance Advisory Service; a rough estimate of the cost to the council would be in the region of £2,500 per annum. The financial position of Swindon Arts is reported to the board on a quarterly basis, this includes a submission of full accounts each quarter. But active board involvement in analysing or responding to the accounts has been limited.
- The organisation does not have a proper budgeted business plan and is supported by Swindon Borough Council central finance officers to manage its day-to-day finances.
- Issues surrounding core costs: -
 - Core costs are in the region of £45-50,000 per annum, core funding is currently at around £13,000;
 - Annual deficit of between £32,000 and £37,000, currently being met by reserves;
 - Core costs have not been charged to festivals (i.e. not met by sponsorship);
 - Salaries have increased in the same timeframe, resulting in accrued savings being eroded more quickly;
 - Commission and bonus payments made to the director are based on levels of income brought in, but this has not however related to retained income.
- Unplanned and risky financial approaches – this years festivals were in part paid out of reserves.

4.5 Comparative Arts Models

The task group carried out a comparative exercise with some similar Local Authorities. The objective was to compare the structure and function of Swindon Arts. The task group selected comparative by authorities by looking at similar towns in Swindon's family group of authorities (as determined by the audit commission). On this basis Milton Keynes and Reading were selected. The task group also considered the Bristol model, as this is perceived by many as an effective cultural partnership.

4.5.1 Milton Keynes

Milton Keynes determined that they do have organisations similar to Swindon Arts, but were unable to assist the task group because the Arts Officer post is currently vacant. Milton Keynes Borough Council are the main funding body of 'Milton Keynes Arts Association' which awards grants to help develop skills and extend the experience in any artistic field in the local community.

4.5.2 Reading

Reading Borough Council has an Arts forum. The Reading Arts Forum was set up about 15 years ago as a consultative forum to allow independent artists and groups to talk to Councillors. The forum is not especially effective in terms of outputs or projects, members of the forum like to use it as a get together to discuss a range of different issues in arts and culture. The forum meets twice a year.

The Arts section at Reading Borough Council does not have the facility to distribute grants to the arts sector. There is one 'grants' budget for the entire Council, any art projects or organisations must apply to the corporate grant division for a grant.

The Arts team of Reading Borough Council run the majority of festivals and events 'in house', working closely with external arts organisations. The team manage most festivals and events from start to finish, from applying for their own external funding to the final delivery of the event. One major event, 'the Reading Community Festival', is organised and run by an external organisation that receives a grant from Reading Borough Council, the Arts division works closely and provides 'in kind' support for the event.

4.5.3 Bristol

The Bristol Cultural Partnership was established over 10 years ago and is recognised as a successful catalyst for encouraging wider partnership between the local authority, local organisations and the private sector within Bristol.

It is jointly funded by Bristol City Council, Arts Council South West and the Bristol Chamber of Commerce to the sum of £105,000 per annum. Arts and Business South West are also involved. The only full time employee is a high level director who is a champion for culture for the city, who receives administrative help; although there were full-time secondees from supporting companies for major projects such as Bristol 2008.

The partnership is about strategic progress for Bristol and uses Arts and Culture to promote Bristol's economic development and cultural profile. It has been successful in developing the "legible city project", running the campaign to gain "European City of Culture" status, and co-ordinating the very high profile film festivals in Bristol. It has worked with and at all levels of the community of Bristol and help forge many other sustainable partnerships. Despite Bristol 2008 not being successful - it did help to raise the profile of the city and created a lot of civic pride.

It has drawn together significant funding for arts and cultural activities and development in Bristol from a number of Blue Chip organisations and government agencies. As an independent company it has access to funding sources that may not be available to the Local Authority.

5. Conclusions & Recommendations

5.1 Findings

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enthusiasm and commitment of the Director • Current business links • Inclusive approach • Growth of festivals • High rate of return for the level of investment • Independence • Support of participants • Support of Swindon public • Sense of innovation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor financial management • Poor level of funding from the Council • Lack of integration into cultural strategy of SBC • Problems with the delivery of the strategic vision • “Director” – single point of success/ failure • No short/ medium term plan • No long term plan • Inability to core fund • Lack of strong board governance Lack of support for the current model from SBC Arts officers and regional organisations • Limited company support and withdrawal of funding partners from Swindon (economic circumstance) • Resources (staff) stretched thinly • Lack of focus
Threats	Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reductions in funding from SBC and other funding partners • Do nothing and Swindon Arts will fold in February 2004 Negative broader impact on the arts in Swindon • Public perception that Swindon Arts is SBC • Inability of the Board to govern effectively • Who delivers to grass roots art organisations • New models are being seen as more positive by external funding agencies (e.g. comparative to the Bristol Cultural Development Partnership) • Total reliance on the Director • Closure of Swindon Arts could mean a loss of money to the arts in Swindon (approximately £70k in cash and £32k in kind from the business sector) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Swindon Arts stabilises (attracting a minimum of £35k from SBC and/ or other partners) • Prospect of EU funding opportunities (for projects) • Further growth of festivals • Realising the cultural renaissance that is about to happen to the town - we may never get an opportunity like this again <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Wyvern Theatre re-tender ➢ University of Bath in Swindon (ICOA) ➢ New Swindon Company ➢ Westfield development ➢ Growth in town centre living ➢ New Library/ Art Gallery ➢ National Trust headquarters Strengths of current Arts organisations (e.g. Swindon Dance) • Business appreciation of the need of cultural/ image change for Swindon

5.2 Conclusions

5.2.1 General

- Swindon Arts makes a positive contribution to the arts in Swindon;
- The organisation is deeply valued by community groups;

There has been a significant growth in the success of the festivals, especially the Jazz Festival; The enthusiasm of the Director and the ability to generate arts development has been widely recognised;

Seem to have achieved lots for very little (lots of goodwill and voluntary support);
- Innovative ideas

5.2.2 Finance

- Swindon Arts will fold in February 2004 without an injection of cash;
- The organisation needs a minimum of £30-35k just to meet its operational costs, above its existing funding;
- They have been running on a deficit for last 5 years of a minimum of £10k (approximately).

5.2.3 Management/ Board Governance

- Board lacks direction and vitality;
- Questions about the appropriate skill mix of the board;
- Lack of strong planning and evaluation framework.

5.2.4 Strategic Approach

- Inability to deliver strategically;
- The framework that makes up Swindon Arts is based on a model that is no longer sustainable.

5.2.5 Swindon – Cultural Offer

- External bodies have reported that Swindon is on the verge of a cultural renaissance;
- The economic significance of cultural industries in Swindon reflects the national average and is likely to grow further;
- Cultural development is important to the image and future development of Swindon;
- The 'Swindon Factor' has resulted in not attracting the inward spend;
- We need to think 'big' there is a potential for a step change in Swindon's cultural offer;
- Lots of excellent nuggets in Swindon, but they are not promoted as widely as they might be.

5.2.6 Overarching Issue

There are two main differing views of Swindon Arts

1. Community Groups and Artists:

Value the organisation, but generally feel that it needs more financial support from the Borough Council.

2. Officers & Regional Organisations

Believe that Swindon Arts needs to fundamentally change. Support the development of a new cultural development partnership.

5.3 Recommendations

- There is a need for a cultural forum to be established for grass roots arts and community organisations. It is recommended that Cultural Services officers of the Lifelong Learning section of the Cultural Change directorate establish this forum.
- That the festivals currently delivered by Swindon Arts are protected, delivery through Swindon Borough Council or an external body core funded by Swindon Borough Council 2004/05. Extreme urgency surrounds the 2004 festivals; at current there will be neither a Jazz Festival nor a Think Art Festival as there have been no funds for the planning and development.
- In the Cabinet of 17th December 2003, the Cabinet are asked to choose which of the following 4 options for the future of Swindon Arts, as identified by the Task Group, should be pursued bearing in mind that the majority on the Task Group favoured 'option 4' as providing the most sustainable future for independent arts development in Swindon. However there was a strong minority view for 'option 1' in light of the support expressed by community groups and direct recipients of Swindon Arts. Which ever option is selected it must be acknowledged that Swindon Arts has to change, as the current model is no longer sustainable.

The Options:

1. Swindon Borough Council puts £35k into Swindon Arts (for core funding costs, this figure is in addition to current funding);
2. Swindon Borough Council puts in less than £35k;
3. Swindon Borough Council does nothing;

4. A Cultural Development Partnership for Swindon is formed.

Option 1: Swindon Borough Council puts £35k into Swindon Arts (for core funding costs, this figure is in addition to current funding)

- The risk is that there will be no organisational or management change;
- No assurance that external and regional bodies will support this model;
- If Swindon Borough Council does put in £35k there is the potential that businesses will match fund.
- Would be on condition of: -
 - The establishment of a revitalised board;
 - The creation of a sustainable business plan;
 - The development of a new organisational structure

Option 2: Swindon Borough Council puts in less than £35k:

- Will require a new board and a revised focus;
Concentrates Swindon Arts on finding a strategic and sustainable existence;
- Would require firm and robust deliverable targets;
- Observation: The board has already tried to do this. The existing model has been losing money for the past five years.

Option 3: Swindon Borough Council does nothing:

- Swindon Arts folds in February 2004;
- No Jazz Festival or Think Art Festival;
- All areas of strength would be lost (see Appendix 1);
- Will create the impression that the Borough Council does not support the arts;
- Observation: Swindon Borough Council will need a strategy for replacing the gap left by the potential closure of Swindon Arts.

Option 4: A Cultural Development Partnership for Swindon is formed:

Swindon is on the verge of a cultural renaissance, an opportunity that must be embraced: -

- Wyvern Theatre re-tender;
 - University of Bath in Swindon (Institute of Contemporary Interdisciplinary Arts), potential multi-million arts base in Swindon;
 - The New Swindon Company (regeneration of the central area);
 - Westfield development;
 - Growth in town centre living;
 - New Library and Art Gallery;
 - National Trust headquarters;
-
- It is essential that the current cash provided to Swindon Arts is ring fenced to act as start up fund for the development of the partnership;
 - It has been speculated that money available from the local business sector would be well in excess of what would be needed to cover running costs;
 - The partnership will bring the arts and the business together in Swindon;
 - Vision “Think Big” - A major cultural step change for Swindon;
 - Strategic and development brief;
 - Priority for Cultural Services officers of the Lifelong Learning section of the Cultural Change directorate to establish;
 - Development of a new board and organisation;
Potential Board Composition: -
 - Swindon Borough Council;
 - The New Swindon Company;
 - Swindon Chamber of Commerce;
 - Business and Arts South West;
 - University of Bath in Swindon;
 - Arts Council England South West;
 - Swindon Businesses.

Organisational Requirements: -

- Director – ‘A Champion for Culture’;
- Full time administrator;
- Free office space - in kind support;
- Full support of Swindon Borough Council officers.

5.3.1 Financial Implications

Detailed financial implications will not be available until a preferred option has been decided. In essence, the basic situation is as follows:

- Option 1 – An increase of £35,000 over and above current funding to come from the Lifelong Learning budget and/or which will be identified as a pressure within the current budget round;
- Option 2 – An unspecified increase of up to £35,000 over above current funding to be identified as a pressure as set out in Option 1;
- Option 3 – Maintain existing funding;
- Option 4 – As Option 3, but with the formulation of a Business Plan by Cultural Services Officers within Lifelong Learning to generate extra funding to provide the additional resources identified in recommendation 2.3.4.

Once the Cabinet's preferred option is known, then further work will be done to detail the full financial implications for that option and a further report to Cabinet will be made. The financial implications of the preferred option will need to be agreed as part of the 2004/05 revenue budget setting process.

5.4 Reporting Findings & Recommendations

The Chair of the Task Group is to take the findings and recommendations to Cabinet on December 17th 2003. The Cabinet Report is attached at Appendix 6.24

Swindon Arts Scrutiny Review

Aim	To conduct an objective investigation providing an in depth analysis into the operation and value of Swindon Arts in supporting the Council's Cultural Strategy and to make recommendations that relate to it's future operation and the level of support provided by the Council.	
Rationale	Following a request from various Members of the Council the Services to the Community Commission was asked to consider the establishment of a task group to investigate Swindon Arts at the meeting of the Commission on October 7 th 2003. Swindon Arts was recommended for investigation by the Commission because of the financial difficulties that it faced, which threatened the future operation of the organisation. The Commission provided the Chair and the Vice Chair with delegated authority to meet with the Leader of the Council, the Chief Executive and the Chief Executive of the New Swindon Company to determine whether a task group should be established. It was concluded at this meeting on the October 13 th 2003 that a task group should be established and for it to make its recommendations to Cabinet on December 17 th 2003.	
Scope	<p>Includes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The operation and value of Swindon Arts in supporting the Council's Cultural Strategy • The future role of the organisation in the provision of cultural activities in Swindon • Consideration of the relationship between Swindon Arts and Swindon Borough Council (specifically the Cultural Services section of Lifelong Learning) • The current financial management arrangements of Swindon Arts and future funding by the Council • Governance of the Board • Governance of the Organisation • Financial management and operation of Swindon Arts • Evidence of alternative model(s) of Arts provision, with a proven sustainability from within the "family group" of local authorities <p>Excludes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detail relating to the structure of arts and cultural activities and events in Swindon 	
Resources	<p>Swindon Arts Scrutiny Task Group</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Councillor Steve Allsopp (Chair) • Councillor Stan Pajak • Councillor Chris Van Roon • Jan Tierney, Finance & Administration Manager, The New Swindon Company (Co-opted Member) <p>Officer Support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Claire Yeates, Scrutiny Support Officer • Steve Jones, Committee Support 	
Timescales	Start	29 th October 2003 (first task group meeting)
	Finish	17 th December 2003 (final report to the Cabinet)
Outputs	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Chair of the Task Group to update the Chair of the Services to the Community Commission on the work of the task group before recommendations are made to Cabinet 2. Chair of the Task Group to take the final report to Cabinet on 17th December 2003 to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outline of findings about history of financial and operational management • Evaluation of current position 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommendations to Cabinet that detail the future of Swindon Arts
Methodology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desk based review of documentation (as detailed in the brief); • Interviewing witnesses; • Analysis of funding for the arts • Research comparative arts bodies
Expert Witnesses/ Advisors	<p>Internal advisors (background information)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Claire Smith, Senior Officer Strategic Management • Helen Miah, Strategic Arts & Community Officer • Councillors Maurice Fanning & Lisa Hawkes (Board Members of Swindon Arts) • Fiona Pearce, Senior Accounts Officer <p>External/Expert Witnesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rosa Matheson, Director, Swindon Arts • John Struthers, Director of Creative Arts, University of Bath • Phil Gibby, Director Arts and Business South West • Martin Warnes, Martin Warnes Designs (Board Member) • Written representation from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Chris Humphrey, Arts Council England South West ○ Ann Cullis, former Strategic Arts & Community Officer September 2003 ○ Michelle Leighton, (Nationwide) ○ Ben Eccles (Sixth Sense Theatre Company) <p>Individual Task Group Discussions with External/Expert Witnesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Barry Linguard, Swindon Initiative • Sally Taylor, Community Artist • Bernie Maguire, Town Centre Manager • Jackie Kent, Operations Director GWR FM Community Trust • John Roe, Lawn Community Church • Dave Knight, Chairman of Swindon Jazz Society • Franco Muccini, McArthur Glen • Tina Kelly, Local Artist Designer • Judi Jones, Local Artist
Evidence Documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service Level Agreement Monitoring Reports • Progress Meeting Reports • Festival Evaluation Reports • Annual Accounts
Consultation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With organisations that have worked in partnership with Swindon Arts • With organisations that have sponsored or funded the work of the organisation • With SBC staff that have worked with Swindon Arts • With Swindon Arts staff and Board members • Comparative exercise with local authorities that in Swindon's family group (Milton Keynes Borough Council & Reading Borough Council)
Risks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Very short timescale ○ Ability to talk to all of the expert witnesses and gather all of the information in the specified timeframe.

Appendix 2

Bibliography

During the course of the review, the following documents were collated, prepared or considered. Copies of all of these documents are available for inspection from the Scrutiny Support Section.

Swindon Arts Briefing Note

Project Plan

Swindon Arts Strategy Plan 2002-2005

Swindon Arts Branding Presentation

Cultural Planning & Development; Andrew Kelly, Bristol Cultural Development Partnership

Swindon Arts Striving to Survive – Presentation to the Board

Email sent by Rosa Matheson to SA Board - regarding the proposed scrutiny review

Emails received in response to Rosa's email detailing their support for SA

Email from Jan Tierney outlining why the New Swindon Company supported Swindon Arts with additional funding

Swindon Arts Jazz Festival 2002/ 2003 Review

Swindon Arts Service Level Agreement

Swindon Culture & Leisure Strategy

The Economic Significance of the Cultural and Creative Industries in Swindon

Minutes of the Task Group Meeting – 29th October 2003

Minutes of the Task Group Meeting – 5th November 2003

Minutes of the Task Group Meeting – 13th November 2003

Minutes of the Task Group Meeting – 19th November 2003

Service Level Agreement

Board Membership

Swindon Arts Sponsors 2003/ 2004

Swindon Arts Jazz Festival Review 2002/ 2003

Arts Council England South West Response

Email from The New Swindon Company

Email received from Town Centre Manager

Nationwide Building Society (Board Member) written response

Notes of conversation from Chief Executive of Swindon Initiative

Feedback from community artists

Notes of conversation with Lawn Community Church & Chair of Swindon

Jazz Society

Email from local artist

Email received SwindonWeb

Email received from local artist

Email received from Belgravia Lettings

Reading Borough Council – notes from telephone conversation

