

Culture and Sport Committee

10am, Tuesday, 23 August 2016

The Bongo Club and Central Library: an Update

Item number	8.2
Report number	
Executive/routine	Routine
Wards	All

Executive Summary

This report provides a further update to the Use of Central Library by Bongo Club report which was presented to the Culture and Leisure Committee 23 October 2012. The report highlights initiatives and developments which have been delivered in partnership with library services, as well as plans to further extend joint programming between Bongo Club staff and libraries staff. It recommends that the current licence to occupy the premises under Central Library be extended for 12 months from October 2016, with a possible further 12 months renewal in October 2017.

Links

Coalition Pledges	P35
Council Priorities	C02 C019 C020 C023 C024 C025 C026
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The Bongo Club and Central Library: an Update

1. Recommendations

It is recommended that the Culture and Sport Committee:

- 1.1 Notes the innovative activity and successful outcomes arising from partnership working between Bongo Club and library services;
- 1.2 Approves the 12 month extension of the licence to October 2016, with a possible further 12 month extension in October 2017.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Bongo Club is a wholly owned subsidiary of the Out of the Blue Arts and Education Trust. They were established in 1996 and since then have developed as a social enterprise organisation, contributing to the cultural landscape of the city.
- 2.2 The club was previously located in Edinburgh University premises, moving there in 2003. These premises were required by the University for further development and the Bongo Club sought new premises in 2013.
- 2.3 Agreement was reached that the Bongo Club could operate from the space below Central Library from January 2014. Their occupation of this space significantly improved the previous condition of the premises, with the installation of both permanent and temporary infrastructure and equipment. These improvements were wholly funded by the Bongo Club, partly through grant funding from Creative Scotland. A total of £400,000 was invested in upgrading the premises.
- 2.4 The agreement was for a temporary licence up until June 2014. In April 2014, Bongo Club requested a two year licence up until June 2016 and thereafter on a month to month basis. This was agreed, with the proviso that it included a six month break clause, allowing the Council to ask them to vacate the premises should future development of the library space require this.
- 2.5 Bongo Club has requested a new licence for occupation and it is proposed to offer this for a twelve month period, with a possible extension of a further twelve months. This would include a six month break clause.

3. Main report

- 3.1 The Bongo Club specialises in art and music, supporting local, national and international, emerging and established artists, through live music, film, theatre and clubs. The ethos of the Bongo Club is of an accessible and stigma-free environment.
- 3.2 The ethos of the Bongo Club impacts upon and improves equality of access by engaging with young people to encourage participation. Its specialist music programme attracts a significant proportion of people from black and minority ethnic communities, higher than the proportion in the Edinburgh population.
- 3.3 The Bongo Club has occupied the space below Central Library since January 2013. They have invested £400,000 in upgrading the premises and the majority of this work has improved for the longer term the building fabric and infrastructure.
- 3.4 Relocation of the Bongo Club to the space under the Central Library has enabled the development of an ongoing productive partnership working with Out of the Blue. It has enabled library and Bongo Club staff to co-ordinate and pool resources to benefit library and Bongo Club customers. Work with Out of the Blue has enabled Libraries to improve the visual arts offer to schools and in libraries and has led to libraries proactively supporting platforms for young artists to develop, publish and perform their work.
- 3.5 #artcore is a Scottish Government/Time to Shine funded youth arts partnership designed to create a hive of youth arts activity across the city. Libraries have been a key partner in this and their approach has been to encourage young people to take charge of and use library spaces and resources as places to create, develop and share their work.
- 3.6 As part of #artcore the Bongo Club hosted a sharing day for the initial microprojects. Young Edinburgh Writers, a creative writing group based in Central Library, published a zine of their work with illustrations using Out of the Blue's RISO printer. Full details of the microprojects can be viewed at : <http://www.outoftheblue.org.uk/category/artcore-microprojects/>
- 3.7 Libraries hosted four of the microprojects, with two of them established and facilitated entirely by library staff. Free Machines in particular was singled out for praise as an example of how existing skills among library staff can be maximised by investing in time and resources to support work with groups they already know.
- 3.8 After the microprojects came to an end, #artcore looked to refocus the programme and find ways to build on what staff had learned from the initial projects. Two new creative writing groups were set up in Craigmillar and Central Library. An animation group at Central Library provided mentoring, coaching and expertise to young people preparing their portfolios for further education as well as accommodating a number of young people with additional support needs
- 3.9 The groups worked alongside each other and together on projects delivering a short trailer for display as part of the programme in Leith Late in June 2016. Four creative apprentices were appointed by Out of the Blue to run the project and have

to date successfully devised, programmed and produced two #artcore takeovers in Central and McDonald Road.

- 3.10 McDonald Road takeover was a music event which was the first library event hosted as part of Leith Late, a visible grassroots celebration of the art scene in Leith. The entire event was devised, programmed and produced by the apprentices who brought in lights, sound and decorations to transform the Business Hub in the basement of McDonald Road Library and host a showcase of spoken word, hip hop, songwriting and electronic music by young (under 25) artists. More than 170 people visited over the course of the evening.
- 3.11 Libraries involvement with #artcore would not have come about without the co-location with Bongo and the opportunity to build relationships and discuss potential collaborations both in the building and with other agencies and practitioners in Out of the Blue.
- 3.12 Involvement with Out of the Blue has also enabled library staff to access their RISO printer (a form of screenprinting) which is an excellent opportunity to enable groups in libraries to cheaply publish their own posters/zines/comics or other materials. All the Takeover posters and promotional material was produced on this and both the Craigmillar creative writing group and the FreeMachines group visited and got an insight into how a small social enterprise staffed by young people operates.
- 3.13 Out of the Blueprint also produced templates for the libraries Dazzle project, which engaged hundreds of children over the Easter holidays in libraries and enabled a successful partnership with Edinburgh Art Festival which saw children's art at the heart of Battle of Jutland centenary commemorations in South Queensferry.
- 3.14 Bongo Club provides low cost public address sound systems and staff support for Central Library Edinburgh Reads events and talks which has reduced library expenditure in this area.
- 3.15 The collaboration between libraries and Bongo Club will be further developed and future ideas and plans include:
 - Out of the Blue providing a library based artist in residence to add to the libraries Digital Toybox initiative
 - 'Library Lates' supported by #artcore to bring in community arts partners to develop new library events audiences
 - Bongo live performances in the Music Library
 - Publication of zine (on line magazine) with illustrations by Graeme MacKellaig and information from libraries, telling the story of what libraries can do, based on the San Francisco public library initiative <http://therumpus.net/2011/05/meanwhile-the-san-francisco-public-library/>
 - Further 'made in the library' publications in collaboration with #artcore trainees, Out of the Blueprint, Writers Inc Groups and libraries.

- 3.16 The continuing relationship between Bongo Club and libraries opens up new opportunities for innovative and engaging activities across the city, contributing to cultural, educational, economic and environmental improvements through facilitating young people's engagement in arts and libraries.
- 3.17 During the year 2015/16 The Bongo Club has welcomed 62,000 people through its doors 60% of which fall into the 18-25 age group, 80% of which are under 35. It employed 35 people during the course of the year.
- 3.18 During this year the Bongo Club has hosted; 189 live bands (including the winner of the UK's best part-time band), 67 theatre rehearsals, 15 spoken word events, three arts and craft markets, five jazz workshops, a week long partnership with Hidden Doors arts festival, one internationally broadcast multi-venue live internet music event, 44 percussion rehearsals in partnership with Beltane Fire Festival and 220 DJ nights.

4. Measures of success

- 4.1 Key indicators of the overall success of the libraries and Bongo Club partnership working include:
- Increased customer satisfaction with library services (annual)
 - Increased number of visitors/stock loans
 - Improved access to arts and cultural experiences and skills development for young people
 - Numbers of under 25s attending events.

5. Financial impact

- 5.1 The Bongo Club licence generates income of £12,000 for the Council
- 5.2 Any costs incurred by libraries for joint activity is contained within existing libraries budget

6. Risk, policy, compliance and governance impact

- 6.1 Risks associated with this report are deemed to be low and any identified risks will be mitigated and managed through service area risk registers.
- 6.2 There is a risk that best value is not being demonstrated in line with CSO's that require all services valued above £25,000 to be competitively tendered. However the existing strength of partnership working with Bongo Club brings associated value and benefits for library customers, in providing new and innovative service programmes and wider access to arts activity for young people.

7. Equalities impact

- 7.1 The innovative activities programming will improve equality of access for customers and in doing so will contribute to the delivery of the Equality Act 2010 general duties of advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relations.

8. Sustainability impact

- 8.1 The proposals in this report will help to achieve a sustainable Edinburgh by continuing service improvements to the local community and highlighting new services available.

9. Consultation and engagement

- 9.1 The Bongo Club worked in partnership with the SomewhereTo_ project in Edinburgh to ascertain the needs of young people in the provision of arts venue space. This led to the expansion of their daytime programme by 50% from the previous year and the rehearsals and workshops reflected identified needs. All of the rehearsals and workshops described were designed, led and mostly attended by young people.

10. Background reading/external references

- 10.1 None

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11. Links

Coalition Pledges	P35 Continue to develop the diversity of services provided by our libraries.
Council Priorities	C02 Our children and young people are successful learners, confident individuals and responsible citizens making a positive contribution to their communities. C019 Attractive places and well maintained - Edinburgh remains an attractive city through the development of high quality buildings and places and the delivery of high standards and maintenance of infrastructure and public realm. C020- Culture, sport and major events - Edinburgh continues to be a leading cultural city where culture and sport play a central part in the lives and futures of citizens.

**Single Outcome
Agreement
Appendices**

C023 Well engaged and well informed - Communities and individuals are empowered and supported to improve local outcomes and foster a sense of community.

C024 The Council communicates effectively internally and externally and has an excellent reputation for customer care.

C025 The Council has efficient and effective services that deliver on objectives.

C026 The Council engages with stakeholders and works in partnership to improve services and deliver on agreed objectives.

S04 Edinburgh's communities are safer and have improved physical and social fabric.

None.