

EXETER CITY COUNCIL

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – ECONOMY 18 JANUARY 2007

EXETER OPEN STUDIOS 2006

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To report on the City Council's involvement in and the performance of the Exeter Open Studios event in Exeter.
- 1.2 To seek continued support for an Exeter Open Studios event to take place annually.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 In 2005 Exeter City Council supported the 'Open Studios' event 'Nine Days of Art' in order to support the increased cultural profile the City. This was achieved in terms of visitor numbers and successful marketing of artists in the City. The event also provided business development, in terms of increased marketing, sales and commissions that many Exeter artists and makers benefited from.
- 2.2 The January 2006 Scrutiny Committee agreed to support the development of an Exeter artist and makers 'Open Studio' event that would take place in the autumn attracting pre-Christmas sales and as part of the Autumn Festival. The Council support was limited to assisting in the coordination and production of publicity and promotion of the event. As an artist led initiative it required a financial commitment from a sufficient numbers of artists and makers to make the project viable.
- 2.3 The aims of the event were to:
 - encourage the growth of creative industries by promoting the work of artists, makers and crafts people producing, marketing and selling work;
 - support cultural tourism initiatives by encouraging visitors to visit Exeter to see and purchase art;
 - encourage joint arts marketing initiatives by marketing Exeter artists, makers and craftspeople and develop public access to artists.

3. PERFORMANCE AND EVALUATION

- 3.1 A meeting took place in March 2006 launching the Exeter Open Studios event and inviting participating artists. This resulted in 34 artists agreeing to open their studios or homes to the public over the first weekend of the Exeter Autumn Festival (4 & 5 November, with some artists opening for longer or holding preview events on November 3). Of the 34 registered artists 10 were sharing venues, one was a group of six artists and one was a group of over 40 artists living or working in Exeter. This resulted in a total of 28 different venues displaying art to the public all over the city and as far as Topsham and Countess Wear.

- 3.2 The event was promoted primarily through a guide that provided details of all the artists' locations and trail maps. An artist registration fee of £50 per artist or group supported the production of the guide.
- 3.3 A total of 10,000 full colour guides were distributed in galleries, art centres, art and craft supplies shops, libraries and Tourist Information Centres in Exeter and across Devon. Each participating artist distributed and displayed 50 guides. Some 350 posters were also displayed across the area and 84 branded directional arrows were displayed across the city.
- 3.4 There were 26 feedback and evaluation forms returned by the artists, reporting the approximate number of visits as 2121; an average of 75 visits per venue. There were 44 feedback forms received from visitors, the overall view of the event being very good. Most visitors, who returned the forms, intended to visit between one and five studios during the weekend event. Most were women and most between 56–65 years old.
- 3.5 The total declared artwork sales amounted to approximately £11,900 and two artists wished to keep the value of their sales confidential. In addition five artists received commissions and eight artists had interest from a gallery in exhibiting their work.
- 3.6 The majority of artists were keen to open their studios again with 11 artists wanting to continue with an Exeter only event at a different time to the countywide 'Open Studios' event, which attracts more rural competition. A further nine artists would participate in both the countywide event and the Exeter only events.

4. PROPOSAL

- 4.1 It is proposed that the City Council support the continued development of an Exeter only artist and makers 'Exeter Open Studio' to take place as part of the Exeter Autumn Festival in November. This event would continue as an artist led initiative and require a financial commitment from a sufficient number of artists and makers to make the project viable. The proposed Council support would again be used to provide support for the coordination and production of publicity to promote the event.
- 4.2 The current City Council Partnership funding of £1,000 to support Devon Artist Network would support the countywide 'Open Studio' event due to take place in September 2007. This would give Exeter artist and makers a choice of two events in which to participate.

5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The resource requirements would be met from existing budgets. The 2006 budget for the entire event was £2,500; of that £1,650 was contribution of fees from the artists and £850 from ECC. The 2007 ECC contribution is budgeted at £1,000.

6. RECOMMENDATION that

6.1 Members note the report on the Exeter Open Studios event in November 2006.

6.2 Members support the 'Open Studios' proposal for 2007.

**RICHARD BALL
HEAD OF ECONOMY AND TOURISM**

ECONOMY & DEVELOPMENT DIRECTORATE

Local Government (Access to information) Act 1985 (as amended)
Background papers used in compiling this report: None