

Agenda Item 17 - Arts Forum – CIO Update for Community Affairs Committee

The Chichester Arts Forum was established in November 2023 following the Council's decision to strengthen community dialogue with the arts, communities, and charities sectors of Chichester.

The Forum has a membership of approximately 50 individuals and organisations, representing a diverse range of professional and community groups across artistic disciplines. These include theatre, music, dance, live art, fine art, and comedy. Regular attendees include representatives from Chichester Festival Theatre, Chichester Fringe, Festival of Chichester, Pallant House Gallery, University of Chichester, Chichester College, Oxmarket Contemporary, Chichester Creative Art Network, Chichester Art Trail, among others.

By late 2024, it became increasingly evident that the Arts Forum needed to define a legacy organisation with a broader framework, capable of operating independently from Chichester City Council. This would allow it to take a more proactive role in supporting and empowering arts activities across the city.

Grassroots organisations had begun to request support in areas that the Arts Forum, as a council-linked body, could not provide. These needs included access to rehearsal, creative, and performance spaces (for both fine and live arts), marketing and management support, external funding access, and a wider platform to drive a grassroots cultural movement in Chichester.

In February 2025, a core working group was formed from Forum members to explore and develop the concept of an independent organisation, potentially structured as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO). Membership was drawn from volunteers and direct invitations to ensure a diversity of skills and perspectives. The group comprises:

- Rhys Chant (Chair)
- Robert Daniels (Bootworks / University of Chichester, Senior Lecturer in Theatre)
- Louise Duggan (Ophelia Arts Consultancy / Chichester CAN)
- Simon O'Hea (Chichester Fringe / Festival of Chichester)
- Mark Elliott (Chichester Fringe / Festival of Chichester)
- Sarah Collins (Creative Beatz)
- Anne Marie Flynn (New Park Cinema)
- Alison McDonald-Hughes (New Park Centre)
- Evan Mumby (University of Chichester, Fine Art Student)
- Mark Featherstone-Whitty (Industry Expert in Theatre Education)
- Ben Williams (MetaNoia)
- Francis Clayton (Events Organiser)

The group met in February and May 2025, including smaller sub-groups that consulted with the creative team at The Spring, Havant, to learn from their CIO model.

In March 2025, the group conducted a consultation exercise with the wider Forum membership, focusing on the purpose and structure of a potential CIO. The response rate was high, reflecting strong engagement across the membership.

In May, the working group met to distil the feedback and begin formalising the key functions, funding sources, membership and governance structures, and services aligned with the proposed charitable objectives.

Under the Charities Act 2011, the group identified the following aims for the proposed CIO:

(4) The advancement of education

- Promoting and sustaining collective knowledge and understanding in specific areas of study, skills, and expertise
- Supporting vocational training and lifelong learning
- Facilitating research and dissemination of findings
- Developing individual capabilities and competencies
- Educating the public on specific topics (e.g. climate change, financial literacy)
- Delivering educational content through media and events

(8) The advancement of the arts, culture, heritage or science

- Supporting art galleries, festivals, and arts councils
- Promoting high standards in drama, ballet, music, literature, cinema, sculpture, painting, mime, etc.
- Encouraging and promoting craftsmanship

To fulfil these aims, the CIO would offer:

- Negotiation and provision of affordable creative spaces
- Marketing and promotional support
- Fundraising support and bid writing
- Networking opportunities and events
- Commissioning and delivery of arts events
- Support for emerging artists and grassroots initiatives

Potential sources of funding include:

- Chichester City Council (CCC)
- Chichester District Council (CDC), via Economic Development or Community Grants
- Arts Council England

- Sussex Community Foundation
- Local trusts and foundations (e.g. Woodger Trust, Basil Shippam Trust)
- Backstage Trust
- Individual philanthropy and donations
- Commercial income (from events, services, commissions, etc.)
- Corporate sponsorship via CSR programmes

To ensure the CIO remains community-led and adaptable, the group suggests the following governance model:

- A fundraising committee or subgroup
- A membership structure granting voting rights at an AGM
- A board of trustees appointed by the membership
- Trustees to be appointed from the ground up, reflecting grassroots engagement
- Consideration of term limits (e.g. Chair: 3 years; Secretary: 5 years) to ensure continuity and renewal

Rhys Chant, Chair of Chichester Arts Forum

30 May 2025