

**Title of meeting:** Culture, Regeneration and Economic Development Decision Meeting

**Date of meeting:** 7 February 2025

**Subject:** Public Art Policy

**Report by:** Director of Culture, Leisure and Regulatory Services

**Cabinet Member:** Councillor Steve Pitt

**Wards affected:** All

**Key decision:** No

**Full Council decision:** No

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**1. Purpose of report**

- 1.1 To advise members of a new Public Art policy officers wish to introduce to ensure that best practice is applied in the selection, delivery and management of public art across Council owned land and space.

**2. Recommendations**

- 2.1. **That the proposed Public Art Policy be adopted and applied to formalise the council's approach to the creation and management of public art.**
- 2.2. **To undertake an audit of work currently in the public realm to ensure that the Council has a record of all works that are sited on our land or properties which over time will include a visual survey of each asset in a similar way to the current Monuments and Memorials Policy.**

**3. Background**

- 3.1. Historically the city has had a number of pieces of public art which have been commissioned through a range of different approaches over many years. Recently officers have worked to provide more transparency and accountability to the processes which supports the current best practice. However without a public art policy we are aware that different approaches have been taken to provide new elements of public art and we wish to apply the current learning and positive work which is emerging from the Seafront Arts programme and apply it across the city.

- 3.2. It is understood that the contemporary concept of public art is now much broader than it once was and that many pieces of public art are no longer in a sculptural form which might once have been anticipated. Public art today can be something to view, listen to, experience, contemplate, interact with or participate in. They can be transient, temporary or permanent.
- 3.3. We fully recognise that public art can play a very significant role in enhancing the built environment creating vibrant spaces where people want to spend time. It can enrich and empower communities encouraging a sense of ownership, raise the profile of a destination providing a boost to the local economy and support growth in creative industries by providing opportunities for employment and skills development by artists.
- 3.4. The proposed Public Art policy recognises both the wide variation in form any works might take but also acknowledges that regardless of the form the council needs to ensure a consistent process to the selection, delivery and management of works be they permanent or temporary.
- 3.5. The Council has lacked a full list of public art works for some time and where some have been listed they have primarily been those which are incorporated into the landscape for the longer period of time. By default this has not necessarily captured works which have been more transient or temporary works which therefore does not enable us to fully celebrate all that we currently have.

#### **4. Adoption of a new Public Art Policy**

- 4.1 The policy seeks to
  - outline the process for the selection and commissioning of public art
  - articulate the process for monitoring and maintaining those that are in the public realm
  - to provide a mechanism to ensure that public art in the city is of good quality, suitable, relevant and safe to continue to remain in situ
- 4.2 The policy allows for the application of learning from within the current Southsea Coastal scheme redevelopment where a model of operation has been successfully working for the last year. This has resulted in an effective utilisation of staff and external partner skills in the form of a steering group, where individual's wealth of experience and knowledge can be used to the wider benefit of the city. The Policy proposes that going forward this group widens it's brief from the Seafront Arts Programme Steering group to being that of a Public Art Steering group.
- 4.3 The policy proposes an audit of existing public art across the city which would enable us to have a comprehensive record of works both historical and contemporary. Over time it is proposed that a visual assessment of the condition of each of the works will be undertaken to ensure they are still in a suitable condition to remain in the public realm.

- 4.4 The policy also proposes to list in the audit privately owned art in public spaces such as train stations, places of worship as well as key public sites such as Gunwharf Quays and Portsmouth Historic Dockyard. Being listed in such an audit does not imply any role for the Council in the maintenance or continuation of the work at these sites but supports the provision of a comprehensive listing.
- 4.5 The policy outlines a recommended commissioning process again proposing current good practice and emphasising that the council's preferred route is one where opportunities are put to the market either through open or limited competition. This would enable artists to respond to a specific brief which would encourage all aspects of the work to be taken into consideration from the outset. Direct invitation for an artist to respond to a particular site would be proposed only in exceptional circumstances.
- 4.6 Equally as important as the commissioning process is that for decommissioning especially where a work may have deteriorated to the point where it is unsafe to remain in the public realm. This maybe due to environmental factors such as sunlight's interaction with plastic which can make it brittle or other elements such as significant change to the surrounding area and landscape. Artwork which was always intended to be temporary should have had a decommissioning process agreed at the outset of its commissioning process.
- 4.7 The proposed policy considers a wide range of different elements in regard to public art and it is proposed that this policy be reviewed on a regular basis of no less than every 3 years. At this time officers are not suggesting a wider public art strategy as we believe individual opportunities for public art would sit within wider development strategies onto which the application of this Public Art policy would then apply so outlining a recommended route for its delivery into a scheme.

## **5. Reasons for Recommendations**

- 5.1 Historically the city's landscape has provided the backdrop for a number of public art installations both temporary and permanent. However without a Public Art policy the approach to commissioning has been varied. This new policy provides an opportunity to capture the learning out of the current Seafront Arts programme to provide a framework for work across the city to ensure it meets the best standards and maximises the opportunities for the city.
- 6.2 The policy articulates our commitment to ensuring that there is an open and transparent process associated with any form of commissioning and that as many opportunities are put out for creative industries practitioners to respond to as possible. That route also enables the council to adhere to procurement principals where practical.
- 6.3 Provision of a comprehensive record of existing public art work will in time enable all works currently situated in the public realm to be reviewed to ensure it is suitable

that they remain in situ or if necessary consider further options depending on the circumstances.

**7. Integrated impact assessment**

7.1 Integrated Impact Assessment (appendix B)

**8. Legal implications**

8.1 There are no legal implications at this time for implementation of the policy as drafted.

**9. Director of Finance's comments**

9.1 The proposals set out in this report are expected to be funded from existing service portfolio budgets, as approved by Full Council

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Signed by:  
**Stephen Baily**  
**Director of Culture, Leisure and Regulatory Services**

**Appendices:**

Appendix A - Public Art Policy

Appendix B - Integrated Impact Assessment

Appendix C - Guidance on Fees for Visual Artists 2022

**Background list of documents: Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972**

The following documents disclose facts or matters, which have been relied upon to a material extent by the author in preparing this report:

Title of document	Location

The recommendation(s) set out above were approved/ approved as amended/ deferred/  
rejected by ..... on .....

.....  
Signed by:  
**Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Economic Development**