

# Minutes for West Sussex Creatives Final Meeting

**Tues 24th March 2026: 11.00-12.00pm**

**Chair: Louise Blackwell (LB)**

**Attendees:** Alexandra Poutsma, Andrew Elston, Ben Cavanagh, Beth Williams, Charlotte Loukes, Dale Rooks, Eleanor Ward, Hannah Foley, James Underwood, Katie Brown, Kevin Quilty, Kyla Booth-Lucking, Liz McCarthy-Nield, Lynda Russell-Whitaker, Rachael Dines, Rebecca Savill, Ricard Freeman, Richard Manders, Simon Edwards, Susan Raikes, Surya Supry, Vicki Meddows-Smith

- LB gave a quick update on the aims of creating the Cultural prospectus and what has happened so far in the process. There have been 4 meetings (online, in Chichester, in Crawley and in Worthing)
- This is a fast changing environment, but we are at a stage where the prospectus can be shared, thanks to fabulous work and energy from Shake it Up Creative who have given lots of time to design the prospectus
- The prospectus celebrates the cultural offer in West Sussex and offers some practical ideas for those in power about how to embed culture. It doesn't cover everything but distills the themes and power of what WS can offer together as a collective.
- Richard Freeman (RF) explained the basics of devolution and what is currently happening across Sussex.
  - Devolution and local government reorganisation is happening across Sussex with unity authorities being created from district and borough councils.
  - Already a unitary council in B&H.
  - There will be one Strategic authority with an elected mayor.
  - Options for Sussex were submitted at the end of last year;
    - three unitary authorities, West Sussex, East Sussex and B&H
    - West Sussex split in two, coastal vs rural urban
    - 5 equal sized authorities not governed by existing boundaries (2 coastal, 3 urban rural)
  - A decision is expected this week. A statement yesterday suggests that timetable will be stuck to.
  - Pre election period next week before local elections- officers won't be allowed to talk about it.
  - Elections for new shadow councils in May 2027 and will come into operation on 1st April 2028.
  - Transfer of funding powers from Whitehall to Sussex and Brighton.
  - Senior executive teams are already appointed, more will be appointed after the local elections.

- There is authority to make decisions before the mayor is appointed in 2 years
  - Priority areas have been granted 19mil extra funding per year.
  - They are: economy dev, adult skills and transport as well as police/crime merging of E/W sussex fire and rescue.
  - Where does Culture sit within these priority areas? Culture doesn't have its own mandate but there have been key amendments going through parliaments regarding Arts & Culture, high street regeneration and illegal parking for mayors, giving mayors more place based power for the mayors.
- LB updated on the Sussex Culture group that she is a part of with Liz McCarthy-Nield and Kathy Bourne.
    - The group is made up of cultural leaders across Sussex with reps from WS, ES and B&H plus reps from the local authorities as well.
    - In the initial phase for creating cultural prospectus/ advocacy tools spanning the whole of Sussex
    - The group is funded by ACE and administered by University of Sussex
    - The WS prospectus will feed into this cross Sussex prospectus. There is a very positive feeling, people are keen to set up policies and work with us.
- Liz M-N said the goal is that Culture is front and centre with a Culture strategy and as much funding as possible across the whole county.
  - *What is the planned timeline for the Pan Sussex information dissemination?*  
Eleanor Ward: project manager for Sussex cultural prospectus reported that
    - an elevator pitch of impact and a data bank for use across the county is being created
    - Plus a 2 min film to sell culture across Sussex
    - Timeline being finalised. Everything will be fed in.
    - Important to say that WS is working with B&H and ES on the Pan sussex prospectus- part of the wider conversation

### **How should we be using this prospectus and co-ordinate the approach?**

RF discussed examples of how this has been done and how different areas can work together. Culture can be a driving force in devolution

- [https://www.ealing.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/18826/cultural\\_manifesto.pdf](https://www.ealing.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/18826/cultural_manifesto.pdf), 100 Creatives, Ealing
- [https://www.centraldistrictalliance.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/CDA\\_Cultural\\_Prospect-Digital.pdf](https://www.centraldistrictalliance.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/CDA_Cultural_Prospect-Digital.pdf) - Central District Alliance, London
- WMCA / Arup - <https://www.wmca.org.uk/media/4txbq3s5/wmca-r20-making-the-case-for-cul>

[ture-business-case-evidence-final-1.pdf](#) Business Case Evidence for culture in infrastructure development

- Case4Culture North East 2015 - 2030 - <https://www.case4culture.org.uk/about/#c4c-reports> Independent regional alliance Thought to have helped boost economic value add to the region by 64%.  
Didn't survive political change and was taken in-house by majority. Divided views on whether that is seen as success or not - lots think there is no longer a voice for smaller orgs  
<https://www.culturednortheast.co.uk/p/goodbye-to-north-east-culture-partnership>
- <https://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/business/support/economic-development/culture-east-sussex/east-sussex-cultural-prospectus-2026>
- General feeling that the mayoral team are listening and open to change, they see the importance of Culture and identity. Awareness of the national mood. Need to be very bold when putting forward ideas about Arts and Culture and stress the benefits.

### **Discussion on how to use doc to ensure that it is not just a report that will sit on a shelf.**

- Important that Organisations/individuals to take ownership of the doc
- Share with trustees, send to combined authority, officers, sussex culture board
- *Can the doc be put on FB and used to promote things online?* Yes, but not the one that you have been sent, but the final version will be sent by end of week and then YES.
- *Can we collate feedback or ask people to write to local councillors?* People are about to vote in 6 weeks and those people are instrumental in setting up new council structures. Encourage people to use the data in the report to grill politicians- make sure your local politicians have a copy and that they put it on their agenda
- Templates and guidelines of how to share could be useful so that everyone is on the same page. We could create a collective hit list so people can tick off when they have sent it to people
- A feeling that prospectus doesn't tell people on the ground how to use it.
- *Is it still important to send it to people in current posts even though they may be changing/leaving their roles?* Yes, we will see people fulfill new roles and many will be moved around. The pre-election period make it a bit tricky to send it to councils but can send to venues
- Important to record who we are sending it to so as not to frustrate/overload people- think about your location as a starting point
- Schools and education should have copies. CCG will share across with departments and partners

- Places like Wakehurst and RSA will use their reach outside Sussex where appropriate- LVEP
- Press and PR will kick in post 8th May when the purdah period ends
- Get everyone asking 'Who are we?' to get the media interested
- Chichester Living will distribute report out to large mailing list. Summer of culture section on website and link to that.
- BBC Radio Sussex- phone in/interviews- should be contacted
- Hosting the compressed version on your website is fantastic
- LSEP- put it on the Elsep platform
- Importance of using websites and databases, including artists and organisations that come to venues
- Marketing strategy could be added to list so that people know when it might be most appropriate to send to different people

Sum up of Actions:

1. Google list of contacts that people can access and feed into [HERE](#) We have suggested organisations as a starter but please add specific people on new lines so we know who has been sent what. This is just the beginning of the list and who we will share it with. Please take responsibility for sharing it with your networks and connections. Thank you. It's not a problem if people receive it more than once but please fill the document in so you know where it has been shared.
2. Marketing strategy/ template for speaking to people (see template below)

Purpose is to hammer home the point that Arts and Culture is the bedrock that underpins the economy, environment, health and well being etc. The purpose is not to talk about everything that happens but to map and anchor it, to stress its importance and impact. Not just a celebration, it's a targeted call to arms to ensure that Arts & Culture is not forgotten and its great value is understood. There are three ideas at the end of the document which are practical ideas on how it can help the mayor make decisions re. Arts and Culture.

Potentially reconvene post election to ensure that this group can continue to feed into the wider conversation.

## **TEMPLATE FOR SHARING THE DOCUMENT**

Thank you for being part of developing the cultural prospectus for West Sussex. Please find attached the pdf of the document to share. You can also access different versions of the document too:

[DOUBLE PAGE SPREAD](#)

[SINGLE PAGE SPREAD](#)

Below is some template text for you to adapt. It's important not to leave out the bit about working with our colleagues in Sussex. We're not working alone, we are now part of the whole of Sussex.

You can help spread the word by sharing it in the following ways:

- Include information about it in your newsletters
- Share it on your website
- Use the tiles (attached) and share on social media
- Write to your MP
- Share with your local councillors before the May 7<sup>th</sup> elections and let them know how much you value culture
- Share it with council officers
- Tell your local press contacts about it
- Speak about it with your Trustees, Boards, and other colleagues
- Share it on neighbourhood, friends and family What's App groups

**Template text (as a guide):**

98 West Sussex creative professionals have co-written a West Sussex Cultural Prospectus.

As Sussex undergoes a once-in-a-generation change to local government, the prospectus demonstrates the crystal clear contribution that arts and culture makes to every inch of the county.

This collaborative work offers three ideas for strategic investment priorities led by new Combined County Authority and West Sussex unitary leadership over the next few years.

We know it will help underline shared aims across economic growth, health and wellbeing, skills, environmental resilience, community safety and place - by placing culture at their heart.

We are also connected to the **Sussex Culture** group, collaborating to create a single offer across all of East Sussex, Brighton & Hove and West Sussex. This document feeds directly into that work.

Please share this document with anyone you think will use it to place culture in the new systems of power in Sussex.

