

## **West Sussex Creatives Meeting**

**Zoom 10- 11am Tuesday 23 September 2025**

### **WELCOME AND PURPOSE OF THE MEETING**

**Louise Blackwell**, Creative Director of Creative Crawley welcomed everyone to the meeting.

**Kathy Bourne** (ED) and **Justin Audibert** (AD) from Chichester Festival Theatre (CFT) introduced themselves. Kathy said they are mindful of the role supporting cultural institutions right across Sussex as a key player and are committed to supporting this group.

**Dale Rooks**, Director of Learning and Participation introduced herself and talked about the extraordinary arts and culture that exists across the region and that there is a fantastic opportunity to work in partnership in a more robust, joined up way and share good practice

Louise outlined the importance of coming together as a group of creatives in this moment of devolution – how do we want to represent ourselves so that we are not missed out in the conversations. The driver for convening this group is to provide the space to think about how we might work together.

Monica Cammiade provided BSL interpretation for the group.

### **INTRODUCTIONS**

Adam Joolia, CEO AudioActive music org based in Worthing, Crawley, Brighton Hove

Beth Williams, Resident artist at West Green Studios, Designer specialising in living bio textiles

Cara Courage, Culture, Communities and Place Consultant, Chair of Phoenix Arts based in Fulking

Caroline Sharman, Director and Arts Consultant, running Culture Spark funded by Chichester District Council taking arts into communities in West Sussex

Catherine Sleeman, Dance practitioner based in Crawley

Chris Cook, trustee for 39 Youth Centre, Bognor Regis & Dormans Youth Arts Centre Crawley

Dan Hill, CFT Nest Producer (new space 120 seater) for supporting emerging artists

Darren Abrahams, One World Orchestra, based in Crawley

Daniel Li, Sinoist Books, an independent press based in Horsham that publishes translated Chinese literature and contemporary fiction NPO

Darren East, Making Theatre Gaining Skills based in Bognor Regis, community classes and traineeship Bognor Regis Puppet Festival

Davina Christmas, ACE Senior Relationship Manager for Strategic Partnerships Place Based Approach

Ellen Cheshire, Chichester Cathedral, fundraising team

Grace Thompson, Founder of Butterflyhope. Inclusion Leader for dance. Public Speaker, Performing artists and disability advocate.

Hannah Carter, Ensemble Reza based in Crawley

Hannah Foley, General Manager Creative Crawley

James Underwood, CEO West Sussex Music providing music education around the whole county

Julian Johnson, Jays Paint Shop -providing graffiti workshops for young people and creating murals

Laura Peters, Vice Principal at West Dean College

Luke Osborne, theatre workshop facilitator based in Chichester

Lydia Cassady, Arts Marketing Consultant, trustee at Worthing Theatres and Museum (previously at CFT)

Maddi Pike, Head of Learning at Goodwood Art Foundation

Maija Handover, Producer in residence at West Green Studios based in Lingfield and Crawley

Mark Bradbury, Community Choir leader and Little Notes (early years programme) based in Horsham

Richard Freeman, Always Possible, data and intelligence agency in Brighton, running Sussex and the City an initiative exploring the impact of devolution on Sussex with a weekly podcast <https://lander.alwayspossible.co.uk/podcast>

Richard Manders, Strategic Lead at Culture and Leisure, Worthing

Robert Jude Daniels, AD Bootworks Theatre, Chichester

Sarah Collins, CEO Creative Beatz open access sessions at the JAM CAFÉ, Chichester

Simon Edwards, photographer/filmmaker based in Crawley and part of Wordfest Crawley

Sophie Eustace, Co-Director Creative Playground, CPP run by Creative Crawley

Sophie Hobson, Creative Associate CFT supporting artists

Sophie Merriner, Fashion Designer and Resident Artist at West Green Studios Crawley

Toby Wilsher, Theatre maker based in Wittering, was previously at Trestle Theatre. Mask workshop maker working internationally

Tim Bolton, Head of School of Arts and Conservation at West Dean

PRESNTATION FROM DAVINA CHRISTMAS, ACE ON WHAT IS DEVOLUTION

See presentation [HERE](#)

The process of establishing devolved authorities or mayoral strategic authorities in a specific region e.g. trailblazers in the North

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough is the only one in the south east.

Central Government is working towards this across the country which will devolve responsibility and funding for:

- Transport and local infrastructure
- Adult skills and employment support
- Housing and strategic planning
- Economic dev and regeneration
- Environment and climate change
- Health, wellbeing and public service reform
- Public safety

Arts and Culture is not on the list. However, the devolution white paper highlights the role of arts and culture, heritage and sport and tourism in driving economic growth, creating opportunities and social cohesion.

Importance of local growth plans (10yr strategic framework for growth – a guiding star for that region) which should include:

- Economic overview
- Shared priorities
- Investment pipeline

[Hull & East Yorkshire Arts, Culture & Heritage Devolution Manifesto](#) – a good example of unified narratives to present to mayoral candidates etc

Three areas in the South are going through the process

1. Norfolk/Suffolk
2. Greater Essex
3. Sussex and Brighton and Hove (holding name) to include West Sussex, East Sussex and Brighton and Hove

Only announced in March 2025 with Mayoral elections in May 2026 – very quick timeline.

Arts Council England (representatives Peter Heslip and Jayne Tyler) are advocating for arts and culture in local growth plans. Davina is leading on devolution and covering Jayne's work while she is off work. Their role is to support the sector to create unified cultural narratives (twin track approach) – how can the narratives come together to create USP/impact of culture.

Arms Length Bodies, lead authorities and universities coming together to maximise potential of place based working contributions

Talking to Brighton Cultural Alliances, Culture East Sussex, West Sussex Creatives, University of Sussex, Culture Officer and Senior Leadership meetings across the three local authorities.

West Sussex narrative on arts and culture is crucial and how it fits with the other areas and this is what this group can input into. Once we have the local growth plan it will be about lobbying once we know who is in power.

#### QUESTIONS/INFO SHARING

Adam Jolia from Audio active asked about ACE restructuring place based working structure?

Davina clarified there are 12 ideas to be tested. This won't involve changes to project grants/NPOs

Richard at Alwayspossible shared several cross-sussex events and symposia will be happening in the new/year spring. Keen to put the cultural narrative - and future ideas - front and centre. Do get in touch - richard@alwayspossible.co.uk

#### NEXT STEPS FOR THE GROUP

**Monday 20 Oct 10am – 12noon CFT** – workshop to pool ideas - how can we put a document together to demonstrate impact and share the West Sussex cultural USP and narrative?

**Wednesday 19 Nov 3 – 5pm**, Unit 79/80, County Mall Shopping Centre, Crawley

Dec date online tbc

This is not a closed group – please spread the word. Open to all creative professionals based in West Sussex.

#### ACTIONS FOR ORGANISERS (CREATIVE CRAWLEY/CFT)

Cathy from CFT and Louise, Creative Crawley will continue connecting with Brighton & Hove and East Sussex

LB will contact ACE re funds to support this group's access needs, meeting costs and potential contribution to travel costs and creating the document.

DR to contact freelancers to support with note taking, gathering data, designing cultural manifesto (Lydia Castie and Sue Webb )

Mapping exercise to identify :

- Areas in West Sussex not represented by the group
- Missing artforms including visitor experiences