

SALISBURY CITY COUNCIL

Report

Subject : Public Art Project Update
Committee : Community Services
Date : 13 June 2023
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1. Report Summary:

- 1.1. This report provides a summary of a thematic analysis of the qualitative data gathered through the Turning Point Project , October 2022 – March 2023, and asks the committee to note this report in advance of the full report later this year.

2. Background:

- 2.1. Turning Point was a creative consultation on the role and future of Public Art in Salisbury, [approved by Community Services in June 2022](#), and managed by the Communities Manager for Salisbury City Council.
- 2.2. The project was led by appointed Community Artist Sue Martin.
- 2.3. The Project Plan based on the Artist Brief (Doc 86577).

3. Methodology:

- 3.1. A grounded theory approach was taken to this ‘consultation as research’ by starting with a set of questions, designed by the lead artist and the Communities Manager, and based on the situated professional experience of both in community development, participatory arts and the cultural sector.
- 3.2. The project has been an example of emergent research design, placing the voices of the participating residents at the heart of the findings.
- 3.3. This is achieved by allowing new questions and conclusions to emerge from the initial set and to allow them to become more dominant as relevant, to produce findings most aligned to the voices of participants.
- 3.4. Thematic analysis was achieved by grouping emerging themes against the questions and by identifying high volume themes which also appeared in more than 4 of the groups.

4. Grounded Analysis Questions:

- 4.1. What should Salisbury’s Art Say or be about?
- 4.2. Where should we put our public art?
- 4.3. What forms of public art do you wish to see
- 4.4. What could or should our public art do?

5. Emergent Themes:

- 5.1. **Education and information** – People from across the project (education, community groups and members of the public) spoke about what we may see as

interpretation and access to information that enables residents and tourists to engage with our public art. The take home statement being “If we know something about it, it can feel like ours” and “Open the door for us” to appreciate what we already have, and any new art in the city. This can be encapsulated in the phrase from the lead artist – “Enjoyment through understanding”. It should be acknowledged that participants in the project may have been influenced by the nature of the project itself, but these sentiments were echoed in 10 of the 22 public surveys. And 17 of 65 post it notes suggestions from the public enabling us to suggest that this is a dominant theme which should be places at the heart of planning for public art in Salisbury.

5.1.1. The subsequent emerging questions is posed as **“How can we make public art more meaningful in the lives of our residents and visitors?”**

5.2. **Sense of Place** – Participants in the project and members of the public shared the idea that public art should be part of how we tell positive stories about ourselves as people and as a city. Survey and creative responses refer to ‘Pride’. The Lead Artist and Communities manager grouped these comments and ideas under the title “Positive Presentation of Self”.

5.2.1. The subsequent emerging question is posed as **“How can public art in Salisbury become part of our positive self-story?”**

5.3. **Activation** - Connected to para 5.2 is the idea of public art as an activating space, i.e., bringing people together, celebrating something specific or asking questions for people to answer in their own way. This was particularly linked to interactive, performance based or temporary public art. Art that changes the use of a space and enables it to be used by groups and for group of people in new way. Or engagement programmes with art that bring groups of people together using public space and public art as a focal point. These may be seen as art interventions, with reference to broad notions of art in the public sphere as laid out in the initial project brief.

5.3.1. The subsequent emerging question is posed as **“How can public art in Salisbury be used as a way to activate people and spaces?”**

5.4. The final report will explore the connecting relationships between these three dominant emerging themes, expanding on them via the words of participants and members of the public, with the project team offering connections to outcome areas.

6. Grounded analysis responses:

6.1. What should Salisbury’s art say or be about?

6.1.1. **Local History and Nature and Wildlife** were the dominant responses to this question across conversations, creative responses and surveys. This was linked in places to the idea of a ‘Sense of Place’.

6.1.2. **Wellbeing and resilience** was a repeated theme across 5 of the 7 participating groups. Identifying Salisbury as a Resilient City but also connecting with the idea that art can provide opportunity for reflection which can impact wellbeing. These themes were grouped together in analysis because of the connection to the emergent theme of ‘Activation’ and to a ‘Sense of Place. I.e., the possible role of our city’s art in speaking back to its residents in an active way.

Other themes could be grouped in the following categories.

6.1.3. **Culture, Group or people led** i.e., created by a specific group of people with a shared experience in the city to represent and celebrate them.

6.1.4. **Literature, Poems and Stories**

6.1.5. **Multi-sensory, tactile, interactive** Whilst this may be considered more of a response to the questions 'what forms of public art do you wish to see?' it was most often a response to the question 'what should art be about'.

Participants, consciously or unconsciously, saw the meaning of the art and its physical interaction with its 'audience' as intrinsically linked.

6.2. **Where should we put our public art? The dominant suggestions were:**

6.2.1. **Small un-used green spaces**

6.2.2. **Routes into the city - welcoming** people in, connecting to our surrounding landscape and saying something about ourselves. This included our ring road roundabouts on a number of occasions, as the first thing people meet before entering the city centre.

6.2.3. **Empty Shops**

6.2.4. **Outlying estates**

6.2.5. **Surprising Places - here** participants and members of the public talked about discovering small pieces of art as you 'come around a corner', 'look down' or 'look up'

6.2.6. Other suggestions included

- **Supermarkets**
- **School Grounds**
- **Blank walls**
- **Parks**
- **Quiet areas of the city**

6.3. **What forms of public art do you wish to see** participants and respondents were less interested in this question than expected, often feeling that they didn't have access to the ideas or information to make a choice. People also expressed that it didn't really matter what the art was, rather how people interact with it and what it (or the artist) was trying to say'. However, the following suggestions were made:

6.3.1. **Performance**

6.3.2. **Living/planted sculpture**

6.3.3. **Temporary installations**, e.g., empty shops, public spaces

6.3.4. **Things with a function or use**, e.g., the Book Benches project was referred to 12 times

6.3.5. The Spitfire was raised time and time again as a positive example of public art for the following reasons

6.3.5.1. It is on a route into the city, and everyone can see it

6.3.5.2. It relates to our local history

6.3.5.3. It is a positive story about Salisbury

6.3.5.4. It is somewhere you might not expect art to be

6.3.6. Large scale sculpture was seen by most participants at the start of the project as either a waste of money or as having little meaning to them. This radically changed over the course of the project. The resulting dominant opinion being that sculpture has to come with some engagement materials, information or way of interacting with it.

6.4. What could or should our public art do?

6.4.1. This area requires further analysis to connect the grounded analysis to the emergent themes and draw conclusions.

6.4.2. This question will be addressed in the full report.

7. Recommendation:

It is recommended that:

7.1. The Sub Committee note this report and await the full report in later in the year.

8. Wards Affected: All.

9. Background papers:

9.1. Turning Point: Artist Overview, Photographs and Initial Feedback – Doc 89451.

9.2. Artist Brief - [Doc 86577](#).

9.3. Public Art Project Update - Feb 2023 – Doc 89456.

10. Implications:

10.1. **Financial:** £8,500 of Public Art Budget 2022/23, as agreed.

10.2. **Legal:** none in relation to this report.

10.3. **Personnel:** none in relation to this report.

10.4. **Environmental Impact:** none in relation to this report.

10.5. **Equalities Impact Statement:** none in relation to this report.