

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Education, Culture and Sport
DATE	2nd June 2011
DIRECTOR	Annette Bruton
TITLE OF REPORT	“Big Noise”: Sistema Scotland in Stirling
REPORT NUMBER:	ECS/11/034

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

The report provides information on the recent visit to “Big Noise” project in Stirling by elected members. It also outlines the findings of the recent evaluation on behalf of the Scottish Government and proposes that further consideration be given to its applicability in the City.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

1. The Committee notes the report and the potential for a similar project in Aberdeen
2. The Committee instructs officers to investigate a business model for the delivery of a project working with Sistema Scotland
3. The Committee instructs officers to report to a future meeting of the Committee on the proposed business model, criteria for identifying an appropriate community and possible funding sources.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are none at this stage. Full financial details will be required for a subsequent report.

4. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

There are none at this stage.
All the above will be included in the proposed, more detailed report.

5. BACKGROUND/MAIN ISSUES

At its meeting on 8 October 2009, the Committee considered a report on the Strategic Music Partnership and the potential links with Sistema Scotland. At that time it was noted that in relation to the funding of the

initiative, Sistema was currently working with the Scottish Government with the hope that a funding agreement for the next Sistema Centre would be split with the local authority providing 50% of the costs, Sistema Scotland providing 25% of the cost and the Scottish Government providing 25% of the cost during years 1 to 3 of the project. From year 4 onwards it was noted that the local authority would be expected to provide 75% of the cost with Sistema Scotland meeting the other 25%.

The report recommended:-

That the Committee –

- a. endorse the work done to date in exploring potential links with Sistema Scotland;
- b. recognise the potential opportunities provided by Sistema as a socially driven initiative;
- c. note the costs, timescale and actions involved in being a Sistema Scotland orchestra centre;
- d. instruct relevant officers to consider feasibility of the development of the Sistema Children's Orchestra Centre in Aberdeen as part of an integrated approach to community regeneration and to report to future committees as appropriate; and
- e. if the initiative is agreed, request a further report within 18 months, by which time the strategic music partnership would have been operational on the feasibility of developing a Sistema Children's Orchestra Centre in Aberdeen as part of an integrated approach to community regeneration

Longer term outcomes are expected in the following five National Outcomes; which will need longer term tracking of children and families and official data.

- We live our lives safe from crime, disorder and danger
- We have strong, resilient and supportive communities where people take responsibility for their own actions and how they affect others
- We are better educated, more skilled and more successful, renowned for our research and innovation
- We live longer, healthier lives
- We have tackled the significant inequalities in Scottish society

The Committee determined that it wished to learn more about the work of Sistema Scotland and send representatives to the Big Noise Project in Stirling. As the Committee will be aware, best efforts to find a mutually convenient date have been ongoing and the visit took place on Friday, 15th April. Attendees were Councillors Cormack, Kiddie and Laing, accompanied by Ken McLeod, Music Co-ordinator and Neil Bruce, Service Manager, Culture and Sport. The programme included meeting the Chairman of Sistema Scotland, Richard Holloway and

Chief Executive, Nicola Killean, attendance at the Big Noise Easter Concert and a subsequent discussion which included the Provost of Stirling Council, the Executive Councillor with the Portfolio for Children and Lifelong Learning, a local Councillor and the Head of Educational Services. Sistema Scotland's Communications Officer, George Anderson co-ordinated the visit.

Background to Big Noise

Sistema Scotland has founded in 2007 and has the following core mission:

- To transform children's lives with music;
- To empower communities;
- To grow future inclusive orchestras; and
- To focus this work on communities in most need, in areas of deprivation

Sistema Scotland is the official Scottish partner of 'El Sistema', founded thirty years ago in Venezuela and has adapted the model to meet the needs and conditions of the Scottish environment. This model is based on evidence which shows that skills learned through orchestral education have the potential to bring the following benefits: - developing self-esteem; discipline; and achieving; so improving the outcomes for children who face inequality and disadvantage.

Sistema Scotland aims to work in areas where the need is the greatest, focusing on communities characterised by high levels of deprivation such as unemployment, crime, anti-social behaviour and poor community cohesion. In the summer of 2008, Sistema Scotland established Big Noise Children's Orchestra in Raploch, Stirling.

Big Noise is an early intervention programme that uses music and engagement in an orchestra from an early age with the aim of fostering confidence, teamwork, pride and aspiration in the children taking part. It aims to engage the whole family and wider community and so extend achievement of these outcomes across the wider community.

In Stirling, the Big Noise programme includes an out of school orchestra programme for children in Primary 2 to Primary 7, delivered mainly in a group setting. The programme is designed to be intensive, so children attend 3 evenings per week after school and 5 mornings per week during school holidays, a total of between 7.5 and 20 hours per week on a voluntary basis. The model is designed so that children of all musical abilities learn to play in an orchestra environment, rather than the traditional model of learning to play an instrument and then joining an orchestra only if they develop sufficient musical ability.

The out of school orchestra programme is complemented by a pre-orchestra programme for children aged 0 to 5, delivered weekly during

nursery and school time for all children in the nursery and in Primary 1, and additional support for learning (ASL) for children attending Castleview School. These programmes are designed to engage in care of the whole child, sustain engagement over time and engage with the majority of children in Raploch, so then it has the potential to achieve more than a series of positive outcomes. It may, as part of a programme of regeneration, achieve social transformation. *The above information is taken from the Evaluation of Big Noise by GEN, for the Scottish Government.*

The Evaluation had a number of main findings:

- There are 344 children who attend nursery and school at the Raploch Campus. Big Noise has successfully engaged with 80% of the children. Primary 2 to Primary 7 children are eligible to attend after school and during school holidays. There are 219 children who can attend; 65% took up this voluntary opportunity.
- Children involved were found to gain benefits in personal and social development, including improving confidence, self esteem, social skills and the ability to concentrate.
- The families of children involved reflected on improved relationships at home, wider social networks and more shared activities between parents and children. Parents could also recognise a “more positive, aspirational future for their children”, and that Big Noise has given them pride and widened their future potential achievements.
- Parent and professionals interviewed identified changing perceptions of the wider community in the Raploch area. There was evidence of more positive relationships between parents and officials and organisations and skills being shared between partner organisations.
- Big Noise is contributing to eight National Outcomes
 - We live our lives safe from crime, disorder and danger
 - We have strong, resilient and supportive communities where people take responsibility for their own actions and how they affect others
 - We are better educated, more skilled and more successful, renowned for our research and innovation
 - Our young people are successful learners, confident individuals, affective contributors and responsible citizens
 - Our children have the best start in life and are ready to succeed
 - We take pride in a strong, fair and inclusive national identity
 - We live longer, healthier lives
 - We have tackled the significant inequalities in Scottish society

The visit to Stirling gained an understanding that while there was a very clear recognition that Big Noise is a project which needs time to be able to make and demonstrate a lasting difference, it can already show it is:

- encouraging ambition and giving life chances

- building on the resilience of the young
- giving new life skills
- offering a taste of success
- broadening horizons
- bringing the discipline of playing together as a team

In Stirling, the benefits being achieved by youngsters are also being built in to school work and the Curriculum for Excellence. The Evaluation noted that improvement in attainment had still to be shown. However, it was recognised that this would be only seen or able to be measured in the longer term.

The costs of the project in 2009/2010 were £474,000, which was £1,866.14 per child per annum. This was a cost of £1.98 per hour for each child involved across all aspects of the programme. The cost of involvement in the out of school programme per child per annum was £5,266.67 and per hour was £11.59.

The project is generational; it is about the whole community being involved or engaged, improving the community, social justice and wellbeing. By investing in children, it seeks to make a difference to the next generation and into the future. The initial project is five years long, with Stirling Council committing to mainstream the work thereafter.

Overall, the impression was of an initiative which had enthusiasm, strong commitment and belief from those involved in its delivery; Sistema Scotland's Board, officers and musicians; and, equally strong belief and commitment from the local authority, both senior and local elected members and officials. The enthusiasm appeared to be matched by participants, from pre-school to the seven month-old adult "Noise" group; while there was seriousness and concentration in performance, there was also enjoyment, confidence and a sense of achievement.

Applicability in Aberdeen

There are a number of issues to consider here:

- The level of elected members and officer commitment from the local authority.
- Recognition that it will take considerable time to see sustained changes. Expectations and demands for evidence of change and results will be seen only in the longer term.
- Identifying a community to work with, however objectively selected, will potentially challenge perceptions of the City and that community and portray the latter in a detrimental way. Comparative data would be used to explain the community identified.
- Finally, decisions will be required about the level of funding and from where it is allocated, with ongoing commitment over a period of years. This might include both Revenue and Capital funding.

Should a decision be subsequently taken to adopt Sistema Scotland's model, it would also need to be recognised that there would be up to 18 months required in planning and set up, to ensure that the Aberdeen project was successfully launched.

There are potential synergies with ongoing discussions between the City Council and Creative Scotland in respect of an integrated and inclusive approach to developing work in youth art. Consideration would also be given to review how opportunities are currently made available for all youngsters to enjoy music tuition and other creative activities; how this project may assist and in addition, how it would fit within the Strategic Music Partnership's work.

The approach highlights commitment to long term change and encourages a wider assessment of how funding might be allocated. In addition, the reports to the Corporate Policy and Performance Committee, on "Working Better Together: A Collaborative Approach to Public Service Design and Delivery" relate; the Report to Committee on 25th November 2010 estimated each youth crime costs £4,585 on average. As Sistema Scotland's evaluation has shown, investing in youngsters at an early age can make a difference to achieve positive change, rather than continue to be reactive to social and other problems.

6. IMPACT

The proposal and approach set out in this report supports Community Planning, the delivery of the Single Outcome Agreement and the objectives of *Vibrant, Dynamic and Forward Looking* by identifying priorities for co-ordinated and joined-up service delivery, as well as more effective collaborative working with partners and citizens. It would also contribute to the vibrancy of the city in terms of cultural opportunities, for youngsters, for audiences and for musicians.

Within the priorities in the Five Year Business Plan, the focus is to contribute to helping ensure that all schoolchildren can reach their potential; raising broad educational attainment and achievement; providing for the needs of the most vulnerable people; and, ensuring efficient and effective delivery of services by the Council and with its partners.

The report is likely to have public interest as it relates to a project which has already engendered media attention.

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Report to Education, Culture and Sport Committee, 8th October 2009, Strategic Music Partnership and potential links with Sistema Scotland ECS/09/31

Report to Policy and Strategy (Education) Committee, 9th June 2009,
Strategic Music Partnership Progress
Report to Corporate Policy and Performance Committee, 10th June
2010, Working Better Together: A Collaborative Approach to Public
Service Design and Delivery
Report to Corporate Policy and Performance Committee, 25th
November 2010, Working Better Together – update

8. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

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