

Committee(s): Barbican Centre Board	Date(s): 12 July 2017
Subject: Ethics Policy – Barbican Centre	Public
Report of: Louise Jeffreys, Director of Arts Report Author: Nick Adams, Senior Communications Manager	For Decision
Summary	
<p>Arts organisations are increasingly face ethical and reputational challenges in areas including contentious programming, fundraising and potential partnerships. It was identified in the Board approved Barbican’s strategic plan that the organisation would develop a clear, publicly available ethics policy that sets out its position and approach to making decisions of this kind.</p> <p>This policy, submitted in draft to the Board for review and approval, aims to ensure the Barbican has a clearly defined process and framework for making ethical decisions and that it is consistent and accountable in the choices it makes.</p> <p>This plan follows the recent arts sector guidance - published by the What Next? group and endorsed by Arts Council England - on meeting Ethical and Reputational challenges.</p> <p>If approved, the policy would be published on the Barbican website and used as a framework for decision making across the organisation.</p> <p>A copy of the Ethics Policy is included in the Appendix.</p>	

Main Report

Background

1. Arts organisations regularly need to make decisions that have potential ethical and reputational implications. Whether taking decisions to work with artists who are contentious figures, presenting work that tackles potentially controversial subjects or choosing which organisations to partner with or accepting funding from, there has been an increase in public and media scrutiny around how organisations make choices of this kind.
2. This situation has led to What Next?, a group that brings together arts and cultural organisations and includes representatives from the Barbican, to produce guidance on how organisations can meet ethical and reputational challenges. This guidance, endorsed by Arts Council England, describes the benefits of organisations adopting an ethics policy for the following reasons:
 - Acts as a useful checking tool when it comes to making a nuanced decision
 - Demonstrates thought has been given to ethical questions

- Communicates the organisation's ethical position and its relation to vision, mission and values
 - Declares responsibilities and/ or obligations held
 - States pitfalls to avoid
3. Based on this guidance many arts organisation have, or are in the process of developing, ethics policies to inform their decision making and to ensure they are consistent and accountable in the choices they make.

Current Position

4. Currently the Barbican does not have any framework for making ethical decisions with decisions on matters described in the policy made on an ad hoc basis. The potential issues this raises include a lack of clarity on procedures for who is responsible for taking decisions of this kind. This situation leaves the organisation open to potential inconsistency and lack of accountability in its decision making.

Options

5. We are asking that the Board agrees to adopt the current draft of the ethics policy with the option of suggesting any amendments.
6. There are no estimated costs associated with this option. If not adopted, there are potential reputational risks due to lack of accountability, potential inconsistency in decision making and accusations that the Barbican is not taking its responsibilities in this area seriously.
7. If approved by the Board, the Barbican Centre Trust will also be asked for approval of the fundraising sections that directly relate to its work.
8. Should the policy gain this approval, it would be published on the Barbican website and used as a framework for decision making across the organisation.

Proposals

9. The current draft of the Ethics policy has been approved by the Barbican Directorate with the recommendation that the organisation adopts it, subject to approval of the Barbican Board. The Barbican Board Risk Committee also recently reviewed the policy and recommended its approval.
10. Adopting the policy would ensure we are following arts sector best practice in how we make ethical decisions. It would also help mitigate the risk of the Barbican making potentially controversial decisions without fully assessing the potential implications or following an agreed decision making process.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

11. Adopting an ethics policy is one of the projects outlined in the Board approved Barbican strategic plan. The proposal is that, if adopted, the policy would be reviewed periodically to ensure its continued relevance.

12. The policy references existing City of London Corporation policies such as the employee code of conduct and is compliant with existing City of London Corporation governance procedures.

Implications

13. The draft text of the policy has been agreed with the City Solicitors department who have ensured the text will have no legal implications and is in line with current City of London Corporation governance procedures.
14. The text has also been approved by the Town Clerk's department.
15. The policy will be used in conjunction with the existing Barbican Risk register and will help inform risk assessments in future.

Conclusion

16. Arts organisations increasingly face ethical and reputational challenges in areas including contentious programming, fundraising and potential partnerships.
17. Recent arts sector guidance describes the benefits of organisations adopting an ethics policy with these policies increasingly prevalent in the arts sector.
18. The policy aims to ensure the Barbican has a clearly defined process and framework for making ethical decisions and that we are consistent and accountable in the choices we make.
19. Should the policy gain approval, it would be published on the Barbican website and used as a framework for decision making across the organisation.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Draft Barbican Ethics Policy
- Appendix 2 – [What Next? – Meeting Ethical and Reputational Challenges guidance \(hyperlink\)](#)

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