

DUNDEE CITY COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Leisure, Arts and Communities Committee - 23 March 2009

REPORT ON: Sensation (Dundee Science Centre) - Revenue Support 2009-2010

REPORT BY: Director of Leisure and Communities

REPORT NO: 184-2009

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To submit to the Committee a request for renewal of revenue funding to Sensation (Dundee Science Centre) for the year 2009-2010.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the Committee approval the level of Grant funding amounting to £31,092 as set out in this report.

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 The funding recommended is £31,092 which sum is provided for in the Leisure and Communities Department's Revenue Budget for 2009-2010, as shown in the budget at Appendix 1.
- 3.2 A separate annual Grant of £15,000 was approved at the Policy and Resources Committee on 14 December 1998 to replace a proposed endowment fund, which will be met from the Leisure and Communities Department's Revenue budget 2009-2010.
- 3.3 The terms and conditions of the grant will be contained within a Service Level Agreement 2009-2010, between Dundee City Council and Sensation (Dundee Science Centre).

4.0 MAIN TEXT

4.1 Review of 2008-2009

Through 2008 Dundee Science Centre (DSC) continued to successfully pursue strategies placing the education or mission related aspects of its activity at the core of its business. These strategies have significantly developed the credibility of the science centre and with a growing number of stakeholders. That DSC is now receiving regular approaches from both Higher Education and other partners to work with them is testament to the work of the education department and its manager, Hannah Crookes. Activities that have provided support to this progress include the appointment of a shared post for public engagement between DSC and the University of Dundee - a post created to specifically build links between DSC and the University, DSC's support for the Dundee International Book Festival - a literacy based initiative targeted at Dundee schools that will be rolled out across the region in 2009 and the hosting of two headlining summer exhibitions.

The Summer exhibitions helped DSC achieve its second busiest year since opening in 2000. Having started the year with a visitor target of 62,000, the delivery of 72,000 visits was very good and more so given the slowing in the economy which began to have an effect from early 2008. The growth in visitor numbers during 2008 was

replicated by few other attractions across Scotland with most seeing a marked decline in attendance.

The participation of DSC chief executive, Paul Jennings, on an international leadership programme supported by the US-based Noyce Foundation has proven of major benefit in highlighting some of the organisational changes that are now necessary. To this end the DSC Board agreed to a restructuring of the organisation in November 2008. In addition to supporting the continued pursuit of its Science Learning Centre initiative these changes will also support the wider development of DSC's science learning and public engagement aspirations

Now entering its ninth year of operation DSC has started to make significant inroads into becoming a community resource of local and regional importance. In addition to continuing to welcome a very sizeable portion of the local population on an annual basis, DSC has also become the partner of choice for other local and regional organisations who share DSC's mission of widening public engagement with science. The further development of links with organisations such as the University of Dundee, University of Abertay, Dundee and the University of St Andrews has not only contributed to building DSC's credibility but given it a growing relevance in terms of the range of knowledge-transfer activities in which DSC is now involved.

Marketing

There were over 50 articles and interview in 2008/2009 and over 100 online mentions of Sensation during 2008. The Easter staff membership incentive resulted in a doubling of memberships being sold during the period of the promotion (based on the previous year.) The promotion also served to generate ideas for selling memberships which has now become ingrained in the way staff speak to visitors about memberships.

Sensation's website attracted 45,000 unique visitors, boosted newsletter subscriptions to 841, generated 140 enquiries through the site and due to the ongoing marketing work has improved the Google PageRange (Google's measure of importance) from 3 to 5. The online free child voucher was redeemed by 1,829 visitors during the course of the year.

4.2 Major Plans for 2009-2010

DSC will be taking full account of the likely changes in trading conditions to be brought about by the significant downturn in both the global and UK economy in its plans for at least the next two years.

The future directions for DSC during the next two years are to prepare for a significant toughening in trading conditions, in all likelihood manifest by a drop in visitor numbers and shortfall in associated income streams, to evaluate growth ambitions with a view to postponing anything that does not represent core business, to proceed on any growth ambitions cautiously and under conditions of regular review, identify opportunities that have the potential to support DSC's mission and its financial sustainability. Resources will then be put behind securing these. A combination of these options is DSC's proposed way forward as simply withdrawing the services offered would impede its development, potentially for years.

In addition to a growing number of strategic and funding partnerships DSC is also on a number of steering groups and committees that have public engagement as their focus - these groups include the regional committee of the Association of Secondary Education (ASE), the local branch of the British Association for the Advancement of Science (the BA) and the Tayside STEM Partnership. The science centre now chairs and administers the STEM Partnership, a group that has the potential to be a key strategic body in advancing wider public engagement aspirations. The development of this group will continue throughout 2009.

In spite of the range of external relationships which DSC has built around public engagement and science learning, much of the activity base of the centre will remain

focused on science education. DSC's challenge over the next three years will be in how it develops its own public engagement and science learning activities so that they are underpinned by regular evaluation and the adoption of a new research agenda around science centre effectiveness.

Exhibitions

"Animated Adventure" featuring Wallace and Gromit will be at Sensation from 1st June to 11th October 2009. This will include the development of an online viral game with Wallace and Gromit featuring Dundee that will be available world wide via the Web.

"Inside DNA" will run from 14th September 2009 to 10th March 2010 which is a unique exhibition encouraging children to explore developments in the field of homogenomics.

In October "Genes In A Bottle" will enable young visitors to extract DNA from their cheek cells and take it home in a pendant.

Marketing

Marketing in 2009-2010 will focus on Awareness and Customer Relationships - an e-newsletter, staying in touch with members, and visitors using all methods at their disposal and communicating a value visitor experience, focusing on the range of things to see and do.

- 4.4 Sensation sustained 28 full time equivalent jobs in Dundee in 2008-2009 and they are projected to achieve 27.7% of their income from non - public services in 2009-2010.

5.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

This report has been screened for any policy implications in respect of Sustainability, Strategic Environmental Assessment, Anti-Poverty, Equality Impact Assessment and Risk Management.
There are no major issues.

6.0 CONSULTATION

- 6.1 The Chief Executive, Depute Chief Executive (Support Services), Depute Chief Executive (Finance) and Head of Finance have been consulted on this report and are in agreement with its contents.

7.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 7.1 None.

STEWART MURDOCH
DIRECTOR OF LEISURE AND COMMUNITIES
10 MARCH 2009

Sensation (Dundee Science Centre)

Appendix 1

	Projected Out-turn 2007	Projected Budget 2008-2009
<u>Expenditure</u>		£
Staff costs and operation costs	862,399	961,100
<u>Income</u>		
Visitor Revenue	414,000	408,057
Car Parks	73,739	70,000
Sub Total Income	487,739	478,057
<u>Grants</u>		
DCC Revenue	30,424	31,092
DCC Endowment	15,000	15,000
Other Funding/Donations	380,595	439,343
Sub Total Grants	426,019	485,435
Total Income	913,758	963,492
Surplus/(Deficit)	51,359	2,392