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Mr Andrew Knutt  
Creative Innovation Centre CIC  
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Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> January 2024

Dear Andrew,

Taunton Town Council writes in strong support of your Arts Council application for core funding to avert risk of closure.

CICCIC is an essential part of Taunton's arts and culture eco-system and has been for the past 12 years. It also has a pivotal role to play in its future development.

The challenges you have faced in recent years have been quite extra-ordinary and yet you have continued to make a huge contribution to Taunton and indeed Somerset's cultural renaissance providing:

- a popular music, arts, poetry and comedy venue for people of all backgrounds where people can overcome isolation, feel welcome and find a sense of belonging;
- vital support for local artists, musicians and emerging talent;
- practical support for the cultural sector and peer networking for creatives;
- strong support to the Ukrainian refugee community, enabling them to create new artistic ventures

and of course the creation of the new Arts Hub which has brought together and created a home for so many innovative theatre, youth/community arts groups and artists leading to a host of new provision for many disadvantaged youth and those facing mental distress or exclusion.

We are a very new Town Council but Members are strongly committed to spearheading a new Cultural Strategy for the town which CICCIC must be at the heart of. Thank you so much for your ongoing contribution to the work of developing the strategy and our evolving collaboration and partnership working through the Arts and Culture Working Group Chaired by Cllr Caroline Ellis and Cllr Vanessa Garside.

At the current juncture we are constrained by not having been able to precept yet to fulfil all Members' ambitions for the town in terms of the support we can offer. This is an evolving picture. Members hope that in the course of the next financial year that Culture Strategy and an associated funding programme can be voted on and progressed by the Council placing the whole sector on a more secure footing to help deliver culture and creative opportunities for all our residents with an exciting programme that amplifies

Taunton's unique history, culture of creativity and diverse communities whilst contributing strongly to our sustainability goals and the health and wellbeing of the town in the widest sense.

We do hope you are able to secure emergency provision in the meantime as the loss of CICCIC at the very time it is most needed to help spearhead a new era of arts development here would be devastating with massive negative ramifications for the people of Taunton and indeed Somerset as a whole.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Smith', with a stylized flourish at the end.

**Donna Smith – PSLCC, FdA, CertHE, CiLCA**

**Town Clerk & Proper Officer**

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