

Arts Network Sutton

Mayor's speech for 2020 AGM

Good evening and welcome to Arts Network Sutton's Annual General Meeting 2020.

Let me start by stating the obvious. 2020 has been a challenging year for everyone. A challenge for ourselves – for our families and our friends. We've all had to make great sacrifices during this time, some unfortunately more painful than others.

But whilst we continue to adapt to our new ways of working and our new ways of living, as President of ANS, I just wanted to say how happy I am to be here with you all tonight, if only in this virtual setting.

I wanted to thank you all for the time you commitment to the local community through your creative endeavors. Especially for all those people who couldn't easily access such opportunities otherwise. Your work encourages their participation in the arts and helps them develop important skills. Our Borough is all the richer for your efforts.

Specifically, I would first like to thank the team at Carshalton Artists for all their hard work this year. Despite having to cancel in-person events, the artists and organisers of CAOS were able to reinvent themselves as the Carshalton Artists "Online" Studios, drawing nearly 2000 visitors to their website by hosting video tours of their studios, offering demonstrations and live workshops.

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These activities, alongside their “Open Windows” and “Open Streets” projects have continued to engage the public, even at a socially acceptable distance.

I would also like to give a big thank you to CryerArts, the team behind the re-opening of the borough’s only surviving theatre. Following a very successful opening season they, like so many other performance spaces around the country, were hit hard by the national lockdown measures introduced in March. The team has worked tirelessly to preserve this amenity for the public and were able to safely re-open in July under the new COVID 19 restrictions.

But the tough times continue, and we should all consider becoming a “Friend” of CryerArts to help this important venue survive and thrive into the future.

Another venue affected by the global pandemic was the The Sound Lounge on Sutton High Street. Originally scheduled to open earlier in the year, this live music venue, vegan restaurant and community space will now be opening its doors within the next couple of months depending on the current lock-down restrictions. This follows a successful application to the Arts Council’s Creative Relief Fund.

The Council’s heritage department has also been working hard, and we were able to safely re-open both Whitehall in Cheam and Honeywood in Carshalton this past July which is wonderful news for these superb community amenities.

Earlier this year, the Council applied to become London Borough of Culture for 2023. Unfortunately, we didn’t win but we did secure a Cultural Impact Award from the Mayor’s office - not mine, the other one down the road.

Our ultimate aspiration, an ambition I know is shared by Arts Network Sutton, is for the borough to be recognised as a
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cultural destination, renowned for its vibrant arts scene as well as for its history and rich heritage.

The Cultural Impact Award will help us stage a series of public events that will help raise Sutton's profile to a much larger audience - an audience across the capital and beyond. And a bigger audience creates a bigger opportunity for all of us.

Thank you all very much for your time, have a great evening.