

Report to:	Cabinet	Date of Meeting:	4 th February 2021
Subject:	Culture – Borough of Culture 2020, Legacy and Strategy		
Report of:	Executive Director - Place	Wards Affected:	All wards
Cabinet Portfolio:	Communities and Housing		
Is this a Key Decision?	No	Included in Forward Plan:	Yes
Exempt / Confidential Report:	No		

Summary:

Report to update Cabinet on Sefton's programme for the Liverpool City Region's Borough of Culture 2020, including its outcomes and legacy, and to seek approval for the procurement of a provider to support with development of a Culture Strategy for the borough of Sefton for 2021 and beyond.

Recommendation(s):

Cabinet is recommended to:

- (1) Note the outputs and outcomes of the Borough of Culture 2020 programme;
- (2) Agree to the development and implementation of a Culture Strategy, in collaboration with key stakeholders across the borough, for 2021 and beyond; and
- (3) Approve the procurement of a provider to lead the Culture Strategy development process, to be progressed in line with contract procedure rules, led by the Communities service in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Communities and Housing.

Reasons for the Recommendation(s):

A Culture Strategy is proposed for progression in collaboration with stakeholders across the borough, in order to sustain momentum built by the programme and by other organisations working effectively in this area across Sefton. This will also help to maximise the impact of current cultural activity across the borough, add value to existing cultural organisations and their activity, alongside showcasing Sefton as a cultural leader within the Liverpool City Region.

The strategy development process would be led by the Communities service, with input from service areas across the organisation and from external stakeholders and partners. Oversight will be from the Cabinet Member for Communities and Housing.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected: (including any Risk Implications)

The alternative of not developing a Culture Strategy is rejected. Although this would enable the allocation of the remaining £10,000 of funding to other culture-related activity, the lack of a strategy will limit the legacy of the programme and negate the impact and momentum that the Borough of Culture programme has helped to build.

What will it cost and how will it be financed?

(A) Revenue Costs

The revenue implications of delivering the Borough of Culture programme, and of developing the proposed Culture Strategy, are met by the £200,000 core funding received from the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority. Additional funding of up to £4,000 may be required for the strategy development process, and will be met via existing service budgets.

(B) Capital Costs

No capital costs are anticipated.

Implications of the Proposals:

<p>Resource Implications (Financial, IT, Staffing and Assets): Currently resource (people) implications are being managed within the current Council resource envelope and prioritising work as required to deliver all on time activities.</p>
<p>Legal Implications: There are no legal implications.</p>
<p>Equality Implications: There are no equality implications.</p>

Contribution to the Council’s Core Purpose:

<p>Protect the most vulnerable: The programme has been focused on inclusion and accessibility to all, for example through interaction during lockdown for those isolated during those periods.</p>
<p>Facilitate confident and resilient communities: The programme has been, and the strategy would be, community-led to ensure continued engagement and collaboration.</p>
<p>Commission, broker and provide core services: Not applicable</p>

Place – leadership and influencer: The programme has been distinct to our place and our people, and the strategy would be the same.
Drivers of change and reform: The strategy would support enhanced engagement in, and benefit from, cultural activity.
Facilitate sustainable economic prosperity: The strategy should align with Sefton’s Economic Growth strategy and key projects, supporting achievement of the objectives therein.
Greater income for social investment: Not applicable
Cleaner Greener: Focus on Sefton’s environment would be a core component of the developed strategy.

What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?

(A) Internal Consultations

The Executive Director Corporate Resources & Customer Services (FD 6265/21) and the Chief Legal & Democratic Officer (LD4466/21) have been consulted and any comments have been incorporated into the report.

(B) External Consultations

Extensive external consultation and engagement has taken place throughout the Borough of Culture 2020 programme, and would be progressed as part of the strategy development process.

Implementation Date for the Decision

Following the expiry of the “call-in” period for the Minutes of the Cabinet Meeting

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Appendices:

There are no appendices to this report

Background Papers:

There are no background papers available for inspection.

1. Introduction

1.1 Sefton was delighted to be named as the Liverpool City Region's Borough of Culture for 2020, with the focus for the Borough of Culture (BoC) programme being on **Sefton people and stories – stories about us, stories by us, and stories for us – all of us**. This was intended to be broad enough to support a wider range of ideas and opportunities, and align with the prioritisation of Sefton's communities in the development of ideas, initiatives and events. It also resonated with communities and partners in engagement on the BoC opportunity.

1.2 In addition to the five elements identified by the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority for the programme, Sefton identified what would be additional Core Principles for Sefton's Borough of Culture 2020 programme, using "four Ps" which were to support discussion and prioritisation regarding opportunities for the BoC programme:

- Participation – initiatives that maximise opportunity for participation; not just event attendance, but in the cultural activities themselves (arts, music, writing, etc); and ensuring inclusivity – reflective of a borough for everyone (irrespective of gender, age, ethnicity, geography, ability, demography, etc).
- Partnerships – working with partners to deliver 2020 and beyond together; this is the borough's year of culture, not the council's.
- Permanence – ideas, installations, events and relationships that will remain in place beyond 2020.
- Pride – opportunities that help engender pride in our community and the communities within Sefton

1.3 The theme of the year was proposed to be stories, using the tagline "Myths and Realities" to support this. The shape of the year was to be focused on much of the storytelling across the earlier parts of the year – relating to local heritage, and recognising the nature of history and stories and how myth, memory, perspective and subjectivity influence such stories over time. The programme was to become increasingly focused on the environmental theme over the second half of the year, culminating in the notable events and initiatives to be developed for November 2020, hopefully to coincide with the UN Climate Change Summit (which London was scheduled to host). Whereas a story such as Napoleon III in Southport could border on "myth", the climate change emergency would be the "reality".

1.4 The nature of the challenges involved in storytelling and myths were recognised. It was therefore critical that evidence was used where it exists to support such stories, or that there was transparency on where such evidence may not exist. This would not hinder the BoC opportunity given the wealth of stories, ideas and opportunities emerging, but would require management in the appropriate manner. The shape of the year outlined above reflects the key themes identified by our communities and our partners through feedback, engagement, and the Sefton CVS event held in July 2019. This was

consolidated and captured as well to support engagement with potential funding partners.

1.5 Local History was consistently identified as a key area of opportunity, with the stories people want to tell, or that people want to celebrate, being identified through the engagement with stakeholders. Environmental sustainability was the other key theme identified by partners and communities. It was therefore intended that the shape of the year reflect these focus areas and demonstrate that the council has listened to communities and partners in maximising the BoC opportunity.

1.6 The above identifies the basis for the stories to be told across the year (the “what”), and there were a range of means through which these stories could be told (the “how”). By way of example, the story of Isaac Roberts is one that resonates with communities in Maghull, and this could have been progressed through such means as blue plaques, events, performances, creative writing and photography.

1.7 While there were to be some major new events across the borough, across the year, the foundation of Sefton’s programme for BoC 2020 was a large number of community-led initiatives and events, in all areas of the borough, celebrating stories of our people and our place.

2. Impact of COVID-19 on the BoC 2020 Programme

2.1 The Cabinet Member briefing paper of 8th April 2020 recommended a scaled-back Borough of Culture programme that delivered as many of the projects as the Council could do in a safe manner, within the budgetary constraints provided by the loss of private sector sponsorship and funding routes such as Arts Council England.

2.2 This approach was approved by the Cabinet Member sponsoring the Borough of Culture programme, as per the approach to governance that was agreed by Cabinet in 2019 to governance of the programme. This paper provides an update on the balance of 2020, and aims to support a discussion on legacy planning.

3. Projects and Events 2020

3.1 **November 2019** - A series of launch events kickstarted our year of Culture in November 2019. A small handover ceremony during the **Constellations event at Crosby Marina** saw the Mayor of Wirral handover the Borough of Culture baton to the Mayor of Sefton. Thousands of residents and visitors came together to view the spectacular parabolic light cloud and enjoy some talented Sefton artists performing over the three-day event. **The Bootle**

Children's Literature Festival was launched to celebrate the opening of Kingsley & Co in Bootle Strand, and Wirral also held a small formal handover at the 2019 Culture Awards.

- 3.2 **Sefton Stories** – the public vote on Sefton stories saw more than 850 votes cast to identify local stories aligned to our local history and heritage; the winners (including Frank Hornby, Kenny Everett and Christiana Hartley) form part of the comic strip trail that will be finalised by the end of the year.
- 3.3 **Schools planting programme** - More than 44,000 spring flowering bulbs have been planted by primary school children across Sefton. Crocus and daffodil bulbs were planted during November and December 2019 in preparation for our Borough of Culture year in many of our beautiful greenspaces throughout the borough.
- 3.4 **February and March 2020** - in February, we kickstarted the We Love Sefton project, which seen a series of posts on social media displaying the many wonderful and unique qualities we love about our borough. March welcomed the spectacular **Nightingale's Song**, a spectacular show by Illuminos to portray the history of the borough on three civic buildings throughout the borough, over three nights. The story followed the Birkdale Nightingale on their journey through Sefton's history and heritage, flora and fauna and the unique creatures that reside in our borough.
- 3.5 **Red Rum** - March also saw the unveiling of a huge mural of the legendary racehorse Red Rum in Southport by artist Paul Curtis. The artwork, located on Scarisbrick Avenue, has been enjoyed by thousands of residents and visitors alike and will continue to do so throughout and beyond our 2020 year.
- 3.6 **Libraries team** - the Beyond The War Memorial project aims to tell stories of the heroes and heroines of conflict who are listed on memorials across the borough, uploaded to a dedicated website by volunteers; the Sefton Saga was also launched earlier this year, which is a living story. Each month budding authors from all ages across the borough had a chance for their story to be chosen as the next chapter of the book. Once complete, the story will be turned into a booklet with the contributors listed as co-authors.
- 3.7 **Community-led projects** such as the red squirrel origami project still went ahead, albeit remotely online, via post, etc. Community by Nature and Rule of Three's Arts launched their playing out packs, dedicated to the local area's history of play. Three artistic activity packs have been providing vulnerable children in Bootle with activities throughout the lockdown period and summer holidays. The Birkdale Hub's Photography competition became **The In Isolation Lockdown Photography Competition** where residents of all ages uploaded pictures that they think summed up their time in isolation. **SING Plus** adapted their project to support the older generation through the lockdown

period by providing them with memory boxes and instruments to map out their memories of Sefton. They also provided diaries to the younger people across Sefton and have captured videos of how they feel about their time in isolation. All of the information captured will be kept and stored in the Sefton Archive. **The Sefton Comedy Hub** was set up so that people could submit clips of themselves telling their favourite joke, recalling amusing anecdotes and humorous stories and reciting funny poems and comedy impressions with prizes awarded for the video of the week. The Hub Facebook page has 850 followers and 1000's views each week. The **Sefton Comedy Bingo** via Zoom was a huge success with 48 Zoom windows for each show, entertaining up to 100 people at a time. The shows ran twice weekly for 6 weeks throughout the lockdown period.

3.8 **The Sefton Time Capsule packs** were sent out to families across Sefton as an initiative to keep children occupied throughout the lockdown period by capturing young people's views of their time in isolation through this wonderful keepsake. The Sefton Time Capsule which will contain entries from all our Borough of Culture projects, newspaper clippings, cabinet papers, etc, and will be buried in Derby Park (for their 125th anniversary) with a blossom tree to mark the spot.

3.9 **Bootle Festival of Ideas** is ongoing at the time of writing, inspiring local people to share ideas related to five themes – making and selling; food and growing; music and culture; health and wellbeing and spaces for change.

3.10 **The Atkinson** have made it accessible for people by providing digital platforms for various projects such as The Sefton Open, which provides the opportunity to view 190 artworks online in The Atkinson's annual Sefton Open exhibition, celebrating the creativity and artistic talent across the borough; The Young Artist of The Year – encouraging people aged 11-18 living in the Sefton Borough to submit artwork to their annual competition which will be displayed online; The Festival of Hope - pioneering festival that places young people at the heart of design, making, programming & production. The most popular exhibition at The Atkinson was undoubtedly Brick Wonders, a recreation of the seven wonders of the world in LEGO, attracting 10,000 visitors in the few short weeks that it was open. The Atkinson began the Borough of Culture celebrations with the 'Vivienne Westwood' exhibition, developed with students and staff at Manchester Metropolitan University and giving us the chance to work with Sefton New Beginnings and Open Eye Gallery to explore the role of fashion as a form of protest. <https://uncoverliverpool.com/community/fashion-forms-protest/> Other highlights of the year included 'Cats on the Page' a touring exhibition from the British Library, and Fatal Attraction, examining the changing perception of the femme fatale in art, with key loans from National Museums Liverpool, The Williamson in Birkenhead and the British Museum. As The Atkinson went into lockdown the exhibitions were digitised and have

become a popular online attraction, alongside participatory online art exhibitions, webinars and local history courses.

4. Balance of the BoC 2020 programme

4.1 Words of Wisdom – this project commenced with schoolchildren across the borough interviewing older people on life lessons, or “words of wisdom”. Many were fed into the Illuminos Show, but the work continued through lockdown as a “pen pal” project, supported by a programme of acts of kindness for older citizens. The Windmills Foundation is collating the outcomes of this project and proposes to publish their book, titled “Words of Wisdom”, by early 2021.

4.2 Time capsule – as above, the Sefton Time Capsule was planted in Derby Park, with a blossom tree to mark the spot, linked to the park’s 125th anniversary. The community event and handover ceremony envisaged originally was not scheduled during 2020, but the planting and placing of the capsule were still completed.

4.3 Comic strip boards – the series of comic strip boards is being finalised, telling stories aligned to the Sefton Stories vote at the start of the year. These will be installed early in 2021, telling the stories (identified as priorities by our communities through the vote referred to in 3.2) below:

- Isaac Roberts
- Red Rum
- Christiana Hartley
- The Bootle Blitz
- Kenny Everett
- Frank Hornby

4.4 Measurement and reporting – at the time of writing work is ongoing in partnership with the LCR CA and Liverpool John Moores University on measurement of success of the year, to inform future strategy development.

5. 2021 and Beyond

5.1 Halton Handover – it is proposed to undertake a handover event with Halton in early 2021, subject to safety and circumstances in the coming months.

5.2 Return of Illuminos – the incredible Nightingale’s Song show was delivered at the start of lockdown, so visitor numbers were not enough to make the most of the opportunity. When safe to do so it would be proposed for Illuminos to return to play the show again, hopefully in 2021. This would be much more cost effective now that the creative work is completed.

5.3 **Unveiling for Red Rum wall mural** – the mural was completed at the very start of lockdown, so no ceremony or formal unveiling has been completed. It would be proposed to undertake an event of sorts to show appreciation to the artist and to publicise the mural nationally, perhaps at the time of the 2021 Grand National (subject to the situation at that time).

6. Legacy and Culture Strategy

6.1 COVID-19 meant that the intended pursuit of additional funding from external organisations (such as Arts Council England) and from private sector sponsorship did not take place. This limited the capacity of the programme to the core funding of £200,000 received from the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority. The intent originally was to pursue funding from Arts Council England for environmentally-focused events at the end of 2020, and this was to include resource to support development of a Culture Strategy for the borough. This funding route is no longer accessible.

6.2 However, a sum of £10,000 has been retained from the core funding which is proposed to be used to procure a partner to facilitate the development of a Culture Strategy for 2021 and beyond for the borough of Sefton. This would be progressed in collaboration with stakeholders across the borough, and would be intended to sustain momentum built by the programme and by other organisations working effectively in this area across Sefton.

6.3 In addition £4,000 of further funding has been identified from related service budgets, with a budget of £14,000 identified for the work based on similar undertakings elsewhere.

6.4 The management of the process would be via the Communities team, reporting to the Cabinet Member for Communities and Housing. As with the development and delivery of the Borough of Culture programme, input and perspective will be sought from across the organisation, and from stakeholders and communities across the borough. The strategy will be brought back to Cabinet for approval.

6.5 The Strategy would create an agreed 5-year action plan taking Sefton through to borough of culture year 2025. It would improve communication and awareness across the borough in the realm of creative / digital / cultural activity and create an inclusive Sefton-wide infrastructure for our cultural ambitions. A strategy is required:

- To attract inward investment and support economic growth – many strands of external funding require us to have a Cultural Strategy
- As an advocacy tool for the role of culture in the borough demonstrating the positive impact of cultural engagement on health and wellbeing, tourism and the development of resilient communities
- To attract and retain creative industries in Sefton

- 6.6 Our Cultural Strategy will involve an extensive consultation exercise with as wide a range of partners as possible, building on the relationships developed during our Borough of Culture year and helping us to align Sefton's cultural ambitions with the Liverpool City Region.
- 6.7 It will be vital that the strategy development process and the consultant supporting its delivery are biased towards action, and management and oversight of the process will be delivered with this focus on action in mind.