

## For general release

<b>REPORT TO:</b>	<b>Overview and Scrutiny Committee 11<sup>th</sup> February 2019</b>
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Development of a Culture Plan and a Libraries Plan for Croydon</b>
<b>LEAD OFFICERS:</b>	<b>Shifa Mustafa, Executive Director – Place</b>
<b>CABINET MEMBER:</b>	<b>Councillor Oliver Lewis Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure &amp; Sport</b>
<b>PERSON LEADING AT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING:</b>	<b>Councillor Oliver Lewis</b>

<b>ORIGIN OF ITEM:</b>	This item has been identified by the Scrutiny Sub Committee as an area of scrutiny.
<b>BRIEF FOR THE COMMITTEE:</b>	To provide comment and inform the development of the Culture Plan and a Libraries Plan for Croydon Council.

## 1 Executive Summary

- 1.1 Both a Cultural Plan and a Libraries Plan are currently in development for Croydon and due to be agreed at the May Cabinet later this year. Both will respond to the current challenges and opportunities for these areas and build on the strengths and achievements. This report outlines current provision as a background report to the SWOT analysis presented at committee and sets out the draft priority themes of both plans.

## 2 A cultural plan for Croydon

- 2.1 The support of culture in Croydon within the context of the regeneration taking place has been a priority over the last 3-5 years. The focus during that time has been on activity; the major redevelopment of the Fairfield Halls and securing an operator for its future, on supporting the cultural sector in Croydon and creating opportunities for it to grow, on the consolidation and development of a calendar of cultural events and on building partnerships both in and outside of the borough. The development of a Cultural Plan for the Borough is now timely, to build on this growing groundswell of activity and create a framework for activity for the next 5-10 years. There is much on which to build, but there are also gaps and challenges.

### Cultural calendar

- 2.2 Croydon has a growing and strengthening cultural sector and cultural calendar. The programme of events in Croydon over the last year have built on the success of the year before and a strong annual, regular programme is emerging. The events are at a range of scales with some events, such as Croydon Pride and the International Mela, returning and some new or one off such as the Peace Festival in the summer

and the programme of events to mark the armistice for 2018. For 2019 there is already a healthy looking cultural calendar of returning events and some new ones such as Cro Cro Land, a music festival of mainly guitar bands aiming for a gender balance both on and off stage and featuring both local and national bands.

- 2.3 Croydon's many parks and open spaces have an important role as cultural spaces where communities can come together to celebrate and enjoy performance, activities and events. Larger scale events held last year included the Butterfly Effect Festival at Lloyd Park, Croydon Pride and the Croydon Mela in Wandle Park. Smaller scale events have also taken place across other parks including the Environmental Fair and Summer of Love Festival in Wandle Park for example. 2019 sees the launch of another major and large scale outdoor event for Croydon, the 3 day music festival The Ends for Lloyds Park at the end of May.

### **Cultural Partnership Fund**

- 2.4 The quantity and quality of bids for external funding from the cultural sector has grown and this success is largely attributable to the establishment of the Cultural Partnership Fund which has been in place since 2016. This was launched to help bring more funding into the arts in Croydon and so far **£219,443** awarded in grants which has levered in **£709,143**. That totals almost £1million in investment into the arts in Croydon over the two year period with a leverage bringing in over 3 times as much as the initial investment. The grant scheme has also provided a basis to launch a corporate sponsorship which was done as part of Croydon's bid to be the first London Borough of Culture and 5 companies joined the scheme immediately at that point.

### **Bids and partnerships**

- 2.5 Croydon was not successful in its bid to be the first London Borough of Culture for 2019, however, the fact that the borough was able to bid and put together a credible programme was a sign of the growing strength of the cultural sector and partnerships. The work undertaken to develop the bid and the partnerships to deliver it was a valuable exercise which created a foundation for the formation of the Cultural Network which meets quarterly and whose membership numbers over 100. It also provided the basis for 2 subsequent bids: the GLA funded Creative Enterprise Zone in which Croydon was successful and a bid to the Arts Council for a scheme to support a performing arts programme for young people who have faced barriers to participation in the arts.
- 2.6 Croydon was successful in becoming one of the first of 6 Creative Enterprise Zones named by the GLA and the funding and the designation will enable a programme of support for the creative and cultural industries in the heart of Croydon's area of regeneration.

The total financial investment in Croydon for Creative Enterprise Zones is circa £1m.

This investment is made up of two elements :-

- £0.5m has been directly awarded to Croydon for the Creative Enterprise Zone Programme, to enable growth of arts in the Borough.
- A further £0.5m will be directly invested in Croydon by the GLA to procure training and development opportunities for new creative business.

### **Fairfield Halls**

- 2.7 Fairfield Halls opens in September of this year under the operation of BHLive, a

social enterprise with a portfolio of other interests including the Bournemouth international Conference Centre and the Bournemouth Pavilion in addition to leisure and sports centres. Plans and partnerships are now well advanced under the leadership of the new venue director Neil Chandler, for a full programme in all of the venue spaces including a programme of free event in the main foyer space which is to be renamed the Arnhem Foyer. The impact of the Fairfield Halls for Croydon will be very significant both in terms of the offer for residents and visitors, the direct and indirect economic impact and the effect on the reputation and profile of the borough. A number of companies will be resident in the venue including Savvy Theatre Company, an integrated theatre company with mixed ability performers and participants.

### **Museum, Galleries and Archives**

- 2.8 Croydon Museum, Galleries and Archives, is approaching the time when it can reapply to the Arts Council for accreditation, having lost this nearly 5 years ago. Following a review of the Accreditation System by Arts Council, officers are in discussion with the Arts Council museum lead to plan out the process and timetable for us in Croydon, including the implications of the review. This, coupled with involvement in the plans, currently at an initial stage of redesign, for the spaces and the way they are used in the Croydon Clocktower will be the main area of focus for the Museum, Archive and Gallery service going forward.

### **Croydon Clocktower**

- 2.9 A redesigned Croydon Clocktower would be a significant piece of cultural and social infrastructure for a regenerated town centre. The plans for the Croydon Clocktower will add to the capacity of the gallery provision in particular and create opportunities to refresh the museum offer. It would also reconfigure the use of space in the central library to reflect the needs of users today and provide a suitable flagship library for the main central library of the service described below.

### **Cultural Plan draft priority themes**

- 2.10 A Cultural Plan for Croydon is currently in development and is scheduled to be taken to Cabinet for approval in May of this year. There have been a number of engagement sessions on a Cultural Plan for Croydon with the Croydon Cultural Network, with over 100 students from Croydon College and a policy development session with Members. The current draft priority themes are as follows:

**2.10.1 Inclusion:** This theme will cover all aspects of inclusion and access to culture and the arts for all communities; what needs to be in place to tackle barriers to participation and to try and ensure as diverse a range of provision in the borough as possible.

**2.10.2 Investment:** This theme acknowledges the importance of the role culture plays in supporting both direct and indirect economic impact for Croydon. It will also cover the role of culture and creative industries in creating jobs and supporting routes to employment.

**2.10.3 Infrastructure:** This theme covers aspects of the buildings and venues, spaces and places that might be supported in the development of a cultural plan for the borough. This would range from the large scale refurbishment of the Fairfield Halls in the town centre to spaces for outdoor performance or studio and production spaces across the borough. It also covers support to the cultural sector, networking opportunities or training provision for example.

**2.10.4 Young people:** The inclusion of this theme is in response to the particular demographic in Croydon being the Borough with the largest population of under 25s. It also responds to the policy context for the local authority in prioritising opportunities for young people.

### **3 Libraries: the current service**

- 3.1 There are 13 Croydon libraries including the main central library in the Croydon Clocktower. Just over a year ago, Croydon's library service was brought in house to the council when Carillion PLC, the previous provider, went into liquidation.
- 3.2 The provision of libraries is fairly evenly spread across the borough and just over 15% of Croydon's population are active library users. Croydon libraries are comparatively well used when compared to outer London in general, with above average visits per capita. The pattern of usage is more akin to inner city areas, with less borrowing per customer but more PC usage, and other types of usage likely to be higher.
- 3.3 Nationally, library usage is changing, library footfall and books loans are decreasing and these trends appear in Croydon too. Over 700,000 books are borrowed each year, with just under half of those being borrowed by under 16s, but approximately 50% of library visits in Croydon do not result in a book loan. The purpose of visits over the same 12 month period included:
  - Over 200,000 sessions using library computer
  - Over 100,000 visits to events and activities in libraries
  - 35,000 visits to under-5s Rhymetime sessions
  - Over 1,500 attendances at Work Club
  - Over 1,000 visits by older people to one-to-one IT skills improvement sessions
- 3.4 The Central Library is busiest with around 900,000 visits annually, followed by Thornton Heath with around 180,000. The least visited library is Sanderstead with 36,000 visits in 17/18. In terms of children and young people over 10,000 children visited libraries with their school class and 30% of existing users are under 16.
- 3.5 Libraries have received £212k of capital funds in 18/19 for the development of plans, pilot studies and a full business case for capital improvements across the service over the coming four years.

#### **South Norwood Library: a case study**

- 3.6 The development plans for South Norwood Library are one example of the kind of change needed at a more advanced stage, as the current building is no longer fit for purpose. Due to open in 2019, the new library at South Norwood will showcase a modern library facility which encompasses modern IT and facilities for visitors and flexible space that can be made available for events or meetings when not in use for library activities.
- 3.7 The existing library offer at South Norwood is a locally listed 1960s multi-level building (365 sq. m total space) next door to the Samuel Coleridge Taylor centre. It provides poor opportunity for modernisation or service development due to its restricted multi-level layout. There are currently only 8 adult and 4 children PCs and 1 study space.
- 3.8 The library is the seventh busiest library in the borough, with around 74,000 visits in 2016/17. In 2012 visits increased by 41% and the current trend shows that visits have

increased.

- 3.9 There is an opportunity to move the library offer to a purpose designed single level approx. 240 sq. metres of ground floor space in a new residential development at a peppercorn rent on 25 year lease. A space assessment has been undertaken and an enhanced and comprehensive library offer could be delivered here that:
- Provides a single level easy access layout
  - Accommodates computer and multimedia access points as well as increased study space
  - Has a flexible design that provides scope for alternative/community uses
  - Provides an attractive and flexible space that increases the council opportunities to draw in delivery partnerships to enhance and extend the current library services
- 3.10 The new library would be located at 24 Station Road which is a more favourable location given its proximity to the station and situation on a road with high footfall. Situated on the ground floor below a four storey new residential development, the space has a prominent street front presence and boasts large glazed windows that wrap around the curved façade, affording a good level of light into the internal space. The single story layout will be fully accessible.
- 3.11 The ambition for the new library is not simply to replicate the current library facility, but to provide a modern, flexible and adaptable space that can have greater community usage as well as providing the core library service. Therefore, the design of the new library will be a dynamic adaptable space with flexible layouts and furniture that can be moved around and set up to support a particular event or activity. The interior will have a limited amount of fixed elements to maintain flexibility.

### **The draft library plan**

- 3.12 A libraries plan will be taken to cabinet for approval in May 2019 and will set out the council's vision for libraries to be places that inform, involve and inspire Croydon residents and visitors. The plan will set out ambitions for libraries over the next ten years, focusing on:
- 3.12.1 Library buildings and technology:** This theme will look at how we can expand the number of book titles and online resources available to our users, how we will need to not only upgrade our existing IT but also to ensure that libraries meet the changing digital needs of their users (for example wifi, bring your own device), and the refurbishment of libraries spaces to ensure they are welcoming, attractive, vibrant, flexible spaces that are easy to manage and maintain and can be used by the service and the community for a range of activities.
- 3.12.2 Shaping the core library offer with residents and widening access:** This theme will look at opportunities to widen access to those residents who don't currently use our library service. For example by expanding the opening hours of libraries by installing technology solutions, providing outreach or pop up services and improving the libraries' online and digital presence. This also includes increasing volunteering and encouraging local people to have a say in their local library.
- 3.12.3 The role of libraries in delivering on wider corporate plan priorities:** This theme will look at the role of libraries as community hubs – connecting people with local information and services that are relevant to local needs. Our libraries can play a crucial role in delivering the wider outcomes set out in the corporate plan through their contribution to the council's Gateway approach. For example, Thornton Heath

Library has recently undergone refurbishment of the community room and a change of layout in the reception area to enable a wider range of services to meet with local people and offer drop in or bookable sessions in the library space.

**3.12.4 Libraries within the context of the council's culture plan (also currently in development):** This theme will look at the role of libraries as cultural hubs and their cultural offer within the context of the wider culture plan for Croydon. Libraries are uniquely placed to focus on the written and spoken word, and this can also be complemented by music, performance, visual and digital arts. Examples of library based activities in 18/19 include London Mozart Players performances to families with children based on well know fairy tales, poetry readings, a short residency by Well Versed Ink in Thornton Heath Library culminating in youth performances and collaboration with the Museum of Croydon to deliver the "Clocktower Late," a celebration and commemoration of the Armistice including visual and digital arts, poetry, film and music.