

Pre-Scrutiny: Croydon Cultural Plan and Libraries Plan

Cllr Oliver Lewis

Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Sport

February 2019

Question from Scrutiny

What are the main strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges facing the development of cultural provision and our library services in Croydon to be taken on board in the emerging plans for these areas.

Strengths

A strong cultural sector and good partnership working

- Increasing amount of quality activity – developing **cultural calendar** with some key flagship events in it that are growing in strength from year to year with something for everyone
- Whilst we were unsuccessful with our Borough of Culture bid – we have bounced back and have been able to make successful bid for the **Creative Enterprise Zone**
- **Cultural Partnership Fund** – grants and sponsorship
- Music heritage and potential come out of work on Creative Enterprise Zone and the first phase of **Music City** work

CROYDON CULTURAL PARTNERSHIP

PLATINUM



GOLD



SILVER



BRONZE



Strengths cont

Libraries now in house and developing a wide ranging offer

- We responded to what happened with Carillion with speed and decision and brought library service in house.
- We have a well dispersed service across the Borough
- Libraries are one of the few universal and free services available to all Croydon residents
- Libraries already offer a range of events, activities and services to residents encompassing health, wellbeing, employment, digital access and inclusion, educational attainment, cultural events, and children's, family and community events

Weaknesses

- **Croydon's reputation – affecting both cultural plan and libraries plan;** a general challenge remains the issue of the perception of Croydon.
- Some assets that have suffered from **lack of historical investment** in the libraries portfolio and in the Croydon Clocktower and Museum.
- **Revenue budgets** have been cut over the years

Weaknesses

- Library buildings are **predominantly older** and in some cases will require significant investment to achieve modern standards
- Libraries are not currently part of the council's IT network or within the council's IT support arrangements, **IT hardware is outdated and connectivity/wifi is poor** in some libraries
- **Marketing** is a weakness; the range of library services already on offer is not well known within all sections of the community.

Opportunities

- The **borough's demographic** – young and diverse
- The refocussing of the council's way of working – **prevention and local delivery**: Libraries and culture both lend themselves to working in this way
- **Fairfield Halls** opening this year
- **Croydon Clocktower** plans
- **Music City** plans

Opportunities

- Where library buildings will be costly to maintain or improve business cases may be viable for **full redevelopment of library sites** providing housing and new modern library facilities – as is the case in South Norwood
- **Improved ICT** provision would deliver benefits to customers and potential reductions in ICT costs
- Use of technology to **increase opening hours** (now in around 20% of UK libraries)

Challenges

- **Budget constraints and cuts for largely non-statutory services.** We have to work hard to bring in other funds, to work with partners, to prioritise what we do and measure impacts
- **Competition from other London Boroughs.** We are always in competition with the other London Boroughs – for resources, for audiences, for partners. we have to find the distinctiveness of Croydon always

Challenges

- Libraries are much loved buildings and institutes and **changes** can be fiercely contested – even by non-library users
- Improving the current ICT and buildings will require **significant capital investment**

Discussion

What are the priorities that must be included in plans to support the development of Culture and our Libraries service?