

**For General Release**

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| <b>REPORT TO:</b>   | <b>CABINET</b><br><b>19 March 2018</b>   |
| <b>SUBJECT:</b>   | <b>Culture in Croydon</b>  |
| <b>LEAD OFFICER:</b>  | <b>Shifa Mustafa, Executive Director - Place</b><br><b>Stephen Tate, Director of District Centres &amp; Regeneration</b><br><b>Colm Lacey, Director Brick by Brick</b><br><b>Paula Murray, Creative Director</b> |
| <b>CABINET MEMBER:</b>  | <b>Cllr Timothy Godfrey, Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Sport</b>   |
| <b>WARDS:</b>   | <b>All</b>   |
| <b>CORPORATE PRIORITY/POLICY CONTEXT/AMBITIOUS FOR CROYDON:</b><br>The services, programmes and plans outlined in this report deliver on all three of the corporate priorities.<br>Growth: culture makes a significant contribution to the successful growth agenda through improving the case for inward investment and the Fairfield Halls specifically will be an engine for growth in Croydon's economy.<br>Independence: both museum and library services make an impact in improving lives and life chances for our residents, in particular for young people through targeted delivery as does much of our supported cultural programme.<br>Liveability: Croydon's cultural offer is an increasingly important part of improving the borough as a place to live, work, study in and visit. |  |
| <b>FINANCIAL IMPACT</b><br>There are no additional financial considerations arising from this report.   |  |
| <b>KEY DECISION REFERENCE NO.</b> This is not a key decision  |  |
| The Leader of the Council has delegated to the Cabinet the power to make the decisions set out in the recommendations below:<br><b>1. DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS</b><br>The Cabinet is recommended to:<br>1.1 Endorse the direction of travel for the major elements of Croydon's cultural programme as outlined in the report<br>1.2 Delegate authority to the Executive Director of Place to establish a Collections Trust for the purposes of Museum Accreditation as detailed in paragraph 3.2 below   |  |

## **2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 2.1 Croydon was unsuccessful in its bid to be the London Borough of Culture for 2019. The programme developed and its priorities, however, remain relevant for the next two to three years which is a key time for Croydon in terms of major cultural development. The Museum Service will be preparing to make an application for reaccreditation of the service, the Library Service is undergoing a major review following being taken in house after the announcement of liquidation by Carillion PLC. The Fairfield Halls refurbishment is well underway and the design team working closely with the operator to ensure that all opportunities to make it fit for purpose are maximised.

## **3. DETAIL**

### **3.1 London Borough of Culture**

- 3.1.1 Last month the announcements were made on the awards for the title of the London Borough of Culture. Sadly, Croydon was not successful in its bid to be the first London Borough of Culture for 2019 and congratulations are due to Waltham Forest for that first title and to Brent for the award of the title in 2020. Croydon was also unsuccessful in gaining one of 6 cultural project impact awards that were made as part of the same competition.

- 3.1.2 Whilst this is disappointing, the work that we undertook in Croydon last year to develop our bid and the partnerships to deliver it was a valuable exercise and will act as a foundation for future growth. 2019 and the lead up to that year, is of course an extremely important period in Croydon's current phase of cultural development in a number of ways, our cultural calendar is becoming established, our sector is strengthening bringing in more external funding and increasing audiences and Fairfield will be re-opening.

- 3.1.3 We will use the momentum of having been part of the competition to continue to develop and deliver a cultural programme in Croydon. There are a number of key events that formed part of our bid that we will work to keep albeit as part of a differently shaped programme. These are a mixture of events that are now becoming fixtures in our cultural calendar such as Pride, the Croydon International Mela and Dance Umbrella plus some new additions such as the Metropolis Music Festival and Jerk and Jollof, an Afro-Caribbean celebration of food and culture and a new poetry and spoken work event for Croydon. We will still be supporting some major projects for the re-opening events for the Fairfield Halls and continuing to animate our public spaces and places with cultural activity and support our night time economy.

- 3.1.4 The five headline priorities that were used in the bid remain important objectives, in particular the importance of a developing offer for young people. The work that has been done to engage the business sector locally will also continue, both through the partnership with Croydon BID and more directly with major businesses in Croydon and with an interest in Croydon

### **3.2 Museums and Archives**

- 3.2.1 The next 18 months is also a key time for our Museums and Archives Service. In November of this year, Croydon Museum Service will be able to request

permission to make an application for formal accreditation from the Museums Association; the mandatory 5 year period which follows the loss of accreditation will have lapsed at this point. Formal accreditation is something the service needs in order to move forward; most funding and training opportunities for the sector are only available for accredited museum services for example. Our application will be built on a number of elements:

### 3.2.2 Our site:

Much of the focus for the application will be on the suitability of our premises; access and having requisite facilities and practices in place. We will also include our future plans for enhanced access to collections which features as part of the Clocktower Development plans covered later in this report.

### 3.2.3 Our collections:

We will need to demonstrate adherence to good policy and best practice in terms of our collections management. As part of this, we propose to establish a Museum Collections Trust for Croydon to sit alongside the Museum Operating Service to oversee acquisition and disposal. We are being advised in this by regional museum colleagues, our own internal audit colleagues and are also looking to examples in other local authority areas where this light touch form of governance is already in place. As part of the recommendations of this report, Cabinet is requested to grant delegated authority to the Executive Director Place to set up a Museums' Collections Trust as part of this measure. This would be done in the same timeframe as the reaccreditation application to be completed by February 2019, the earliest point at which the application could be made following the request to apply in November 2018.

### 3.2.4 Our programme: we will need to show a good wide ranging programme with plans in place to consolidate and develop a range of partnerships to deliver both creative and relevant programming

## 3.3 Fairfield Halls

### 3.3.1 Extensive works continue to Fairfield Halls and already the venue looks and feels incredibly different, spacious and streamlined in line with the original design as part of a comprehensive scheme that is sympathetic to the architectural and heritage qualities of the building.

### 3.3.2 The interior of Fairfield Halls is currently stripped back to the bones with the demolition of the Arnhem Gallery now almost complete. The Concert Hall seating has been removed for refurbishment and birdcage scaffolding has been erected within the Hall. Asbestos removal continues within the Ashcroft Theatre in preparation for further works.

### 3.3.3 Current work packages being procured include brick and blockwork, screed, render, continued internal and external repairs together with the work to reinstate mechanical and electrical systems. Over the next few months the extensive works will continue before the more surface works can be completed.

### 3.3.4 Working with the future operator, BHLive, has been extremely useful at this particular stage of the refurbishment. Brick by Brick, contractors Vinci, BH Live and the Council have been working collaboratively with the multi-disciplinary team undertaking the works to build on the plans by the design team. The

operator has been involved at a sufficiently early stage to be able to influence works and steer some useful changes to the scheme as planned with conversations taking place around the operation, look and feel of the refurbished venue, focusing in particular on hospitality, bars, public spaces and kitchens, technical facilities and back of house – the artist experience.

- 3.3.5 One small example of this partnership working is the re-siting of the bar in the foyer area and one on a larger scale is the shift in location of the planned new gallery facility. The foyer area will be much more open with a greatly reduced box office presence to maintain the space and reflect how customers actually interact with a venue. Priority is given to creating space for people to mingle and use the venue at all hours of the day. The relocated bar will allow for better circulation and create a further area of customer seating.
- 3.3.6 A relocation of the Gallery space will enable it to be a better facility with more emphasis and space at ground floor as well as the underground exhibition area. By moving the Gallery entrance out of the new planned glass box, or Cloister, this area, can be designed and used as one whole coherent space which greatly increases the Cloister's potential as an active and attractive restaurant/café for use alongside the venue.
- 3.3.7 The Ashcroft Theatre will also see further significant changes as well as the planned additional seating to take the seating capacity to over 800, the canopy will be removed so that the Theatre will have a more contemporary, stripped back, studio feel.
- 3.3.8 All of the changes are motivated by a clear focus on improving the operational viability of the venue. With their solid experience of running large scale venues and consistent emphasis on the importance of the customer experience, BHLive are working closely with our design and construction teams to get the very best from this scheme.
- 3.3.9 Extensive works will be undertaken to the exterior and the siting of the Halls. Alongside the transformed public realm, new homes will be being delivered by Brick by Brick making this a significant regeneration programme within the Cultural Quarter. The exterior of the halls will see refurbished and replaced windows and cladding, together with extensive cleaning and replacement of the main entrance doors to provide a new standalone entrance to the Ashcroft Theatre from College. A refined entrance canopy at the front of the Halls refurbished to reflect the original design.
- 3.3.10 The opening up of the Cloister onto the Public Realm will activate College Green as will the relocation of the Gallery to create further activity and visible street presence onto the enhanced public realm, the design of which and implementation works are running alongside the Fairfield Halls improvements.

3.3.11 In terms of the timescale for the works overall, the Concert Hall will be available by the end of this year with a subsequent phased opening of the other venue spaces to follow with full handover by the end of March 2019. There will be an increasing range of opportunities for people to see the spaces over this time, building gradually to full scale operation.

#### 3.4 Libraries

3.4.1 On 17<sup>th</sup> January following the announcement of liquidation by Carillion PLC Croydon terminated the service contract and brought the library service back in house. As we move forward we want Croydon to be at the cutting edge of library provision delivering a range of services that benefit all our communities, new and established, in fit for purpose buildings, providing a wide range of high quality fast, reliable digital access and linked to wider community provision.

3.4.2 Croydon operates thirteen libraries - a large central library and twelve branch libraries and a home library service for those residents who have difficulties leaving their homes. Croydon has also co-funded the Upper Norwood Library Trust over the last three years to deliver a community hub providing a range of services targeted at improving the life skills and life quality of local people and this includes a library offer.

3.4.3 There will be in the region of 2.4 million physical visits this year to the service – with almost half to central library - and approximately 87,000 people will be active users of the service including the virtual library offer. Libraries offer residents an opportunity to come together supporting community cohesion and celebrating culture through a range of activities including storytelling, author talks, writing workshops, crafts and creative events and hosting performances by local groups including the London Mozart Players and Brit School students.

3.4.4 The aim over the coming year, will be to ensure that our libraries form an even more integral part of the borough's cultural offer, actively contributing to and complimenting the wider cultural programme on offer. The council has commissioned Red Quadrant to work with us as we develop our libraries strategy which will focus on the seven library outcomes identified by the Libraries Taskforce. These are:

- cultural and creative enrichment
- increased reading and literacy
- improved digital access and literacy
- helping everyone achieve their full potential
- healthier and happier lives
- greater prosperity
- stronger, more resilient communities

3.4.5 As well as looking at local need, current usage of libraries and examples of good practice from elsewhere, the council is taking the opportunity ask residents through online engagement and targeted focus groups what they want the library service to provide. The outputs of this work will be delivered in the summer of 2018.

## **4. CONSULTATION**

- 4.1 Consultation and engagement are key in the ongoing development of Croydon's cultural initiatives and services. Croydon 2019 builds this into the programme structure for the year in particular in the way funding will be devolved to district and neighbourhood areas. Consultation with service users, current and prospective, will be built into both the forward planning for library services and the plans for reaccreditation for the Museum Services.
- 4.2 More specifically, since the libraries have come back in house, the council has taken the opportunity to carry out engagement asking residents, customers and staff for their priorities for the library service aligned to the libraries taskforce themes, which include cultural and creative enrichment, increased reading and literacy and improved digital access and literacy. We will be seeking ideas online, in our libraries and through targeted focus groups (with non-users as well as current users) and will use the results of this engagement (as well as previous engagement carried out in 2016) to inform future plans for the libraries.

## **5. FINANCIAL AND RISK ASSESSMENT CONSIDERATIONS**

- 5.1 There are no additional financial considerations arising from this report.
- 5.2 The decision to bring the Croydon library service back in house, following the collapse of Carillion, will result in the requirement for some additional capital investment in order to ensure that the service is fit for purpose. This has been included within the capital programme for 2018-21, which was presented to cabinet in February 2018.

Approved by: Lisa Taylor, Director of Finance, Investment and Risk and Deputy s151 Officer

## **6. COMMENTS OF THE COUNCIL SOLICITOR AND MONITORING OFFICER**

- 6.1 The Solicitor to the Council comments that specific legal advice will need to be sought in relation to the process for the establishment of and governance arrangements in relation to setting up the trust.
- 6.2 There are no additional legal implications arising from the recommendations within the report

Approved by: Sandra Herbert, Head of Litigation and Corporate Law, for and on behalf of Jacqueline Harris-Baker, Director of Law and Monitoring Officer

## **7. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPACT**

- 7.1 There are no direct implications for staff at LBC in this report. However a strong and vibrant cultural offer enhances the reputation of Croydon and supports the employer brand of Croydon for both attraction and retention.

Approved by: Sue Moorman, Director of Human Resources

## **8. EQUALITIES IMPACT**

- 8.1 All of the cultural programming developed by the authority has a positive equalities impact. The access improvements built into the refurbishment designs of the Fairfield Halls have been covered in previous reports. The significant work involved in both the service accreditation plan for the Museum and the service review for Libraries will involve Equalities Impact Assessments.

## **9. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT**

- 9.1 As reported in previous Cabinet reports, the refurbishment of the Fairfield Halls delivers a greatly improved building in terms of sustainability.

## **10. CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION IMPACT**

- 10.1 Specific work in Croydon's cultural programme is designed to support a safe and diverse night time economy; increasing footfall, creating lighting projects, broadening the offer for example. Other parts of the programme are designed to improve some of the public realm. There is work in our libraries and museums which focuses on young people and the provision of activity and places to go for free. The work on College Green as part of the Fairfield development in particular, will transform what has historically been an unsuccessful public safe into one that is well designed and well used.

## **11. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS/PROPOSED DECISION**

- 11.1 The direction of travel for the ongoing development of Croydon's cultural programme is along the same priorities as were agreed for the Borough of Culture Bid by Cabinet in November last year.
- 11.2 The reason to recommend the establishment of a Collections Trust would be to strengthen the application for reaccreditation for the Museum Service

## **12. OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED**

- 12.1 The option not to apply for reaccreditation of the Museum Service was considered and rejected.

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**APPENDICES TO THIS REPORT:** None

**BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:** None