



# Culture, Leisure and Sport

## Cabinet Member Bulletin

### Councillor Oliver Lewis

#### July 2020

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### Overview

Since the lockdown in March, our initial focus was on closures and the swift and effective decommissioning of services; libraries, museum and in a supporting role for leisure centres and the Fairfield Halls. We have been supporting services on the front line; preparing for our library buildings to be used as potential locality hubs for distribution of food and medicines, which was not mobilised in the end. Some of our staff have also been redeployed across other frontline services.

### Culture

We have been able to set up a Cultural Relief Fund of £135k with support from the GLA, has to date received over 28 applications to the first two rounds. Grants have been awarded to 23 organisations to the value of £86,663k, averaging just over £3k per award. The final deadline is at the end of June.

Most importantly, we are continuing to stay in close touch with the cultural sector with a weekly roundup of news, updates and opportunities. We are also circulating a regular survey to try and collect up to date intelligence on the state of our cultural organisations. Our sector has worked with us to develop a detailed submission to the DCMS enquiry into the impact of COVID on the cultural sector which we sent through last week.

### Creative Enterprise Zone

The CEZ activity during this time has focused on ensuring the ongoing survival of the sector in Croydon through this difficult time. This has been through supporting businesses and organisations in finding appropriate support and funding, repurposing funds in response to the crisis, supporting revised delivery models and contributing to lobbying efforts.

Despite the challenges thrown up by COVID we have been able to successfully pilot a joint initiative between Croydon College and FMM Popup. This has been designed to build links between the creative sector and HE/ FE institutions in the borough to support the creation and delivery of work experience placements in the sector.

### Croydon Music City

During the lockdown CMC has focused on working with local venues, directing them to potential sources of support, locally (via the culture relief fund), regionally (via the



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GLA's "Culture at Risk" team) and nationally (through organisations such as the Music Venues Trust).

We have also been working with organisations who have previously received grant funding to help them look at how they may continue to deliver, albeit with some changes due to COVID. This is currently in progress, and come to the fore now that some government guidance has been provided around venues and licensed premises.

### Sports and Leisure

We have been sending out regular detailed communication to our sports sector with advice and guidance on available support for sports organisations and clubs. Croydon clubs have already benefitted from around £40k of emergency funding from Sport England. Several organisations joined us in a round table to discuss the impact of COVID on the sports sector in Croydon and the results of these discussions have been fed through to the DCMS in response to the public enquiry. In addition we have been developing our digital communications with residents to promote information and online activities relating to physical health.

Greenwich Leisure closed down the leisure facilities in Croydon following the advice from Government in March. We are currently in discussion with them about plans to reopen on a phased basis when Government guidance changes and leisure facilities are allowed to re-open.

Tennis courts and lawn bowls were amongst the earliest sports facilities to be allowed to re-open nationally.



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## Parks and Greenspaces

Now more than ever, our diverse and beautiful greenspaces have been shown to be incredibly important for our residents and we are happy that individuals are making use of the natural surroundings for their health and wellbeing. We are also extremely grateful for all the staff and individuals involved in keeping these greenspaces open, clean and fit for use.

Since lockdown in March, we have worked to ensure that all our greenspaces remained open, which wasn't necessarily the case across London, and that we have been keeping in line with central government guidance as and when it has been released. This includes some vital work to close and cordon off some of our recreational areas like playgrounds and outdoor gyms. Again, we are thankful for the majority of Croydon residents who are abiding by these regulations and not using these facilities.



It has also been important to ensure that the right messaging about responsible behaviours has been available for visitors to our greenspaces. For this reason, our messaging has been both on-site and online. Even though the majority of public behaviour has been positive, there is always room for improvement and we would like to place a call out to everyone to support our parks staff and to stay safe in these two simple ways:

- Litter – Please use the litter bins available or, better yet, take your litter home with you!
- Follow the guidance about what facilities you can and can't use.

Finally, as the lockdown restrictions continue to ease we will continue to work hard to reopen facilities and enable activities when we are able to do so safely and responsibly. We thank you for your patience and support with this and hope that you continue to enjoy the benefits of using our wonderful parks and greenspaces.





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## Library Services

Across the library and museum services we have greatly increased our online offer and have seen an increase in membership with over 1,000 new individuals joining libraries online since 20<sup>th</sup> March when the libraries closed.

Digital issues for April and May are the highest we have ever recorded and growing. Since joining The Libraries Consortium, Croydon Libraries have increased all online resources, now providing over 40,000 eBooks/eAudio books, over 750 popular magazines, and thousands of eNewspapers in over 100 languages. Total eBook issues have increased 308% and eAudio by 188%. The enhanced online offer/programming continues to increase engagement through social media with regular craft events online every Saturday afternoon, rhymetimes and storytimes produced by library staff familiar to local audiences, and higher profile events such as the popular Storytime with local author and illustrator Ciara Flood as part of the Pyjamarama initiative from Booktrust. In ordinary times, Ciara Flood would visit a library and share her books and drawings with 50-60 local schoolchildren; online her story and drawing demonstration had 1,716 and 497 engagements.

The home delivery service has been paused but we have stayed in touch with over 20 of our home library service customers through a befriending calls programme in the meantime.

The Start-ups in London Libraries project, delivered in partnership with the British Library's Business and IP Centre, has flourished online. Croydon's Project champion has been providing webinars and one to one support sessions with 9 other London boroughs. The programme webinars have supported 273 new businesses across London, and 29 additional businesses have signed up for support in Croydon. Croydon businesses can sign up for free weekly one to one sessions here: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/11-business-information-session-with-start-ups-in-london-libraries-tickets-102882722994>

## Summer Reading Challenge 2020 online

This year, with the disruption caused by COVID, the Reading Agency has launched an all-new digital version of the Summer Reading Challenge. The aim is to keep children reading over the summer, supporting parents and carers with children already at home. The theme for this year is Silly Squad and focuses on funny stories and tales. Croydon readers aged 4 – 11 are challenged to read 6 books with the Silly Squad, an adventurous team of animals created by children's illustrator Laura Ellen Anderson. Our young readers can enjoy all different kinds of funny books now in the Croydon



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Libraries eBooks and eAudio collection here: <https://llc.overdrive.com/library/youth>.  
Full information about the challenge is here: [www.summerreadingchallenge.org.uk](http://www.summerreadingchallenge.org.uk)  
and on social media pages.

Croydon Libraries are also launching a Silly Tales Competition for children aged 4 – 7 and 8 – 11 to send in their own stories, poems and creations.



## Museum & Archives

The Museum of Croydon in response to COVID-19 closed its physical offer on 20<sup>th</sup> March. Since then it has launched a totally virtual and interactive museum offer benefitting from a brand new website and enhanced social media presence through Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. The exhibition programme 'What's Your Croydon?' has continued online with the following offer:

- Croydon Natural History & Scientific Society – a selection of postcards from the John Gent collection.
- Good Wolf with an interactive storytelling activity for the family
- Play for Progress launched their exhibition 'Roots and Branches' online with:
  - an online gallery
  - music tracks
  - weekly arts and music sessions.

We have launched a number of online campaigns including VEDay75 with a premiere of our Home Front and VE Day video as a result of Nation Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) supported project with Digital Drama. We explored the history of Croydon's pubs through our Virtual Pub Crawl in honour of National Beer Day. We also took part in the national #museumfromhome day with coverage from the BBC. Finally, on Windrush Day we proudly shared some stories to celebrate the contribution of the Windrush generation and their descendants in Croydon.

**AMBITIOUS FOR CROYDON**



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As curators of future exhibitions, we have been actively collecting resident's stories and experiences of life in lockdown during COVID-19 with our Letter from Lockdown. We have also been sharing the Coronavirus Time Capsule, documenting the lives of young people through C3 and led by Croydon Music & Arts.

Our volunteers have continued working with us during closure by researching biographies of Croydonnites who have portraits at the National Portrait Gallery, as part of our work on the NLHF supported Citizen Project. The volunteers have been delving further into our oral history collection, and have been transcribing, researching and creating virtual handling boxes. It's been great to continue our work with volunteers and we've been keeping in touch with Zoom calls and a quiz.

Finally, we're continuing to provide access virtually to collections and have increased information on our website with regards to what materials we have and how they are accessible during closure. We have been answering archives enquiries throughout the lockdown period.