

Committee: Overview & Scrutiny Panel Sustainable Communities & Transport

Date: 30 April 2019

Wards: All Wards

Subject: London Borough of Culture

Lead officer: Christine Parsloe, Leisure & Culture Development Manager

Lead member: Councillor Nick Draper, Cabinet Member for Community & Culture

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Recommendations:

- A. To note the progress being made in the delivery of Merton's involvement in the Mayor of London's 'London Borough of Culture' initiative
 - B. Receive an update of the plans and priorities for the future delivery of this programme.
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1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. This report updates members about the London Borough of Culture programme, the Impact Award made by the Mayor and the related Community Infrastructure Levy award. It updates members on delivery so far and the plans for the future including creating a sustainable partnership for a range of cultural work across the borough.

2 DETAILS

2.1. Background

- 2.1.1 In 2016 the Mayor of London invited boroughs to bid for the status of London's Borough of Culture (LBOC). In partnership with several local creative businesses, the Council decided to bid. A programme, entitled *Common Ground* was created. It reflected key concerns and ambitions in Merton, most notably the need to 'bridge the gap' in participation and cultural engagement. It also built on the known ambitions for a cinema in the east of the borough.
- 2.1.2 The Mayor had invited boroughs to include one exemplar project in these bids. In Merton, this was a film programme called FilmMerton which incorporates a series of film seasons and commissioning new work.
- 2.1.3 The borough did not win the full LBOC status: the feedback was that the Mayoral team did not feel Merton was quite ready to host such large-scale events throughout the year, but that the Council and its partners had put together a robust and intriguing bid which highlighted diversity, ambition and opportunity in unexpected ways.
- 2.1.4 The borough did win Mayoral support for FilmMerton. The Cultural Impact Award, as it is known, brought with it three key benefits: some money, significant profile and open doors from potential partners.

2.1.5 The Mayoral support was not sufficient to deliver the programme. The Council agreed to invest some of the Neighbourhood Funding created by the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). This is discussed in more detail below (para 6).

2.2. **Governance and Partnership**

2.2.1 The impetus for *Common Ground* came both from the Council and some key local partners. Those partners have now come together in a steering group, known as the Cultural Advisory Group (CAG) which is responsible for overseeing delivery of FilmMerton and wider cultural ambitions. It has adopted a set of Terms of Reference (Appendix 1) and committed to completing their annual review in May 2019.

2.2.2 CAG has a regular calendar of monthly meetings at which it shapes its strategy for the future and considers reports on progress to date, primarily this has been focussed on the delivery of Film Merton. Membership includes

- Conrad Murray, Artistic Director, Beatbox Academy
- Greg Vincent, Morrisons Law
- John Merriman, Crown Lane Studios
- Kristina Burton, Mitcham Town Community Trust / SHINE Merton
- Somayeh Aghnia, Geeks
- Councillor Janice Howard
- Councillor Linda Kirby
- Christine Parsloe, Leisure & Culture Development Manager

2.2.3 The CAG it continually reviews its membership and ways of working to maximise effective participation and leadership. It does not have a formal legal existence, although it has discussed the formation of an entity which would enable it to hold contracts in its own right. This is an ongoing debate which will be revisited in the coming months. CAG members presented its work to the Merton Partnership away day last year.

2.2.4 In officers' experience, the Merton CAG represents a new and important approach and opportunity. Unlike many such steering groups it is business led, which has enabled an innovative and energetic attitude. The Group is strongly committed to values of inclusion, economic and civic participation and long-term thinking. Both CAG and Councillors have been keen to see it evolve into a partnership which can continue to lead on cultural delivery and ambition for Merton.

2.2.5 CAG has already travelled a considerable distance. From its beginning in 2016, it has

- Put together the *Common Ground* bid with support from a very wide range of community partners and organisations
- Won the resources and profile attached to FilmMerton and the wider CIL programme
- Engaged many different partners and participants through innovative outreach and discussion (see para 4)

- Held a successful and inclusive launch event at Wimbledon Theatre in late November 2018
- Implemented FilmMerton, a brand new programme
- Determined its approach to other cultural interventions over the next 15 months.

2.3. FilmMerton

2.3.1 The outcomes and targets which form part of the funding agreement with the Greater London Authority are attached at Appendix 2. There are four core outcomes:

O1	<i>To create ambitious and inclusive new work</i>
O2	<i>Build the audience for film in the east of the borough to support the ambition for a new cinema</i>
O3	<i>Building groups and communities who have taken and can take leadership roles in expanding cultural and civic participation in the east of Merton</i>
O4	<i>Put Merton, and particularly Mitcham, on the map as open to and excited by emerging immersive technologies in augmented and virtual realities to support economic development objectives</i>

2.3.2 The programme has five main strands:

- Community film seasons, where community groups curate short seasons of films alongside local events to build the audience. These happen in a range of venues across the borough
- Commissioning four new short films, 2 from young people (18-25) who are emerging film makers in the borough and 2 from more established film makers. All have strong 'Merton' threads, will be filmed here in Merton and will offer opportunities for local people both in front and behind the camera
- Working with volunteers to deliver events and grow skills
- A festival, to be held in March 2020, with the working title *Mitcham Reality*, celebrating and showcasing augmented and virtual reality
- Evaluation and reflection so the programme can inform other and future work.

2.3.3 CAG produce a monthly report for the GLA. A recent report is attached at Appendix 3 – FilmMerton GLA Monthly Update: Jan/February 2019.

2.3.4 CAG has, with the support of the Council, procured consultancies to deliver the programme. The first film seasons were held in January and the film-makers commissioned in February. It is therefore early days to comment on the overall achievement of targets, but Members may wish to note the following:

2.3.5 **Film seasons** - The plan is to deliver 12 film seasons curated by community groups and a further 12 film seasons by guest curators.

2.3.6 So far 13 community seasons are confirmed with ten community groups choosing the films, showing the interest in the programme across the borough. These groups are:

- Lantern Arts – Food On Film
 - South Mitcham Community Centre – Inspirational Films
 - Dementia Alliance – Dementia
 - Focus 41 x 2 seasons - Inspirational Black Women/ Celebrating Black Britain
 - Friends of Pollards Hill Youth Centre x 2 – Hidden Stories/Black History Month
 - Soul Productions – Gangs & Peer pressure
 - SHINE on Saturdays – Shiny Movies: Friendship
 - MVSC/All Star Barbers – Barbershop Quintet
 - Korean British Cultural Exchange – K-Pop
 - Colliers Wood Film Collective x 2– Immerse Yourself
- 2.3.7 Community groups will be offering an eclectic range of films on everything from cake to K-Pop and representing a diverse range of local communities and their concerns/interests. These include older people suffering from dementia, young people's views on gang culture and peer pressure, and black women overcoming trauma and abuse through inspiring female role models.
- 2.3.8 The community panels are primarily from Mitcham and Pollards Hill with 3 from Raynes Park and Colliers Wood. As seasons are confirmed a range of venues are being identified, attracting new audiences and opening up new spaces.
- 2.3.9 Seasons are accompanied by events and talks generated by the community groups themselves.
- 2.3.10 FilmMerton's first season, Food on Film, was brought together by Lantern Arts in Raynes Park. The season started at the end of January with a special launch, continued into February and finished at the end of March. At the time of writing there have been 3 screenings, each attracting more than 20 people. Most attendees have been over 60yrs old, with the exception of the 10 children who came to see Willy Wonka. 85% of attendees to date have been women and 90% White British.
- 2.3.11 The following community film season showcased 'Inspirational Black Women.' This film season began on 7 March with a women-only screening to celebrate International Women's Day, closely followed by a season of screenings which uncovered the Hidden Stories of Black and minority ethnic history. This season completed in April. The second showing in this season, on 24 March at Pollards Hill Youth Centre, had a diverse audience of over 50 people.
- 2.3.12 Eight guest curator seasons have been confirmed so far with recent additions including the comedian Jo Brand. Publicity and marketing for these events continues to grow. Members will understand that in working with high profile curators, CAG and the delivery team are having to enter into personal agreements to manage the timing of announcements.
- 2.3.13 **Commissioning new work** - Film Merton includes commissioning new films: two from 18-25 year-old film makers living in the borough, and two from more established film makers from anywhere. All four films are required to be 'about' Merton.
- 2.3.14 At the time of writing rapid progress has been made:

- Advertisement of short film commissions (November-January) in a wide range of local and national outlets generated 56 submissions
- Longlist processing refined the 56 submissions to a shortlist of 31
- Shortlist processing by a selection panel led to interviews of 5 established filmmakers and 3 projects submitted to Young Merton Filmmaker categories
- 2 films were selected in the established filmmaker category and 2 in the young Merton filmmaker category. All were selected by unanimous decision of the selection panel
- Filmmakers have now been appointed to the project
- The two winning filmmakers in the Young Merton filmmaker category plus all runners up were invited to British Film Institute (BFI) Future Film Festival as a development opportunity. 6 young people attended the Festival on the weekend of 16 February.

2.3.15 All Filmmaker submissions were monitored for equalities and diversity and the following results evidence a diverse response to the opportunity.

Characteristic	Breakdown
Age	16-24: 4 25-29: 3 30-34: 3
Disability/health condition	None declared
Ethnicity	Black African: 1 Dual heritage: 3 White British: 4 White other: 2
Religion/belief	None: 8 Christian: 1 Prefer not to say: 1
Sex	5 female 5 male
Sexual orientation	Bisexual: 1 Heterosexual: 7 Prefer not to say: 2
Socio-economic background (not a protected characteristic)	a) Went to university: 9 (of 10) b) First generation of family to attend university: 4 (out of 9) c) Attended state school: 7 d) Attended independent school: 3
Postcode	SW19: 4 SW20: 1 SM4: 2 Out of borough (despite terms): 2

2.3.16 Two of the runners up to the Young Merton filmmaker category have expressed interest in being mentored or getting work experience on the 2 film commissions by the established filmmakers which the delivery team are now facilitating.

- 2.3.17 At the time of writing, the augmented reality commission and the festival are in preparatory stages. The evaluation strand is underway and will include both creative recording (currently through photography) and statistical evaluation.
- 2.3.18 **Volunteers** - The Film Merton programme has an important commitment to working with volunteers. Advertising used the MVSC network as well as libraries and spreading information across the networks cultivated during *Common Ground* and in the call-outs for films seasons. At the time of writing 20 volunteers have become involved in roles including stewarding film seasons and participating in the selection process for film makers.
- 2.3.19 The volunteers comes from across the borough, including Mitcham, Raynes Park and Colliers Wood. The majority (17) are over 60, and they are split 8 women and 12 men. Seven are from black and ethnic minority communities and one from a white non-British background, whilst the others are unknown.
- 2.3.20 **Partnerships** - A key objective of the programme is to forge new partnerships, build audiences and support investment in Merton. Although it is early days, a strong new relationship has already emerged with the British Film Institute who have contributed staff time and leadership. This contribution includes chairing the panel which chose the film makers and enabling all the young applicants to participate in the BFI young film makers events and networks for the year.
- 2.3.21 With support from officers in FutureMerton, the CAG has also been reaching out to potential investors in cinema. There have been early and positive discussions with independent cinema operators elsewhere in London. These discussions will continue.
- 2.3.22 The Cultural Advisory Group (CAG) is itself an important partnership. Its core membership, besides Councillors represents businesses, schools and creative practitioners. As noted at paragraph 2 above, this is a new approach in the borough and is already achieving significant steps.

2.4 Cultural Advisory Group - Future Work Programme

- 2.4.1 CAG has a robust commitment to working in ways which empower people, puts participation at the heart of commissioning and decision making, and which supports innovation to address tough problems. These priorities inform both the work the group is doing and the way it works.
- 2.4.2 When the bid was made for LBOC and a council partnering contribution using CIL, it included a number of key elements which forms the basis for the current and future work programmes:
- FilmMerton delivery
 - Commissioning new creative work
 - Support to the creative and cultural sector
 - Enabling governance and support
- 2.4.3 FilmMerton delivery is now well underway and the CAG is now giving due consideration as to its options for both new work and support to the sector. Current proposals under consideration focus on promoting the borough's diverse and exciting range of musicians.

2.5 Summary

2.5.1 In deciding to bid for the LBOC title, and making a significant investment through CIL, the Council made a strong statement of commitment to cultural success in the borough, predicated on taking a new approach to ‘bridging the gap’ and on innovative business leadership. This approach has already seen notable successes as detailed in this report and includes a breadth of engagement in the programme, including people from a wide range of communities and across the borough.

3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

3.1. The Council considered very carefully before bidding for LBOC and decided to proceed given the commitment of partners, especially in the ascent CAG, and the benefits of profile it offered.

3.2. At the time of considering the CIL allocation, the Council identified three options before deciding to fund the CAG to deliver Film Merton and lay the groundwork for longer term sustainability:

Option	Detail	Outcome
1	To deliver the whole Common Ground programme (2.1m) without further support from the Mayor, using LBM resources	Rejected - as beyond available budgets
2	To not deliver Film Merton, returning the resources to the Neighbourhood Fund and rejecting the award from the GLA	Rejected - as would fail to fulfil community ambitions and commitments made in bidding for the award
3	To only fund the Cultural Advisory Group to the minimum required to deliver Film Merton with no support to its sustainability in future	Rejected - as not investing in community ambition and aspiration at this time, when Cabinet have already committed the resources for investment in cultural activities which support bridging the gap, community empowerment and economic opportunity

3.3. CAG, including council members and with officer advice, continues to carefully consider options for delivery within the framework of the funding available and the agreements reached with the GLA. Options considered for specific strands of work are influenced by impact on community engagement and bridging the gap, support to the profile of the borough, the opportunities to create excellent work and strengths within the cultural sector.

4 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

4.1. During the preparation of writing the council’s bid for LBOC – ‘Common Ground,’ consultation included:

- Numerous one-to-one and small group discussions with stakeholders including practitioners, schools, cultural groups, venues, creative businesses and community groups
 - A series of meetings testing the emerging programme
 - Use of the existing consultation evidence and assessment of information from the national Audience Finder database
 - Analysis against material relevant to bridging the gap e.g. on cultural activity, education and health.
- 4.2. For the bid itself an information pack was produced summarising all of the statistical evidence – this evidence was a large pack of information.
- 4.3. In preparing for the delivery of Film Merton, consultation has continued in the following ways:
- Detailed discussion with a wide range of community groups on community seasons, identifying film makers and preparing for the augmented reality app
 - Targeted meetings with key stakeholders e.g. the Youth Parliament
 - Recruitment of volunteers both through the MVSC networks and open meetings
 - Discussions with potential businesses about investment in cinema facilities in Mitcham.
- 4.4. CAG has also continued wider consultation on future planning including:
- Consultation meetings open to the public in South Wimbledon and Mitcham
 - Ongoing specific discussions with interested groups and stakeholders
 - Growing publicity and attention to the programme from both print and online media.
- 4.5. On 26 November CAG launched both FilmMerton and wider work with a red-carpet event at New Wimbledon Theatre. Almost entirely funded by sponsorship, this event brought together different communities and in particular showcased performers who would not normally sing or dance on that stage. The formal event was followed by an impromptu session in the piano bar which was strongly welcomed by younger singers and players.
- 4.6. CAG is strongly committed to both consultation and reflection, using time at monthly meetings to consider recent consultation and use it to shape the next steps in their work.

5 TIMETABLE

- 5.1. The Council submitted its bid for the LBOC programme at the end of November 2017 after 3 months of intensive preparation. The Cultural Impact Award was announced in February 2018. By October 2018, the delivery team had been appointed, the first call-outs for community seasons were in place, CAG's terms of reference formalised, and the CIL allocation agreed.
- 5.2. The launch of the FilmMerton programme took place in November 2018 and the first of the community film seasons started in January 2019, with the established and young filmmakers commissions all being in place for February 2019.

- 5.3. The FilmMerton programme will now roll-out over the next 18 months and CAG will commence the planning and delivery of the other outcomes for this project.
- 5.4. The FilmMerton programme must be completed by March 2020, and CAG is currently confirming the dates of the Mitcham Reality Festival which will finish the programme.
- 5.5. CAG and the Council have been strongly committed to building a sustainable and long-term platform for culture. In developing the timetable for other work, CAG is carefully considering the momentum of FilmMerton and how best to build on it during 2020 and beyond.

6 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1. The clear long term objective for CAG is to demonstrate effective delivery against the strategic aims of bridging the gap, and to deliver support to the sector without reliance on public sector resources.
- 6.2. The main sources of funding are:
- CIL funding from L B Merton - £ 213,000
 - Cultural Impact Award Funding from the GLA - £ 40,000
 - Income Raised During Programme Delivery - £ 5,600
- 6.3. The breakdown of the budget as agreed in the CIL decision is:

Item	£	Comments
FilmMerton	185,600	Detailed budget agreed by CAG and review monthly: includes £40,000 from the GLA and a fundraising target of £5,600
Business development for the sector	8,000	A proposal for this strand of work will be advertised through the council's procurement portal
Community Commissions	40,000	This will be subject to detailed further proposals to be agreed by CAG
Cultural Leadership Development	22,000	This mirrors the sum allocated in the Common Ground bid and covers governance costs and limited support for delivery over the two years from April 2018 to April 2020
Contingency	3,000	To enable additional marketing etc. as required
Total Expenditure	£ 258,600	

- 6.4. CAG keeps its budget under close review and has identified both the strategic objective of long term sustainability and short-term objectives for fundraising and partnership. Opportunities include:

- Sponsorship: in cash or in kind. Even at this early stage, CAG has shown success in this arena, as the launch has shown
 - Commercial income: possibilities include ticket sales; sale of Intellectual Property (IP) etc. At this time, CAG has shown a marked inclination to see any such income go directly to the community group which generates it. It would be possible, however, to consider whether there is IP generated by CAG which itself has value, if not now, then in the future
 - Charitable funds: there are a range of trusts and charities which support cultural work, although it can require time (money, investment) to make the application
 - Public sector funds: CAG fully recognises the unlikelihood of future public sector support given the constraints on the sector.
- 6.5. The proposed work programme is currently covered with the approved income except for the £5,600 to be generated from the programme. This income is expected to be generated and the oversight is in place to ensure that the programme is delivered within the committed resources. However, for any additional projects or programmes CAG may decide to do or if CAG chose to create a larger programme they would also commit to fundraising to meet those additional ambitions.
- 6.6. The commissioning element of CAG's work offers its own specific opportunities for CAG to invite proposals where match funding is a prerequisite - whether from communities or practitioners.
- 6.7. CAG has used a proportion of its budget both to commit to a stipend for the Chair, which enables small business owners to play a prominent role in its work, and for consultancy for a Critical Friend who is both supporting the group and ensuring delivery of this work programme. These costs are contained within the Cultural Leadership Development budget line.

7 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1. Expenditure of funding from the GLA must always be compliant with the terms of the grant agreement under which it is provided including lawful procurement as appropriate to level of expenditure whether under the Council's Standing Orders or under the Public Contracts Regulations 2015.
- 7.2. South London Legal Partnership is available to assist the Council in carrying out legal and advisory services in relation to the CAG.
- 7.3. Under the CIL Regulations the Neighbourhood Fund, must be spent on local projects to support the demands development places on the borough. Government guidance states that local authorities should engage local communities and agree with them how to best spend the Neighbourhood Fund and that the cost of administering the fund should be reasonable and proportionate to the amount of funding received.

8 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1. The delivery of Film Merton is being monitored to measure the engagement across communities, with a particular view to the overriding objective of 'bridging the gap'. At the time of writing, only one film season has started so it is too soon

to measure impact. It is clear from the applications and appointments for film making that communities not usually engaging with such opportunities have been attracted, including from ethnic minority and younger groups, and from the eastern half of the borough.

- 8.2. This is an issue of particular concern to CAG and funders and influences programme design and consultation.

9 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1. There are no specific crime and disorder implications.
- 9.2. Members may wish to note that some of the community groups have identified disorder and related issues to be highlighted in their seasons, such as Soul Productions who are curating a season connected to gangs and peer pressure. As seasons are connected to community events, this will be a valuable opportunity to work with young people around strategies to resist such pressure.

10 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1. There are no specific risk management or health and safety implications. The delivery team are working closely with specific venues and community groups to ensure health and safety requirements are properly managed.

11 APPENDICES – THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS ARE TO BE PUBLISHED WITH THIS REPORT AND FORM PART OF THE REPORT

Appendix 1 - Merton's Cultural Advisory Group – Terms of Reference

Appendix 2 - GLA Grant – FilmMerton: Objectives, Targets and Outcomes

Appendix 3 - FilmMerton GLA Monthly Update: April 2019

12 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 12.1. Merton's – '*Common Ground*' bid.
- 12.2. CIL report

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