

Committee: Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Date: 17 March 2020

Wards: All Wards

Subject: London Borough of Culture

Lead officer: Chris Lee, Director of Environment & Regeneration

Lead member: Councillor Cooper-Marbiah, Cabinet Member for Commerce, Leisure and Culture

Contact officer: Christine Parsloe, Leisure & Culture Development Manager

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 and the delivery of the programme in the Cultural Infrastructure Levy Award.
- B.** Receive an update of the plans and priorities for the future delivery of this programme.

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.

2 DETAILS

2.1. Background

- 2.1.1 This is the second annual report to this panel about the London Borough of Culture programme. The first was considered in April 2019 and contained full details of the bid, which won the Cultural Impact Award and the development of further cultural work in the borough.

- 2.1.2 In summary, Members are reminded that:

- A number of business and cultural leaders in the borough came together in a partnership, now called the Cultural Advisory Group (CAG) to promote a bid for the London Borough of Culture status and for other, related projects aimed at 'bridging the gap' in participation, cultural engagement and promoting the borough.
- The Council's bid, entitled *Common Ground*, included an exemplary project, Film Merton, which won Cultural Impact Award funding from the GLA.
- The Council also awarded Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding to be set aside for the CAG to use in the delivery of Film Merton and other cultural projects.

2.2. Governance and Partnership

2.2.1 The CAG has a regular calendar of monthly meetings at which it shapes its strategy for the future and considers reports on progress to date. CAG has considered all matters relating to both Film Merton and other projects that are set to take place once Film Merton concludes. Membership of CAG (at March 2020) includes:

- Somayeh Aghnia, Geeks (co-Chair)
- Greg Vincent, Morrisons Law (co-Chair)
- Conrad Murray, Artistic Director, Beatbox Academy
- Kristina Burton, Mitcham Town Community Trust / SHINE Merton
- Lynette Shanbury, Polka Theatre (alternate: Nick Parr, New Wimbledon Theatre)
- Jean-Marc Flambert, freelance marketing professional
- Councillor Oonagh Moulton
- Councillor Linda Kirby
- Christine Parsloe, Leisure & Culture Development Manager

2.2.2 Membership during the year has also included John Merriman of Crown Lane Studios (previous Chair) and Cindy Sasha, freelance photographer.

2.2.3 CAG continually reviews its membership and ways of working to maximise effective participation and leadership. It does not have a formal legal existence and is, therefore, not able to contract services in its own right. CAG members have presented its work to the Merton Partnership.

2.2.4 The Merton CAG continues to represent an important approach and opportunity for the borough. Unlike many other 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.

2.2.5 The future of CAG continues to be under active consideration. Further projects have been commissioned, but the members of the group rely on support to ensure good accountability both from their delivery team and from the funders. As the resources for this support grow less, it will be harder for CAG to maintain its momentum. The Council's Cultural Strategy is due to be updated in 2020 and will need to consider this issue.

2.2.6 CAG has already travelled a considerable distance. From its beginning in late 2016, it has:

- Developed *Common Ground* and launched its work with a major event at New Wimbledon Theatre
- Nearly completed FilmMerton, a brand new programme centred around film in the broadest sense

- Created two new major cultural projects in *Radio Local* and to promote cultural and creative businesses in the borough

2.3. Cultural Impact Award - FilmMerton

2.3.1 The funding agreement between the Council and the Greater London Authority (GLA) has clear targets, outputs and outcomes. All of these will be fully reviewed and reported in a final evaluation report at the end of the project.

2.3.2 FilmMerton has four central objectives. They are not separately prioritised and activities within the programme will support more than one.

Table 1 – Project Objectives

Ref	Objective
O1	To create ambitious and inclusive new work
O2	Build the audience for film in the east of the borough to support the ambition for a new cinema
O3	Building groups and communities who have taken and can take leadership roles in expanding cultural and civic participation in the east of Merton
O4	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

2.3.3 Table 2 – Project Outcomes

Ref	Outcome	Objectives supported
OC1	Demonstrable growth in film audience in eastern half of the borough	O2
OC2	New groups and individuals in the community engaged with cultural activity leading to overall growth in activity	O1, O2, O3
OC3	New groups with ongoing cultural capacity through decision making and commissioning	O1, O2, O3
OC4	New commissions in film and immersive technology which are welcomed by key audiences including both communities and creative practitioners	O1, O3, O4
OC5	New partnerships with the film sector, including cinema operators, heritage groups, film clubs, film makers, producers and distributors to take forward future work towards a permanent cinema in the east of the borough	O1, O4
OC6	A successful immersive (VR and AR) festival <i>Mitcham Reality</i> which engages the community with those new technologies	O2, O3, O4

OC7	<i>Mitcham Reality</i> has capacity to become a regular fixture and is engaged with other festivals across London and beyond	O1, O2, O3, O4
OC8	A robust and accessible evaluation which enables communities, funders and the cultural leadership of Merton to build on success for future activities	O3
OC9	A reputation for Merton as borough where exciting cultural activities, led by and empowering local communities and producing amazing work, will be found	O1,O3,O4

2.3.4 **Table 3 – Project Targets / Outputs**

Ref	Targets / Outputs	Objectives	Progress to date
T1	Achieve target growth in film audience (established in relation to baseline to be determined in late 2018)	O2	To be included in Final Evaluation Report
T2	At least 8 robust community panels, representing at least 32 people) engaged in curating film seasons with support and mentoring, building a long term and informed cadre of film fans, by February 2020	O2, O3	11 community organisations engaged in curating film seasons with support and mentoring.
T3	At least (say 10 per film for 96 films) 960 film goers for the film seasons of which at least 25% (240) saying they are seeing a film they would not otherwise have seen by February 2020	O2, O3	1,226 film goers viewing 99 films. 50 films chosen by community organisations and 49 chosen by guest curators.
T4	At least three new groups in the community actively engaged in cultural commissioning and decision making that are not so engaged at September 2018, by December 2019, in ways which outlast the individual commission or season	O3	11 community groups engaged. None had previously been engaged in cultural commission and decision making of such work. Legacy project in development to sustain this work beyond Film Merton
T5	Positive community and critical reception for the newly commissioned work	O1, O4	To be included in Final Evaluation Report

T6	Ambitious and high profile programme of guest curated seasons well received by audiences	O2,O4	Range of diverse and acclaimed guest curated seasons showing 49 films selected by 12 guest curators and shown across the borough in different venues
T7	A well-attended and watched <i>Mitcham Reality</i> festival in 2020	O4	To be included in Final Evaluation Report as event takes place on 6 and 7 March (Verbal update at meeting)
T8	Full funding for FilmMerton as envisaged at May 2018 achieved by December 2018.	O3	To be included in Final Evaluation Report. Fully funded through 'cash and kind'
T9	Further funding attracted to expand the programme, either to extend film seasons or create additional new work	O1,O2, O3	To be included in Final Evaluation Report
T10	At least three robust partnerships created with film industry partners to sustain through Film Merton and beyond, and in particular to support creating a cinema in Mitcham by September 2019.	O1,O4	9 industry partnerships created and legacy projects to sustain are in development

2.3.5 The programme has five main strands:

- Community Film Seasons: 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 New Work: 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, were filmed wholly in Merton and offered opportunities for local people both in front and behind the camera. Also commissioning a new augmented reality app showcasing Mitcham Status Fair
- Working with volunteers to deliver events and grow skills
- A festival, held in early 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.

2.3.6 CAG commissioned consultants to deliver this programme:

- Community engagement and curated film seasons - designing and delivering film seasons has been led by Maureen McKerkiel Associates
- New film commissions and the Mitcham Virtual Reality Festival have been led by Digital Drama
- Evaluation, managed by Maureen McKerkiel Associates, has been delivered by Audience Agency and Rebecca Cresta Photography.

2.4. Film Seasons

2.4.1 This strand has seen film seasons chosen by community groups and guest curators.

2.4.2 Community groups:

A diverse range of community groups have chosen a wide selection of films from food to feminism through to freedom fighters, attracting audiences from across the borough, mainly from the eastern side. Twelve community seasons have run through eleven community groups using thirteen different venues.

- **Friends of Pollards Hill Youth Centre** – a group of residents on Pollards Hill Estate who support and work with young people at the local centre, particularly in the promotion of positive images of BME people. This group organised two seasons including the best attended film season so far – ‘Hidden Stories’ attracted 150 people over 4 films
- **Focus 4-1** – a completely user-led mental health project which focuses on the recovery of BME communities. Group of BME women with PTSD curated season of films on Inspirational Black Women
- **Dementia Alliance** – part of Merton Alzheimer’s Society ran a season as part of National Dementia Day challenging assumptions on the condition
- **Soul Productions** – community group who work with young people making short films about their experiences. They chose a season of films looking at gangs and peer pressure
- **Dynamic Living** – local organisation that manages two homes in Mitcham for young people in care living semi-independently. Film choices explored issues such as county lines and gang violence
- **Morden Community Cinema** – a coalition of local community groups in parts of the borough with high number of Referendum Leave voters. Season focused on tolerance and understanding of difference
- **Commonside Trust** – organisation runs community centre delivering local services such as lunch clubs for older people. Season focused on mental health
- **SHINE** – a Saturday club for primary-aged school children from socially excluded communities in Mitcham. Season of films centred on friendship
- **Johmard Community Lyme Youth Group** – works with young people in the area – film choices focus on the portrayal of black love on film (February-March 2020)
- **Merton LGBT+ Forum** – season celebrates LGBT+ History Month in February 2020
- **Lantern Arts Centre** – a community centre linked to the local church, which provides arts activities for users including older people and children/youth

groups. Organised season of films about food and linked in with local restaurateurs who delivered demonstrations and samples.

2.4.3 **Venues:**

A wide range of venues have been used for the seasons, bringing films to new places and opening up the opportunities to new audiences:

- Mitcham Library
- Vestry Hall
- New Horizon Centre
- Pollards Hill Library
- Johmard Community Centre
- Pollards Hill Youth Centre
- Colour House Theatre
- Farm Road Pavilion
- Lawrence Weaver Institute
- Wimbledon Library
- St Helier Methodist Church
- Mitcham Fire Station
- Lantern Arts Centre

2.4.4 **Audiences:**

At the time of writing 1,226 people have attended the showing of 99 different films to date. Definitive numbers will be provided once the seasons have finished and all data collected and analysed.

So far, preliminary findings about the audiences are:

- 60% women
- 80% Black minority ethnic background
- 20% White other
- 70% 35-55 age range
- 30% 15-25 age range
- 90% East of the borough
- 10% other parts/ outside of the borough

2.4.5 **Key Findings:**

At this early stage, it is clear that audience numbers and the range of groups involved exceed the targets agreed for the GLA funding, which will be reflected in the final evaluation reports.

It should be noted that these numbers do not include attendances from the final three seasons of the programme.

It is also clear that people:

- Are coming to film events who have not come before
- Are much more interested in films they or their community members have chosen rather than those chosen for them
- Would rather use known and trusted venues than seek a new one out. This finding has immediate relevance to the ambition of seeking to create a cinema.

2.5. Commissioning New Work

2.5.1 New films

- Two produced by two 18-25 year-old film makers living in the borough
- Two from more established film-makers from anywhere. (Infact the director of Just Delivered also lives in Merton.)
- All four films were required to be 'about' Merton.
- The commissioned films include two heart-warming comedy dramas about love and friendship; a stop-motion animation about a local football team; and a visually artistic homage to the hidden beauty found.

The four films are:

- HIS NAME WAS GERRY directed by Peter Lee Scott
- JUST DELIVERED directed by Rosie Gaunt-Mathieson
- THE STREETS THAT SHAPE US directed by Matvi Khosho (Young film-maker)
- THE WIMBLEDON FOOTBALL CLUB STORY, AS TOLD IN LEGO directed by Charlie Strank (Young film-maker)

2.5.2 The two Young Merton filmmakers were also awarded Festival passes to the prestigious BFI Future Film Festival, access to BFI filming recording equipment to use on their production and mentoring to help develop and encourage their film-making skills and experience. Runners up who unsuccessfully applied for Young Merton film commissions were also awarded Festival passes to the BFI Future Film Festival.

2.5.3 Augmented reality (AR) commission

- An AR app, which brings photographs to life
- Featuring historic pictures of Mitcham Fair
- Developed to be used as part of an installation at Mitcham VR Festival, bringing Mitcham's rich community heritage to life using the latest tablet technology.
- Research and content for the AR app was developed with the input of volunteers from the local community, giving them the opportunity to experience working with AR
- Local community volunteers tested out the app to check its usability and accessibility and give feedback accordingly
- At the time of writing, the delivery team are working with the Council's Heritage Service to make sure the photographic element continues to be readily available for future use.

2.5.4 Mitcham Virtual Reality (VR) Festival

- Details of the Mitcham VR Festival is attached at Appendix 1
- Took place on 6 and 7 March at the (General Giles Social Club on Mitcham Fair Green)
- The Festival venue was donated for this event by a local businessman, who is keen to encourage local participation in film, music and the arts and has been inspired by the FilmMerton project
- At the time of writing, the Festival is being heavily publicised both to the industry and across the local community

- It is programmed to be an exciting free 2 day Virtual Reality Film Festival held in the heart of Mitcham
- Day 1 (Friday 6th March) was for invited guests only from the local community and key funding partners
- Day 2 (Saturday 7th March) was open to the general public for bookable and turn up and see activities
- Members will have a verbal update at the meeting.

2.6. Advanced Publicity and Communications

- 2.6.1 The Mitcham VR Festival received great coverage across London based press outlets. Most notably, Time Out included the festival online and in print, saying that '*Mitcham is about to become an epicentre of technology with a day of '360-degree films'*'. Justin Johnson and Rosie Gaunt-Mathieson had a wonderful interview on BBC Radio London: Robert Elms Show on 3rd March. The Resident also recommended the festival in their Things To Do section.

Links to the online versions are included below:

<https://www.timeout.com/london/things-to-do/mitcham-vr-festival>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/p081h9jl>

<https://www.theresident.co.uk/london-culture-events/things-to-do-this-weekend-in-london-7-8-march-2020/>

- 2.6.2 The festival was also recommended in local press outlets. Absolutely Magazine South West, Families South West Magazine, South London Press, Wimbledon SW19 and Time & Leisure Magazine all recommended the festival. We also reached out to AFC Wimbledon who ran a news article. Mária Rakušanová also spoke to South West Londoner for a large feature ahead of the festival. Links to the online articles can be seen below:

<https://absolutely.london/things-to-do-this-month-in-london/>

<https://www.londonnewsonline.co.uk/mitcham-vr-festival-at-the-general-giles-social-club-mitcham/>

<https://www.wimbledonsw19.com/#!/pages/wimbledonsw19:info:filmmertonvirtrealrealityfestival001>

<https://www.afcwimbledon.co.uk/news/2020/february/our-history-as-youve-never-seen-it-before/>

- 2.6.3 The Mitcham VR Festival has also received great coverage in industry specific press outlets. Gizmodo, a key tech site, interviewed Mária and will be speaking to people at the festival. VR Focus, XR Central, Techristic, Cinema Go Trailers, XR Must and JumpCut Online also all ran previews for the festival. Links to the online articles can be seen below:

<https://www.vrfocus.com/2020/01/gloomy-eyes-bro-bots-more-part-of-free-mitcham-vr-festival/>

<https://www.xrcentral.com/gloomy-eyes-bro-bots-more-part-of-free-mitcham-vr-festival/>

<https://techristic.com/gloomy-eyes-bro-bots-more-part-of-free-mitcham-vr-festival/>

<https://cinemagotrailers.co.uk/free-vr-festival-comes-to-merton-london/>

<https://xrmust.com/events/mitcham-vr-virtual-reality-festival-2020/>

<https://jumpcutonline.co.uk/2020/02/free-vr-film-festival-heading-to-london/>

- 2.6.4 Various theatre press outlets also covered the festival, including Broadway World, From Page To Stage, Theatre Weekly, Bakchormeeboy and At The Theatre. Links to the online articles can be seen below:

<https://www.broadwayworld.com/uk-regional/article/Free-VR-Festival-Comes-to-Merton-London-20200121>

<https://from-page-to-stage.com/2020/01/21/news-vr-and-film-festival-comes-to-mitcham/>

<https://theatreweekly.com/unique-vr-and-film-festival-comes-to-mitcham/>

<https://bakchormeeboy.com/2020/01/25/arts-of-the-uk-2020-mitcham-vr-festival-comes-to-merton-london/>

<https://www.atthetheatre.co.uk/unique-and-free-arts-festival-comes-to-londons-mitcham-7-march-2020/>

2.7. **Volunteers**

- 2.7.1 The FilmMerton programme has always had an important commitment to working with volunteers. Volunteers have been recruited via:

- Advertising using the MVSC network, via libraries and spreading information across all the networks cultivated during the formulation of the original *Common Ground* project and in the call-outs for films seasons
- 26 volunteers registered are were used within the project for the Film Seasons, including a new group for whom we do not yet have background data, but this will be included in the final end of project reports
- The data to date indicates that the majority are:
 - Aged 17 - 60 years old
 - 50% split between male/female
 - 50% are from a BAME background with 15% White other and 35% Unknown
 - 80% come from the east of the borough and 20% other parts/outside borough
- In creating the new films, a number of additional voluntary input has been involved, not least from approximately 60 local people who took part in the programme and local businesses that have given their support
- Film students at Ravensbourne University have also played an important voluntary role: 2nd year students created a 3-minute promotional video about the FilmMerton short film commissions to be used to promote Mitcham VR Festival as well as being used as a legacy for the short film commissions (to sit on the FilmMerton website etc). They also produced three 30 second social media promos for the Mitcham VR Festival.

2.8. **Evaluation and Reflection**

- 2.8.1 Evaluation and reflection have been ongoing features during the delivery of this programme. The impact of this approach is evidenced by positive actions including adjusting seasons and venues on the basis of feedback received.

- 2.8.2 The evaluation strand includes both creative recording (through photography) and statistical evaluation.
- 2.8.3 Detailed reports on the programme are expected in April and will inform the work of CAG in the future. Some lessons, as noted at para 2.4.5 above are already clear.
- 2.9. **Partnerships**
- 2.9.1 A key objective of the programme is to forge new partnerships, build audiences and support cultural investment in Merton. The programme has been successful to date in this regard, and now a key legacy challenge is maintaining this momentum. New relationships with cultural organisations include:
- British Film Institute: have given considerable support to filmmakers (see above), chaired events and panels, and promoted the programme
 - Film London
 - Cinema For All
 - FilmBank Media
 - Park Circus
 - ICA Cinema
 - Dogwoof
 - Birds' Eye View
 - Independent Cinema Office
- 2.9.2 A number of new relationships with community organisations have been created. These are either new in the sense that the groups have previously had relatively little contact with the Council, or in the sense of creating a new arena for joint working around cultural engagement. These relationships include Soul Productions and Morden Community Cinema. In considering the legacy proposals below, retaining these relationships has been an important element.
- 2.9.3 With support from officers in FutureMerton, CAG held early positive discussions with independent cinema operators elsewhere in London. It remains difficult to see a robust pattern for investors. At the same time, the experience of the community seasons has shown that local people want to see films they themselves have chosen in trusted venues. This experience has shaped the legacy project (outlined below).
- 2.9.4 The Cultural Advisory Group (CAG) is itself an important partnership. Its core membership, besides Councillors, represents businesses, schools and creative practitioners. As noted at paragraphs 2.2 above, this is a new approach in the borough and has taken significant steps towards greater cultural participation.
- 2.10. **Legacy from Film Merton**
- 2.10.1 Whilst the formal evaluation reports due in April will be profoundly important to the learning from FilmMerton, CAG has been committed to maintaining momentum and is therefore working with Commonsense Development Trust to allocate sufficient resources to continue programming community seasons through 2020-21. This will also retain the relationships with technical suppliers involved in providing equipment and the Independent Cinema Office. This legacy project is afforded within the overall budget for this programme of work.
- 2.11. **2020 Work Programme**

2.11.1 CAG has ensured that they robustly commit 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. 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

2.11.2 CAG has focused its next round of projects on three strands:

- Visible and engaging cultural activity in Mitcham to follow on from Film Merton
- Building the cultural and creative sector in the borough's economy, especially in the east
- Continuing the film-audience development, through legacy from FilmMerton

2.11.3 ***On the streets of Mitcham: Radio Local*** – CAG sought out an intervention, which would be highly accessible to the general public while providing a platform for artists, and which would enable a particular emphasis on music and the spoken word. CAG have commissioned performance artists Hunt+Darton to deliver their project *Radio Local* project in Mitcham in the summer of 2020.

2.11.4 This project is a strongly locally-adapted version of a successful initiative already undertaken in a number of other towns across the country. Hunt+Darton ultimately create a 12 hour long live broadcast radio show in partnership with a local radio station, run from the public streets of the chosen area. In preparing this broadcast, they commission artists to work locally and develop strong relationships with a range of community groups. Members can see more about *Radio Local* in other areas at <http://www.radiolocal.co.uk>

2.11.5 ***Building the cultural and creative sector*** in the borough is a longstanding objective for the Council. CAG, following its review of existing material and through the consultations, which informed the original *Common Ground* bid, decided that some robust research was required on which to base a future strategy. After a competitive process, AlwaysPossible Ltd of Worthing were commissioned to deliver this project. Their first report, on space and venues for such businesses, will be considered by CAG in mid-March and their final reports are due in June 2020. Again, this material will inform both economic development and cultural strategic work by the Council and its partners in the future.

2.11.6 ***Continuing film-audience development work.*** As noted above, the partnership with Commonsides Development Trust will be a key element of taking this forward.

2.12. Summary

2.12.4 In deciding to bid for the London Borough of Culture (LBOC) title, and making a significant investment through Community Infrastructure Levy (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 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 alternative options very carefully before bidding for LBOC and decided to proceed given the commitment of partners, especially in the ascent of CAG, and the benefits of profile it offered.
- 3.2. At the time of considering the CIL allocation, the Council identified four options before deciding to fund the CAG to deliver FilmMerton and lay the groundwork for longer-term sustainability:

Table 4 – CIL Funding Options

	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	Not to deliver FilmMerton, 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 FilmMerton 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
4	To fund a the Cultural Advisory Group with the sum originally provisionally allocated to Common Ground to deliver FilmMerton, promote its legacy, develop other cultural opportunities and extend the partnerships created	Accepted as the most cost effective way to develop cultural empowerment in the borough

- 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; and the opportunities to create excellent work and strengths within the cultural sector.

4 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

- 4.1. As described in the 2019 Scrutiny report, the preparation of ‘*Common Ground*,’ included substantial consultation. This has continued during FilmMerton, especially through detailed discussion with a wide range of community groups on community seasons, identifying film makers and preparing for the augmented reality app and the Film Festival.
- 4.2. CAG has also continued consultation on future work. The business support project is itself a form of extended consultation/research on requirements of the Creative Industries Sector in Merton.
- 4.3. 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 FilmMerton programme has run since January 2019 to its last season which ran during the last week of February/first week of March 2020. The final large scale event will be the Virtual Reality Festival of 6-7 March, followed by final evaluation reports and CAG reflection.
- 5.2. The timetable for future CAG work is set out under the relevant headings above, and is focused on maintaining momentum and informing future work in this area.

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 to date are:

- CIL funding from L B Merton - £ 213,000
- Cultural Impact Award Funding from the GLA - £ 40,000

There have also been numerous areas of support in-kind, some of which are detailed below.

- 6.3. The breakdown of the budget as agreed in the CIL decision and later updated by CAG in agreement with the delegated authority officers is:

Table 5 – Budget

Item	£	Comments
FilmMerton	167,300	Detailed budget agreed by CAG and reviewed monthly: includes £40,000 from the GLA
Business development for the sector	10,000	This strand of work was advertised through the council’s procurement portal and is now underway

Radio Local	24,999	This strand of work was advertised through the council's procurement portal and is now underway
Legacy Film Merton partnership with Commonsense Community Trust	15,000	This partnership is now being finalised
Cultural Leadership Development	23,900	This covers: * the sum allocated in the Common Ground bid for governance and limited support for delivery over the two years from April 2018 to April 2020 * a small amount for marketing and comms across the whole programme after FilmMerton
Music and outreach	11,000	This is a provisional sum for two emerging and related projects under active discussion at the time of writing
Contingency	1,801	To enable additional marketing etc. as required
Total Expenditure	£ 253,000	

6.4. CAG keeps its budget under close review and the proposed work programme is currently covered.

6.5. A significant number of partners have supported with use of venues and resources in-kind. This is part of the evaluation is still under review and being prepared for inclusion in the final reporting and declaration of the total value of the complete programme. Examples include:

- Video assets from Ravensbourne students worth approximately £1,000
- Donation of the General Giles Club for the Festival, worth £2,000
- The BFI Future Film team have donated time and resources to help develop Young Merton filmmaking talent, alongside time to chair events
- Other volunteer time and venues for the seasons

6.6. 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 funds by the Council must be compliant with lawful procurement rules as are appropriate to the level of expenditure whether under the Council's Standing Orders or under the Public Contracts Regulations 2015. The

obligations contained in any funding agreements must be followed and evidence of compliance with such obligations should be recorded in writing.

- 7.2. Under the CIL Regulations the Neighbourhood Fund, CIL must be spent on local infrastructure to support the demands of development. 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 FilmMerton is being monitored to measure the engagement across communities, with a particular view to the over-riding objective of 'bridging the gap'. It is clear from the community seasons and the 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 part 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 curated a season connected to gangs and peer pressure. As seasons are connected to community events, this has been 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 worked closely with specific venues and community groups to ensure health and safety requirements were properly managed.

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

Appendix 1 – Promotion of the Mitcham Virtual Reality Festival on the Digital Drama Website

12 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 12.1. Merton's – '*Common Ground*' bid.
- 12.2. CIL report.
- 12.3. Scrutiny Report 2019.

Appendix 1

Promotion of the Mitcham Virtual Reality Festival on the Digital Drama Website



Showcasing the latest immersive experiences, **Mitcham VR Festival** on **Saturday 7th March** will be the culmination of FilmMerton, the year-long project aiming to encourage participation with film throughout the London Borough of Merton. At Mitcham VR Festival, interactive Virtual Reality experiences will be showcased alongside 360-degree films and a unique Augmented Reality installation to give visitors the opportunity to engage with a broad range of immersive experiences from sci-fi thrillers to romantic dramas and comedy flicks. The event will be free.

All the Fun of the Fair

All the Fun of the Fair will enable Mitcham VR visitors to step into their local history through the technology of an Augmented Reality installation. With a unique soundscape and images springing to life on iPads, *All the Fun of the Fair* will transport audiences back in time to the Mitcham Fair, rumoured to be the oldest fair in England.

FilmMerton Commissions

Alongside Mitcham VR Festival, a series of four short films have been especially commissioned by FilmMerton and selected by a board chaired by Justin Johnson (Lead Programmer, British Film Institute Southbank) and will premiere at the festival. These have all been produced in Merton and showcase work from both established and aspiring filmmakers. Local Mitcham resident, Rosie Gaunt-Mathieson (*Dawn of a New Gay*, selected for London Short Film Festival 2020) will present *Just Delivered*, a heart-warming romantic comedy. Peter Lee Scott (*Sketch*, winner of Best Film at British Independent Film Festival 2018) will share *His Name is Gerry*, a drama-comedy about young people and bereavement. Aspiring filmmaker Matvi Khosho, a former asylum seeker brought up in Mitcham, will highlight the multicultural foundations of Merton with *The Streets That Shape Us*. The final short will be Wimbledon resident Charlie Strank's *The History of Wimbledon Football Club – As Told in Lego* which documents 'football coming home' to the local community.



MITCHAM VR FESTIVAL SELECTION

Gloomy Eyes

The sun grew tired of humans and decided to never rise again. The darkness awoke the dead from their graves. A zombie kid called Gloomy and a mortal girl called Nena fall in love, forming a deep connection that even the most powerful man cannot destroy. This is a beautifully animated VR love story.



Memoria: Stories of La Garma

Memoria: Stories of La Garma is an interactive Virtual Reality journey narrated by Geraldine Chaplin that allows you to explore the memories, paintings and objects trapped intact inside the cave of La Garma for over 16 thousand years. You can walk around three spaces of the cave and unleash the memories of each space, including palaeolithic hunters, a mom and her child and the terrifying cave lion who made his way deep into the cave to live his final days.



The Curious Tale of the Stolen Pets

Experience an interactive tale of childlike wonder! Help your grandfather solve the mystery of the stolen pets by exploring wonderful miniature worlds. Use a hairdryer to melt snow in a wintery landscape! Search the wreck of a pirate ship partially hidden under the surface! Every world is unique, full of interactions and colorful life.



360° Films Playlist 1

Judi Dench: My Oak Tree VR

Judi Dench: My Oak Tree VR is a pioneering, immersive 360 film that allows viewers to fly around and through the most impressive oak tree in Judi Dench's garden. Combining cutting-edge graphics, real scan data, state-of-the-art 360° filming techniques and poetic storytelling, this heart-warming journey brings the tree alive in a completely new way, and shows how trees can help to save our planet.



Anonymous

Anonymous is a 360° narrative film sharing the personal story of being a child of an alcoholic. After 28 years, Samantha shares her story of living with an alcohol-dependent parent, hiding the secret and dealing with the death of that parent. You come face to face with Samantha, who will address you directly as she works through her five stages. This piece highlights a story that 2.5 million children experience throughout the UK. The anonymous.



360° Films Playlist 2

Crackle Pop

Part documentary, part music experience, *Crackle Pop* explores the phenomenon of sound to colour synesthesia. Experience the neurological phenomenon of sound to colour synesthesia – the perception of colours or shapes when listening to sounds and music. Documentary and music video collide in this kaleidoscopic 360° film, pieced together from the descriptions of synesthetes listening to the breathtaking music of Paul Russell's post-punk orchestra, *Human Pyramids*.



Kinch and the Double World

Kinch and the Double World brings the fantasy adventure genre to cinematic Virtual Reality. Set in Victorian London, it tells the story of Kinch, an orphan who gets caught up in a stage magician's trick and ends up being transported to a magical world. In this alternate reality, the moon is falling, threatening to destroy the world. This 360° film was produced by the multi award-winning British studio Figment.



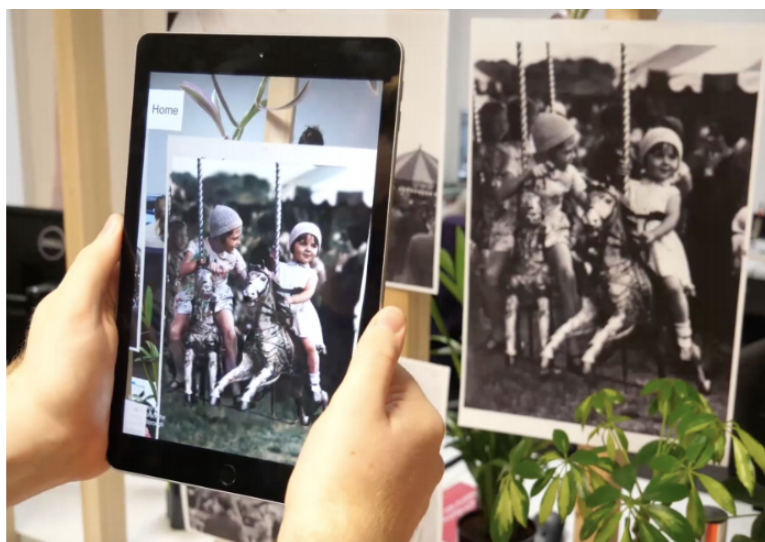
Bro Bots

Bro Bots is a VR animated comedy series. In the not-so-distant future, robots are everywhere. They talk like us. They walk like us. And they have really big personalities. Two British robots – Otis and Roberto – arrive in New York and join the NY Police Department. After hearing news that a wanted suspect will be taking to the stage at the Comedy Cellar that evening, Otis and Roberto are sent to investigate. What they discover leads to a highly dangerous assignment – locating an unregistered server deep within the heart of Botcorp, the world’s most powerful robot corporation.



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Mitcham VR Festival is part of London Borough of Culture, a Mayor of London initiative supported by the City of London Corporation's Charity, City Bridge Trust and Airbnb.

www.london.gov.uk/mylocalculture

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#mylocalculture
#MitchamVR

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MAYOR OF LONDON



merton

Winner Mayor's Cultural
Impact Award

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