

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT & NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

TO:	HOUSING, NEIGHBOURHOODS AND LEISURE COMMITTEE		
DATE:	15 NOVEMBER 2017	AGENDA ITEM:	12
TITLE:	CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT UPDATE		
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1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report provides an update on two key developments relating to cultural services and activities. It is not intended to be comprehensive with regard to the activities or initiatives underway or planned by the many cultural organisations in the town but, rather, to focus on key recent developments the Council is involved in. It is preceded on the agenda by a presentation on the Abbey Quarter by the Museum Manager Matthew Williams and information on this exciting initiative is, therefore, not replicated in this report. The report focuses on progress in taking forward Reading's successful bid to the 'Great Places Scheme' (including a reconfiguration of the Cultural Partnership) and the delivery plans being developed by the Museum of English Rural Life (MERL) and Reading Museum consequent on being jointly awarded National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) status by Arts Council England (ACE).
- 1.2 Appendix 1 - Cultural Partnership: Revised membership and draft Terms of Reference.  
Appendix 2 - Great Place Scheme: Project Management Structure.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 That the Committee notes the progress being made with regard to taking forward Reading's Great Place Scheme as set out in section 4.1 of the report.
- 2.2 That Committee agrees to scrutinise the work of the Cultural Partnership and, as a minimum, receives an annual report on its work.
- 2.3 That Committee agrees to the Council entering into a Partnership with Reading University, as required by Arts Council England, in order to establish Reading Museum and the Museum of English Rural Life as a joint National Portfolio Organisation.

2.4 That the signing of the Partnership Agreement with Reading University is delegated to the Head of Legal and Democratic Services in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Culture, Leisure and Consumer Services, Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services and the Director of Finance.

### 3. POLICY CONTEXT

3.1 The ambition to raise Reading's cultural profile and reputation is about both the outcomes for Reading as a place and delivering better quality of life for residents. The delivery of culture and heritage contributes to achieving the following Corporate Priorities:

- Keeping the Town clean, safe, green and active;
- Providing the best life through education, early help and healthy living;
- Providing infrastructure to support the economy.

3.2 A new Cultural and Heritage Strategy 2015-2030, developed under the auspices of the Cultural Partnership, was endorsed by the Council's Policy Committee in November 2015. The new Culture and Heritage Strategy clearly sets out an aspirational vision for culture and heritage to play a key role in the town's future, enhancing the quality of life for residents and increasing the attractiveness of the town for visitors and investors. The Strategy envisages Reading's profile and reputation as a cultural destination being transformed over the coming years, building from a strong base of arts and heritage organisations and assets and catalysed by the Year of Culture that was held in 2016.

3.3 A new 2050 Vision was launched on the 18<sup>th</sup> October this year following an extensive period of development and consultation by the three lead organisations: Reading UK, Reading University and Barton Willmore. The Council has endorsed this Vision and, in its role as community leader, to work alongside other agencies and organisations to realise the Vision's ambitions. A thriving and renowned cultural offer is a key component of this vision.

3.4 The new Economic Development Plan led by Reading UK CIC, "Growing Opportunity" has the three key objectives of: raising Reading's profile; growing opportunities to strengthen the local economy; and employment for local people. The further development of arts, culture and the digital economy to contribute to these objectives is at the heart of the plan.

### 4. THE PROPOSAL

#### 4.1 Current Position:

##### Great Place Scheme

The Housing, Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee considered a report entitled 'Great Place Scheme: Reading-on-Thames' at its meeting on the 5<sup>th</sup> July this year. This report set-out the parameters of this new funding initiative, a summary of the key areas of work that will be supported by the grant award of £558,400, including who will lead on delivery of these over the eligible expenditure period that runs until December 2020; and a summary of the next steps required to ensure that proposals are progressed in accordance with grant conditions and to obtain 'permission to start'. The Committee endorsed the work undertaken to secure the Great Place

Scheme grant and supported the proposals for the Council and its partners (Reading UK and Reading University) to take forward implementation.

Work has been undertaken to fulfil the requirements to get 'permission to start' from the funders with information provided as follows:

- Cost break down and cash flow;
- Confirmation of partnership funding;
- Timetable / activity programme (with more detail for year1);
- Project management and procurement arrangements;
- Job descriptions for any staff to be employed utilising grant funding;
- Draft formal Partnership Agreement with key delivery partners.

Permission to start will shortly be secured from the funding agencies following a review meeting on the 6<sup>th</sup> October.

In addition to meeting these formal 'signing-off' requirements there has been significant progress in preparatory work to underpin delivery going forwards. This includes:

### **Cultural Partnership**

We have progressed the reconfiguration of the composition and role of this established partnership to make it more fit for purpose and also to act as the Great Place Board (specifically incorporated into new Terms of Reference attached at Appendix 1). This has involved two workshops led by an external facilitator, Cllr. Guy Nicholson, who was also the lead on the Peer Review of Cultural Services in Reading carried out earlier this year. The reconfiguration of governance structures for culture, arts and heritage was one of the Peer Review's key recommendations and the continuity provided by Cllr. Nicholson's facilitation greatly assisted the process and the positive engagement of all the stakeholders. A key objective of reconfiguring the Partnership was to ensure that it could take a strategic and developmental role, connecting up and adding value to existing activities whilst also looking to the future.

The Partnership (Great Place Board) has agreed its purpose as to:

- Provide vision and strategy for Culture and Arts in Reading;
- Act as the strategic 'Great Place Scheme Board' - overseeing its development and delivery;
- Raise the local, national and international profile of Culture;
- Plan ahead, provide strategic direction and steer the development of future initiatives and investment.

The 1<sup>st</sup> meeting of the reconfigured Cultural Partnership is scheduled to take place on the 22<sup>nd</sup> November chaired by the Lead Councillor for Culture, Sport and Consumer Services.

### **Recruitment**

The recruitment to the post of Culture Development Officer with RBC is in the process of being finalised. Interviews were carried out on the 28<sup>th</sup> September and an outstanding candidate has accepted the post and will start in early December.

Recruitment of the Reading-on-Thames Festival Director for 2018 has also been completed, led by Reading UK who will be the employing organisation. Again the calibre of the person appointed is considered to be impressive. Now that the Director is in post the recruitment of a Producer for the festival is now underway.

### Reading-on-Thames Festival

The Festival was trialled this September (with support from ACE) and was very well received. Currently being evaluated with surveys of both businesses and audiences underway - this will help provide feedback to inform development of next year's Festival. Over £20k of private sector match funding (cash) was secured which bodes well for exceeding the Great Place Scheme £50k match funding target over the next 3 years as the Festival builds.

### University Research and Outreach

Over the summer, Dr. Sally Lloyd-Evans and colleagues at the University have carried out some initial scoping around mental health and have identified some potential community arts and health partners in South Reading. They have also recruited teams of 'young researchers' and teachers in local schools who will help to co-create the research methodology going forward.

A schematic illustrating the management and governance structure for the Great Place Scheme is attached at Appendix 2.

### National Portfolio Organisations (NPOs)

Arts Council England's (ACE's) National Portfolio provides regular funding for organisations that have a long-term and sustained commitment to a programme of high quality work meeting ACE's strategic objectives. These objectives include:

- Excellence is thriving and celebrated in the arts, museums and libraries;
- Everyone has the opportunity to experience and be inspired by the arts, museums and libraries;
- Every child and young person has the opportunity to experience the richness of the arts, museums and libraries.

A key benefit of NPO status, over and above the reputation and kudos it provides, is multi-annual core funding. This funding has been extended from 3 to 4 years duration in the current bidding round with funding available for the period April 2018 to March 2022.

Historically Reading has had no local NPOs. However, early discussions with ACE suggested there might be opportunities in the current round given a shared strategic ambition to establish Reading as a cultural hub. ACE announced the results of the bidding round on the 27<sup>th</sup> June and a joint bid by MERL and Reading Museum was successful. The Council also submitted a bid for NPO status for South Street Arts Centre but unfortunately this was not successful on this occasion. However, two other local organisations, CultureMix and Readipop, were also successful meaning that Reading now has 3 NPOs across 4 organisations. Given the competitiveness for NPO status and funding this is a major achievement for the town's cultural sector.

The joint Museum bid is led by MERL in an equal partnership with Reading Museum under the umbrella of the 'Reading Town and Country Museums Partnership' (RTCMP).

'The mission of RTCMP is to create opportunities to experience heritage that builds a sense of place and identity for Reading and its surrounding communities. Our ambition is to play a leading part in the transformation of Reading's reputation as a cultural centre. Building on the strength of our track record of partnership, as RTCMP we will:

- Exploit the quality and distinctiveness of our collections;
- Embrace and deliver fundamental change in the scope and impact of our engagement with audiences;

- Promote our commitment to engage our common audiences through innovative practice, shared workforce and programme development;
- Deliver excellence for all our audiences.’

A key focus of the project is community engagement and outreach (‘audience development’) and being an exemplar of good practice in this regard, including for work with schools and young people. In this regard both Museums are building from a strong base having both received significant HLF awards with associated engagement and activity programmes over the next few years. Proposals include some shared posts to work across both Museums, development of a shared ‘Youth Strategy’, which will include focusing on widening participation. Proposals also support increased resilience and financial sustainability into the future.

The successful bid is worth £1m in total over the 4 years shared across the two museums. Both Museums are currently working together on a shared Business Plan that will need to be submitted to ACE by 15<sup>th</sup> December and approved in advance of funding being available from the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2018. The University will be the lead accountable body and the required formal partnership agreement with RBC as a consortium partner is currently in draft form.

#### 4.2 Options Proposed

The Committee has already endorsed the work undertaken to secure the Great Place Scheme grant and supported the proposals for the Council and its partners (Reading UK and Reading University) to take forward implementation. This report provides an update on progress since the July Committee meeting with considerable focus on the reconfiguration of the Cultural Partnership that has taken place and which was also a key recommendation from the Peer Review of cultural services earlier this year. The Cultural Partnership will keep its membership and activities under review and remain flexible to accommodate changes should these be needed. It is also proposed that the Housing, Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee fulfils a scrutiny role with regard to the work of the Cultural Partnership and, as a minimum, receives an annual report and update on the Partnerships work.

Led by MERL, the Museums are currently developing a Business Plan linked to their NPO funding from ACE which will commence in April 2018 and continue through to March 2022. An annual delivery plan will need to be produced and agreed by ACE for each year of funding. This provides scope to flex or amend proposals and activities as joint working develops over the four year period. The University will be the Accountable Body and will be required to enter into a Partnership or Collaboration Agreement with the Council so that both organisations have a formal commitment both to delivery and to meeting the grant conditions specified by ACE. This agreement is currently in draft format and will need to be signed and submitted to ACE along with the Delivery Plan in February.

#### 4.2 Other Options Considered

The successful bids for both the Great Place Scheme and NPO status are bringing significant additional resources to develop and extend the impact of cultural activities in the town. Effort has been focused on meeting the requirements of the funders in order to be able to progress delivery and this work is essential if the funding on offer is to be secured.

## 5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

5.1 The ambition to raise Reading's cultural profile and reputation is about both the outcomes for Reading as a place and delivering better quality of life for residents. The delivery of culture and heritage contributes to achieving the following Corporate Priorities:

- Keeping the Town clean, safe green and active
- Providing the best life through education, early help and healthy living
- Providing infrastructure to support the economy.

5.2 A new Cultural and Heritage Strategy 2015-2030, developed under the auspices of the Cultural Partnership, was endorsed by the Council's Policy Committee in November 2015. This strategy has an over-arching ambition that:

'By 2030, Reading will be recognised as a centre of creativity with a reputation for cultural and heritage excellence at a regional, national and international level with increased engagement across the town.'

## 6. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

6.1 There are specific requirements and guidelines for publicity for Great Place Scheme Projects and in particular the funders are keen that the public know how they have contributed towards putting arts, culture and heritage at the heart of 16 places across the country by playing National Lottery games.

6.2 Community engagement and information is at the heart of plans for delivering Reading's Great Place Scheme proposals. In particular the research and commissioning strands of the programme will require extensive community involvement and incorporate community led research models.

6.3 Increasing both the quantum and scope of community engagement is also central to the Museums' NPO Delivery Plans, including in particular a commitment to develop a 'Youth Strategy' for the engagement and involvement of young people with a focus on those currently not accessing the cultural offer.

6.4 More broadly information, marketing and engagement are central to audience development across much of the cultural sector, including the many community based culture and heritage delivery organisations. The Cultural Partnership will continue to seek to ensure that there is effective community engagement and easily accessible information as a key part of its overall remit.

## 7. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

7.1 It is not considered that an Equality Impact Assessment is relevant with regard to the content of this report.

7.2 A particular focus of the proposals is to enable widespread access to cultural opportunities by developing initiatives to engage new or under-represented audiences and to address the health and well-being of more vulnerable groups through a programme of cultural commissioning.

## 8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The Council has power to enter into the partnership funding agreement and to undertake and implement the NPO activities under s1. Localism Act 2011 (the general power of competence). The Council also has power under s.19 Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 to provide inside or outside its area recreational facilities as it thinks fit.
- 8.2 The funding provided to NPOs by ACE is conditional on a funding agreement with the University as accountable body and these grant conditions will be reflected in the Partnership Agreement with the Council. The Council is experienced in meeting the requirements of ACE funding both as lead accountable body and as a partner.

## 9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The successful bid is worth £249,999 per annum over the 4 years, £999,996 in total, shared across the two museums. There is no requirement for any direct match funding but an expectation that existing resources will be deployed to ensure that the additional activities within the NPO proposals and business plans are delivered.

## 10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 10.1 'Great Place Scheme: Reading-on-Thames', Report to the Housing, Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee, 5<sup>th</sup> July 2017.

'Peer Review of Cultural Services', Report to the Housing, Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee, 5<sup>th</sup> July 2017.

'GREAT PLACE SCHEME: Reading-on-Thames' - HLF grant award letter 13<sup>th</sup> April 2017.

'The Cultural Education Partnership', Report to the Housing, Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee, 15<sup>th</sup> March 2017.

Reading's Culture and Heritage Strategy 2015-30

'Great Art and Culture for Everyone' - 10 Year Strategic Framework 2010-2020, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition Revised 2013, ACE.

'Rdg 2050 Vision: A vision for a smart and sustainable Reading 2050.'

Cultural Partnership (Great Place Board)  
DRAFT Role & Responsibilities - Terms of Reference  
September 17

## Purpose

### To

- Provide vision and strategy for Culture, Heritage and Arts in Reading
- Act as a strategic Great Place Board - overseeing its development and delivery
- Raise the local, national and international profile of Culture

## Proposed Board Structure

Proposed structure, based on functional numbers and feedback from development workshop

### Stakeholder/Representative Board - 14 reps

- RBC Arts & Heritage Forum / RBC rep
- University
- Reading College
- Reading UK CIC
- Business - digital business community
- Reading CAN
- Alliance for Cohesion and Racial Equality
- Networks:
  - Music
  - Dance
  - Drama - Theatre & Arts Reading
  - Museum & Heritage
  - Visual Arts
  - Health and wellbeing
- Chair / rep Cultural Education Partnership

### Delivery groups / sub groups

Membership will enable influential advocacy and leadership and direct linkages to, and accountability of, new and established delivery groups or sub-groups, including: Reading International, Reading Abbey Revealed, CEP, Ageing-well, Skills and Economy (including funding and sponsorship), Reading-on-Thames Festival, Junction Dance, CAN, Reading 2050, Arts & Heritage Forum

As mentioned above the new structure could be supplemented as follows:

- 'Task and Finish' or Sub Groups with at least 2 Board members and co-option where necessary (Possible sub groups: Economy & Skills, Funding & Sponsorship, Promoting Excellence)
- A reference group comprising anyone who has expressed an interest in an arts-related topic including artists, sponsors, funders, audiences and venue operators.

The Reference (Executive?) Group is inclusive, not exclusive and is self-selecting. The breadth of membership ensures that no specific interest group can dominate.

- To provide people to sit on sub groups or Task & Finish Groups
- To provide the Board with a wide range of knowledge to draw on;
- To informally hold the Board to account

## Terms of Reference

### Proposed Objectives

- To provide vision and strategy for Culture, Heritage and Arts in Reading
- Work in partnership to increase the profile, investment and support of the arts and culture in Reading
- To implement a shared Reading Culture & Heritage Strategy and delivery plan and monitor its delivery
- To encourage excellence in the arts in Reading
- To help influence and support opportunities for community engagement in the arts, particularly among children, young people and those who experience barriers to participation
- To raise Readings reputation and profile for Culture and heritage
- To provide an overview and add value to key Culture and Heritage initiatives and maximise benefits
- To ensure Accountability by producing an annual report to HNL Committee
- To develop Business involvement and establish links to Economic Forum
  - Develop economic forum - theme arts and culture and digital economy importance to place, retaining employees. Quality offer for business to benefit from
- To deliver an Annual Cultural Forum
- To ensure wider demographic representation in cultural activities and work with diverse local groups

### Culture and Heritage strategy

The partnership developed the existing strategy which was published at the end of 2015. The Strategy has headings which overlap and are fairly loose; there is a need to operationalise the strategy and add value. Proposed to revisit strategy - strengths and building blocks.

It is proposed that:

- The strategy is reviewed in 2017 by the revised board and stakeholders
- The draft action plan in place is revisited to ensure focused on themes that are making difference, the arts manifesto is referenced in the action plan
- The standing items (proposed overleaf) are informed by the strategy & action plan, but primarily by the Great Place Scheme

### Potential future agendas & work programme

Focused based around list of achievable objectives, focus on delivery of Great Place Action Plan

Proposed standing items:

- Image
- Communications
- Support to artists
- Funding
- Addressing skills of a strategic nature.
- Reading 2050 vision
- Culture of place - benefits
- Single point of entry information
- Mapping linkages with other fora etc.

