

# Overview & Scrutiny

## Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission

All Members of the Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission are requested to attend the meeting of the Commission to be held as follows

**Thursday 11 February 2021**

**7.00 pm**

**Until further notice, all Council meetings will be held remotely**

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**Tim Shields**

**Chief Executive, London Borough of Hackney**

**Members: Cllr Sharon Patrick (Chair), Cllr Sade Etti (Vice-Chair),  
Cllr Anthony McMahon, Cllr M Can Ozsen, Cllr Ian Rathbone,  
Cllr Penny Wrout and Cllr Anna Lynch**

## Agenda

**ALL MEETINGS ARE OPEN TO THE PUBLIC**

- |   |                        |                 |
|---|------------------------|-----------------|
| 1 | Agenda Papers          | (Pages 5 - 54)  |
| 2 | Minutes of the Meeting | (Pages 55 - 78) |

## Access and Information

### Getting to the Town Hall

For a map of how to find the Town Hall, please visit the council's website <http://www.hackney.gov.uk/contact-us.htm> or contact the Overview and Scrutiny Officer using the details provided on the front cover of this agenda.

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### Further Information about the Commission

If you would like any more information about the Scrutiny Commission, including the membership details, meeting dates and previous reviews, please visit the website or use this QR Code (accessible via phone or tablet 'app')

<http://www.hackney.gov.uk/individual-scrutiny-commissions-living-in-hackney.htm>



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Providing oral commentary during a meeting is not permitted.

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<p><b>Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission</b></p> <p><b>11<sup>th</sup> February 2021</b></p> <p><b>Item 4 – Hackney Library Services</b></p>	<p>Item No</p> <p><b>4</b></p>
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## Outline

The current pandemic (Covid-19) has had a significant impact on the UK, its economy and the daily lives of people. For councils this is likely to have had a direct impact on cost from being in lockdown, on activity planned before the virus outbreak, recovery and the local economy.

Covid-19 has had a huge impact on library services. Libraries not only offer access to books and other reading material but also provide a valuable service to residents in the form of public computer use for those who do not have access to IT services within their home for example to make their benefit claim or look for employment. Not forgetting a quiet place for children to do their homework and access to online facilities outside of school hours.

With concern about the growing digital divide being exacerbated by the pandemic, particularly those digitally excluded, the Commission asked for the Council to provide information about Hackney’s Library services phased re-opening strategy and digital divide. We asked:

1. its approach, response and phased re-opening following Covid-19
2. Online activities and changes to the service provision to make it fit for purpose in the future.
3. As more services and access to services move online what is the council doing to help residents overcome the digital divide?
4. How are council buildings, services and communal spaces being used to support this work?

## Reports in the agenda:

To support this discussion the following report has been provided as background information

- Impact on Library services during Covid-19 pandemic.

## Invited Attendees:

### London Borough of Hackney

- **Cabinet Member for Planning, Culture & Inclusive Economy, Cllr Guy Nicholson**

- **Strategic Director, Engagement, Culture and Organisational Development, Polly Cziok**

**Action**

Members are asked to consider the reports, presentations and ask questions.

# Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission Meeting 11th February 2021

## Impact on Library services during Covid-19 pandemic

### Initial service change

Covid-19 has had a huge impact on library services. During the first lockdown in March 2020, all libraries had to close. The service moved as much of its provision as possible online and ran book groups, storytelling sessions, quizzes and numerous craft activities for children. The e-book and e-audio service was widely promoted and issues went up by 150%. To help promote this service, a wide range of book reviews were also posted. The digital offer also includes access to a wide range of newspapers and magazines. During the summer the library service ran even more online craft activities for children, and ran a series of very popular events during Black History Season starting in October 2020. This included a session on tracing your ancestry with Paul Crooks, who had pioneered research into African-Caribbean genealogy.

The service was able to recommence the home visit service in early summer, delivering library stock to residents who are housebound.

A major impact of the first lockdown was that as the libraries were fully closed, the service could not offer the public computer use which the service knows provides a great benefit for residents who are unable to access any IT provision in their own homes to help with, for example, benefit claims and applying for employment.

A further impact is that the service has received no fees or fines during this time as well as no income from letting out meeting rooms.

### Phased reopening strategy

As the lockdown progressed, the library service developed a 4 phased approach to reopening. The service has a robust set of operating procedures and appropriate risk assessments which have been approved by both the Council's Health and Safety team and Public Health.

**Phase 1** which commenced in July 2020 allowed the service to offer an order and collect service whereby there would be no public access but customers were able to order stock online or by phone and then pick up the stock from library sites. Reduced opening hours were introduced from Tuesday to Saturday from 11-4 at 6 out of 7 library sites (Hackney Central remains closed due to building management issues).

**Phase 2** allows the service to continue with its order and collect service and added controlled public access to the libraries for browsing and borrowing stock and for computer use. The reduced opening hours were extended to 11-6 and this commenced in September 2020.

Then new government restrictions were imposed in December 2020 and browsing had to cease from 21/12/20.

**Phase 3** of the reopening strategy includes providing all services detailed in phase 2 but also includes the service providing limited activities in the library for adults and children plus a return to normal public opening hours

**Phase 4** would be operating a normal service that was provided pre pandemic but with all appropriate additional measures in place. It would be hoped the service would be in this position by the end of 2021.

It was always envisaged that the service may have to move in and out of various stages due to Government restrictions.

The current lockdown regulations allow libraries to be open for order and collect and for public PC use. Due to the severity of the current infection rates, but recognising the need to keep providing a basic service to those residents most in need, the service is currently operating in a very limited capacity. Only two libraries are open (those with the highest recent usage), Dalston CLR James and Stamford Hill, for order and collect and limited essential computer use. These two libraries are open on reduced hours of 11-4 and for two days a week each.

Some staff have been concerned about coming to work in the current infection situation, especially those with longer journeys or who feel more vulnerable. There are also staff who are keen to come into the libraries. The service has undertaken two anonymous surveys to gauge staff opinion and managers have worked closely with staff to ensure that those coming into the buildings feel safe and comfortable doing so. Clearly the current service offer does not require a full complement of staff, and we have been successful in redeploying library staff into a range of priority roles, including telephone contact tracing, business grants administration, cyber attack recovery, and electoral services.

### **Addressing the digital divide to ensure residents who are digitally excluded can get access to support and services**

At present the service has two libraries open - Dalston CLR James and Stamford Hill - for two days a week each and they are both providing computers for residents to access. This service has proved very popular and indicates the need there is in the community for it. Library staff are doing all they can to help customers using the computers but due to social distancing rules, they are unable at present to provide the 1:1 help they would normally be able to. That said they can still make sure customers are able to log on to the equipment and there are printed guidelines provided on how to access various websites. Staff are always available to give customers any information they may need to access particular sites. Once the service can offer its 1:1 computer coaching provision again staff will be able to provide the excellent service it had previously.

The service provides the customers with all the cleaning materials they need to clean the keyboards and mice between use as well as plastic covers over the keyboards which ensures they are even safer to use.



### **Future of the library service**

Councils have a statutory duty to provide a library service as set out in the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 which states that libraries are 'to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons'. The main requirement is that the service encourages both adults and children to make full use of the library service and lend books and other printed materials free of charge for those who live, work or study in the area. Other than this there is no definition in the act as to what constitutes 'a comprehensive and efficient service'. The general view is that it is a service which meets local needs and provides equal access in the context of available resources.

It is important that the service learns from what has happened during the pandemic and it is vital that the service continues with its digital presence which has proved so popular. During the pandemic the service has managed to update its computer hardware which has future proofed this service as well as refurbishing two libraries - Clapton and Shoreditch - to make them more appealing to customers.

The Council is set to embark on a full service review of the library service at the beginning of the new financial year. A 12 month project, this will lead to the production of a Library Strategy to ensure that the service is meeting the needs of residents, is maximising the use of its assets, and is fit for purpose for the next decade. The project will include a full review of existing service usage data, both pre pandemic and during the last year, a staff engagement exercise to hear ideas from across service, a major public and stakeholder engagement programme, and best practice learning from other authorities. The strategy will also include a timetable for planned capital investment in the libraries.

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<b>Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission</b> <b>11<sup>th</sup> February 2021</b> <b>Item 5 – Hackney Arts and Culture Services</b>	Item No <b>5</b>
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## Outline

### Hackney Carnival

A previous discussion about Hackney Carnival by Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission provided some challenge about the inclusivity of the event to all members of the community. This discussion is to provide an update on how the Council addressed the concerns raised about inclusivity. The Commission asked for:

1. An update on how the Council provided opportunities for more members of the community in Hackney to access and participate in the Carnival.
2. Following the impact of the pandemic and move of the Hackney Carnival to the virtual environment. The Commission asked the following:
  - a. The success (pros and cons) of the virtual carnival and measures of success
  - b. The numbers who participated in the virtual carnival this year.
  - c. In preparation for next year's carnival how will the virtual carnival work be capitalised on?
  - d. Confirm if the Council is still planning a live event.

### Arts and Culture Services

The current pandemic (Covid-19) has had a significant impact on the UK, its economy and the daily lives of people. For councils this is likely to have had a direct impact on cost from being in lockdown, on activity planned before the virus outbreak, recovery and the local economy.

Hackney is known for its diversity which is shown in its arts and culture sector. The 3 lockdowns have had a significant impact on the operation of arts and culture in the borough. The sector started to use a mix of income streams to support the sector which provided an element of resilience pre-covid but has made them very vulnerable to the impact of the pandemic.

The Commission asked for the Council to provide information about:

1. the impact of Covid-19 on the arts and culture
2. the recovery plans for arts and culture in the borough.

### **Digital Divide**

With concern about library and culture services and the growing digital divide being exacerbated by the pandemic. The Commission asked for the Council to provide information about:

1. The impact of Covid-19 on services and how the service areas are addressing the digital divide to ensure the residents who are digitally excluded can get access to support and services.

### **Reports in the agenda:**

To support this discussion the following reports have been provided as background information.

1. Hackney Carnival
2. Impact of Covid 19 and Recovery Plan for Culture
3. Impact of Covid-19 on Cultural Services and the digital divide.

### **Invited Attendees:**

#### **London Borough of Hackney**

- **Cabinet Member for Planning, Culture & Inclusive Economy, Cllr**  
Guy Nicholson
- **Strategic Director, Engagement, Culture and Organisational Development, Polly Cziok**
- **Cultural Development Manager, Lucy McMenemy.**

### **Action**

Members are asked to consider the reports, presentations and ask questions.



## Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission, 11 February 2021

**Item one: Hackney Carnival** prepared by Lucy McMenemy, Cultural Development Manager, 22 January 2021.

**1) An update on how the Council addressed the LiH challenge to be more inclusive - providing opportunity and access to more members of the community in Hackney to participate in the Carnival.**

In the context of the Coronavirus pandemic, planning for an outdoor, open access Hackney Carnival in September 2020 was wound up in March 2020 and the live event was cancelled.

The council facilitated an alternative, digital programme of carnival activity throughout the summer of 2020 (see 2 below).

However, prior to the pandemic stopping the planning process, a series of exploratory meetings were held in person in February 2020 with the groups / organisations in the table below, to explore a range of opportunities for the community to participate in a live carnival event in 2020:

Group / organisation	Taken part before?	Initial ideas for participation
<a href="#">Community Groups</a>		
Regent Estate TRA	No	Opportunities for individuals to join existing groups / estate decor project
St Michael's London Fields	No	Over 55s knitting group engaging in decor project
New Unity Church	No	Engagement of organisations in the Newington Green Alliance
Dalston Eastern Curve Garden	No	Community workshops to create decor for Hackney Central
Cordwainers Grow	No	Community workshops to create decor for Hackney Central
Daymer	No	Potential Saz recitals on live stage
<a href="#">Council Services</a>		

Resident Participation Officers	No	An officer-led initiative could develop, to support the creation of a TRA float, involving representatives of all TRAs across Hackney
Employment and Skills team (accompanied by A New Direction)	No	Explore potential event management student placements  Insert a requirement to train / employ locally into certain tenders  Offer discount stalls for young entrepreneurs
Hackney Museum	No	Provide intergenerational activity in play areas, e.g. museum object handling.  Involve Active UK participants in the judging point showcase
Sport and Physical Activity Team	No	Explore interest of Young Sports Photojournalists in documenting the event
Business Relations	Yes	Continue to liaise with local businesses to enable them to take advantage of the trading opportunity, or to develop creative contributions
Young Hackney	No	Could potentially display artwork produced by young people.
Ageing Well (Policy)	No	Provide Ageing Well with a stall at the event / involve older people in volunteering / invite more elders groups to take part / commission Intergenerational activity in family areas e.g. older people mixing with younger, through organised cultural activity
Libraries	No	Explore working with an existing writing group e.g. Takeaway Stories - short stories could be distributed at carnival.
<a href="#">Schools</a>		
Morningside School Primary School and Children's Centre	Yes	Work in partnership with a carnival group to create costumes, develop choreography and appear as part of the procession

<b>Consultancies</b>		
Attitude is Everything	No	Review physical access for artists at the event, develop action plan, assessment of the event on the day, disability equality training for key staff and volunteers
<b>Existing carnival partners</b>		
18 Hackney-based carnival groups	Yes	Groups proposed ways in which individual residents can get involved in carnival group activities, along with the hundreds of Hackney young people that they already engage, e.g. steel pan workshops, leading to participation with Pantonic Steel Orchestra / dance workshops leading to participation with various carnival groups
Hackney Church	Yes	Involvement of residents who are accessing the church's community programme

Meetings were also planned with the following groups but were cancelled due to the pandemic:

<b>Group / organisation</b>	<b>Taken part before?</b>	<b>Initial ideas for participation</b>
St Pauls with St Michael's Primary School	No	Work in partnership with a carnival group to create costumes, develop choreography and appear as part of the procession
Access All Areas	Yes	Continued involvement of Black Cab members in the judging area showcase
Compassionate Neighbours	Yes	Hosting further 'Carnival Elders' art workshops for over 55s
Uprising (Elders)	Yes	Hosting further 'Carnival Elders' art workshops for over 55s
Hackney Caribbean Elders	Yes	Hosting further 'Carnival Elders' art workshops for over 55s

The 'initial ideas' outlined in the table above were the starting point for further discussions about the carnival's community engagement programme in 2020. Some of the proposed activities would have required significant investment; a selection of initiatives were to be

developed into a bid for investment from Arts Council England, but this fundraising was put on hold when the pandemic started.

In addition to the above meetings, a number of groups representing Turkish and migrant communities were contacted to explore potential partnerships / opportunities to work together on the carnival, without success at the time. Contact with these groups can be attempted again in the future.

**2) Following the impact of the pandemic and move of the Hackney Carnival to the virtual environment, the Commission wants to explore the following:**

**a) the success (pros and cons) of the virtual carnival and measures of success**

i) In order to measure the success of the programme, the following evaluation framework was created, as below.

Evaluation framework

<b>Aim</b>	<b>Measure of success</b>	<b>Evidence</b>	<b>Method / source</b>
Support Hackney's carnival groups to develop new digital skills	i) At least 50% of the borough's 18 carnival groups take part in the online programme  ii) Groups learn new digital skills  iii) 9 films produced	Number of groups taking part  Number of training sessions, on-going digital production support and qualitative feedback from the groups  Number of films uploaded onto Facebook	Head count of groups  Survey of participating groups  Count of the films
Support Hackney's carnival groups to develop a more significant online presence	i) At least 10,000 people watch the films  ii) The carnival groups' digital work is well received	Number of views online  Positive feedback about the online films	Facebook analytics  Comments online from audience



	iii) Positive reporting by journalists	Press coverage in local press and relevant press e.g. The Voice	Review of press coverage
Facilitate the carnival groups to play an active role in supporting the wellbeing of Hackney's residents during and after the lockdown, through the creation of online, entry-level carnival activities to do at home	i) The carnival groups' 'how to' demonstrations are accessed by local families and residents, and support them in staying engaged and entertained during the lockdown	Positive feedback from audiences about the films and their impact	Comments / quotes online
Create an archive of Hackney Carnival in 2020, documenting the artists, cultures and carnival artforms, as well as aspirations for the carnival amongst the participating groups	i) Films made by carnival groups (see above) that reflect the artforms involved in 2020  ii) Reflections collected from the carnival groups aspirations collected and some form of record created	A range of films are created that show the diversity of carnival arts in Hackney in 2020  Some form of record of the groups' perspective and aspirations for their work and Hackney Carnival in 2020	Archived material, accessible via Hackney website
Start preparations for Hackney Carnival 2021	i) All 18 carnival groups continue to have access to funding to enable them to start making plans for 2021, despite the constraints of the lockdown	Number of small grants allocated to enable groups to make preparations	Count of contracts with carnival groups

## ii) Pros and cons of the online carnival

A full evaluation report for the online carnival in 2020 can be found here:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1BiN-zBtZdyCEqk9v9H0qt7F2oOpD3rtLGTV1U0O9mvw/edit#>

## A summary of the successes of the programme

In summary, the successes of the programme were as follows:

### Training and Digital outputs

- Two online training sessions with Arts Council England's Digital Culture Network were held and access to associated resources was arranged for participating carnival groups. Further, on-going production support was available from Globalcarnivalz on a 1:1 basis, as and when needed by the carnival groups.
- From June- September, Hackney Carnival at Home uploaded 21 videos by the carnival groups to the Hackney Carnival Facebook page, featuring a wide range of carnival artforms, from arts and crafts tutorials to Soca music workouts.  
<https://www.lovehackney.uk/carnival>
- A short film about the health and wellbeing benefits of the carnival was created, featuring Mayor of Hackney Phillip Glanville and other key partners in the community, made by Dogleap films and curated by Marva Antoine from Tropical Isles carnival group. <https://www.lovehackney.uk/carnival>
- The Hackney Carnival at Home 'Weekender' was broadcast via Reel Rebels Radio on 12 September, and on the Hackney Carnival Facebook page on 13 September - the Sunday when the event would have taken place. The Weekender was curated by Pax Nindi and marked the climactic finale to the summer-long season of carnival films. It also featured carnival sound systems, films from past processions, music videos of artists who have performed on the carnival live stage and live interaction with the audience facilitated by Pax Nindi.  
<https://www.facebook.com/hackneycarnival/>
- A mentorship opportunity, created for a young person interested in digital content production, to lead on the Carnival Dance Challenge. This was developed in association with Hackney Young Futures Commission. Nick Hensman successfully applied for the role and he worked closely with Pax Nindi to promote the dance challenge, coordinate the submission process and present the shortlisted submissions as part of the Weekender event.  
<https://www.facebook.com/hackneycarnival/>
- Co-curators Deb Mullins and Manuela Benini created a new archive for Hackney Carnival on Lovehackney.com called Spirit of Hackney Carnival. They carried out research that delves into the artistry and origins of carnival and features exclusive insights from designers, musicians and choreographers.  
<https://www.lovehackney.uk/spirit-of-hackney-carnival>

## Aims met

### **The programme supported Hackney's carnival groups to develop new digital skills**

The programme created the opportunity for 13 of the borough's 18 carnival groups to learn how to present their work online. The groups attended training and created a total of 21 films from home, using the phones on their mobile phones. The groups recognise the value of this initial step into developing an online presence.

### **The programme supported Hackney's carnival groups to develop a more significant online presence**

The programme created the 'Hackney Carnival at Home' platform for the groups' work during 2020 on the Hackney Carnival Facebook page and the Love Hackney website.

Many groups pointed out that the online carnival was not the same as the real event, but that the project had created a valuable new platform that they wanted to continue to engage with.

A high point for the programme was the Virtual Carnival Weekender live stream, which was very popular with audiences and carnival groups alike and was identified as a 'must do again' element to build on for 2021 and beyond.

Carnival artists told us:

*"The programme gave us the opportunity to further develop our online outreach and provided a platform for our fellow artists and performers to create the nearest thing to physical carnival."*

*"(It's) opened doors for digital creativity, which may be the way forward in the future."*

*"It gave us the opportunity to present our behind the scene activities and preparations and has inspired us to continue documenting our group and developing this valuable new platform."*

*"(The online carnival) helped us to keep engaged and a live part of something we love."*

### **The programme facilitated the carnival groups to play an active role in supporting the wellbeing of Hackney's residents during and after the lockdown, through the creation of online, entry-level carnival activities to do at home**

There was positive feedback about the programme from audiences, indicating wellbeing outcomes for many people, from the 'how to' demonstration videos, the Carnival Dance Challenge and the Virtual Carnival Weekender live stream.

Facebook comments on the weekly posts of carnival group videos included the following:

- *"Yes Hackney, show the way!" (Hull International Carnival)*

- *“I love these posts, so full of life and people doing creative things together. Also rooted in real culture and real response to life.”*
- *“Culture is beautiful, thank you for sharing.”*
- *“Just lovely, so uplifting, Woi!”*

Facebook comments on the ‘how to’ demonstration videos received the following feedback:

- *“This is another way to get ready with the family, so educational and easy for the children to do while they are at home.”*
- *“Thank you for showing us how to recycle your costume and look forward to seeing your collection in Hackney Carnival 2021.”*
- *“Congratulations on your costume demonstration, it’s so inspiring, keep the traditions alive.”*

Facebook comments about the Virtual Carnival Day included the following:

*“Thank you many beautiful souls for bringing this glorious day of celebration to us across the globe.”*

*“The mood was PERFECT”*

*“What a special day it was. Much love to Pax and the rest of the Hackney Carnival family.”*

Carnival groups also appreciated the Virtual Carnival Day:

*“Go Hackney Carnival!!!! Jun Mo Generation will forever be a part and support the beautiful annual event, sharing our cultural heritage with each other!!! All the best to all carnival mas bands! You guys and gals are awesome!!!”*

**The programme created an archive of Hackney Carnival in 2020, documenting the artists, cultures and carnival artforms, as well as aspirations for the carnival amongst the participating groups**

The films created by the carnival groups collectively created a digital snapshot of Hackney Carnival’s artists and cultural traditions in 2020.

In addition, a new archive about Hackney Carnival was created for the Love Hackney website called the Spirit of Hackney Carnival. This is a focused piece of written research into the heritage and meaning of the Hackney Carnival, and it is rated highly by the carnival groups.

## **The programme facilitated the groups in starting to prepare for Hackney Carnival 2021**

17 of the 18 carnival groups have successfully applied for the Council's annual carnival commission funding, despite the constraints of the lockdown, to enable them to start making plans for 2021.

Activities applied for included creating Covid-safe workspaces, online workshops with participants, developing further digital capacity and researching carnival themes for 2021.

### **An additional success: a mentorship opportunity for a young person**

A local young person completed a mentorship in digital content production, and successfully oversaw the delivery of the Carnival Dance Challenge (see above). The mentorship was devised in association with Hackney Young Futures and there are plans to create another, similar opportunity in the future, where possible.

### A summary of aspects of the programme that could be improved upon

The online carnival was less successful in the following areas:

- Audiences and participants told us 'it was not the same' as a live carnival event (but those who expressed this also praised the team for their efforts in creating the online programme)
- The online programme didn't accommodate the significant community engagement plans originally planned for the live carnival, due to limited capacity during the first lockdown to rethink the delivery of those projects and recreate them digitally for socially distanced participants. Now community groups and the council are in a better position to explore how to deliver online community engagement, and elements of this work can be reincorporated into carnival 2021.
- Many of the participating carnival groups had no previous experience of making films or digital content. The programme demanded a lot from them in terms of producing digital films whilst at home during the first lockdown, using mobile phone cameras and, inevitably, this impacted on the quality of the films produced. The narrative around the 2020 programme embraced the 'homemade' quality of the content, but in the future it would be beneficial to shift gear and commission complementary, professional documentation of the Hackney Carnival as well.
- The launch of the Carnival Dance Challenge was relatively late in the summer, just three weeks before the Virtual Carnival day. This left little time to recruit applicants. Feedback indicated that a longer lead in time would have led to more people (and more adults) taking part.
- The Spirit of Hackney Carnival was completed at the same time as the Weekender event was being promoted, leading to it being slightly overshadowed. There is still potential to further develop and promote the project.

- Facebook and Love Hackney were the online platforms used for the carnival in 2020, but these were relatively restrictive in terms of how the content was presented and accessed. Furthermore, several people reported that Facebook was perceived to be a barrier to access for those without Facebook accounts. In the future, in addition to social media platforms, a new, bespoke and accessible website dedicated to the Hackney Carnival is required. The website should become the on-going archive for all things carnival, and should adequately reflect the experience of attending the carnival, allowing online visitors to interact with and engage in the many different facets of the carnival in a creative and enjoyable way.
- The wellbeing impact of the online carnival was relatively under-evaluated and an online audience survey would have been useful.

#### **b) The numbers who participated in the virtual carnival this year?**

Unless otherwise stated, all figures below relate to audiences on the Hackney Carnival Facebook page.

The 21 short films created by the carnival groups attracted a combined audience of:

- **38,965 views**
- **4,450 engagements (likes, comments and tagging)**
- **784 shares**

The Hackney Carnival at Home Weekender was accessed via two different platforms and had a very different impact on each day.

On Saturday 12 September from 12pm-8pm, the Sound System day on Reel Rebels Radio attracted:

- **372 listeners**
- **298 unique listeners**
- **Listeners from 25 unique countries**
- **76% of listeners were in the UK**
- **75% of UK listeners were London based**

On Sunday 13 September, the Virtual Carnival livestream on Hackney Carnival Facebook page attracted:

- **22,340 viewers**
- **3,708 engagements (likes, comments, shares and tagging)**

The Carnival Dance Challenge promotional posts attracted the following audience:

- **6,056 viewers**
- **765 engagements (likes, comments and tagging)**
- **31 shares**

The Hackney Carnival health and wellbeing video attracted the following audience:

- **2,004 viewers**
- **255 engagements**

It should be noted that the 3,708 engagements (likes, comments, shares and tagging) during the Virtual Carnival livestream was a remarkably high number to accumulate within eight hours and represents a particular success in creating a sense of community during the event.

In addition to the above data from Facebook and Reel Rebels Radio the Hackney Carnival pages of the Love Hackney website attracted **1,737** views and **1,303** unique viewers. These figures reflect the fact that all of our publicity directed viewers to the Hackney Carnival Facebook page instead of the Love Hackney website.

The Hackney Carnival at Home project also attracted press / media coverage in the following publications:

- The Voice
- Hackney Gazette
- Made In Shoreditch
- Hackney Life
- Hackney Magazine
- Globalcarnivalz.co.uk

**c) In preparation for next year's carnival how will the work to bring a virtual carnival be capitalised?**

The Cultural Development Team is currently planning:

- To develop a new, bespoke website for the Hackney Carnival, to complement the existing exposure via social media posts. The website will be unique and will reflect the experience of attending and interacting with the live, multi-venue carnival event held in the past. Discussions are being held with potential website developers.
- To maintain the online presence of the carnival groups throughout 2021/22, to keep their work being seen and enjoyed by Hackney residents and others further afield. Consultation sessions will be held with carnival groups about the ways in which their work and its meaning can be best presented online, with the support of a professional digital production crew.
- To devise a wide-reaching, covid-safe online community engagement programme for 2021, comprising a variety of ways in which community groups and online audiences can take part. e.g the Carnival Dance Challenge can be developed as part of this.
- To continue the development of both written and visual content for a Hackney Carnival archive, that focuses on aspects of carnival that may not be fully comprehended at a live event, e.g. the meaning of the groups' themes, detailed accounts of the heritage each group represents.

- To create further opportunities for a young person / people to develop new skills in digital content production, in association with Young Hackney Futures.
- To explore potential partnerships with local businesses who may want to support the online programme.
- To continue the annual commissioning programme for the carnival groups, to enable them to sustain their practices during 2021-22.

**d) Confirm if the Council will still do a live event.**

The panel will be updated about this at the Scrutiny panel meeting on 11 February.



## Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission, 11 February 2021

**Item four: Covid 19 Impact and Recovery Plan for Culture** prepared by Lucy McMenemy, Cultural Development Manager, 25 January 2021.

### 1. The impact of Covid-19 on the arts and culture

#### 1.1 Understanding the impact

In order to understand the impact of the pandemic on the borough's arts and cultural organisations and to inform support from the Council, the Cultural Development Team has been in ongoing dialogue with the sector as follows:

- An online survey was carried out with the sector in April 2020 to understand the impact of the first lockdown. Report here:  
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1VuabvW48ilWFri3HHstytxqmwNvaSG0/edit#>
- A follow up, online meeting was convened in May 2020 for all cultural orgs, Mayor Glanville and Cllr Nicholson, to explore how the council can help. The questions and answers that were later addressed as a result of that session are shared here:  
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/16PelPOtXgGruRA5uUv9RXOW1JAQfeUi6/edit>
- An online meeting was convened for cultural organisations working with children and young people, to identify the risks and opportunities. The report is shared here:  
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1ez378R8onpBTYeiY1mCiYmB3a8-NhCrm/edit>
- A range of existing and new cultural business forums have provided feedback and the opportunity to discuss constructive approaches to the crisis, engaging more than 220 representatives:
  - Discover Young Hackney network (working with children and young people)
  - Hackney Carnival Network
  - Theatre venues and cinemas
  - Heritage and visual arts organisations
  - Music venues
  - Black, Asian and ethnically diverse groups
- Monthly, online check-ins continue to be held with three groups of cultural venues particularly affected due to a) having business models based on filling large auditoria and/or b) loss of venue hire income:
  - Theatres & cinemas
  - Music venues
  - Heritage and visual arts organisations

## 1.2 Key learnings from the above dialogue

### 1.2.1 Impact of the first lockdown

It should be noted that in recent years most UK cultural venues have made a shift away from relying mainly on subsidy from arts funders and have developed additional, new earned income streams through bars, venue hires, workspace leases etc. This mixed income approach made UK cultural organisations very resilient pre-covid, but very vulnerable to the impact of the pandemic.

In brief, the following impacts were recorded in the Culture Team's survey carried out in April 2020 and from feedback at online meetings:

- Most organisations reported a loss of income, by 50-100%, through a combination of:
  - Freezing / withdrawal of grants from funders
  - Loss of earned income e.g tickets sales, space hire, hospitality
- Within this financial context cultural venues told us that they:
  - paid back client deposits
  - gave refunds on ticket sales
  - paid artists and companies they work with, despite the cancellations
  - reduced rent to tenanted office spaces
- Organisations in council premises were able to discuss rent deferrals. Others renting from private landlords reported a lack of such support or understanding.
- In the context of losing all earned income, organisations with existing funding agreements with public funding bodies such as Arts Council England sought to repurpose their grants to support their new cashflow requirements.
- Various organisations reported falling outside the criteria for the first round of government funding due to not paying business rates / the high rateable value of their premises / being a micro business located in shared workspaces / being in receipt of charities' rate relief.
- Whilst the job retention scheme protected many jobs in the sector (and continues to do so), the impact on work for artists and other freelancers has been severe, as in many cases their paid work has entirely stopped. (1 in 10 jobs in Hackney are in the cultural and creative industries.)
- The response from the insurance industry regarding Covid-related public safety in venues has raised questions and uncertainty.
- Many organisations reported concern about losing contact with participants / audiences and the potential effect that would have on the wellbeing of young people / older people, digital exclusion and the end of apprenticeship opportunities were also reported as serious causes for concern.

Early on in the pandemic, Arts Council England (ACE) very quickly set up a series of new Emergency Funding rounds for arts and cultural organisations, and individuals.

Many Hackney organisations survived the first phase of the pandemic thanks to a combination of this emergency funding from ACE, emergency government grants administered by LBH, crowdfunding campaigns and the use of their own reserves.

Some cultural venues also created alternative income streams where possible such as opening for off-sales, using their venues as a bike store, food market etc.

At this point, the Council lobbied the government through the Parliamentary Inquiry into the impact of Covid on the DCMS sector on a range of points including:

- Extension of the Job Retention Scheme for cultural organisations until social distancing is fully relaxed.
- Removal of the payment of business rates as eligibility criteria for the then forthcoming 'Top Up' grants for businesses.
- Expansion of the Arts Council England-led Emergency Fund to a forward-looking Sector Support Fund to support the development of organisational business models, enhancing business and sector resilience, investing into the infrastructure needed to enable new ways of connecting with audiences.
- Provision of guidance and resources on developing new business models, business continuity planning and organisational development to support future resilience.
- Provision of guidance on re-opening after the lockdown that gives businesses and the public the assurances they need.
- Expansion of the reach and capacity of Arts Council England's Digital Culture Network to support, enable and advise the increase in organisations now shifting to online programming.

### 1.2.2 Cultural Recovery Fund

The government's investment of £1.57bn into the arts and cultural sector and the extension of the Job Retention Scheme and ban on evictions has temporarily alleviated the devastating financial impact of the crisis for a significant part of the sector in Hackney.

The Cultural Recovery Fund (CRF), administered by Arts Council England / British Film Institute / Heritage Lottery Fund, was launched to enable cultural organisations affected by the Covid-19 crisis to stay afloat, providing them with support over a 6-month period, with a view to them reopening or operating on a sustainable, cost-efficient basis by 31 March 2021.

The first Round of the Cultural Recovery Fund attracted a total of £11,982,234 to 68 of Hackney's arts and cultural organisations. This is a very good result for Hackney,

representing the fifth highest level of investment in a London borough, after Westminster, Camden, Islington and Lambeth.

A second round of Cultural Recovery Fund was launched in December and applications are currently being assessed. The second round aims to support organisations as they transition back to a viable and sustainable operating model during April-June 2021.

Cultural organisations are currently telling us that whilst the Cultural Recovery Funding has prevented imminent closure, their concerns are about a financial cliff edge forming in July 2021, when the CRF and other emergency funding will end.

### 1.2.3 Reopening and re-closing venues

As the first lockdown restrictions eased, and when the first payments from the Cultural Recovery Fund started to be received, Hackney's venues were keen to reopen to focus on programming, keeping staff employed and getting artists back into venues.

The planning process for the reopening was complex, with many considerations to take into account to ensure that staff and audiences were covid-safe.

Those venues that did temporarily reopen in between lockdowns reported the following:

- Severely reduced audience capacities due to social distancing measures, particularly venues with large auditoriums. For example, a music venue reported opening at 12.5% capacity and two cinemas reported reopening at 30% - 32% capacity.
- Some venues held two performances per night to mitigate the reduced capacity.
- The 10pm curfew affected bar sales, but venues tended to start performances earlier in the evenings to mitigate that.
- Organisations that managed to reopen still financially struggled, perhaps more so than when they were shut due to overhead costs but very little income (due to having to operate at less than half capacity).
- Cinemas, theatres and music venues reported that audiences had been responding very well, and that screenings / performances had sold out.
- There was concern about the lack of new film offerings / performances being put forward by the relevant industries and no international tours taking place i.e. not enough new work being available to draw audiences in.
- There were some vacancies in workspaces as creative industry businesses who usually hire them were also financially impacted.

Feedback about further closures was as follows:

- Closing again was particularly painful as business was just starting to pick back up before the second lockdown.
- Some organisations continued to open for tenants and daytime tv and film screening, rehearsals and recordings, providing a vital income stream.
- Young peoples' activities were continued where possible, mostly online but some delivered face to face for the most vulnerable.

- The continuous changes in Covid restrictions has played havoc with attempts to programme any live activity; most organisations are digitising their cultural programmes.
- Alternative covid-safe income streams continue to be developed e.g. merch sales and developing take-away services
- Organisations remain optimistic that audiences will return once restrictions are lifted and are keen to get support from the council in developing a 'hyper local' publicity campaign for new programmes of live events in 2021.
- Organisations are concerned about future scrutiny from neighbours, after an extended 'quiet' period; neighbours may object to the return to normal operations.

#### 1.2.4 Innovative ways of reaching audiences and staying connected

With the challenges faced by cultural venues, the sector has explored new avenues for staying connected with audiences, employing artists and creating platforms for their participants. Many have successfully transitioned to an online offering or created alternative platforms as follows:

- Music venues: live stream events

Several of Hackney's music venues are now streaming regular, ticketed live gigs. This has kept audiences engaged and provided work for musicians but it is yet to be established if paywalls for this kind of content can make a significant contribution to the income of small organisations. Buying the relevant equipment has been a long term investment for the venues.

- Arcola Theatre: Arcola Outside

The Arcola Theatre has created 'Arcola Outside', a new outdoor performance space and bar on a site near the theatre's main building on Ashwin Street. When Covid restrictions allow, the Arcola Outside will enable the theatre to welcome audiences back, and to create new opportunities for freelance artists and workers. It will be a flexible, multi-purpose space, able to host live performances, screenings, installations and more.

- Immediate Theatre: Hackney Social Radio

Hackney Social Radio was created in April 2020 to address digital isolation amongst older people, "creating a sense of community through the airwaves". Programmes are broadcast weekly on [Resonance 104.4FM](#), making it accessible for those without a digital device. Every Wednesday, programmes feature music requests, audience phone-ins, stories from the community, features from local artists, interviews and advice from experts, with regular up-to-date information about where to access help and support.

- Access All Areas: Still Here

Still Here was a six week, outdoor audio exhibition across Hackney. Through the use of QR codes, audiences were invited to hear learning disabled and autistic artists share their experiences of lockdown, and their hopes for the 'new normal'. The exhibition was located

on the streets of Hackney, launching on the day when the live Hackney Carnival would have taken place.

## **2) Recovery Plan for arts and culture in the borough**

### **2.1 Existing support from the council**

Many council services have directly supported the borough's arts and cultural organisations to survive the challenges caused by the pandemic, including Regeneration, Property, Environmental Health, Licensing, Employment and Skills and Cultural Development.

Collectively, these services have:

- Shared information by
  - holding the regular meetings with the sector outlined in 1 above, and the Hackney Wick Fish Island CEZ studio providers, where challenges were discussed with Culture, Regeneration, Business and Regulatory Services
  - providing weekly, up to date information about government grants and other support to business in the Hackney Business Newsletter
  - sharing a weekly 'Cultural Update' email with 296 organisations in Hackney which includes details of sector-specific funding support and opportunities on a local, regional and national level
- Supported access to funding by:
  - administering the many rounds of government funding for all kinds of businesses, including arts and cultural organisations and freelancers
  - organising funding advice sessions by ACE on Project Grants and Developing Your Creative Practice funding programmes
  - writing letters of support for ACE and BFI Cultural Recovery Fund applicants, to endorse their applications in the context of the Arts and Cultural Strategy.
  - maintaining contact with ACE throughout the pandemic, sharing our findings and advising on the needs of the sector in Hackney
  - launching the Wick Together cultural commissioning fund for creative freelancers in the Hackney Wick / Fish Island CEZ
  - allocating funding from the second round of the Shoreditch and Hoxton Art Fund to projects that will support the wellbeing of local residents by engaging them in cultural activities
- Supported the cultural infrastructure by:
  - supporting venues with rent referrals where necessary
  - engaging with private landlords and highlighting the importance of supporting venues and studios where necessary
  - connecting venues with the GLA's Culture at Risk office, which has assisted in negotiations with landlords
- Supported the reopening process by:
  - inviting guest speakers to share best practice in reopening workplaces

- advising on how to interpret government and local guidelines on the restrictions for licensed venues
- giving practical advice on how licensed venues can reopen safely, including visits by regulatory services
- promoting venues through the Love Hackney Shop Local campaign
- Supported the creation of training opportunities for young people by
  - advising on how the cultural sector can get involved in the government's Kickstart Apprentice Scheme, in partnership with the Council, facilitating participation in the council's consortium application
- Supported the development of new online programmes of cultural activity by
  - organising online training sessions with Arts Council England's Digital Culture Network
- Supported heritage and visual arts organisations to reconnect with Hackney schools by
  - organising an online meeting with teachers to explore best ways to sustain access to Hackney's rich cultural offer in schools
  - collating and sharing details of creative opportunities (online workshops, online studio visits etc) with schools

## **2.2 Development of support for the arts and cultural sector**

### **2.2.1 Funding**

The sector will be supported to access further funding through the following actions:

- the creation of a new council commissioning fund for arts and cultural projects that facilitate community engagement, using Neighbourhood CIL funds. Organisations have advised the council that they would value having funding to experiment and to find new ways of working.
- the administration of further rounds of government funding for businesses
- the on-going promotion of funding opportunities for the sector
- keeping ACE informed about the concerns of the sector regarding the end of the CRF funding in June 2021

### **2.2.2 Advice and support for the NTE**

In addition to the existing communication channels established with the sector (Business Newsletter, Cultural Update emails, monthly meetings etc), a new channel will be created:

- Hackney Nights is a new, online portal for licensed venues. The portal will serve as a hub for information and help to connect licensed venues to Hackney services, especially during the current crisis, and prepare everyone for the recovery phase. The portal will also promote online events, webinars, networking meetings, best practice and Covid 19 related advice.

### 2.2.3 Promotion of cultural activity in the NTE

As part of the existing Love Hackney Shop Local campaign, the council plans to help promote those venues that play a role in Hackney's night time economy:

- A specific Love Hackney Shop Local guide will be created to promote the cultural offers of Hackney's theatres, cinemas, music venues, and any other cultural organisations that attract audiences to Hackney's exciting nightlife. The guide is ready to launch as soon as Covid restrictions allow venues to reopen.

### 2.2.4 Development opportunities through a new Arts and Health Network

The council is preparing to establish a new Arts and Health Network to capitalise upon and coordinate some of the excellent work that the sector already delivers to support local resident's health and wellbeing. The network will focus on the following:

- Social prescribing
- Older residents and the negative effects of isolation
- Mental health in children and young people

### 2.2.5 A review of properties in the borough

The impact of Covid 19 on levels of empty commercial properties in the borough prompts the need for a conversation about any opportunities this could create for the arts and cultural sector. This conversation is yet to take place within the council.

### 2.2.6 Continued delivery of council-led cultural initiatives

The following, annual cultural initiatives / festivals that commission and showcase the work of local arts and cultural organisations continued in alternative formats in 2020, providing on-going support to the sector. They will continue to do the same in 2021:

- Hackney Carnival
- Windrush Festival
- Black History Month
- Discover Young Hackney
- Hackney Circle (for residents aged 55+)





## Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission, 11 February 2021

### Item : Impact of Covid-19 on Cultural Services and the digital divide

prepared by Lucy McMenemy, Cultural Development Manager, 25 January 2021.

#### 1. The impact of Covid-19 on the Council's Cultural Services

##### 1.1 Cultural Development Team

The work of the Cultural Development Team is underpinned by the Arts and Cultural Strategy 2019-2022.

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/12p5tTwJwr7EH\\_7Q9EwO0\\_P8GuzWkpA/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/12p5tTwJwr7EH_7Q9EwO0_P8GuzWkpA/view?usp=sharing)

The strategy is currently being reviewed in light of the pandemic, to consider the ongoing relevance of the objectives and how they are delivered. Whilst there may be few changes to the strategy's objectives, it is expected that a wholesale review of delivery methods will be needed to make them Covid-safe. All changes will be published as an Appendix to the main document before the end of March 2021.

##### 1.2 Facilitation of on-going dialogue with the sector

A key function of the team at this time has been its ongoing liaison with the arts and cultural sector, which has been very adversely affected by the pandemic. The team has facilitated support from a range of council services, supported their efforts to fundraise and advocated on their behalf to the government for more support.

(See the paper on **Covid 19 Impact and Recovery Plan for Culture** for further details.)

It is anticipated that the various cultural business forums that have been initiated as a result of the pandemic will become lasting assets in terms of our strategic partnership working with the sector.

##### 1.3 Online delivery of existing annual programmes

The Cultural Development Team delivers an annual programme of inclusive and relevant cultural activities designed to deliver community cohesion, educational opportunities, employment opportunities and health and wellbeing initiatives - the five themes in the Arts and Cultural Strategy.

During 2020, we aimed to keep as many of these activities going as possible, in new, mainly online formats, with the aim of connecting communities and mitigating the loss of significant cultural events. The following initiatives took place:

### 1.3.1 Discover Young Hackney, youth arts festival

This is a year-round programme of cultural activities delivered for and by young people aged 11 - 24. Every year, a wide range of arts and cultural organisations are commissioned to create accessible and exciting opportunities for young people to engage in culture, and to highlight pathways to further training and employment.

In 2020 the programme was delivered through a combination of online and face to face activity, when allowed. Forthcoming highlights include the Alter Ego talent show, hosted by Hackney Empire, and a 'Digital Mural' project involving a series of projections in the Hackney Central area.

### 1.3.2 Windrush Generations Festival

The Windrush Generations Festival celebrates the contributions of Hackney's Windrush generation with events, educational resources and activities for all ages. The programme honours the important contributions of the Windrush community in Hackney. Typically the programme involves events that bring people together to celebrate and remember.

In 2020 the programme was delivered entirely online, on LoveHackney.com. Highlights included original songs written by Windrush seniors, access to historic/heritage collections revealed by Hackney Archives and Hackney Museum, and a live DJ music event.

### 1.3.3 Hackney Carnival

Please see the separate paper on the Hackney Carnival in 2020.

### 1.3.4 Black History Season

Hackney's Black History programme typically spans a season of activities from October to December, and aims to make Hackney even more inclusive, representative and celebratory of its rich migration story of African and Caribbean communities settling in Hackney and beyond. This was particularly important in 2020 in the context of Hackney's Black Lives Matter motion and the Council's commitments towards ensuring we are an anti-racist borough.

In 2020 the programme was intended to be a mix of online and face to face events, but due to the on-going restrictions, the face to face events were postponed, including a series of guided Black History walks, the Windrush Portrait Photography project, and a Windrush Jazz event.

The online programme featured a Black History poster map, a Windrush Cricket Callout, an 'Archiving your history project with Hackney Archives, an Afrikan Heritage Writers Zoom call that paid homage to the Windrush generation, and a collection of poetry and artwork celebrating the essence of Windrush led by Friends of Woodberry Down community club.

### 1.3.5 Christmas and Chanukkah celebrations

Hackney Council usually organises a Christmas Lights event and a separate Chanukkah Ceremony in December, held in the Town Hall Square, involving performances by a diversity of artists.

In 2020, these events were cancelled and instead the Culture team created an online video called Hackney's Festive Spirit, posted on Hackney's Youtube account. In addition to acknowledging these important festivals, the video also provided an opportunity to reflect on the past year and what was lost to Hackney, how Hackney's community stepped up to volunteer support and to share hope for the future. The video involved the Mayor, the Speaker and faith leaders from both the Christian and Orthodox Jewish communities as well as NHS workers, volunteers at the food hubs, staff from the Waste team and performances and artwork by local schools.

### 1.3.6 Hackney Circle, for over 55s

Hackney Circle is the council's free membership scheme that connects Hackney's older residents to the borough's creative and cultural businesses. In normal times, the Hackney Circle offers face to face opportunities for its 350 members to socialise and engage in the borough's world class cultural activities.

During the pandemic, the Hackney Circle has shared links to the various online opportunities to keep fit and engage in culture. We have also worked closely with Mortar, a key community and business partner, to deliver pilot 'Learn to weave with Make Town' workshops, comprising deliveries of bags of craft materials to participants homes' plus online interaction to enable communal making sessions to take place.

### 1.3.7 Hackney Pride 365 Festival

The Council launched its Hackney Pride 365 festival to celebrate the borough's historic, diverse and boundary-breaking LGBTQIA+ community in 2017. The festival typically runs all year, with community-led events at Hackney's venues and outdoor spaces.

In 2020, the full scale Hackney Pride 365 festival wasn't possible to deliver partly due to the redeployment of the relevant Cultural Development Manager to another service within the council. However, two LGBTQI+ projects were supported by the Cultural Development Team; one of which involved supporting fundraising for an online project by Faggamuffin, a group of soundsystem stakeholders, and another was a commission for an LGBTQI+ young people's project, as part of Discover Young Hackney.

## 1.4 Initiatives that have not gone ahead

### 1.4.1 Dalston Children's Festival

The festival partners were unable to deliver the festival, either as socially distanced experiences or online. This was because some key individuals in the Dalston Children's Network were furloughed, other partners had changed priorities, and it was felt that there would be little value in developing a digital alternative. This will be revisited with the partners with a view to resuming activity in autumn 2021 or summer 2022.

## **1.5 Equalities-focused work**

In addition to maintaining as much of the regular programme of activity as possible, the Culture team has led on initiatives responding to the Black Lives Matter movement in 2020 and the racial inequalities that have been recently been revealed, through two cultural projects:

### **1.5.1 Mayor's review of the naming of landmarks, streets and public spaces**

The review was established in June to listen to the views of residents about how to tackle public space names associated with the slave trade. Central to this is a steering group made up of local cultural historians, community leaders, young people and other residents. The group has developed a series of recommendations on the decision making and renaming of contentious sites across the borough.

The steering group's recommendations have started to be delivered; Cassland Road Gardens, named after Sir John Cass, a Director of the Royal African Company, had its existing signage removed in December 2020 and will be renamed.

Hackney Council is inviting members of the public to submit ideas for names of future roads, buildings, parks and other public spaces on the new Hackney Naming Hub, to crowdsource names to make the borough's spaces more inclusive.

The Council is playing a key role in the capital towards achieving greater diversity of representation across the public realm.

### **1.5.2 The announcement of two new permanent public artworks to pay tribute to the Windrush Generation**

Artists Thomas J Price and Veronica Ryan have been commissioned to create two new individual public artworks celebrating and honouring Hackney's Windrush Generation, the first permanent public sculptures to do so in the UK.

The Culture team is currently fundraising for the works, which will be installed in two different locations at the heart of civic and community life in the borough, including outside Hackney Town Hall. The works will serve as a permanent expression of solidarity with the Windrush Generation, a recognition of the hugely significant contribution they have made to life in Hackney and the UK, and will symbolise the ongoing commitment from the borough to provide refuge and welcome to worldwide migrants.

## **1.6 Working outdoors**

There has been a significant increase in interest from artists and cultural organisations in bringing arts and culture outdoors.

There was a strong interest from the theatre sector in delivering outdoor theatre performances during the first lockdown. The Council was unable to support these requests due to the government restrictions at the time.

More recently, there have been a number of requests to assist artists in finding locations for the display of artworks in the public realm and we envisage that this trend will continue. The Culture team is working closely with the Regeneration and the Leisure and Green Spaces teams to respond to the enquiries and facilitate where possible.

In addition to the the above requests for temporary projects, and in addition to the two Windrush art commissions mentioned in 1.5.2, the Culture team has worked closely with the Leisure and Green Spaces team during 2020 to develop a series of permanent / semi permanent artworks in Hackney's public realm:

### **1.6.1 Stik artwork in Hoxton Square**

A popular new artwork donated by the artist Stik entitled 'Holding Hands' was installed in Hoxton Square after years of development and planning.

### **1.6.3 Stik Artwork Commissioning fund**

The artist Stik has donated £220,000 to Hackney Council to enable a programme of future commissions for other artists. A commissioning framework is currently being developed.

### **1.6.2 Abney Park Cemetery**

The chapel in Abney Park Cemetery is currently being restored, funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund. Artists will be commissioned to create artwork for the stained glass windows of the chapel.

In the context of the above activity, a new public art policy is being developed for the borough.

## **1.7 Additional projects for 2021/22**

### **1.7.1 Arts and Health**

The council is preparing to establish a new Arts and Health Network for Hackney and also the City, aligning with the work of the City and Hackney CCG. The network will capitalise upon and potentially coordinate some of the excellent work that the sector already delivers to support local residents' health and wellbeing. The network will focus on the following areas:

- Social prescribing
- Older residents and the negative effects of isolation
- Mental health in children and young people

The network will meet quarterly (in person or online) with a programme of presentations, discussions and projects to work on together, aligned with Hackney's Arts and Cultural Strategy, Ageing Well Strategy, JSNA for the City and Hackney CCG and other strategies relating to the City / Culture Mile.

The council has already formed a partnership that has submitted an application to Arts Council England's Thriving Communities Fund. The project aims to develop a strategic approach to social prescribing in the City and Hackney. There are many arts and cultural organisations with huge amounts of expertise to offer but they are not currently connecting with the health sector, who are in vital need of support during the pandemic. If the bid is successful, a foundational training programme will demystify social prescribing; provide a space to connect sectors, establish a common language, and expand GPs and link workers' knowledge of community projects available for their patients.

#### 1.7.2 NCIL commissioning pot

The council is planning to release a significant investment into the arts and cultural sector through the Neighbourhood CIL Planning gain. The launch of this fund has been delayed due to the impact of the cyberattack.

The fund will be used to commission projects that facilitate community engagement in a creative activity and relate to the objectives of the Arts and Cultural Strategy

Consulted organisations have advised the council that they would value having funding to experiment and to find new ways of working; this has informed the development of the fund's commissioning criteria, currently being devised by the Planning service.

Examples of potential proposals discussed so far with the cultural business forums to date include:

##### Employment

Music venues are interested in developing new learning programmes that enable young people to be upskilled in videography, media, sound recording etc. This is in response to a predicted high demand for technical roles relating to streaming.

##### Education

Heritage and visual arts organisations are keen to find new, Covid-safe ways to deliver activities for school groups.

##### Health and wellbeing

Members of Hackney's Discover Young Hackney Network have expressed interest in developing cultural programmes that support the mental health of young people as they transition back into their everyday school and educational environments.

A range of organisations, including the Dementia Friendly Community, that have previously delivered regular programmes for older residents are interested in sustaining their engagement, to support those most at risk from the negative impact of social isolation.

### Community Cohesion

Theatres who have established connections with vulnerable groups have articulated a desire to deliver cultural programmes to enable communities to reconnect after the crisis in safe spaces, and overcome entrenched experiences of isolation.

## **2. How the service areas are addressing the digital divide to ensure the residents who are digitally excluded can get access to support and services.**

The drive to digitise cultural programmes has brought new opportunities that can be capitalised upon in the future, but equally, it risks exacerbating inequalities without accompanying measures.

There are two arts-led pilot projects that have addressed this in relation to Hackney's older residents, many of whom have no access to digital devices, or lack confidence in using them. These pilot projects provide templates for further engagement.

### 2.1 Hackney Social Radio

The Cultural Development Team has supported the development of Hackney Social Radio, led by Immediate Theatre in response to the digital isolation experienced by older residents during the pandemic.

The programme addresses digital isolation amongst older people by “creating a sense of community through the airwaves”. Listeners can tune in using non-digital devices, and the programmes are broadcast on Resonance 104.4FM.

Broadcasting weekly on Wednesdays, programmes feature music requests, audience phone-ins, stories from the community, features from local artists, interviews and advice from experts with regular up-to-date information about where to access help and support.

### 2.2 Hackney Circle

As outlined in 1.3.6, the Hackney Circle is the council-led free membership scheme that connects Hackney's older residents to the borough's creative and cultural businesses.

During the pandemic, letters have been sent to those members without email addresses to keep them informed and connected - the most recent mailout included a flier to Hackney Social Radio.

15 members of the Hackney Circle were the first cohort of older residents to take part in the council's Digital Buddies Scheme, led by the Digital Inclusion Team, whereby older residents are teamed up with a local secondary school pupil who supports them to develop new digital skills.

The Digital Inclusion Team has also worked closely with Hackney Circle members to test out new video tutorials for the 'Improve Your Digital Skills' page of the council's website.

A pilot project developed with Mortar Studios, a key community and business partner, delivered pilot 'Learn to weave with Make Town' workshops, comprising deliveries of bags of craft materials to participants' homes. Participants told us that this project decreased loneliness by 62%.

In partnership with Mortar Studios, we are now exploring how the pilot 'craft bag' project template can be shared with other partners, such as Hackney's Housing service and other housing associations in Hackney.

One potential housing partner is already in the process of establishing a Sparko TV community (which doesn't require WiFi, users can access the service using their landline phones). The Hackney Circle can potentially provide high quality craft activities for those Hackney-based Sparko viewers.



<b>Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission</b> <b>11<sup>th</sup> February 2021</b> <b>Item 6 – Minutes of the Previous Meeting</b>	Item No <b>6</b>
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**Outline**

The draft minutes of the previous meeting on 18<sup>th</sup> January 2021 have been delayed and will be provided at the next LiH meeting on 9<sup>th</sup> March 2021.

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<b>Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission</b> <b>11<sup>th</sup> February 2021</b> <b>Item 7 – Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission 2020/21 Work Programme</b>	Item No  <b>7</b>
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**OUTLINE**

The draft work programme for the Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission 2020/21 is attached. Please note this a working document.

**ACTION**

The Commission is asked for any comments, amendments or suggestion for the work programme.

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# Overview & Scrutiny

## Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission: Work Plan July 2020 – April 2021

*Each agenda will include an updated version of this Scrutiny Commission work programme*

Dates	Proposed Item	Directorate and lead officer contact	Description, Comment and Purpose of item
<p><b>23<sup>rd</sup> June 2020</b></p> <p>All Council meetings will be held remotely until further notice.</p> <p>Papers deadline: Fri 12<sup>th</sup> June 2020</p>	Trust and Confidence	Metropolitan Police Service Hackney Borough  DCS Marcus Barnett, CE BCU Commander	The Commission's scrutiny review highlighted some indicators suggesting lower than average levels of trust and confidence (meeting held on 31st January 2019). The Commission learned a range of activities were being delivered by the police in this area including the activities being delivered by the newly formed BCU-wide Trust and Confidence Board. This item is an update on that area of work and a look at the impact of Covid - 19.
	Stop and Search	Metropolitan Police Service Hackney Borough  DCS Marcus Barnett, CE BCU Commander	At the Commission's meeting in January 2019 the Commission heard about the roll out of body worn cameras, and work with the IAGs, the Safer Neighbourhood Board, and programmes in schools to improve understandings on both sides about stop and search. This item is an update on that area of work and a look at the impact of Covid - 19.
	Community Safety Partnership Plan 2019-2022	London Borough of Hackney  Tim Shields (Chief Executive)	An update on the progress of the Community Safety Partnership Plan against the four priority themes of the plan. This update will include an in-depth look at the strategic priority Street Drug Market and Substance Misuse.

Dates	Proposed Item	Directorate and lead officer contact	Description, Comment and Purpose of item
		Metropolitan Police Service Hackney Borough  DCS Marcus Barnett, CE BCU Commander	
<p><b>15<sup>th</sup> July 2020</b></p> <p>All Council meetings will be held remotely.</p> <p>Papers deadline: Fri 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2020</p>	Update on Housing Services' Fire Safety works	Housing Services in Directorate of Neighbourhoods and Housing  David Padfield Director of Housing	Information about Hackney Council's fire safety works with input from Hackney's Resident Liaison Group.
	Evidence Session for Exploring the work of Housing Associations in Hackney Scrutiny Review	Various Housing Associations and London Borough of Hackney James Goddard, Interim Director, Regeneration	This session will explore: 1) The strengths of formal partnership arrangements 2) Community investment by housing associations, approaches to supporting their residents to succeed, and partnership with the Council to improve social and economic wellbeing. 3) Improving recycling on estates across the borough.
<p><b>30<sup>th</sup> September 2020</b></p>	Update on Thames Water Main Burst in	Thames Water Steve Spencer –	An update from Thames Water on their progress of repair works, a status update on residents returning to their homes (home owners, private tenants, council tenants, registered social landlords and leaseholder) and an outline of

Dates	Proposed Item	Directorate and lead officer contact	Description, Comment and Purpose of item
<p>All Council meetings will be held remotely.</p> <p>Papers deadline: Fri 18<sup>th</sup> Sept 2020</p>	the N4 area	<p>Operations Director Tim McMahon – Head of Water Asset Management</p> <p>Ofwat Carl Pheasey - Director Strategy &amp; Policy</p>	<p>your investment plans, timescales and the improvements you expect to achieve from this investment plan.</p> <p>An update from Ofwat on the progress of performance for Thames Water, accessibility of this information locally and investment in improvements by Thames Water.</p>
	Update on the Impact of Covid 19 on Hackney's Housing Service	Interim Director of Housing David Padfield from LBH	Hackney Housing to provide an update on the impact of Covid 19 on Hackney's Housing Service in relation challenges and opportunities; business as usual activities; repairs; financial position; support to residents and customer service.
	Executive Response to LiH Scrutiny Review - Council and partnership response to escalation in serious violence review	Tracey Anderson Overview and Scrutiny Officer	<p>The Cabinet response to the LiH's recommendations following their scrutiny review looking at the <i>Council and partnership response to escalation in serious violence review</i>.</p> <p>The Commission's review of the Executive's response to the recommendations made by LiH.</p>
	Update on Thames Water Donation for Lea Bridge Distribution / Use of	Cllr Rathbone Ward Cllr for Lea Bridge	Update on recommendation for distribution / use of funds fro Ward Councillors and The Commission to approve the allocation of funds (taking into consideration the recommendation by the local <b>ward councillors</b> from Lea Bridge Ward) and to agree the governance process or any restrictions on the donations e.g. for a specific use.

Dates	Proposed Item	Directorate and lead officer contact	Description, Comment and Purpose of item
	Funds		
	Discussion about work programme for 2020/21	Tracey Anderson, Overview and Scrutiny Team	The Commission to agree the work programme items for 2020/21.
<p><b>9<sup>th</sup> November 2020</b></p> <p>All Council meetings will be held remotely.</p> <p>Papers deadline: Wed 28<sup>th</sup> October 2020</p>	Stop and Search Inclusive Policing linked to Building Trust and Confidence	<p>Metropolitan Police Service Hackney Borough</p> <p>DCS Marcus Barnett, CE BCU Commander</p> <hr/> <p>Metropolitan Police Service HQ – Professionalism</p> <p>Commander Catherine Roper</p> <p>Head of Profession, Crime</p>	<p>This is a dedicated session to look at more broadly at stop and search and inclusive policing linked to building trust and confidence.</p> <p>The aim of this meeting is to talk with the BCU, MET HQ and MOPAC about the work to build trust and confidence to help us understand how public concern is being addressed by the MPS and MOPAC. We have included the IPOC to further explore how the IOPC works with the MPS in terms of their complaints system.</p> <p>This is a broader discussion to considers how the Police and Councils (not just LBH) can address concerns (linked to the stop and search activity) about community relations and trust &amp; confidence between the Police and local communities.</p> <p>Question in advance have been submitted to the Borough Commander, MET HQ and MOPAC officers covering the following areas:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Stop and Search</li> <li>2. Trust and confidence</li> <li>3. Accountability</li> </ol>



Dates	Proposed Item	Directorate and lead officer contact	Description, Comment and Purpose of item
		Prevention, Inclusion & Engagement	4. Handcuffing 5. Fair and inclusive policing. 6. sources of intelligence 7. community engagement work related to building trust and confidence  Question in advance have been submitted to IOPC officers covering the following areas: 1. Powers of IOPC in relation to the recommendations they make to the MPS 2. Role of the IOPC in relation to MPS complaints 3. Their success in relation to influencing policy and recommendations implemented. 4. Information about the IOPCs review on the use of stop and search.
		Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC)  Natasha Plummer  Head of Engagement	
		Independent Office of Police Conduct  Sal Naseem  Regional Director London	
<b>14<sup>th</sup> December 2020</b>  All Council meetings will be held remotely.	Lettings Policy	Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Finance, Housing Needs and Supply Cllr Rennison	Discussion and update about the lettings policy and the planned consultation on the new proposed policy. .

Dates	Proposed Item	Directorate and lead officer contact	Description, Comment and Purpose of item
Papers deadline: Wed 2 <sup>nd</sup> December 2020		Head of Benefits and Housing Needs Jennifer Wynter	
	Homelessness and the Impact of Covid-19	Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Finance, Housing Needs and Supply Cllr Rennison  Head of Benefits and Housing Needs Jennifer Wynter	Homelessness/rough sleeper update <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Commission would like to hear about the Council's work securing a home for those housed during lockdown and also to understand what the Council is doing with the new street homeless.</li> <li>The Commission wants to explore the impact of Covid-19 on this service and impact on future provisions and costs to service</li> </ul>
	Winter Night Shelters Provision in Hackney	Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Finance, Housing Needs and Supply Cllr Rennison	Local housing and rough sleeping teams within local authorities must consider whether the risk people sleeping rough in their area is so great that it requires a night shelter to open or whether there is a more COVID safe option such as self-contained accommodation.  The Commission wants to look at the decisions about local provision for winter night shelters in the borough.

Dates	Proposed Item	Directorate and lead officer contact	Description, Comment and Purpose of item
		Head of Benefits and Housing Needs Jennifer Wynter	
<b>18<sup>th</sup> January 2021</b> All Council meetings will be held remotely.  Papers deadline: Wed 6 <sup>th</sup> January 2021	Green infrastructure in Hackney	Cabinet Members for Energy, Waste, Transport and Public Realm Cllr Jon Burke	As a result of Covid 19 more residents have remained in the borough which put pressure on communal green spaces in the borough.  Presentation about the Green Infrastructure Strategy.
	Parks and Green Spaces Strategy	Cabinet Members for Energy, Waste, Transport and Public Realm Cllr Jon Burke	Presentation about the Parks and Green Spaces Strategy out for consultation
<b>11<sup>th</sup> February 2021</b> All Council meetings will be held remotely.	Hackney Carnival Update	Cabinet Member for Planning, Culture & Inclusive Economy Cllr Guy Nicholson	Update on Hackney Carnival and the impact of Covid on arts and culture services. Update to cover the following: 1: Hackney Carnival 2. Impact and Recovery Plan for Culture 3. Impact on Culture Services / Digital Divide.  1) Update on virtual carnival and a follow up from LiH challenging to the council about inclusivity.

Dates	Proposed Item	Directorate and lead officer contact	Description, Comment and Purpose of item
Papers deadline: Mon 1 <sup>st</sup> February 2021		Strategic Director, Engagement, Culture and Organisational Development Polly Cziok	2) Following the impact of the pandemic and move of the Hackney Carnival to the virtual environment. The Commission wants to explore the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) What happened this year - how successful was the virtual carnival and measures of success</li> <li>b) What was the virtual reach this year?</li> <li>c) Strengths and weaknesses of this year's carnival. In preparation for next year's carnival how do we capitalise and still do a live event.</li> </ul>
	Hackney Library Services	Cabinet Member for Planning, Culture & Inclusive Economy Cllr Guy Nicholson  Strategic Director, Engagement, Culture and Organisational Development Polly Cziok	Information about Hackney Library services phased re-opening strategy and digital divide. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. its approach, response and phased re-opening following Covid-19</li> <li>b. Online activities and changes to the service provision to make it fit for purpose in the future.</li> <li>c. As more services and access to services move online what is the council doing to help residents overcome the digital divide?</li> <li>d. How are council buildings, services and communal spaces being used to support this work?</li> </ul>

Dates	Proposed Item	Directorate and lead officer contact	Description, Comment and Purpose of item
<p><b>9th March 2021</b> All Council meetings will be held remotely.</p> <p>Papers deadline: Wed 24<sup>th</sup> Feb 2021</p>	Update on Thames Water Main Burst in the N4 area	<p><b>Thames Water</b></p> <p>Steve Spencer – Operations Director</p>	<p>An update on the progress of repair works, a status update on residents returning to their homes (home owners, private tenants, council tenants, registered social landlords and leaseholder) and the progress of performance for Thames Water.</p> <p>In attendance will be the Ward Councillor for Brownswood Ward representative for local residents in the ward who were impacted by the flood.</p>
	Resident engagement	Interim Director of Housing David Padfield LBH	Update on resident engagement in relation to the council structure and strategy.
	Lift Maintenance and Repair	Interim Director of Housing David Padfield LBH	<p>Discussion about the maintenance and repairs to lifts on the Council's housing estates across the borough. The discussion will cover:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) implementation of LBH's lift protocol</li> <li>(b) proposals for the new lift maintenance contract and;</li> <li>(c) proposals for contract monitoring - response times, servicing arrangements and any new changes or enhancements being made to manage the new contract effectively.</li> </ul>
	Digital Divide and Housing Services	Interim Director of Housing David Padfield LBH	<p>Digital Divide and Housing Services - the following information is requested:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) how housing services are supporting residents who are digitally excluded and;</li> <li>(b) The work of the council to assist with the provision of digital connectivity and low cost internet. Also an update on connectivity in community halls.</li> </ul>

**Item to be rescheduled**

Housing Services - Interim Director of Housing David Padfield from LBH

- Leaseholders Services - Leaseholders Services – how are leaseholders consulted and engaged. A look at the different types of leaseholders, support to leaseholders and engagement generally and in relation to Section 20 notices. Include points raised by Commission
- Outcomes of Housing Services' review of Community Halls - Update on the outcome of the review



London Borough of Hackney  
Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission  
Municipal Year 2020/21  
Date of meeting Wednesday, 11 February 2021

Minutes of the proceedings of  
the Living in Hackney Scrutiny  
Commission held at  
Hackney Town Hall, Mare  
Street, London, E8 1EA

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<b>Chair</b>	<b>Cllr Sharon Patrick</b>
<b>Councillors in Attendance:</b>	<b>Cllr Anthony McMahon, Cllr M Can Ozsen, Cllr Ian Rathbone</b>
<b>Apologies:</b>	<b>Cllr Anna Lynch and Cllr Penny Wrout,</b>
<b>Officers in Attendance</b>	<b>Polly Cziok (Strategic Director, Engagement, Culture and Organisational Development), Lucy McMenemy (Cultural Development Manager), Petra Roberts (Cultural Programme Officer)</b>
<b>Other People in Attendance</b>	<b>Cllr Guy Nicholson (Cabinet Member for Planning, Culture &amp; Inclusive Economy), Auro Foxcroft (Village Underground)</b>
<b>Members of the Public</b>	<b>None</b>
<b>Officer Contact:</b>	<b>Tracey Anderson</b> ☎ 0208 356 3312 ✉ tracey.anderson@hackney.gov.uk

**Councillor Sharon Patrick in the Chair**

**1 Apologies for Absence**

- 1.1 Apologies for absence from Councillors: Anna Lynch and Penny Wrout.
- 1.2 Congratulations to Cllr Sade Etti on her new role as Mayoral Adviser for Homelessness, Housing Needs and Rough Sleeping. This was her last meeting with the scrutiny commission be commencing her role on 1<sup>st</sup> March 2021. The Members of the commission wished her all the best in her new role.

**2 Urgent Items/ Order of Business**

- 2.1 Items of the meeting was as per the agenda and there were no urgent items.

**3 Declaration of Interest**

- 3.1 None.

## 4 Hackney Library Services

- 4.1 The Chair welcomed to the meeting Cabinet Member for Planning, Culture & Inclusive Economy, Cllr Guy Nicholson and Strategic Director, Engagement, Culture and Organisational Development, Polly Cziok from London Borough of Hackney.
- 4.2 Libraries not only offer access to books and other reading material but also provide a valuable service to residents in the form of public computer use for those who do not have access to IT services within their home. Covid-19 has had a huge impact on library services.
- 4.3 The Commission asked for information about the impact of Covid-19 on library services, plans for reopening and their work to mitigate the digital divide in relation to library services.
- 4.4 The Cabinet Member for Planning, Culture & Inclusive Economy commenced the presenting with the following points in his opening statement.
- 4.4.1 The Cabinet Member placed on record his thanks and appreciation to staff for keeping the library service functioning over the last 12 months. Pointing out staff provided an immediate response to the pandemic and lockdowns.
- 4.4.2 The report provides information about some of the activities that have been scheduled as part of the phased reopening of the service. This is currently on hold due to the current lockdown.
- 4.4.3 The service is still focused on a 4 phased reopening strategy. The phases are set out in the report in the agenda.
- 4.4.4 The Cabinet Member drew Members attention to looking beyond the immediate response to the pandemic; to also consider how the service has been able to engage with residents and provide a service. Looking at the future of library services, what it will look like and the kind of services they could offer.
- 4.4.5 The Cabinet Member referred to the extraordinary outcome of the last 10 months and the channel shift of library services; operating effectively within the virtual space. Moving book clubs, reading sessions, accessing to information, learning and knowledge online. Noting various strands of engagement have come to the fore whilst the physical space has been closed and the restrictions in place.
- 4.4.6 The Cabinet Member pointed out this would be a future piece of work. The Cabinet Member suggested the scrutiny commission may wish to think about this as a future work programme item, as the service evolves over the coming 12 months.
- 4.4.7 The changes being discussed are not about restricting a service, closing or reducing the service; but capitalising on the aspects that have been delivered well over the last 10 months to expand the offer. Whilst supporting and enabling the librarians to be able to engage with that agenda and lead it.



- 4.4.8 An important part of the next 12 months will be to ensure the library staff are leading on the investment they need into their professional careers and what they need to deliver a great service over the next 5-10 years.
- 4.4.9 There is more work to do in relation to this area of work. But this meeting is providing the Executive Members with the opportunity to highlight the ambitions and to set in motion a work programme.
- 4.5 The Strategic Director, Engagement, Culture and Organisational Development added the library services has had a challenging time over the last 12 months. The service experienced a huge impact in the first lockdown when the service had to close.
- 4.5.1 The service transitioned to moving all provisions online e.g., book groups, storytelling sessions, quizzes etc. During this time, they found the uptake of ebooks and audio services increased massively.
- 4.5.2 The paper outlines the work carried out in the black history season.
- 4.5.3 In the summer, the library service was able to recommence the home visits service which is of key importance to the residents who are housebound.
- 4.5.4 The major impact of the first lockdown for the public was that they could not offer computer use. The Council is aware the world shifted services online during the pandemic and for those people who are digitally excluded or effected by digital poverty that free computer usage was essential.
- 4.5.5 Previously the digital divide assumptions were that people could not use the internet or did not have access to the internet. More recently it has been identified that its now related to people who are on really low incomes, who have run out of data on their phone or who are not able to pay their broadband bill. The library PCs service was a lifeline to people trying to sort out universal credit claims, applying for jobs or ordering repeat prescriptions.
- 4.5.6 The Council received a lot of feedback from residents that this was something that they missed extraordinarily.
- 4.5.7 There has been an impact on the service areas income. They have had no income from fees, fines or meeting room hire.
- 4.5.8 The 4 phased approach to reopening was developed with public health and the corporate health and safety teams.
- 4.5.9 The Strategic Director pointed out the library service has done an amazing job to create a covid secure environment. Citing the Director of Public Health saying they are an exemplar in everything they have done to keep staff and residents safe.
- 4.5.10 The Strategic Director put on record her thanks to the service lead (Libraries and Development Support Manager, Sue Comitti), her staff and the corporate Health and Safety Team who have worked hard to protect the staff and public and to provide a service to the public in a safe way. Opening the service as much as they can whilst adhering to the public health guidance.

- 4.5.11 Current government guidance in this lockdown permitted libraries to open for order & collect and public PC use.
- 4.5.12 There were requests among the staff group and from unions to close libraries completely. However the government guidance permitted libraries to be open for public PC use. The Council felt very strongly that whilst the infection levels were high, they did not want staff to come into work who were anxious about putting themselves at risk. Notwithstanding the council had a duty to provide a skeleton service to vulnerable members of the public that needed access.
- 4.5.13 Due to the high infection rates in Hackney they decided to open the libraries that had the highest levels of usage only for order & collect and for PC use. These were Stamford Hill and Dalston. Each library is open 2 days a week with limited opening hours (11-4pm). The aim of reduced hours being to reduce contact for the public while the infection rates were as high as they were. At the same time, the council was of the view they could not completely deprive the vulnerable public of that access.
- 4.5.14 The Council worked closely with the staff to make sure they had enough staff - who had identified as feeling comfortable with coming into work - to cover the proposed hours.
- 4.5.15 The Council was hoping to reintroduce the click and collect service for Hackney Central library. But this has been challenging due to the building management issues.
- 4.5.16 The Council has been able to redeploy library service staff into other areas of the council e.g., telephone contact tracing, business grants administration, electoral services (helping to get the electoral role ready for May) and data recovery work following the cyber-attack.
- 4.5.17 The redeployment has been good for library staff because they can often feel detached from the rest of the organisation. This provided an opportunity to get them involved in the covid effort. The additional under employed staff are hoping to get involved in the vaccination work. The Strategic Director pointed out staff have had a positive attitude to getting involved in redeployment.
- 4.5.18 Currently their work in relation to the digital divide has focused on keeping the libraries open and making sure people can come in and use the PC services.
- 4.5.19 The council highlighted that some of the people using libraries are vulnerable and often ask staff for one-to-one support with things like filling in their Universal Credit Claims. It was pointed out currently staff cannot give this type of support because of social distancing requirements. However, the Council is doing all it can to help and support people from a distance.
- 4.5.20 In reference to the future of the library service. The Strategic Director highlighted they have huge amounts of learning from the pandemic and it has been a very long period since hackney library services had a strategic review. The council is proposing to do a review of library services in the new financial year.

- 4.5.21 In relation to the review there will be a full-time member of staff working alongside the head of service to do the review. The first phase will involve reviewing all the data they hold on current usage both pre pandemic and during the pandemic, footfall, demographics, library usage etc. This information will provide a clear picture of the usage pattern. The review will move to look at how things have shifted during the pandemic and what is sustainable.
- 4.5.22 The next phase will be intensive staff engagement. The council has approximately 100 staff in libraries and many are very creative people with lots of ideas about how the service can grow and develop. The council is hoping to have some face-to-face contact with staff at this point, but this will be covid dependent.
- 4.5.23 Lastly, they will move into the public engagement phase. The council is anticipating this will be around summertime with various engagement methods (face to face, focus groups, online) but this will be covid dependent. This will aim to understand what people get out of using the library service whilst targeting people who do not use them to find out what they might want from the service in the future.
- 4.5.24 Finally, they will be looking across the council to look at what services can be provided out of libraries. The aim is not to turn them into mini customer service centres but to consider genuine co-location of services that will provide a real synergy with library services. This will involve talking to people across the council and looking at where the synergies could work and perhaps ways, they can make the libraries more financially sustainable long term. Using libraries as a springboard for other service provision and as effective community engagement hubs.
- 4.5.25 Taking into consideration that other offices like neighbourhood offices have closed over the years. Libraries remain the single touch point for local resident engagement. Libraries have a presence in all their neighbourhoods, and this is precious and important, they can do a lot more with their presence.
- 4.5.26 After all this work they will develop a Library Strategy in 2022-26 to cover the next administration. At this point they expect to have a clearer understanding of the timings in relation to the capital programmes being planned for libraries and they will be able to have a solid plan with clear strategic objectives.

#### **4.6 Question Answers and Discussion**

- (i) Members referred to the digital divide being mentioned at this scrutiny commission and coming up at various council meetings. Members referred to the explanation given about digital divide being related to poverty and not so much about digital skills and the inability to use digital devices. In reference to libraries Member asked if there was a criteria for residents be able to use the computers and if use was restricted, in timeslots or open for booking.**
- (ii) Members referred to Dalston and Stamford Hill and asked if there were plans to re-open Shoreditch library? Members referred to the libraries currently open and in the planning being at the centre or north of the borough.**

In response the Strategic Director, Engagement, Culture and Organisational Development explained the reasons they chose to just keep the 2 libraries mentioned open after Christmas and during this period is because of the high infection rates locally. They wanted to keep providing a service but a minimal service. In addition, several staff were feeling at risk therefore they chose the 2 sites with the highest level of usage for PC use and click & collect. This was also to ensure they were still serving the communities that needed the service the most.

The Strategic Director pointed out the aspiration is to open Hackney Central library and they will reopen the other libraries when the infection rates decline. This is being monitored. The Strategic Director added they want to re-open Shoreditch library because it has had a refurbishment. It was pointed out libraries will reopen taking into consideration public health advice which gives notice that it is a safe and sensible to do so.

The Strategic Director pointed out the council does not want anyone to come into work who is clinically vulnerable, has a long commute or are at risk. Currently they have enough staff who live locally and who can walk to work and feel safe, to staff the current service offer.

The Strategic Director pointed out the infection rates are declining, and all the information indicates things are moving in the right direction as residents get the vaccine. It is anticipated they will return to full opening over the next couple of months in line with Government advice.

The Strategic Director, Engagement, Culture and Organisational Development confirmed there is no criteria for PC use and a resident can just book. The Strategic Director explained there was a discussion at a national level (Chief Librarians Association) about essential use, but they decided they would not define what is essential use. Some people find their computer activity good for their mental wellbeing. In addition, Librarian did not want to police this activity.

The Cabinet Member for Planning, Culture & Inclusive Economy emphasized about social distancing in the libraries. One of the key challenges with Hackney Central is the access arrangements for the library and the inability to implement effective social distancing. This is of great concern to everyone working in the service and for the council managing the public health impact of covid on the local community. This supported the rationale for why some libraries were open and some are closed. It is anticipated this will be the position for the next 6 months as they adapt.

The click & collect offer is available for users of the service and eBooks remain unaffected.

The Strategic Director added for Hackney Central the design of the building is inappropriate and access is very dependent on lifts for accessibility. Pointing out it is hard to run lifts in a covid safe way. Their plans are to implement an order & collect service on the ground floor. Although this site will not be open for PC use residents will have access to order and collect. The challenge lies with the building management arrangements and this has been hard to negotiate. The Council hopes to resolve this very soon.

In response to the question in the chat by a Member asking if the home delivery service is open. The Strategic Director confirmed the home delivery service is still open via the community library service. This service is still delivering to a few hundred residents although fewer than normal because many of the residents who use this service are clinically vulnerable and they have declined to use the service to limit contact with people.

**(iii) Members commented the feedback noted from residents who are shielding is that delivery of books is appreciated.**

In response the Strategic Director confirmed they still operate home delivery for books.

The Cabinet Member for Planning, Culture & Inclusive Economy commended the community library service who have continued to operate throughout the pandemic with a very short interruption to the service at the beginning. The Cabinet Member pointed out they have had to redesign the way they deliver the service and managed to keep that momentum. For those who are using the service it has been of great comfort and support to their quality of life over the last 10 months.

**In response Members commented some cancer patients cannot go out and are very comfortable to receive home delivery and this has been great.**

**(iv) Members referred to Hackney Central Library being filled with people using the computers, particularly students. Members asked as there are only 2 libraries open has the service been able to cater for students or is this not a possibility?**

In response the Strategic Director, Engagement, Culture and Organisational Development confirmed they are unable to cater for student's computer use. Pointing out Hackney Central will continue to be a challenge due to the design of the building. Pointing out that in the Town Hall building the lifts have been switch off due to covid.

It is anticipated that the refurbishment of Clapton and Shoreditch libraries will provide more workspace for people. Currently the only service they can offer under government guidance is PC use (this is booked for 1 hour at a time) and order & collect. Therefore, even if they opened more libraries, they would not be able to allow people to come in and study there for hours, browse or do any other activity they would normally do in a library. The Strategic Director pointed out as the guidance changes; they will be able to open some more of the provision. This will be in close working with support and advice from their colleagues in public health and the corporate health and safety team.

**(v) Members asked if there are any timescale for reopening a service that caters for students. Noting schools will reopen on 8<sup>th</sup> March 2021.**

In response the Strategic Director confirmed there was no definite timings or dates. But assured Members the council will open services as quickly and as safely as soon as possible.

**(vi) Members asked if the Council records the usage of library services.**

The Strategic Director, Engagement, Culture and Organisational Development confirmed they have a detailed record of service usage. The Strategic Director offered to provide this data if required to the Commission in a briefing note.

**(vii) The Chair commented that the review sounds interesting and was pleased to hear they will be reviewing the service to make improvements. Commenting several boroughs have cut their library services due to austerity. Members were pleased the Council made a commitment to keep their libraries open. The Commission welcomed being kept informed about the library service review.**

**(viii) In relation to the service review Members welcomed the aim to speak to all users and asked how the council was going to engage with non-library users to get their views to feed into the review.**

In response the Strategic Director, Engagement, Culture and Organisational Development advised they will use their current communication and consultation methods. They can also use common place, public events and have stalls in parks etc. Highlighting there are a range of ways they can talk to people generally.

The Strategic Director pointed out for the review they do not just want to talk to very active users who are in the library user groups. They want to talk to everyone in addition to looking at the data they hold on usage. There has been a lot of feedback from the Hackney Young Futures Commission about libraries and how important they are to young people. This data can feed into the review.

In terms of non-users, they want to understand why they are not users of libraries services. For example, there are parents who were avid users of the library when their children were small but then they stop. The council wants to look at how to keep those customers. Also, understand what will attract people into the libraries. Considering the events to hold and the community work they could host. They will talk to voluntary sector partners and everyone.

The Cabinet Member added the success from engaging with the community through consultations like the Dalston conversation gives a good platform to reach out to the wider community including those who may not use the service, to really connect and engage to get their feedback and ideas. This will be a major exercise, but the library service has a great future ahead. The pandemic has provided a platform that demonstrates the flexibility of the service and the ability of the service to be able to respond to quite difficult environments and how to continue a service. The next 12 months should be a great opportunity for the service.

## **5 Hackney Arts and Culture Services**

- 5.1 The Chair welcomed to the meeting the Cabinet Member for Planning, Culture & Inclusive Economy, Cllr Guy Nicholson; Strategic Director, Engagement, Culture and Organisational Development, Polly Cziok; Cultural Development Manager, Lucy McMenemy and Cultural Programme Officer, Petra Roberts

from London Borough of Hackney. Also in attendance was venue operator Auro Foxcroft from Village Underground.

- 5.2 At a previous discussion (January 2020) about Hackney Carnival by the Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission they provided some challenge about the inclusivity of the event. This discussion is to provide an update on how the Council addressed the concerns raised about inclusivity. The specific questions the Commission asked related to this update are outlined on the cover sheet for item 5 in the agenda.
- 5.3 The 3 lockdowns have had a significant impact on the operation of arts and culture in the borough. The Commission decided to look at the impact of Covid-19 on arts and culture and the recovery plans for this sector in the borough.
- 5.4 This discussion covered:
1. Hackney Carnival
  2. Impact of Covid 19 and Recovery Plan for Culture
  3. Impact of Covid-19 on Cultural Services and the digital divide.
- 5.5 The presentations from LBH Cultural Development Manager outlined the following main points from the report in the agenda.
- 5.5.1 In the context of the pandemic their initial planning for the Hackney Carnival in September 2020 ceased in March 2020 following the cancellation of the live event.
- 5.5.2 Prior to this announcement they had started to act on the recommendations from the LiH Scrutiny Commission. Namely increasing levels of community engagement. The team was reaching out to various groups in Hackney and lined up a number of new organisations and council services to participate in the carnival with a view to raising some funding from the Arts Council. This was to develop a new and exciting community engagement strategy for the event. This work can resume in the future.
- 5.5.3 After reviewing the options of what could be achieved, they decided to produce an online carnival.
- 5.5.4 They worked with Hackney Carnival groups to create videos that reflected the work they do to summarise some of the out puts from the programme. E.g., presentations of cultural traditions and videos about reflections on carnivals and what it means to Hackney's communities. Also covering the impact of the pandemic.
- 5.5.5 There were also videos on how to do carnival crafts at home. These videos were viewed by many people online. In total 21 short films were made, and these were placed on the Hackney Carnival Facebook page.
- 5.5.6 There was a team of co-curators who helped to develop specific projects. In addition to the films by the carnival groups there was a film about the health and wellbeing effects of taking part in the carnival.

- 5.5.7 They also delivered a Hackney Carnival at Home Weekender. This was a celebration on the weekend when they would have had the physical carnival. This was a live stream event in 2 parts. Part 1 was a sound system event on the Saturday and part 2 was the livestream event on the Sunday.
- 5.5.8 They created a mentorship opportunity for a young person. The young person worked with one of the carnival curators and focused on digital content production. This was successful and they would do it again.
- 5.5.9 Two of the curators worked together to create a new archive of Hackney Carnival. This consists of a lot of interviews with carnival artists and volunteers and they reflected on the meaning of carnival to them, the history and heritage. The officer pointed out this has developed into an interesting resource which can be built on. This is on the Love Hackney website.
- 5.5.10 The aim of the programme was to support Hackney's carnival groups in developing new digital skills. The feedback received from the groups was that this was useful in helping them develop their online presence. It was appreciated that the online version had helped to keep the carnival spirit alive.
- 5.5.11 The how-to videos were appreciated by the public and they had positive feedback.
- 5.5.12 They had started to think about their preparations for Hackney Carnival 2021. They had hoped they would be able to do a live event this year and started the round of carnival commissions for carnival groups to apply for. They were giving access to funding earlier than usual to start thinking about what they would do for Hackney Carnival 2021. This was to enable them to consider their themes and to help make their workspaces covid safe.
- 5.5.13 The number of people who accessed the carnival online amounted to almost 39k views of the 21 short films by the carnival groups.
- 5.5.14 There was a smaller number of people who engaged with the sound system day on Real Rebels radio station. They had 372 listeners.
- 5.5.15 On the Sunday for the live stream on the Hackney Carnival Facebook page attracted 22,000 views and a high number of engagements. People enjoyed interacting with the host Pax Nindi. That was successful.
- 5.5.16 The carnival dance challenge project was a piece of work that the young person doing the mentorship worked on. They put a call out to the public to take part and come up with a dance in response to a soca tune developed especially for the project. This had 6000 views. This was a good outcome for a new event.
- 5.5.17 There was good press coverage (the full list is in the report) and they had positive response from various media outlets that reported on the carnival.
- 5.5.18 The live stream had clips from carnivals of previous years and messages from other carnivals, DJ sets and competitions that allowed the host to interact with the audience in various ways.



- 5.5.19 Regarding the Hackney Carnival event, it was announced today that they had taken the decision to not proceed with the outdoor carnival event in September. This was due to the ongoing concerns about the pandemic. The focus would be on building on the successes of the digital event last year. The Council will review the situation because it may be possible to have some pop-up carnival activity in public spaces nearer the time. In the meantime, they will focus on creating a fun, interesting and meaningful online carnival.
- 5.5.20 The aim is to develop a new website for Hackney Carnival. Last year some of the content was on the Facebook page and some was on the Love Hackney website. It was a little scattered. The desire is to create a bespoke website that would enable them to recreate the experience of accessing the event in person. To have a legacy that could be used in the future. It could also be used as a networking tool for the groups in the future.
- 5.5.21 The council wishes to maintain the online presence of the carnival groups. The groups have feedback that although they enjoyed learning about creating a film and sharing their work, they would love to get back to making costumes for the carnival event. It will be key to refocus the carnival groups on their art form; allowing them to do that again and for the council to document and facilitate this rather than expecting them to do this from home with mobile phones.
- 5.5.22 It will be important to do a wide-ranging community engagement plan this year. The council is in a better position this year to think about how this will work. For example, this could be to build on the carnival dance challenge that enabled public participation in a collective endeavour.
- 5.5.23 The council plans to build on the Hackney carnival archive they started on Love Hackney. They wish to find ways to make that more accessible and interactive.
- 5.5.24 The Council would like to involve another young person on the digital content production again in association with Hackney Young Futures.
- 5.5.25 The council wishes to explore partnerships with local businesses to encourage them to support the online program. They are committed to supporting the carnival groups and continuing with the annual commissioning programme to sustain their practices throughout the next year.
- 5.5.26 The Cabinet Member for Planning, Culture & Inclusive Economy thanked the Cultural Development Manager and her team for a successful first attempt at producing a digital carnival. The Cabinet Member pointed out similar to libraries, this had opened up opportunities even though it was sad not to physically participate in a live event.
- 5.5.27 The Cabinet Member pointed out the Mayor of Hackney is keen to see a larger programme delivered this year. Therefore, if they are to go virtual again, they will look at how to expand this further. This expansion will primarily be led by more participation, making and creating things and doing performances and capture more views.
- 5.5.28 Fundamentally it is about building a larger programme and a larger portfolio of activities. Even though it will take a lot of work to do this.

- 5.5.29 The Cabinet Member advised the Council's view is it would not be safe to run a live event on this scale in September. The Cabinet Member pointed out Glastonbury were of the same view and had cancelled their event too.
- 5.5.30 The Strategic Director, Engagement, Culture and Organisational Development advised the decision to cancel the live event was driven by the uncertainty around the infection situation. Highlighting it was important to note that even if they were to consider holding a safe event in September this year. The organisations capacity to do the work and deliver the event is not available. For example, the council's current event manager is redeployed on the covid effort working on PPE distribution. In addition, the Police also have to put in a large number of resources to help keep the public safe. Also, health partners are involved in the carnival planning too. So, it is not just about making the plans for the event for September but also about the organisational capacity to sit around the table with partners to plan the event. The Hackney Carnival is a partnership effort to make it a safe event.
- 5.6 Part 2 was a discussion about the impact of covid on cultural services, arts & cultural sector, digital divide and the plans to support the recovery of the arts and culture sector in the borough.
- 5.7 The Strategic Director, Engagement, Culture and Organisational Development commenced the update by paying tribute to the support work of the Cultural Development Manager (Lucy) and Cultural Programme Officer (Petra) to the arts and culture sector in the borough. Recognising it has been a challenging year for the sector and still is. The Council is aware how important the arts and culture sector is to the local economy, jobs etc.
- 5.7.1 The Strategic Director highlighted the work of this team would normally centre around organising events. Their usual work has been impacted and the team have shifted their focus onto providing support to their partners in the sector.
- 5.8 The Cultural Development Manager made the following main points from the reports in the agenda.
- 5.8.1 Covid has had a significant impact on the arts and cultural sector and they remain affected.
- 5.8.2 Initially in the first lockdown the culture team did a survey and held several meetings with the sector to understand the impact of the first lockdown.
- 5.8.3 All cultural programmes came to a stand stop.
- 5.8.4 Organisations reported a serious loss of income through the withdrawal of grants, freezing of grants and the loss of all of their earned income streams – tickets, space hire, hospitality etc.
- 5.8.5 Organisations based in council premises were able to discuss rent deferrals but others with private landlords did not all have the support and understanding from their landlords.
- 5.8.6 The Arts Council set up emergency funding in the first instance which helped to keep several arts organisations a float. But some reported falling outside the

- criteria for the government funding because they did not pay business rates, had a higher rateable value for their premises, being a micro business in a shared workspace or having charity rate relief.
- 5.8.7 The job retention scheme has protected many jobs in the sector however the freelancers have been hugely affected with many losing all their paid work.
- 5.8.8 Several organisations also reported concern about losing contact with their participants and audiences and the effect this would have on their wellbeing. Particularly young people and older people alongside the impact of digital exclusion.
- 5.8.9 The Culture team contributed to the Council's lobbying efforts to the Government. They lobbied through the parliamentary inquiry into the impact of covid on the DCMS sector. This included lobby for a forward-looking sector support fund to develop organisations to enable them to survival the initial impact of the pandemic.
- 5.8.10 Following the lobbying the Government announced the cultural recovery fund of 1.57 billion to invest into the arts and cultural sector. The first round was funding to help businesses stay afloat covering 6 months of funding from October 2020 to March 2021. In LBH they were allocated approximately £12 million. This went to 68 arts and cultural organisations in Hackney.
- 5.8.11 There is a second round of recovery funding – launched in December 2020 – of which the application window has closed. They are currently awaiting the outcome of that funding allocation decision. This will be additional funding covering April - June 2021. This will be to help businesses transition into a more sustainable operating business model with the aim of being able to reopen in July 2021.
- 5.8.12 Regarding the re-opening and reclosing of venues. When organisations tried to reopen in between the lockdowns they reported opening with 30% capacity for cinemas and less in music venues. Some venues tried to mitigate that by holding 2 performance per night and bringing in additional audiences in phases.
- 5.8.13 The 10pm curfew mainly affected bar sales but for places like theatres they started performances earlier to mitigate this.
- 5.8.14 The feedback from organisations that did reopen advised it was easier financially when they were closed because they had no overhead costs. Therefore, many were of the view it was not viable for them to reopen.
- 5.8.15 For those that reopened they found that audiences were keen to return to venues, screenings and performances. They were sold out. However, they did flag concern about the lack of new films and cultural performances being put forward by the relevant industries, citing there was not enough new work available to draw in audiences. When venues reclosed, it was difficult because business had started to pick up again.
- 5.8.16 Organisations were able to keep their spaces open for tenants and for hires e.g., daytime TV and film screenings, rehearsals and recording. This has been an important source of income. Many organisations moved their programmes

- online this enabled them to stay in touch with audiences and to try new things, although it has not necessarily been a lucrative source of income.
- 5.8.17 Online equipment requires substantial investment. This is a long-term investment and remains to be seen if it will be a good source of income.
- 5.8.18 Many organisations have been innovative e.g., music venues have tried out live streaming events, one theatre is developing an outdoor theatre, this will allow them to reopen sooner than they would do for their indoor theatre.
- 5.8.19 There is a radio programme for older residents. There is a project called Hackney Social Radio by Immediate Theatre. Programmes are broadcast weekly on Resonance 104.4FM. If older residents do not have access to digital devices or WiFi they can tune in. The programmes feature music requests, audience phone-ins, stories from the community, features from local artists, interviews and advice from experts, with regular up-to-date information about where to access help and support.
- 5.8.20 In relation to the recovery plan, there have been a few council services that have directly supported organisations to survive the challenges – Regeneration, Property, Environmental Health, Licensing, Employment and Skills and Cultural Development. They have all worked together to share information with organisations through various meetings, regular newsletters and emails, access to funding through supporting the many rounds of government for businesses, organising advice sessions on various grants that are available to organisations, writing letters of support and launching commissioning funds - the Wick together fund for freelancers in Hackney Wick area and the second round of the Shoreditch and Hoxton art fund.
- 5.8.21 The Council's property team has supported venues with rent deferrals and the culture team has supported organisations with private landlords to access support from the GLA's Culture At Risk office. They have also engaged with private landlords directly.
- 5.8.22 The council has supported the reopening process by inviting guest speakers to share best practice. For example, with reopening workspaces and helped organisation to interpret government and local guidelines on the restrictions for licensed venues. In addition to practical advice on how to reopen. They have also promoted venues and shops through the Love Hackney Shop Local campaign.
- 5.8.23 The council has supported the creation of training opportunities by facilitating organisations to apply for the governments kickstart apprenticeship scheme. They have supported the development of online programmes by putting on training sessions by the Arts Council's digital culture network.
- 5.8.24 The Council has been working with the visual arts and heritage organisation to reconnect with Hackney's schools. These organisations felt that this was the key issue for them. They have not been able to deliver their workshops in schools, so they have had online sessions with teacher to explain and explore the best way to keep that engagement with schools.

5.8.25 In terms of future support for the sector, this is evolving all the time. Currently they envisage supporting the sector to access funding through a new Neighbourhood CiL fund. This will be launched in the next few months. This will enable arts and cultural organisations to apply for project funding. There will also be further rounds of government funding.

The Chair clarified if the CiL funding was Hackney Council funding. The officer confirmed it was.

The Cabinet Member for Planning, Culture & Inclusive Economy added this is being explored by the planning authority. They are keen to bring it forward as a culture fund that can be deployed across the sector. They will draw down the Neighbourhood Community infrastructure Levy (CiL) which is a section of planning gain that comes forward specifically to deploy around communities and investing in communities. This is to help mitigate the social impact of new development in the borough.

The Chair clarified if this was Section 106 money.

The Cabinet Member confirmed Section 106 is focused on specific planning gain related to affordable housing and school places from the immediate impact of a development. This funding also has more restrictions. The CiL takes a more general planning gain.

5.8.26 The officer continued the presentation by advising the licensing team will launch Hackney Nights which is a new online portal for licensed venues and will help them to find the information they need.

5.8.27 There will be a specific love Hackney shop local guide for the night-time economy to help promote the cultural offer when venues start to reopen.

5.8.28 The culture team will launch a new arts and health network to help the cultural sector to connect better with health professionals around social prescribing, older residents and the negative effects of isolation and mental in children and young people.

5.8.29 The culture team will be talking to property services and Hackney Business Network (previously known as Invest in Hackney) about the possibilities for the arts and cultural sector to access any space that becomes available.

5.8.30 The culture team will continue to deliver their cultural initiatives which enables them to commission organisations to deliver work e.g., the Hackney carnival, Windrush festival, black history season and discover young hackney and hackney circle.

5.9 The Cultural Programme Officer added in addition to maintaining some of the cultural programme activities they have led on initiatives responding to the Black Lives Matter movement in 2020 linked to the racial inequalities work. Using arts and culture as a powerful tool.

5.9.1 In relation to the Mayor's review of the naming of landmarks, streets and public spaces. The review is called 'review, rename and completely reclaim', established in June to listen to the views of residents about how to tackle

- landmarks, streets, buildings and public spaces named after plantation owners and people who traded in enslaved Africans.
- 5.9.2 They had reached a turning point in history where covid and the Black Lives Matter movement placed racism in the spotlight and this complimented the Council's Black Lives Matter motion and built on the local history of fighting racism in the borough, dating back to the 1980s. This has also been well document through the work of Hackney Museum.
  - 5.9.3 The project gives the council an opportunity to rethink the names of spaces, where communities live, learn, work and play. To ensure that they are appropriately reflecting their diverse communities.
  - 5.9.4 In June 2020, the council set up task groups across culture heritage working with planning, parks and green spaces. Central to the review in Hackney is the community steering group. Made up of local cultural historians, community leaders, young people and residents. All having local expertise, experience, investment and passion for the subject. They have played an advisory role to the council. The community steering group identified the names and symbols of people who profited from slavery and colonialism and those that remain memorialised in the public spaces.
  - 5.9.5 The group met weekly and identified 4 contentious symbols through the review which are linked to Sir John Cass, Cecil John Rhodes and Sir Robert Geffery and Francis Tissen
  - 5.9.6 They have developed a framework for the council which includes a traffic light system and a process on how the council can make decisions about contentious sites.
  - 5.9.7 One of the first actions is to change the name of Cassland Road Gardens which the council has committed to. That was named after Sir John Cass Director of the Royal African Company. This will be complex as they need to consider the impact on residents, legislation and the process of engagement. The council wants to hear resident views and give residents as much information as possible before consultation more widely.
  - 5.9.8 The other aspect of the review is to consider how in the future the borough's public realm could better reflect the people they champion across the board. The Hackney renaming hub was launched in November 2020. This is an online hub to crowd sources new names from residents. They have also launched the web page which gives information about how the two groups are working together on the review.
  - 5.9.9 The equalities work links with the announcement of the 2 new permanent public art works to pay tribute to the Windrush generation. In partnership with Create London the Council will commission 2 sculptors – Thomas J Price and Veronica Ryan – to produce 2 permanent pieces of artwork to honour Hackney's Windrush generation and in recognition of the significant contribution they have made to life in Hackney and the UK. This will also symbolise the ongoing commitment from the borough to provide refuge and welcome to worldwide migrants.

- 5.9.10 The Council is currently fund raising for this work. The artwork will be installed in 2 different locations across the borough – outside Hackney Town Hall and the Narrow Way.
- 5.9.11 The Council's partners London Creates have been awarded a sizeable grant from the freelance foundation to deliver a public digital engagement programme; to include an interactive website, exhibitions and educational resources. This ties in closely with their Windrush engagement programme working with approximately 3000 Windrush elders and their descendants on a whole range of intergenerational activities across arts heritage, sports, health and education. This work will link with the black curriculum work across the council and link to the unveiling of the artwork with the celebrations of the Windrush day and year-round ambitions to promote black history - telling the story and the educational history about the art works.
- 5.10 A local business owner from Village Underground, Auro Foxcroft attended the meeting to give his experience as a venue operator in the arts and culture sector. Outlining the impact of the pandemic on the business.
- 5.10.1 The venue operator from the Village Underground thanked the culture team for all the work they have done. He explained this has genuinely been very good and helped to sign post to funding opportunities which has been excellent.
- 5.10.2 Most important was bringing everyone together. The venue operator explained he takes part in a regular music venue meeting with participants from across the borough. The solidarity and coming together and Hackney Council facilitating this has helped to share ideas, support and help. The venue operator hopes that this will be a long-term change.
- 5.10.3 The venue operator commended Hackney Property Services for their support too. Particularly in their case and having forbearance on their rent. Also, to Hackney Council supporting the cultural sector with deferments. This has managed to keep businesses going. Village Underground highlighted they have benefited from forbearance from a range of organisations, but rent was really key.
- 5.10.4 Hackney's cultural infrastructure is stressed, and some businesses are doing better than others. In his view Hackney is doing fairly well considering the current climate. In his view this is partly to do with the support and partly to with the great cultural infrastructure that Hackney has. Emphasising they are all working together.
- 5.10.5 In terms of what might happen next, he would like to encourage the council to focus on bringing everybody together for reopening. There are a number of great organisations both building based, and non-building based. Taking the opportunity to come back stronger and getting Hackney's cultural infrastructure going well is probably the safest way forward. Not just for the infrastructure but also for the audience to feel safe to comeback out again.
- 5.10.6 They should also look to welcome everyone back to cultural events and try to reduce the natural and understandable apprehension. In his view the council can play a fundamental role in terms of messaging and the communication to residents. Continuing the facilitator role, the council has been undertaking to bring organisations together.

- 5.10.7 In relation to spaces it would be sad if Hackney ended up with empty commercial space. Not only because of the impact on the economy but for the people who previously occupied those spaces. The venue operator pointed out If this does happen it would be good if the Council could devise a process for using the space for cultural purposes, offering it out to cultural organisations and particularly to those that interact the most with residents and society. Offering to arts and culture that have the most social role.
- 5.10.8 The venue operator pointed out space is such a premium in arts and a lot of great projects and ideas could flourish with the use of empty spaces. Pointing out from his experience in the industry when they get a commercial lull this can leave loads of empty space and suddenly you get an explosion of creativity and great new ideas. In terms of property services and what the cultural team can do to get empty space in temporary use, (until it becomes income generating again) this can be put into the hands of artists and arts organisations which would be good for the community at large.
- 5.10.9 The Cabinet Member for Planning, Culture & Inclusive Economy thanked the Village Underground for his contribution and the officers in LBH for leading the support work to the sector. The Cabinet Member pointed out this work has positioned the sector within the council across the different service areas that engage with the Cultural Team. This has reaped dividends for many in the sector in Hackney. This is the first time over the last 10 months that the cultural sector is in higher consideration by Property Services as they are for cultural development, business support and business advice services that the council are delivering. This work has helped the council to understand its relationship with the arts and cultural sector in the borough.
- 5.10.10 Bringing about a far greater level of engagement, as described by the guest in the meeting, has been important because the other set of relationships that are critical is the relationship between the Arts Council and Arts Council England. It will be key going forward for the council to advocate on behalf of local organisations across the sector with creditability and bring that advocacy into Arts Council England and into Central Government and the Department of Culture, Media and Sport.
- 5.10.11 Ensuing the council is listened to because it's important to champion all of those great creative practitioners that have made Hackney their home.

## 5.11 Questions, answers and Discussion (part 1)

- (i) **Members referred to the table in the report highlighting the work started after officer attendance at LiH in January 2020. Members commended the council for taking on board the comments and recommendations made during their meeting and the plans to expand. Members referred to schools and youth clubs not being open except for vulnerable young people. Members asked how they would get schools involved - in addition to youth clubs and tenant associations - recognising it is just after they start their academic year following a long summer holiday.**
- (ii) **Members commented if they are making films these can be made at any time and during the summer term before they break up. Although**



**Member recognise schools will have a lot of academic work to catch up on. Members think it's important that young people are given the opportunity to make films and costumes because of cultural heritage being an important part of people's wider education.**

In response the Cultural Development Manager confirmed they do want to involve schools and agreed they can ask them before they break up for the summer holidays. This format will give them a lot more flexibility for involving groups that have those kinds of restrictions.

One of the first steps is to meet with their carnival groups and contact the curator team for the carnival to help produce a robust community engagement programme. There will be via consultation and co-production with key carnival stakeholders and artists. The process will involve talking to various partners and working out what will work for them.

They intend to involve youth groups, schools and the other partners they started to contact in February 2020.

- (iii) Members commended the work and activities by the service to involve schools and agreed it would be a great activity. Members also welcomed the creation of an online space for the carnival as this would serve well for the future. Referring to the previous report to the Commission from officers last year about their relationship with other carnivals around the world. This will add as a rich resource for other carnivals.**
- (iv) Members commented events like this do not have much institutional memory. Therefore, the work to create institutional memory through videos as a resource about the carnival was welcomed.**
- (v) Members commended the report on the carnival and asked if the same funding was available during the pandemic and enquired how groups can get help with funding.**

In response the Cultural Development Manager advised the funding application they were scheduled to submit to the Arts Council was still available. There is also project grant pots of funding. The officer pointed out the funding stream is currently oversubscribed because they have removed the requirement for match funding. This funding is available to large organisations, local authorities, individual artists and carnival groups. They do provide support to groups during their application process. They support them with advice on how to make a successful application.

The other fund is 'developing your creative practice', this is also Arts Council funding. This is aimed at individual artists to be able to develop their practice in a new way, to seek advice and mentoring to support what they would like to do. The Council is writing letters of support for carnival artists and others who are applying for that funding.

In summary there is funding available, but it is extremely competitive.

The officer advised the council will not be applying to the Arts Council for funding for the carnival this year because they are submitting a bid for another project. They can only apply for one in at a time.

- (vi) Members asked the officer to describe a tangible benefit from this work that people can do together e.g., NHS claps. The Member suggested doing something that embodied the spirit of carnival bringing the community together. Is this possible?**

The Cabinet Member for Planning, Culture & Inclusive Economy welcomed the idea and asked Members for suggestions.

The Chair suggested the creation of small neighbourhood groups with activities to celebrate carnival - subject to small groupings being permitted. The Commission agreed to feedback any further ideas.

- (vii) Members asked if the carnival would be shown on YouTube. Members suggested being on YouTube may encourage more people to view it and once they are allowed to mix, they could sit together.**

In response the Cultural Development Manager confirmed last year they used the Hackney Carnival Facebook page because they already had a following on that page with a view of building on that audience. The officer advised on reflection it would be good to put it on YouTube because it may be more accessible.

- (viii) Members pointed out Hackney has very talented young people and older people and asked if the dance challenge would be opened to and linked in with groups like the Windrush generation to encourage all age ranges to get involved.**

- (ix) Members commended the engagement list of groups in the report. Members asked if all these groups would be encouraged to participate in the online event again.**

In response the Cultural Development Manager advised they would get back in touch with the groups to explore the potential of their involvement this year and work out the best way to do that for them. This will be worked out with each group.

This will require coming up with a form of community engagement that everyone can do.

## 5.12 Questions, answers and Discussion (part 2)

- (i) Members commended the work of the council to support the cultural organisations and tenants of council properties. Members asked if the Council has been lobbying the government to put pressure on all landlords to help the organisations that were not fortunate enough to be commercial tenants with the Council.**

In response the Cabinet Member for Planning, Culture & Inclusive Economy advised as a Council they have been championing the case for commercial

tenants across many sectors when it comes to their relationship with commercial landlords. The Cabinet Member confirmed this has been happening and continues currently.

The Cabinet Member highlighted that both Mayor of Hackney and he, as Cabinet Member, will be attending a meeting with landlords to advocate for a group of commercial tenants. Pointing out this is ongoing work. The Cabinet Member informed there are more calls on the Council to support in whatever way it can. The fundamental issue is the council has no authority to intervene in the relationship between a commercial landlord and its tenant. Notwithstanding the council can help, advocate and bring people together.

In relation to lobbying government to lever out as much support as possible. The Council has contributed to the formal channels such as the Select Committee inquiries and direct representation through to the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

- (ii) **Members asked Village Underground to outline his experience of being a venue operator during these times and the plans for reopening. Members also asked if he was aware of any venues that have not survived during the pandemic.**

In response Village Underground explained it has been tough because their business operation revolves around bringing people together and this has evaporated. They have lost approximately 95% of their income.

During the open period they put on a couple of events and found the audience was keen to buy tickets and come out again. The current challenge is whether Hackney's infrastructure will be as successful as it was previously in the first and second culture recovery fund round. If they have the same level of success with funding Hackney should see most of the cultural infrastructure survive. In his view the big issues to watch for the winddown of furlough – this has been a protection for many jobs. This is not just in reference to the cultural sector jobs but jobs of the audience members too.

There is also the end of eviction protections soon so this could be a potential watershed moment for commercial landlords and commercial tenants.

Lastly there is the large debt mountain that is building up from taking out a coronavirus business interruption loan (CBILS) scheme. His business had £1million of CBILS loans to keep them going through the pandemic. In addition to the forbearances given to them by the council and other stakeholders/funders. He pointed out they have a payment plan in place, but this is subject to the business bouncing back reasonably well.

The venue operator was of the view there will be organisations in the borough that are going to struggle with the huge mountain of debt. Pointing out even if they did not take out CBILS loans they would have forbearance that will need to be paid back.

In his view the sector has a lot of optimism that they will get through this period. But there are still hurdles to overcome for the cultural and hospitality sector. He pointed out it comes back to everyone working together and the Council

taking the leading role. Orchestrating a mass opening when it is safe to do so to encourage a lot of activity. They are hoping this will commence in the summer.

- (iii) **Members referred to the night-time economy being closed and that residents may have found it has been quieter and become accustomed to this. Members asked if the Council is expecting residents to provide opposition to venues reopening? Members commented it is great that parts of Hackney have become a destination but queried if the culture offer after the pandemic could be widened.**
- (iv) **Members referred to the great work in relation to Black Lives Matter and the Windrush generation. Members asked if it would be possible to make culture even more encompassing. To enable people who do not currently enjoy those destinations, clubs and venues to enjoy a wider culture, so they could build back better and stronger.**

In response the Cabinet Member for Planning, Culture & Inclusive Economy acknowledged the thoughts and comments from the venue operator from Village Underground. The Cabinet Member added they can consider a portfolio of activities across a wider community to draw people in. Hoping then the residents would not look at the sector with animosity. But perhaps with a new sense of ownership of what the cultural, leisure and hospitality sector can offer in the borough. Point out the arts and culture interface are the perfect platform to do as described by the venue operator. Like the work he has been doing with his two venues demonstrating the capacity and ability of the arts and cultural sector to build those bridges and create that relationship.

- (v) **Members referred to one of the most famous venues in Hackney (theatres) and asked if they have engaged with theatres like the Arcola to find out the impact on them.**

In response the Cultural Development Manager confirmed theatres have been hugely affected just like music venues and cinemas.

Officers advised these are the 3 groups of organisations they meet with monthly to help them navigate this very difficult time.

In relation to the theatres a lot of them were interested in doing outdoor theatre in the first lockdown. But this was something the council was unable to support them with because of the concerns about organising events during the pandemic.

Some like the Village Underground were able to reopen for a short period in the late summer and were able to re-engage with audiences.

There have been some innovate approaches like access all areas. This is not a venue but a theatre organisation that works with people with a learning disability. This group normally takes part in the carnival each year but this year they worked with their members to create an online event. This also had a route through Hackney's streets with QR codes for people to scan as they went along the route to hear about the lockdown experiences of their members.

The Shoreditch Town Hall have progressed with some projects. They have started working with a group of young people to help develop their programme for young people. They have recently put out a call for 6 new artists to work with them to develop new work. They had approximately 160 applications for this. This demonstrates a huge demand for these opportunities in the sector. They have moved all their work online.

The Cultural Programme Officer added the council has worked closely with the Hackney Empire on the Discover Young Hackney Festival. The is an all-year-round programme for young people aged 13-19.

They put on activities to help young people remain part of society and to take care of their wellbeing and mental health. The council commissioned 15 projects. A lot of the projects were held online but focused on the softer elements of wellbeing and mental health and gave young people an opportunity to communicate with each other. This was in addition to developing skills and training opportunities to provide pathways for young people into the arts and culture sector. Theatre organisations have worked hard across the borough to maintain that creative activation.

The Hackney Empire is planning to hold their annual Alter Ego talent contest in the next couple of months. This is likely to be held in March or April 2021. The Hackney Empire is continuing to engage with audiences online as well as through other communication channels.

Members acknowledged it has been a terrible time for many businesses but especially the arts and culture sector. It was pleasing to hear that in the short window of opening that some businesses had reopened. The Commission is hoping the vaccine programme will be successful and enable the sector to take events back offline and put them back into the community.

The Chair and Members of the Commission thanked LBH staff and Village Underground for attending the meeting.

## 6 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

- 6.1 The draft minutes of the previous meeting held on 18<sup>th</sup> January 2021 have been delayed and will be provided at the next LiH meeting on 9<sup>th</sup> March 2021.

<b>RESOLVED:</b>	Minutes were approved
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<b>ACTION:</b>	
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## 7 Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission- 2020/2021 Work Programme

- 7.1 The Chair referred to the work programme and updated the Commission on the discussion items for the next meeting.
- 7.2 The March meeting is scheduled to focus on housing and the digital divide.

7.3 There will also be an update from Thames Water on the flooding in N4. This is the six-month progress update agreed by the Commission earlier in the municipal year.

7.4 Police to be called back for first meeting of the new municipal year in June. The Overview and Scrutiny officer to send out the invite requests for the June date in the draft calendar.

<b>ACTION:</b>	Overview and Scrutiny officer to send out the invite requests to MPS Borough Command Unit Police, IOPC, MET HQ and MOPAC for the June 2021 meeting.
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## 8 Any Other Business

8.1 None.

Duration of the meeting: 7.00 - 9.10 pm