



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
Community Groups		
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
Council Services		

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.
Schools		
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

Consultancies		
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
Existing carnival partners		
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:

Group / organisation	Taken part before?	Initial ideas for participation
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

Aim	Measure of success	Evidence	Method / source
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.