

Meeting:	Cabinet
Date:	19 th July 2007
Subject:	Overview & Scrutiny Review of Cultural Services
Key Decision: (Executive-side only)	No
Responsible Officer:	Javed Khan, Director of Community & Cultural Services
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Anjana Patel – Portfolio Holder for Community & Cultural Services
Exempt:	No
Enclosures:	Scrutiny Review of Cultural Services

SECTION 1 – SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Members of Cabinet are asked to note the content and recommendations of this report and refer the report to the Portfolio Holder for Community and Cultural Services to inform future cultural services provision.

REASON:

In accordance with Overview and Scrutiny rules, Cabinet must consider reports produced by the Committee or one of its sub-committees.

Overview

- 1.1 A sub-Committee of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee carried out a review of Cultural Services over the period December 2006 to June 2007. This review occurred within the period that the independent Trust (Arts Culture Harrow), which was managing the Harrow Arts Centre and Museum, went into voluntary liquidation. As such it provided some challenges in regards to its timing.

- 1.2 The review included desktop research and site visits, with a local professional artist in the review committee. However, it did not include public or specific stakeholder consultation. The Review Group comprised:
- Cllr Mitzi Green (Chairman)
 - Cllr Jean Lammiman
 - Cllr Bill Stephenson
 - Cllr Nana Asante
 - Cllr Paul Scott
 - Community Co-optee: Tim Oelman
- 1.3 The site visits undertaken by the Group were:
- Harrow Museum, Canons Park, Bernays Gardens and the Beacon Centre in Rayners Lane
 - Arts Depot in Barnet, Camden Arts Centre in Hampstead, Swiss Cottage Central Library in Camden and Willesden Green Library Centre in Brent
- 1.4 It is noted that this report makes general recommendations across much of Cultural Services yet only reviewed arts provision in any depth, with some sports and heritage elements, and did not review libraries, open spaces, whole sports and leisure programming, recreation or parks. Therefore, its conclusions must be read in this limited context.

SECTION 2 - REPORT

- 2.1 This review makes broad conclusions about Cultural Services with 26 specific recommendations for action across four main themes:
- consultation with the wider community should be central to the development of cultural services
 - clear aims and priorities should be developed
 - planning for sufficient capacity and sustainability should be considered
 - robust performance management plays a key role

2.2 Response to recommendations

Strategic Issues

Recommendation 1: *The first step towards developing the Harrow Cultural Strategy in 2009 should be to identify key aims for cultural provision in the borough. Local people and groups should be consulted and enabled to take an active role in working with officers to carry out the work to identify these aims.*

The Council will ensure that the 2009 revision of the borough- wide Cultural Strategy will actively involve local people and groups.

Recommendation 2: *In the long term, the council should consider entering into partnership with an independent, charitable organisation to deliver arts services.*

The council has recently taken over two key arts and heritage facilities following the demise of a private charity for the second time in 7 years. This

reflects the challenges of such partnership, and the limited market of service providers. Further work must be done to determine the root causes prior to any progression towards this goal. Additionally, with the new facilities project at Gayton Road, this may present some challenges for the council with a partner in a co-located council space.

Recommendation 3: *The opportunity should be taken as part of the council's new cultural strategy to maintain the council's commitment to placing the arts, and culture, at the centre of the way it thinks about the services it provides to local people, through strategic, tactical and operational links to high-level service plans and strategies.*

Agreed. A Cultural Services Officer Group (CSOG) has been meeting regularly since 2005 and continues to develop strong links between the breadth of cultural services delivery, ensuring that the importance of these services is reflected in the Council's corporate ambitions. CSOG will begin work on the next Cultural Strategy in 2008.

Recommendation 4: *A robust approach to performance management is key to the successful operation of cultural services. Officers should recognise this by seeking to establish a more robust approach to performance management, leading to a performance management culture in cultural services. Performance management must be kept under review by the scrutiny function.*

CSOG and a Performance Management Support officer are undertaking an internal review of the scorecard of measures required and their relevance to holistic cultural services performance management. Cultural Services performance is also monitored at the recently established Service Improvement Board Meetings.

Cultural facilities

Recommendation 5: *The council should justify plans for the future based upon firstly a baseline understanding of current facilities and their use, and secondly on a robust analysis of the needs which need to be met for cultural services in the borough. The review group would like to see evidence of this at a later date.*

Service areas already make use of data from a range of sources and the results of studies such as the extensive Sports, Recreation and Open Spaces Study. Further analysis will be undertaken in the lead up to the Gayton Road Project, and in the collection of data for audience development and a cultural 'observatory' of data.

Recommendation 6: *The council should put its reference and reliance on a wide range of demographic information, including the Harrow Vitality Profiles, on a more formal footing for the planning of cultural services, recognising them as key tools for analysing the needs of local people and making long term plans accordingly.*

Services already rely heavily on the Vitality Profiles and other data to inform service planning and delivery. The recent Beacon Centre opening and

Celebrating Change programme of arts activities were developed precisely around identified need.

Vitality Profile data and other cultural data can sometimes be challenging as it is often demographically based or culturally based, but seldom interchangeable. Demographic data paints a picture of social need without consideration for cultural aspiration and often the most active cultural communities are those in the most deprived wards. Conversely, affluence does not necessarily influence cultural participation. The data sets available in the creative industries, for example, are disparate and specialised. Recent years have seen a regional effort to create cultural 'observatories' of knowledge, which the Council aspires to develop locally.

Recommendation 7: *Cultural infrastructure, and its development, should be planned with reference both to perceived exemplars of best practice in this field, and to the aims and aspirations of the council's cultural strategy, as part of a robust performance management process.*

Agreed.

Recommendation 8: *In the medium and long term, provision at Harrow Arts Centre and the Harrow Museum should be fully integrated within the rest of the borough's cultural provision.*

Agreed. Provision at Harrow Arts Centre has been fully integrated into the arts provision by reorganisation of the department and refresh of the service plan following the successful re-launch of the centre.

The Harrow Museum has been fully integrated into the libraries and heritage provision by assimilating the staff and service planning after the re-opening of the site.

Recommendation 9: *Steps should be taken as part of the process for the development of the 2009 cultural strategy to outline a vision, for the HAC in particular, that permits long-term decisions to be made about the physical fabric of the main building and the site as a whole.*

Agreed. A whole site review will be considered for the Hatch End site that includes the other site users (leisure, medical, private) and aspirations for a repositioning of the site as a Culture and Leisure centre.

Community involvement

Recommendation 10: *The council should not consider resident satisfaction data as a standalone issue. Surveys should be integrated within a range of other methods of community involvement, thus allowing a more holistic view to be taken on the success of cultural services from the point of view of service users.*

The limited nature of data collection in the annual reporting of Culture Block Indicators is showing a slanted view of the reality of Cultural Services. There are numerous other collection and consultation methods in place across the services that are not measured or considered, and the resident's data alone is

not sufficient. Surveys are also subjective and officers are keen to develop stronger real engagement methods with audiences and residents who are already, or could be participants.

Recommendation 11: *The council should reassess the effectiveness of the cultural forums. They should be used as one of a raft of measures to involve the local community. Community involvement should extend to individual residents and users on their terms, rather than on the terms of the council as a method to achieve its own ends in consultation.*

The healthy involvement of the existing cultural forums and planning groups across a range of events, with delivery based on the active involvement of our users and residents, would question the validity of this recommendation. The cultural forums are one of many engagement strategies in place within the service, which influence the development of service plans. The services show excellent value for money and have been measured year on year with extraordinary outputs and cultural delivery. Whilst the reminder that our community is at the core of our planning for a cultural strategy is welcome, given the strength of existing activity, this recommendation serves little purpose. The Council is currently recruiting to a new post of Audience Development Manager, which will add significantly to existing successes.

Recommendation 12: *The council's 2009 cultural strategy should be designed to place the needs of the local community, as expressed through community involvement activities, in a strategic context.*

Agreed. Community involvement is of the utmost importance and the Council will continue to develop these strong links through to the design of the next cultural strategy. We also recognise that arts and culture is about aspiration and contemporary exploration—these cannot exclusively be realised through community need. The intention of the arts service must also be about raising the bar and inspiring new horizons of thought beyond the known local frame.

Recommendation 13: *The council should take immediate steps to ensure that current consultation activities identify community need, established both by conventional needs analysis and community involvement activities, as the paramount concern in any cultural development.*

The notion that all activities must be justified prior to any action is a sweeping statement that would work to deter the very valuable ongoing work of services, which is based on strong robust plans framed on current thinking. We understand that for any major projects, more must be specifically done to assess needs and then prioritise.

Recommendation 14: *The council and ward councillors should investigate the possibility of creating community funds, which can be used by local people to carry out specific projects. Local people should be provided with the support necessary to be able to apply for and use these funds effectively.*

The Council already operates Prosperity Action Teams at a Ward Member level.

Recommendation 15: *The cultural services strategy should ensure that Gayton Road's pre-eminence as the borough's flagship community cultural facility is established and maintained.*

Agreed.

Recommendation 16: *Consideration should be given to the potential of the Gayton Road project to act as an element of, and driver for, the redevelopment of the town centre.*

Agreed.

Recommendation 17: *The main gallery space at Gayton Road should be professionally curated.*

This issue will be considered fully at the appropriate stage of development.

Recommendation 18: *The Council should look critically at the proposal for a commercial performance space seating 350 in the context of the financial viability of such a venue.*

The documentation provided on this matter clearly spelt out the justification for a 350-seat theatre rather than 250 seats. The minimal risk and nominal fit out costs for an additional 100 seats far outweigh the overwhelming opportunities it affords to local and regional commercial arts activity.

Recommendation 19: *The Council should make clear estimates of, and firm commitments to, ongoing revenue funding for the Gayton Road arts centre.*

We are considering this issue within the Council's Medium Term Budget Strategy.

Recommendation 20: *We consider an ongoing library facility in the centre of Harrow to be essential over the transitional period.*

We are developing options to maintain the library's functional resources through virtual and other means during its period of closure.

Recommendation 21: *More detailed community involvement work, consulting local people and groups about the design brief, eventual architects' plans and fit-out for the site, needs to be carried out in tandem with the physical construction of the project.*

We have established a project sub-committee, which is focusing specifically on developing a Communication plan for the project. This will include local consultation on the various aspects of the project.

Recommendation 22: *Capital improvements to be undertaken within cultural services should be prioritised, to identify which are the most important for the council and to manage competing project priorities accordingly.*

Case Study: Bernays Gardens

Recommendation 23: *Artists' studios – and other space for creative industries – should be developed to meet need in such a way that the volume of space and the number of potential studios is maximised. Some sites may*

not be appropriate for certain developments; a strategic approach should be taken.

Agreed.

Recommendation 24: *As part of a prioritisation exercise, definite plans on the use of the site should be drawn up and the appropriate community groups consulted before any further action is taken.*

Further action on this matter will be considered in due course, including the need for further community consultation.

Recommendation 25: *Local councillors should be approached regarding providing funding for some elements of the development through the Prosperity Action Teams, in conjunction with community fundraising.*

Prosperity Action teams will be made aware of these options

Recommendation 26: The Cultural Services Review should reconvene in six month's time to consider the success of the Beacon Centre and report their findings to Overview and Scrutiny.

Equalities Impact consideration

2.3 Cultural Services by their very nature have a significant impact on equalities indicators such as participation levels, community cohesion and confidence.

Current KPIs and likely impact of decision on KPIs

2.4 Where the report highlights issues relating to KPIs, these are identified and the effect explained. The most significant KPI related recommendation relates to the use of resident satisfaction surveys.

Legal and financial considerations

2.5 No legal implications arise directly from this report, but there are potential implications around contract, procurement and partnerships arrangements in the future.

2.6 No financial implications arise directly from this report

SECTION 3 - STATUTORY OFFICER CLEARANCE

Name: Barry Evans	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Chief Financial Officer
Date: 10 July 2007		
Name: Hugh Peart	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Monitoring Officer
Date: 10 July 2007		

SECTION 4 - CONTACT DETAILS AND BACKGROUND PAPERS

Contact:

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Background Papers:

Scrutiny Review of Cultural Services