

Culture and Leisure Sub-Committee

29 June 2021

Present: Councillor J Cruddas (Chair)
Councillors K Barrie, G Bell, L Bell, L Bones, M Hall,
J Kirwin, J Montague, A Newman and J Shaw

Apologies: Councillors C Davis and G Madden

C&L1/21 Substitute Members

There were no substitute members reported.

C&L2/21 Declarations of Interest and Dispensations

There were no declarations of interest or dispensations reported.

C&L3/21 Minutes

Resolved that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 28 January 2020 be confirmed and signed by the Chair.

C&L4/21 Cultural Services Recovery Planning

The Sub-Committee received a report on the Authority's Cultural Services recovery planning following the current easing of covid restrictions on service delivery.

The period since the first lockdown in March 2020, through to the current easing of restrictions on service delivery, has been especially challenging for Cultural Services. Major sections of the service had not been able to operate for much of the past 15 months, the Playhouse Whitley Bay for example having been dark for the entire period.

Other services had been able to operate for limited periods when lockdown restrictions had been eased, allowing for some access to museum facilities at Segedunum and Stephenson Steam Railway, as well as key visitor attractions such as St. Mary's Lighthouse.

The Events programme had been significantly hit with the postponement for two consecutive years of the Mouth of the Tyne Festival, and only limited events activity being permitted. Library provision has functioned on a limited basis in line with the permitted national guidance, with Order and Collect provision and limited People's Network access.

The Government guidance on restrictions during the pandemic had been used in the compilation of the report and could be viewed via the following website:

<https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>

The senior Manager, Cultural Services, presented an overview of what the service had been able to deliver over the period of the pandemic and current planning for a return to business as usual. This included:

- Covid 19 Response Phase – March to June 2020
- Recovery Phase One – July to November 2020

- Recovery Phase Two – Transition (planned) November 2020 to March 2021
- November 2020 to March (reality)
- Library visits, library book issues and people’s network logins
- Wider sector impact
- Culture Survey – the effect Covid-19 had had on the delivery of services or cultural projects; how Covid-19 had affected funding for cultural activity; and the level of optimism about the future of cultural services in the UK
- Following the Roadmap – April to July 2021
- Culture in the Council Plan – keeping libraries and leisure centres open; the destination of choice for visitors through North Tyneside’s award-winning parks, beaches, festivals and seasonal activities; outstanding children’s services, events, and facilities so North Tyneside was a great place for family life
- Current strategies – Libraries Strategy 2016-21; Arts Development Strategy 2014-21’ Heritage Strategy 2014-21; and Tourism Strategy 2014-21

In terms of the impact of culture, there was now a clear acknowledgement of the social and economic value of the cultural sector, and its ability to deliver growth and drive regeneration. These impacts could range from growth in tourism, creative and cultural sectors, to enhancing individual skills, knowledge and confidence, to strengthening community pride and place image. Three quarters of mental health problems occurred before the age of 25 and half before the age of 14 (*Hayes et al 2020*)(*Social prescribing and Barriers to Cultural activities – Children North East 2021*). The national gap in life expectancy between children from communities with the highest and lowest vulnerability to literacy problems in the country was staggering (*Literacy and Life Expectancy National Literacy Trust 2018*). The arts could help meet major challenges facing social care; aging, long-term conditions, loneliness and mental health (*Social Care Institute for Excellence – Policy Briefing 2017*).

The sub-committee was invited to put forward comments on the Cultural Services Recovery Planning presentation. These included the following comments with responses (*italics*) from officers, as appropriate: -

- The North of Tyne cultural offer and whether North Tyneside as a borough could expect to receive its fair share of the or instead from pooled resources on projects such as the Tour of Britain cycling. *The North of Tyne £2.6m cultural recovery fund was due to be launched this month and share details to be confirmed.*
- Covid and community projects by locals and the type of monitoring in place of new cultural projects to support them e.g., a new Playhouse, Whitley Road. *There was no systematic monitoring of community projects but that analytical data was gathered over the years and good relations with community groups developed.*
- Potential inequalities between different wards across the borough in terms of lifespan of residents and how this was addressed. *Culture and creche zones were linked to the North Shields Master Plan or Culture Strategy. Health after covid (at the coast) was linked to the Tourism offer in the borough. There were not many tourism offers available in the Benton and Weetslade areas of the borough, but the Authority was aware of this and as far as possible trying to address this imbalance.*
- The use of Parks as valuable assets in terms of inequalities and how arts and cultural services were being accessed via the parks and integrated e.g., Snowman and the dogs. *Public art and heritage were part of the cultural offer such as those in Northumberland Park. In relation to the use of arts studio, arts trail and commemorative art, work was being done such as using Waggonways or other ways to showcase these in terms of the cultural offer.*

The Chair, on behalf of the Sub-Committee, thanked the Senior Manager, Cultural Services, for his informative presentation and acknowledged the work done by him and his team(s) in delivering the Authority's cultural services during these difficult times. The Chair also commented that she, as well as other Members of the sub-committee, had a keen interest in looking at ways in which to address health and inequalities in those areas of the borough which were most in need of support.

It was **agreed** that the report and presentation on the cultural service delivery over the period of the pandemic and current planning for a return to business as usual be noted.

C&L5/21 Work Programme

The Sub-committee received a report which presented Members with potential topics for inclusion in the 2021/22 work programme.

As part of the process for establishing the 2021/22 Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme, suggestions had been sought for potential topics that the Sub-committee could look at. As in previous years, the focus of overview and scrutiny would be on policy development. Following discussions with the Chair and Deputy Chair of Culture and Leisure Sub-committee, and Cultural Services Sport and Leisure and senior officers, the following topics had been identified as possible areas for the Sub-committee to consider over the coming year:

- Cultural Services Covid recovery planning and Services overview
- Sport & Leisure Services Covid recovery planning and Services overview
- Tourism and Events activity
- Cultural Strategy

The report highlighted that the Sub-committee was able to establish a sub-group to carry out an in-depth investigation into a particular area but that due to resource constraints only one sub-group could operate at any one time.

Members were given the opportunity to raise other topics relevant to the remit of the Sub-committee for inclusion in the work programme. The following suggestions were put forward for consideration:

- Future developments for the Segedunum heritage site including funding arrangements and timescales for completion following the outcome of the covid pandemic.
- Work around how the Authority advertised staycations as part of the culture offer and general plan for advertising and if stats were produced pre-post covid on people visiting the borough; and whether this had made any difference to the economy of North Tyneside compared to the last 4-5 years.
- The effectiveness of the no cycling signs on pavements and pedestrianised streets across North Tyneside in terms of how many, and, if they were still needed.

In discussing the sub-committee's work programme, the Chair informed Members that a meeting of the scrutiny Chairs and Deputy Chairs was due to take place on 30 June 2021 to consider amongst other matters, topics that had been put forward by Members for potential inclusion in the work programmes' of the Overview, Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee and its sub-committees; and that any potential items of business arising from the meeting relevant to this sub-committee's terms of reference in addition to the above suggestions, would be considered for inclusion in the work programme

It was **agreed** that (1) the proposed work programme for 2021/22 be approved; and (2) the suggestions put forward by Members of the Culture and Leisure Sub-Committee and any further potential items of business arising from the meeting of the scrutiny Chairs and Deputy Chairs meeting be considered by the Chair for inclusion in the work programme relevant to this sub-committee's terms of reference.

C&L6/21 Date and Time Next Meeting(s)

It was **agreed** that the meetings due to be held on 31 August 2021 and 4 January 2022 both following immediately after Bank Holiday's, potentially reducing Members' availability, each to be re-arranged in consultation with the Chair and all Members of the sub-committee informed of the alternative dates accordingly.