

## READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

### REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

|                  |   |              |                                      |
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| TO:              | HOUSING, NEIGHBOURHOODS AND LEISURE COMMITTEE |              |                                      |
| DATE:            | 15 MARCH 2017                                 | AGENDA ITEM: | 15                                   |
| TITLE:           | THE CULTURAL EDUCATION PARTNERSHIP            |              |                                      |
| LEAD COUNCILLOR: | PAUL GITTINGS                                 | PORTFOLIO:   | CULTURE, SPORT AND CONSUMER SERVICES |
| SERVICE:         | ECONOMIC & CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT               | WARDS:       | BOROUGHWIDE                          |
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#### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report provides an update on progress in establishing a Cultural Education Partnership (CEP) for Reading in order to ensure access to high quality arts and cultural education for all children and young people, especially those young people who otherwise might not have access to such opportunities. The report outlines the strategic context set by Arts Council England (ACE) and the role of its bridge organisation 'Artsworld' in working with Reading to establish the CEP as a priority 'early adopter' in the south-east. It outlines the key stakeholders engaged with the CEP and the content of an initial Action Plan, as well as highlighting some emerging opportunities to deliver significant benefits to Reading's children and young people. The report seeks the Committee's endorsement of actions taken to date to establish the CEP and the support of the Committee and its members in advocating for the work of the CEP and the importance of access to high quality cultural experiences for all our young people whatever their background or circumstances.
- 1.2 A copy of the CEP's 'Action Plan September 2016 - August 2019' is attached at Appendix 1. Appendix 2 provides more detail on the 'Sound Around' project referenced in section 4.2 of the report.

#### 2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 That Committee notes and endorses the progress made in establishing a Cultural Education Partnership (CEP) for Reading.
- 2.2 That Committee endorses promoting access to high quality arts and cultural education for all children and young people as a means of improving outcomes, especially for those young people who otherwise might not have access to such opportunities.

2.3 That Committee welcomes the commitment and support of a range of partner organisations involved in the CEP and the ongoing delivery of its associated Action Plan, noting the significant opportunities outlined in section 4.2 of the report.

### 3. POLICY CONTEXT

3.1 Arts Council England's (ACE's) 10 Year Strategic Framework (2010-2020)- 'Great Art and Culture for Everyone' provides the overarching national ambition for cultural excellence and specifically includes as one of its 5 key goals:

'Every child and young person has the opportunity to experience the richness of the arts, museums and libraries'.

The importance of this goal has been reinforced by ACE's 'Cultural Education Challenge' - a call for the arts, culture and education sectors to work together in offering a consistent, and high quality, arts and cultural education for all children and young people. The concept and development of Cultural Education Partnerships has been promoted to specifically deliver on this challenge in 50 priority areas for ACE across the country.

3.2 The particular focus of Reading's CEP on those young people who otherwise might not have access to high quality cultural opportunities resonates strongly with local priorities to address inequality and to 'narrow the gap'. Exposure to arts and culture is widely acknowledged to have a wide range of benefits both for individuals and for society and communities more widely. In particular for young people engagement with arts and culture is strongly associated with personal development, aspiration, achievement and well-being. The overarching aim of the CEP is:

'To allow every child and young person in Reading to have the opportunity to aspire, achieve and participate in high quality arts and culture, and to develop a collaborative, sustainable infrastructure to maintain such engagement'.

The CEP and its Action Plan are aligned with and support the delivery of Reading's Culture and Heritage Strategy, the Children and Young People's Plan and the Health and Well-being Strategy.

### 4. THE PROPOSAL

#### 4.1 Current Position:

ACE have a national network of 'Bridge' organisations specifically commissioned to ensure that all children and young people experience the richness of the arts both in and outside school through connecting arts and cultural organisations, schools and communities. Unsurprisingly Bridge organisations across the country have been tasked with a key role in developing CEPs and for Reading this has meant working closely with Artsworld - the Bridge organisation for the South East.

In 2015/16 based on measures such as levels of deprivation and achievement, ACE and Artsworld identified a number of places to be prioritised for support as early adopters of CEPs. In the South East these included Brighton, East Kent, Milton Keynes, Hastings, Slough and Reading. Brighton is recognised as leading the way in the South East because of their existing development of an initiative called 'Our Future City' focused on the development of all children and young people's creative talent. Artsworld hosted a workshop with Brighton and other prospective CEP areas in the South East in July 2015. At this time a range of organisations in Reading were already

involved and engaged in planning for Reading's Year of Culture 2016 and the proposed creation of a CEP resonated strongly with local aspirations and strengthening partnerships. This enabled rapid progress to be made in gaining support for creating a CEP for Reading and this development phase was further supported by grant funding of £10,000 from Artswork. This funding supported facilitated workshop sessions to establish the partnership, undertake an initial consultation with young people and to develop and agree an Action Plan.

A copy of the Action Plan is attached at Appendix 1 and this document includes membership of the Partnership, terms of reference, information on Artsmark and Arts Award (accreditation schemes supported by ACE for the cultural activities of schools and individual young people respectively) and summary feedback from the initial consultation with young people that took place between May and July 2016. Of particular note with regard to the consultation are young people's quoted responses to the question:

'I think taking part in arts activities is important for me because....'

These, often perceptive, responses are very affirmative of how young people themselves value arts activities and of the potential for the CEP's work to be impactful.

The partnership has strong and committed representation from key local stakeholders, including schools, Berkshire Maestros, the College, the University, Reading UK CIC and the 'Culture and Arts Network' (CAN) representing all community arts organisations in the town. Artswork are also members of the Partnership and continue to provide proactive support. The CEP is currently Chaired by Cllr. Sarah Hacker as Chair of the Arts and Heritage Forum and there is a range of Council services represented. The Terms of Reference make clear that the current membership of the CEP is not immutable and can be altered or flexed should the need arise.

The detailed Action Plan has clear objectives and targets to help drive delivery and accountability:

- By August 2019 5,000 children and young people who were previously unlikely to engage with or participate in arts and culture will have engaged with and participated in an activity;
- Over the term of the CEP Action Plan 1,500 young people will have undertaken training, and achieved skills and appropriate accreditation, making them ready to seek employment in the cultural sector, or to use creative skills in their chosen employment field;
- Between September 2016 and August 2019 1,500 children and young people in Reading will have engaged in Arts Award with at least 750 achieving accreditation at one or more levels;
- Over the term of the CEP Action Plan 30 schools and colleges in Reading will have gained Artsmark status;
- Between September 2016 and August 2019 20+ partner organisations will actively participate, in collaboration, in delivering the CEP Action Plan;
- By August 2019 a further 3 Year CEP Action Plan will have been developed and resources secured to maintain a sustainable infrastructure for comprehensive ongoing arts and cultural engagement and participation from Reading's children and young people.

The delivery mechanism adopted by the CEP for the Action Plan is through establishing three partnership subgroups which focus on the following:

1. Support and develop new engagement, especially with young people who do not currently benefit from high quality cultural activity or experiences.
2. Activity that promotes and enables readiness for creative employment or upskilling.
3. Facilitate achievement of 'Arts Award' objectives and target Artsmark numbers.

It is acknowledged that these sub-groups and related programmes of work need to be further developed but it is still early days in the development of the CEP and significant progress has been made. This is recognised by both ACE and Artswork with Reading invited to speak about the development of its CEP as an example of good practice at a national workshop in January this year.

## 4.2 Options Proposed

The relatively rapid formation of the CEP and the early development of an Action Plan very much reflects a coalition of the willing with a genuine belief that organisations working together can achieve more than is possible individually, even at a time when public sector resources are constrained. Artswork have an ongoing remit and resources from ACE to promote Artsmark and Arts Award, especially but not exclusively to schools and the Reading First Partnership provides potential for strategic engagement in this regard. Artswork also have a small partnership investment fund to help pump-prime additional activity. An application has been submitted to Artswork initially for work with Reading College. The proposed one year programme aims to create a strategic step change in young people aged 15+ participating in cultural education and accessing cultural opportunities that enhance employability in the cultural sector. A decision on this application is anticipated by the end of March.

In addition to this specific application there are many and potentially growing opportunities for the CEP to embed benefits to children and young people in a range of programmes and activities, including targeted work to support those children and young people who are least likely to otherwise access high quality arts and cultural experiences. Whilst it would be impossible to list all those organisations engaged or activities being developed, including huge amounts of ongoing work in mainstream education settings and through CAN, set out below are examples that are indicative of the potential to enhance children and young people's access to arts and culture in the town. Firstly, there are a number of major projects already underway that have a strong community engagement strand that can provide significant opportunities to engage with children and young people, including schools:

- The 'Abbey Revealed' project which also incorporates refurbishment of the Abbey Gate building for use as an education centre (also resonating with its past use as a school that Jane Austen attended);
- The ambitious three year visual arts programme 'Reading International', led by the University's new Institute of Heritage & Creativity and embedding engagement with local arts organisations, schools and communities in the programme;
- Reading University's MERL reopened on 18 October after a £3 million redevelopment project, supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund and, as with the Abbey Revealed project, there is an extensive engagement and activity programme extending into future years;

- Reading Museum and MERL have also secured ACE funding for a collaborative project looking at the potential of digital technology to increase access and reach with clear potential for engagement with children and young people.

Secondly there are a range of planned or potential initiatives and funding bids that have either a specific focus on children and young people or can embed strands of activity to incorporate this:

- Reading Library Service is developing its range of cultural activities on offer, including a newly enhanced 'Rhyme Time', a programme of high quality theatre across its entire network of libraries, and will work with Jelly to deliver a new Arts Award programme with a long-term aspiration to expand the popular under 5's programme to other cultural venues. In addition the planned integration of libraries with community hubs has clear potential to increase linkages with other services to the benefit of children, young people and their families;
- The Reading-on-Thames Festival in September 2017 will be a legacy project from the Year of Culture with a high quality free to access programme that will explicitly seek to engage children and young people. An international project for children and young people - 'Rivers of the World' - will also be included. This project is a partnership with London's 'Totally Thames Festival' and will involve Reading secondary schools linking with Nepalese schools with a related exhibition on London's South Bank and in Reading;
- Reading has been selected as one of three locations nationally for delivery of the 'Sound Around' project in 2018. This project is a collaboration between Orchestras Live and the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra (RPO) and delivery will be managed locally through Berkshire Maestros and participating schools. The project has a specific targeted component to ensure participation of SEN pupils and special schools. Further details on this project are provided in Appendix 2.
- 'Jelly' is currently completing a 3 year funding application to continue their children and young people offer, including delivery of Arts Awards;
- Reading Museum and MERL are collaborating with Oxford's Pitt Rivers Museum who are leading on a bid for Heritage Lottery Funding (HLF) from their 'Kick the Dust' funding stream. This Thames Valley wide bid for over £900k over 5 years will focus specifically on opportunities for young people to engage with museums and for participating museums to extend their work with young people;
- Bids for National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) status have been submitted to ACE for both South Street and for Reading Museum in collaboration with MERL (ACE's National Portfolio provides regular funding for organisations that have a long-term and sustained commitment to a programme of high quality work that meets ACE's strategic objectives. A key benefit of NPO status, over and above the reputation and kudos it provides, is multi-annual core funding over a 5 year period and applications for the period 2018-22 are currently being considered by ACE). Whilst the national funding round for NPOs will be hugely competitive, if the bids are successful the capacity for outreach and engagement will be significantly enhanced. Reflecting ACE's Cultural Education Challenge it is an explicit requirement that NPOs deliver demonstrable benefits for children and young people.

Whilst selective, the above are indicative of the great potential in Reading for access to high quality arts and culture to make a real difference to quality of life and outcomes for children and young people and the CEP will be working to ensure that these benefits are realised and maximised.

### **4.3 Other Options Considered**

As reflected in their Cultural Education Challenge and overarching strategic framework, children and young people are a high priority for ACE. The Council, and a range of partner organisations, have been working closely with ACE who have identified Reading as one of a number of priority locations for strategic investment in the South East and nationally. The work to develop the CEP is closely aligned with and related to this wider strategic engagement. The objectives of CEPs also strongly align with the Council's priorities and the local aspiration to ensure a lasting and impactful legacy from the Year of Culture in 2016, including for children and young people. Given this strategic and local context, pursuing the potential benefits from establishing a CEP was considered to be the only appropriate option and has been strongly supported by a range of organisations.

## **5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS**

5.1 As outlined above the work and objectives of the CEP are closely aligned with a range of Council and Partnership strategies and children and young people's engagement with arts and culture is strongly associated with personal development, aspiration, achievement and well-being. In this regard the CEP primarily contributes to the Council's priority in the Corporate Plan for:

'Providing the best start in life through education, early help and healthy living.'

5.2 The aim of the CEP is also aligned with the Council's strategic aims:

- To establish Reading as a learning City and a stimulating and rewarding place to live and visit;
- To promote equality, social inclusion and a safe and healthy environment for all.

## **6. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION**

6.1 The CEP is committed to ensuring that children and young people's views and direct involvement are at the heart of its activities and will inform the development of its priorities and work programme. As outlined in section 4.1 of the report an initial consultation with young people has been carried out and the results are summarised in the Action Plan attached at Appendix 1. Ongoing engagement with children and young people, including direct representation of the Youth Cabinet on the Partnership, will be central to the work of the Partnership and a particular focus for the sub-group established to support and develop new engagement.

## **7. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

7.1 This report covers a diverse programme of activities and engagement linked to the work of the CEP that aims to ensure that culture plays a full role in improving the quality of life for Reading's children and young people. Promoting the role of cultural opportunities in combating inequalities and the need to address inequalities in participation in Reading are explicit objectives of the CEP.

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

## **8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

8.1 None arising from the content of this report.

## **9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 The Council's contribution to the work of the CEP is being managed within existing constrained resources and budget allocations and is primarily an enabling role rather than as a direct funder. Identifying both existing and new resources that can support delivery of the CEP's objectives are an explicit component of the Action Plan.

## **10. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

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

Reading's Culture and Heritage Strategy 2015-30