

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

TO:	HOUSING NEIGHBOURHOODS AND LEISURE COMMITTEE		
DATE:	4 JANUARY 2023		
TITLE:	STREET ART ADVISORY PANEL UPDATE		
LEAD COUNCILLOR:	CLLR BARNETT- WARD, CLLR ROWLAND	PORTFOLIO:	LEISURE & CULTURE, ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES & COMMUNITY SAFETY
SERVICE:	CULTURE & ENVIRONMENTAL AND COMMERCIAL SERVICES	WARDS:	BOROUGHWIDE
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1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Housing, Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee on the progress of the Street Art Advisory Panel and its next steps.
- 1.2 Actions are to note the progress of the Street Art Advisory Panel and approve the proposed process for adoption by the advisory panel.
- 1.3 The Street Art Advisory Panel has met three times this year and followed up via email.
- 1.4 It was set up in response to the growing interest in Street Art and an increase in its appearance after Banksy visited the town in 2021.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 To note the progress and next steps of the Street Art Advisory Panel.
- 2.2 To approve the process of identifying when a piece is street art as opposed to graffiti.

3. POLICY CONTEXT

3.1 At the November 2021 Housing, Neighbourhood and Leisure Committee meeting, it was agreed that the Street Art Advisory Panel could be set up to accomplish the aims as outlined in Appendix 4 of the CIL Enhanced Graffiti Removal Project Report.

3.2 The approved aims of the group are:

- *How street art and graffiti can be incorporated into the Reading's public art offering
- *The process of defining 'what street art is' as opposed to graffiti

4. THE PROPOSAL

4.1 Current Position:

4.1.2 To date the Street Art Advisory Panel has met three times. Outputs include:

4.1.3 A street art definition has been agreed by the panel. This definition proposes that **Street art** is a non-permanent artform, generally created on surfaces in public places like exterior building walls, overpasses, bridges and junction boxes. Street art does not have to involve painting. It can be done with stickers spread over surfaces or by methods like yarn bombing, a process where artists cover things like trees and telephone poles with colourful fibres and knitting, examples of which can be seen in both Emmer Green and Caversham. As a non-permanent artform it is not expected that it will be maintained except for under exceptional circumstances. For example, if a piece of street art has been commissioned as part of a project where it is intended that the piece is permanent, or if a piece is deemed a part of Reading's social history or commentary and is therefore important to the town. (For example, the Black History Mural)

4.1.4 The proposed definition of graffiti has been based on wording in the Reading Borough Council Street Cleansing Policy where graffiti is defined as 'any picture, letter, sign or mark which has been painted, inscribed or affixed on a surface'. Further to this, the Street Art Advisory Panel has proposed that when a piece is described as graffiti, it does not fit the criteria of street art as described above, and/or fails against one or all the following categories:

- Content - the piece contains
 - Hate comments
 - Extremist sentiment
 - Anti-faith
 - Swear words
 - Advertising
 - Tagging - (where it is not deemed to be a 'signature' or part of a larger piece of street art)
- Context - the piece
 - Is in a conservation area
 - Is on a structure that may become structurally unsound if it remains in place
 - Is on a building that is of significant heritage importance

4.1.5 Where a piece is considered graffiti, the work will be addressed under the Council's established graffiti policy.

4.1.6 A proposed process for identifying street art vs graffiti has been drafted and trialled by the panel. A brief overview of the process is summarised below:

Stage	Description of Process
1	Referral received by the Street Art Advisory Panel from the community, RBC Colleagues, Councillors or Other (where the current Street Cleansing Policy doesn't apply it will go through the following process)
2	Evaluation by Panel members against criteria including: <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Content○ Context○ Consent○ Is it likely to cause structural damage?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Is it heritage or conservation area or building? ○ Does it contain <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Hate comments ○ Extremist sentiment ○ Anti-faith ○ Swear words ○ Advertising ○ Tagging
3	<p>A quorum of 3 members of the Street Art Advisory Panel will complete the forms, a report will be created to be signed off by contributing Street Art Advisory Group panel members</p> <p>To ensure community representation, the relevant Ward Councillors will also be included in the advisory process. The quorum will not include the Lead Councillors, to ensure a wide range of views.</p>
4	<p>Report will be circulated to key stakeholders. The final decision will be taken by the Assistant Director for Culture in consultation with Lead Members and the panel's feedback.</p>
5	<p>Decision will be communicated back to the Street Art Advisory Panel and the individual who made the referral</p>
6	<p>Street Cleansing Team advised, and action taken to remove the piece if appropriate</p>

Please note: *There will be occasions where despite the recommendation of the Street Art Advisory Panel it will not be possible to remove work due to health & safety reasons or it being on private property, in line with the Council's Graffiti Policy.*

Draft Terms of Reference included in Appendix 1 for further information on process and decision making.

4.1.7 Examples of Street Art and Graffiti below:

Street Art



Examples of Graffiti in combination with street art:



Highlighted areas on the images are classed as graffiti.

4.1.8 Initial membership of the advisory panel has been recruited to and will continue to adapt as new key stakeholders are identified both within the community organisations (such as amenity societies and cultural groups) and the Council.

To date, the membership of the panel and those who have been consulted include:

- Reading Museum
- Jelly
- Open Hand Open Space
- A range of individual artists, specialising in visual arts
- RBC Officers representing Culture Development, Street Cleansing and Heritage
- Former Lead Councillor for Culture, Heritage and Recreation and Former Lead Councillor for Neighbourhoods and Communities, currently Lead Councillor for Leisure and Culture and Lead Councillor for Environmental Services and Community Safety

4.2 Next steps:

A trial was carried out in August 2022 using two existing pieces. Officers will create a report based on the outcomes from the trial. This report will be distributed to the Street Art Advisory Panel, to ensure that it is an accurate summary of their recommendations. It will then be passed on to key decision makers, in this case the Lead Councillors for Leisure and Culture, and Environmental Services and Community Safety, to inform their final decision.

Officers will also continue to work with Lead Councillors and the Street Art Advisory Panel on developing this process.

5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

5.1 The purpose of this section is to ensure that proposals contained in reports support the Council's vision and Corporate Plan priorities:

Reading Borough Council's vision is:

To help Reading realise its potential - and to ensure that everyone who lives and works here can share the benefits of its success.

5.2 The Panel's Contribution to the Corporate Plan is as follows:

Healthy environment

- The panel will be looking at how Street Art can impact Reading's Climate Strategy, specifically through the paints that are used to create the pieces, as well as how the pieces are removed. Specifically, regarding pieces that are close to water.

Thriving Communities

- N/A

Inclusive economy

- The focus on ensuring that Street Art is considered in this way, supports Reading's placemaking ambitions as outlined in the corporate strategy.

5.3 Full details of the Council's [Corporate Plan](#) are available on the website and include information on the projects which will deliver these priorities.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no direct environmental or climate implications arising from this report. However, the panel will be looking at how Street Art can impact Reading's Climate Strategy, specifically through the paints that are used to create the pieces, as well as how the pieces are removed. Specifically, regarding street art that is close to water.

7. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

7.1 Community consultation is a key part of the proposed process. The Street Art Advisory Panel is a blended membership made up of the cultural community, cross service RBC Officers and Councillors. Relevant Ward Councillors will be critical to ensuring that community opinion is appropriately captured. As such they will be advised to run their own community consultations to incorporate into the decision-making process.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

Appendix 1

DRAFT Street Art Advisory Panel - Terms of Reference v5

Context

The visit from Banksy in 2021 sparked the imagination of Reading, with a lot of interest and 'love' shown for the piece. It also resulted in a number of copycat pieces appearing around the town.

The current procedure for graffiti or street art is covered in 'The Street Cleansing Policy Appx 1'. This procedure outlines the circumstances and methods by '*which any picture, letter, sign or mark which has been painted, inscribed or affixed on a surface*' can be removed and where these can be removed from.

However, it does not give the Street Cleansing Team guidance on how to deal with street art that could be of value to Reading as a community and/or a town.

The Street Art Advisory Panel has been set up to support this need.

Purpose and Role of the Group

The purpose of this group will be to advise on:

- How street art and graffiti can be incorporated into the Reading's public art offering
- To set up an approved process to identify where a piece is street art as opposed to graffiti

Membership

Membership of this panel aims to reflect the variety of stakeholders in street art, including the visual art community, heritage representatives, highways and street care. Initially this group was brought together to approve these terms of reference and agree the process for identification of street art vs. graffiti. Moving forward, this group will only meet if required and will conduct most consultation online via email.

1. Representatives from Local visual art organisations and Amenity Societies (5 reps)
2. Lead Councillors for Environmental Services and Community Safety and Leisure and Culture (2 reps)
3. A member of the Street Care Team (1 rep) to advise on how they currently remove street art and any relevant experiences
4. Reading Business Improvement District (1 rep)
5. The conservation and heritage advisor for RBC (1 rep) to advise on how structures of historic importance and street art may or may not fit together
6. Ensure that the piece of artwork is not seen as a possible hazard on the highways (1 rep)
7. Reading Borough Council Coordinator (1 rep)

In addition to the above, appropriate Ward Councillors will be included in the consultation process to ensure that the community is represented.

Accountability

This group will meet to advise the council, and decision makers (Assistant Director for Culture) they will not be accountable for decisions made. They will meet as and when needed, to ensure that the group is reactive and supporting the needs of the community.

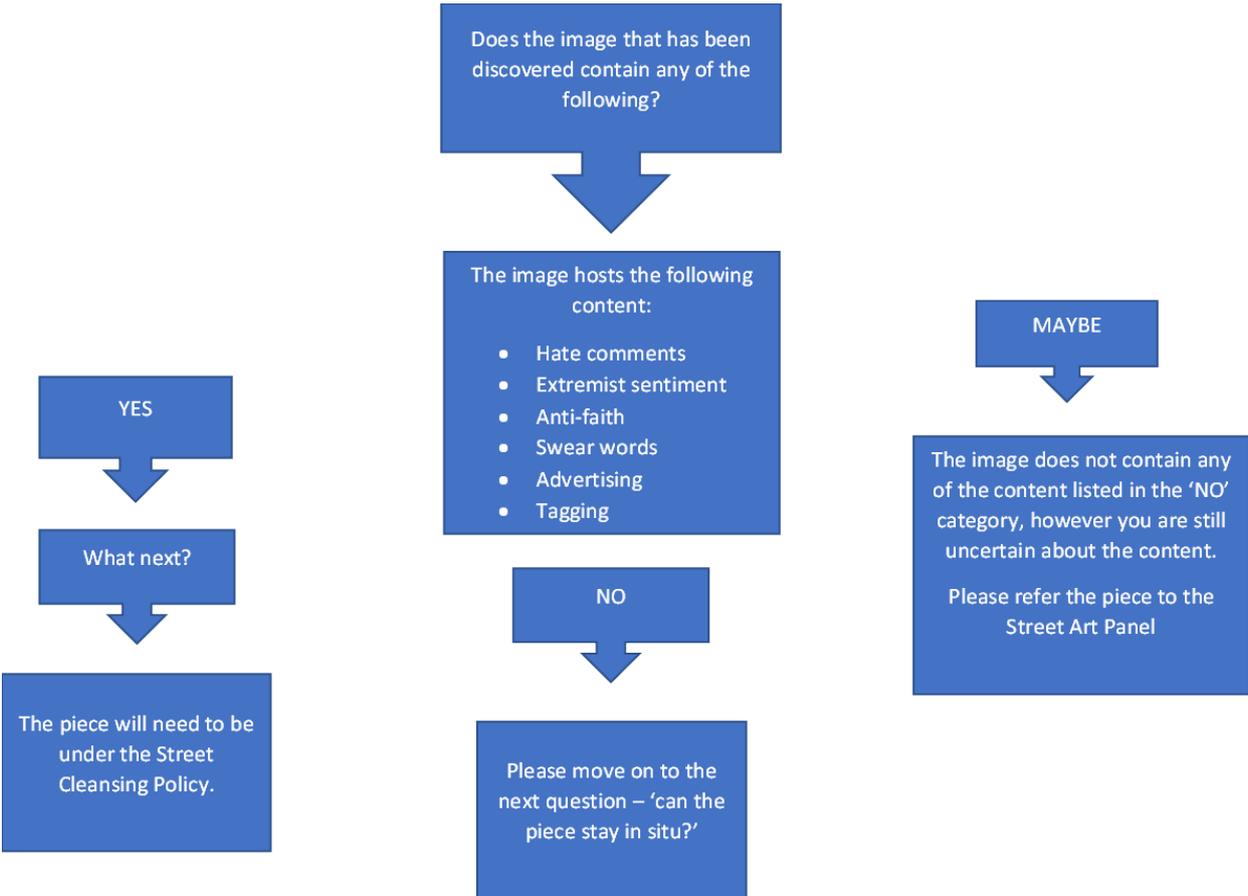
Ward Councillors will be critical to ensuring that community opinion is appropriately captured, as such they would be advised to run their own community consultations.

Decision Making

This group will be an advisory group only, final recommendations will be made by the Assistant Directors for Culture in consultation with Lead Members and the panel’s feedback.

Appendix 2 - Decision Flow Diagram

The flow diagram below will assist the panel in deciding whether a piece will need to be considered by the Street Art Panel or dealt with under the Street Cleansing Policy.



NO

The image has been created on one of the following surfaces:

- It is in a conservation area, on a protected building or structure
- Is on a structure that may become structurally unsound if it remains in place
- Is on a building that is of significant heritage importance

Consent was not sought and the owner of the structure or building would like it removed.

please note that in the case where the building/land is owned privately the Street Cleansing would need to advise.

Can the image stay in situ?

YES

All signs point 'yes' - send on to the Street Art Panel

MAYBE

The image hits a couple of the categories in the 'NO' section, however there is support from the community to keep it in place.

Please send on to the Street Art Panel

Send on to the Street Cleansing Team to be dealt with under the Street Cleansing