

REPORT TO: Employment, Learning and Skills, and
Community Policy and Performance Board

DATE: 31st January 2022

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director, Enterprise, Community
and Resources

PORTFOLIO: Employment, Learning and Skills and
Community

SUBJECT: Borough of Culture

WARDS: Borough wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an interim review the Borough of Culture project.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION that the report be noted

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 Background to borough of Culture

The award of Liverpool City Region Borough of Culture was inspired by the UK City of Culture programme that followed Liverpool's European Capital of Culture in 2008. The new initiative launched in 2018 as Liverpool celebrated its 10th Anniversary as the UK's only European Capital of Culture.

The Borough of Culture initiative is a non-competitive process that rotates around the City Region with the aim of encouraging each Borough to collaboratively develop its local talent and potential, while reflecting the ambitions and aims of the Regional Culture and Creativity Strategy that looks to build sustainable capacity across the City Region.

The overall aim of the programme is to stimulate talent, aspiration and promote creativity and economic growth through cultural engagement and activity across the City Region. Each Borough needs to weave five key elements into their creative programme:

- accessing, enjoying, learning and thriving through culture and creative engagement with skills and talent pathways
- positive outcomes – wellbeing, health, education, cohesion and future of work

- communities – increased participation, particularly the ageing society
- distinctiveness of place – promoting the creative and cultural offer to local people and visitors
- infrastructure – leaving a legacy through better infrastructure for culture and creativity

The aim of Halton's Borough of Culture year was to:

increase participation in quality cultural activity across Halton, helping more people to experience the arts and to benefit from the role that culture can play in transforming lives - improving health and wellbeing, reducing social isolation, increasing community cohesion, inspiring creativity, supporting learning and making Halton a great place to live and work.

The programme has been delivered under the banner of 'Celebrate Halton'; celebrating Halton's past, present and future through a diverse programme of activity

3.2 Operational overview

The internal project group comprised:

Julie Griffiths (Head of Libraries) – Borough of Culture Lead Officer
 Steph Davies (Lead Funding Officer) – funding support, Culture HQ lead
 Wesley Rourke – Operational Director lead
 Michelle Osborne – Marketing lead

Members of the HBC project group undertook this project in addition to their substantive roles.

In 2019 Artreach were appointed through the Council's procurement process and funded by HBC to support the development of the Borough of Culture programme. Artreach are sector experts with significant experience delivering, curating and creating cultural programmes across the UK.

3.3 Celebrate Halton Programme

The Celebrate Halton programme was developed in partnership with ArtReach and following consultation with stakeholders. The programme was devised during the pandemic and as a result had an agility and flexibility that enabled delivery to flux dependent on national restrictions. Early activities took place online and were well attended. These included:

MakeFest: Originally designed to be the follow up to the successful 2019 event that took place in Halton Lea Library, this event was reimaged in a digital format due to lockdown restrictions. 1600 online learning sessions have taken place so far via haltonmakefest.co.uk

Halton Libraries Festival Season: Despite restrictions Halton Libraries began their festival season at the start of 2021 with a mass make involving residents creating origami cranes and sharing on social media.

From 17th May changes in restrictions enabled the delivery of live events.

3.4 Funding

An allocation of £200k was made by the CA with an expectation that match funding was also secured to enhance the programme.

3.5 Marketing

The project website is celebratehalton.co.uk The events calendar hosted details of all the core commissions alongside events that were funded by the Made In Halton grants programme, and events uploaded by community groups.

Social media platforms were utilised to provide the latest marketing and information:

Twitter: @Halton2021

Instagram: @Halton2021

Facebook: CelebrateHalton

3.6 Outputs & outcomes

- The Celebrate Halton project delivered a programme of more than 500 activities across multiple venues and online; forming new partnerships & strengthening existing ones, working with new creatives, and facilitating new opportunities for residents.
- More than 150 artists & creatives have been supported by the project.
- The project team leveraged more than £600k in additional external funding from multiple agencies.
- Made in Halton small grants programme invested in 15 local projects including theatre workshops, music for people living with dementia, summer schools, art exhibitions, & comedy shows.
- Culture HQ retail unit in Runcorn Shopping Centre created an accessible event space where people could attend activities such as artist talks, exhibitions & workshops. The reimagined use of this busy retail environment offered access to non-traditional audiences, supported local artists, and connected people with creative interests. Evaluation of this project is currently underway.
- Celebrate Halton supported the high street economy through a programme of street theatre and live music increasing footfall & dwell time, as well as bringing joy to shoppers.
- Working with existing volunteer groups Celebrate Halton invested in activity to amplify the profile of Halton's culture assets including the

Victoria Park Glasshouse, which hosted The Squirrel installation in December.

- Celebrate Halton's Music Weekend supported the revival of the night-time economy, working with local pubs and venues to host live music.
- The project worked across Halton's parks revitalising the bandstand programme and, through the Liberty UK festival, bringing arts activities to open spaces.
- Celebrate Halton invested in projects at both Catalyst Science Discovery Centre & Norton Priory Museum & Gardens.

Where There Is Light – part of a UK tour, this Squidsoup installation was hosted at Catalyst Science Discovery Centre during heritage month, enabling visitors to experience the artwork for free across 2 weekends.

Museum of the Moon – Luke Jerram's ubiquitous installation spent a month at Norton Priory Museum supported by a wide programme of complimentary activities including music performances and children's story sessions.

Light! – Working with Liverpool Lantern Company the project created an event to introduce a new audience to the ancient woodlands that surround Norton Priory. More than 2000 residents wandered the snow covered trail uncovering wonderful wildlife sculptures and captivating animations.

These programme elements all utilised the Borough of Culture brand to promote the existing culture offer in Halton through a new lens to attract more diverse audiences.

- Celebrating Halton's Heritage, the heritage project strand of Celebrate Halton, has created a programme that will run into 2022. This includes establishing a Heritage Hub in Widnes and working with artist Laurence Payot to deliver an outreach digital museum. Halton's heritage came out as one of the most important aspects that residents wanted to see in the Borough of Culture programme.
- The overall project has supported skills development, working with local talent and creating an apprenticeship as part of the Heritage strand.
- Celebrate Halton featured in the Liverpool Echo every 2 weeks as part of their Culture Diary, a wraparound advertisement featured in the print version of the Weekly News alongside online advertising, features were included in Inside Halton, as well as information being continuously provided via corporate press releases, a dedicated website & social media channels. The programme was also supported via partner websites and social media accounts.
- Evaluation is being delivered by researchers from Liverpool John Moores University and a report will be produced.

3.7 Legacy

- Celebrating Halton's Heritage

The Celebrating Halton's Heritage public programme will begin in January 2022:

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A
Bleach packers Projections 1 Runcorn Shopping City	■							
Bleach packers Projections 2 Tesco Widnes	■							
Bleach packers AR Locations across borough	■							
Heritage Exhibition 1		■						
Associated events/activities & Opening event		■						
Heritage Exhibition 2					■			
Associated events/activities & Opening event					■			
Heritage Exhibition 3								■
Associated events/activities & Opening event								■

This strand of the Borough of Culture programme will focus on 'trades' in Halton over the years, from the 1500s to the present day. A specific piece of work will focus on the 'nasties' theme and the role of bleach packers, to be delivered via a commission with lead artist Laurence Payot who will work with a group of young people to develop a series of monologues and projections revealing key voices and stories with a contemporary and critical perspective. The monologues will take life when projected onto buildings/structures during a series of events.

Heritage Architects will engage local residents in the design and delivery of three themed exhibitions that aim to inform people about the daily lives and conditions of local workers in new and innovative ways, delivering 'exhibition experiences' rather than having displays in a museum or static exhibitions. The atmosphere of the exhibition space will change dramatically within each category in order to bring the theme to life through lighting, projection, layout and dressing the space with colour, texture and sound.

- Culture HQ

A new funding stream will enable Culture HQ to remain open until April 2022 while a group of artists / creative organisations develop a business case to source longer-term financial support to keep the facility as a more permanent culture asset.

- Culture Strategy

A key legacy from the Borough of Culture project will be the creation of a culture strategy for Halton.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

None

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

HBC is obligated to offer in kind support as part of external funding agreements.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Children and Young People in Halton

One of the five core elements of all Borough of Culture programme is aimed at Children and Young People – accessing, enjoying, learning and thriving through culture and creative engagement with skills and talent pathways. A young people's panel has been developed as part of the programme development. The panel have curated Bounce Festival that took place in December:

Saturday: am	Launch – samba band, hip hop workshop, make up tutorials, goody bags	Glasshouses
Saturday: pm	Digital workshops	Widnes Library
Saturday: evening	Dance workshop, art workshop, after party with live music and pizza	The Studio
Sunday	Drama workshop & performance, pottery workshop, after party with food stalls and gifts	Norton Priory Museum

6.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton

One of the five core elements of all Borough of Culture programmes is Positive Outcomes – including for education and future of work – enhancing the cultural offer locally, along with the introduction of nationally renowned organisations and artists will kick start skills development and employment opportunities in the creative industries. On a number of project elements, local talent was paired with commissioned organisations & experts to increase local ambition and foster learning - Festival Producer Sashwati Serengupta worked alongside Louise Nulty, CE of The Studio on Celebrate Haltons Music. Artreach have consistently shared specialist knowledge and skills with local teams including the Celebrate Halton project team, and the Norton Priory events team.

6.3 A Healthy Halton

One of the five core elements of all Borough of Culture programmes is Positive Outcomes – including for wellbeing and health – research supports that engagement in cultural and creative activities has a positive impact on wellbeing. Culture HQ has been a hub for local organisations supporting residents health and wellbeing including Mind Halton, Weaver Arts Community Group and, Recharge and Restore.

6.4 Safer Halton

Not Applicable

6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

There is liaison between the Celebrate Halton project team and wider regeneration work currently taking place across the Borough.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

There are no risks associated with the report.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

The Borough of Culture programme offers opportunities for the whole community through a range of activities and events.

9.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

None under the meaning of the Act.