

Item No.	Classification: Open	Date: 15 March 2021	Decision Taker: Cabinet Member for Communities, Equalities and Neighbourhoods
Report title:		Culture Grants 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All	
From:		Interim Director of Leisure	

RECOMMENDATION

1. That the Cabinet Member for Communities, Equalities and Neighbourhoods approve the extension of grant funding of £152,000 to currently commissioned arts and cultural organisations for a period of twelve months from 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2. In March 2017 the Cabinet formally approved Creative Southwark: Cultural Strategy 2017 to 2022.
3. The strategy placed Southwark as one of London's most vibrant and innovative locations for cultural activity, attracting many new and emerging artists and cultural organisations that offer high quality opportunities for local people to benefit from culture across a range of disciplines. Many of these organisations operate on limited resources.
4. Creative Southwark: Cultural Strategy 2017 to 2022 aims to:
 - Ensure that Southwark continues to be a borough for cultural excellence
 - Embed a cross-council and partner approach to culture
 - Ensure that cultural priorities are reflected in emerging plans and strategies, including the Southwark Plan
 - Align the strategy to the Fairer Future Promises
 - Protect, preserve and grow our cultural venues, spaces and provision
 - Ensure our cultural sector is resilient in the changing financial and political climate
 - Support the economic prosperity of the borough, including the night time economy
 - Enable all of our diverse community have access to cultural opportunities
 - Collect, conserve and celebrate our local history for future generations.
5. The grants, events and projects that Southwark Council's Culture team delivers are designed to support the aims of the strategy.

6. The Council grants programme aims to diversify the support provided to the sector ensuring its continued vibrancy, as well as playing a role in enabling the leverage of investment of approximately £3 million from other funders.
7. In 2020-21 the total culture grants budget was £152,000 with individual organisations receiving between £19,500 and £51,500.
8. Five organisations were awarded grants:
 - South London Gallery
 - Southwark Park Galleries (formerly known as Café Gallery Projects/ Bermondsey Artists Group)
 - Blue Elephant Theatre
 - Theatre Peckham
 - London Bubble Theatre
9. The grant awardees support the delivery of Creative Southwark, the borough's cultural strategy. They are required to support emerging artists and young people and to assist local communities to celebrate and support creative interventions that engage the community.
10. A broad range of universal and targeted activities are currently provided within the existing programme with a significant number of young people and residents engaged on a regular basis. It is important that these participants are able to access continuous provision to support constructive leisure time, social and creative development, particularly during this challenging period of the pandemic.
11. In addition, these services provide accredited training and skills to young people, engage socially excluded groups including those with mental health issues and isolated elderly residents, provide volunteer opportunities, engage with thousands of schoolchildren and families, and provide work for hundreds of artists and performers.
12. A summary of their outcomes representing a wide range of arts and culture activities to residents including performances, exhibitions, workspace, training, schools engagement, and professional development can be seen in Appendix 2.
13. All funded organisations are subject to conditions of grant detailing the frequency of payments and monitoring arrangements.
14. In addition to direct grant funding, the Council gives support to a wide range of cultural events and activity including working with other council departments to provide a diverse and thriving cultural events calendar co-created with local residents across the borough. For example:
 - Events programmes and commissions such as *Spring Rising* via the Dulwich Commission

- Bespoke place based commissions via Regeneration such as the *Inventors Imaginarium* via Blackfriars Stories, and the *Wellbeing Weekender* via Peckham is Open
 - Street Parties and festivals via Neighbourhoods Fund such as *Bermondsey Street Festival*
15. The Council also exercises considerable influence on developers to secure direct investment in cultural infrastructure, providing fit for purpose buildings and spaces that support the borough's cultural sector to thrive and grow. For example, new or improved cultural spaces being provided for:
- The Annex at The Old Vic
 - Mountview Academy
 - Theatre Peckham's refurbished theatre
 - New spaces for Southwark Playhouse
 - Peckham Levels
 - Central School of Ballet

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

Policy implications

16. *Common Purpose, Common Cause* - the council, CCG and Voluntary & Community Sector Strategy aims to achieve better partnership working across sectors to improve outcomes for residents, improve commissioning and grant-giving that focuses on outcomes for local people and better use of community assets to build resilient communities through community-led approaches. The VCS strategy is about a new relationship with the VCS and unlocking the social value and assets that exist in communities to create a Southwark that is fairer for all.
17. The council acts as an important advocate and supporter of the arts and cultural industries in the borough both through direct delivery of programmes and funding such as the culture grants, regeneration schemes, employment and skills support.
18. *Covid 19 Pandemic*: The impact of the pandemic on the cultural sector has been significant and widespread. Many public-facing arts venues and events are unable to operate within social distancing restrictions as they are only financially viable with 70% - 90% capacity audiences. Many freelancers, who make up 70% of the national theatre sector, for example, have not been eligible for government support. Many organisations have had to furlough staff or make redundancies, with 55,000 job losses nationally in music, performing and visual arts, representing a 30% decline across those sectors (as reported by the Policy & Evidence Centre and the Centre for Cultural Value, December 2020). As an example of the long-term impact of the pandemic on the future sustainability of the cultural sector, The Florence Nightingale Museum, based at St. Thomas'

Hospital, Lambeth, announced its closure for the foreseeable future on 4th January 2021.

19. It has recently been announced that 58 Southwark-based cultural organisations will receive grants from the Culture Recovery Fund (CRF), representing a combined total of nearly £13.8 million from the government's £1.57 billion COVID-19 rescue package for the sector.
20. A bespoke £5 million loan, repayable over 10 years, has also been agreed with the London Theatre Company (who run the Bridge Theatre) as part of the CRF's Repayable Finance offer. These CRF loans have an initial repayment holiday of up to four years and a low interest rate to ensure they are affordable for arts and heritage organisations.
21. A second funding round of CRF grants has been made available during January 2021, with decisions expected during Q1 2021.
22. In response to the pandemic the council refreshed its council plan in November 2020.
23. The refreshed Council Plan 2020-22 contains a number of culture priorities designed to support the cultural sector recovery from the impact of the pandemic and to contribute to the Southwark Stands Together and 'Thriving Neighbourhoods' themes.
24. The new council plan priorities that Culture contributes to are:

Celebrate and promote the rich diversity of the borough and support Black, Asian and minority ethnic artists to create and showcase new work, including drawing up plans with the community for a Black cultural centre
Protect, promote and support Southwark's creative and cultural sector
Establish a Creative and Cultural District in Camberwell and Peckham
Work with partners to increase representation of Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities on Southwark boards and in other community leadership positions
Ensure that street names, public art and Southwark's local environment reflects and celebrates our diverse communities

25. Relevant Culture and Events service deliverables designed to ensure the above priorities are met are:

Review culture and events grant funding programmes to ensure they deliver on Southwark Stands Together commitments
Ensure that 100% of events and culture funding reflects the demographic make-up of the borough
Engage with cultural sector representatives to understand the challenges caused by the Covid crisis and identify the actions the council can implement to support their recovery and sustainability
Develop new creative research, development & showcasing support scheme for Black and culturally diverse artists to launch in 2021/22
Scope and plan a board diversification programme inspired by Arts Council's Agents for Change model to diversify the governance of the borough's cultural sector

26. In the light of these changed priorities it is necessary to complete a review of the approach to and criteria for the council's culture grants scheme.
27. The review needs to include the sourcing and comparing of protected characteristics and demographics monitoring data on grant beneficiaries, potentially including governance, workforce, artists and audiences with the local population.
28. On completion of the review a process for re-profiling grant funding will need to be designed and agreed.
29. A new commissioning plan including an application process for a refreshed Culture Grants programme will need to be drawn up and agreed.
30. The Culture Grants service agreements will need to be updated to take account of new obligations for funded organisations to align with Southwark Stands Together.
31. If the commissioning process prompts any changes to the funding of existing recipients this will need to be communicated in a timely manner to enable the organisations to make any necessary changes to their service provision.
32. It is anticipated that the process outlined above will take 6 – 9 months as a minimum and it is therefore proposed that the current Culture Grants are extended for twelve months to allow for this review to take place and to avoid any immediate disruption to the funding of existing grant beneficiaries.
33. The new grants scheme will launch in the autumn of 2021 and new grants will begin in April 2022.
34. The 2021/22 grant allocation would be:

Organisation	Grant 2020/21	Proposed grant	Reduction (£)	Reduction (%)
Bermondsey Artists Group	21,500.00	21,500.00	0	0%
Blue Elephant Theatre	19,500.00	19,500.00	0	0%
London Bubble Theatre	28,000.00	28,000.00	0	0%
South London Gallery	51,500.00	51,500.00	0	0%
Theatre Peckham	31,500.00	31,500.00	0	0%
Total	152,000	152,000	0	

35. These grants have been extended annually to the above organisations since 2017/18 when the Culture Grants budget was reduced from £252,000 to £152,000 leading to an average 25% reduction.
36. Each organisation in receipt of culture grants will be written to updating them of the proposed extension and grant allocation for 2021/22 and notifying them of the intended grant programme review.
37. In 2021/22 the culture programmes and funded organisations will continue to deliver against the Cultural Strategy Creative Southwark, while the new grants programme will be developed to align with new priorities from the refreshed council plan, Cultural Recovery priorities and Southwark Stands Together.

Community impact statement

38. The council's cultural strategy was approved in March 2017 and clearly set out the need for sustainable investment and development of cultural provision within Southwark.
39. The process by which organisations have been recommended to receive funding is transparent and focused on delivering the most beneficial impact to the wider cultural sector.
40. The award process specifically seeks clarification around target users, participants, audience and the community areas in which they will be delivered in order to identify where there may be an overlap of provision or where alternative activities are being targeted at similar audiences. This provides opportunity to minimise any negative impact on audiences and protected equalities groups wherever possible. All of the groups receiving funding have clearly developed and target audiences for their activities.
41. The process is such that the awards being made are likely to deliver the most beneficial impact whilst wherever possible maintaining provision to protected groups.

Resource implications

42. All commissioned provision will be monitored closely over the coming year to ensure that the intended outcomes are achieved. This will be carried out within existing staffing resources by members of the Culture team.

Financial implications

43. The total budget available for Culture grants programme in 2021/22 is £152,000 (cost code LH237-66701) in line with the Council's budget setting process which is enough to cover the cost of recommendations in this report.

44. All grant funded organisations will be made aware in March 2021 of the grant allocation process and that future funding is not assured and is dependent on the Council's budget setting process.
45. Staff and any other grant monitoring costs connected with this proposal will be contained within existing departmental revenue budgets.

Legal implications

46. As set out in the supplementary advice from the Director of Law and Governance.

Consultation

47. The grant funded organisations were consulted and the Cabinet Member for Communities, Equalities and Neighbourhoods was briefed.

SUPPLEMENTARY ADVICE FROM OTHER OFFICERS

Director of Law and Governance

48. This report seeks approval of the extension of grant funding totalling £152,000 to the arts and cultural organisations listed under paragraph 34 and in the report appendices for the 12-month period commencing on 1 April 2021.
49. Under the provisions of Part 3D of the council's Constitution the decision to approve the recommendations set out in this report is reserved to the Cabinet Member for Communities, Equalities and Neighbourhoods.
50. The Cabinet Member will be aware of the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. At each stage, in exercising its function (and in its decision making processes) the council must have due regard to the need to:
 - Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation or other prohibited conduct;
 - Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it;
 - Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it.

The relevant protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. Marriage and civil partnership are protected in relation to (a) only.

51. The community impact statement set out within paragraphs 38 to 41 advises that the process by which organisations have been recommended for funding allocation had been established and managed with a view to

ensuring transparency and safeguarding the interests of individuals and groups having protected characteristics under the Act.

52. The conditions of grant funding which regulate the existing commissioned arts and cultural activities will continue to apply during the 12 month extension of the agreements between the council and the recipient organisations.

Strategic Director of Finance and Governance (EL20/080)

53. The report seeks the approval of the Cabinet Member for Communities, Equalities and Neighbourhoods for the extension of grant funding of £152,000 to currently commissioned arts and cultural organisations for a period of twelve months from 01 April 2021 to 31 March 2022.
54. The Strategic Director of Finance and Governance notes that the costs can be contained within existing resources as mentioned under the financial implications. It is expected that continued monitoring will take place with all grant recipients to ensure conditions of grant are met.
55. Staffing, subsequent grant monitoring and any other costs connected with this proposal to be contained within existing departmental revenue budgets.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Creative Southwark: Cultural Strategy 2017 to 2022	www.southwark.gov.uk/culturestrategy	Michelle Walker 07523 919585

APPENDICES

No	Title
Appendix 1	2020-21 Culture Grants Awardees
Appendix 2	2020-21 Culture Grants Q1&2 performance figures

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	Rebecca Towers, Interim Director of Leisure	
Report Author	Michelle Walker, Culture and Events Manager	
Version	Final	
Dated	11 March 2021	
Key Decision?	Yes	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER		
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments included
Director of Law and Governance	Yes	Yes
Strategic Director of Finance and Governance	Yes	Yes
Cabinet Member	Yes	Yes
Date final report sent to Constitutional Team		15 March 2021