

<b>Report to:</b>	<b>TOURISM, ECONOMY AND COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</b>
<b>Relevant Officer:</b>	Alan Cavill, Director of Communications and Regeneration
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	14 April 2021

## ARTS AND CULTURE – IMPACT OF COVID-19

### 1.0 Purpose of the report:

- 1.1 To gain understanding of the impact of Covid-19 on arts and culture in Blackpool in order to inform the recovery planning process.
- 1.2 To agree a plan for gathering evidence to understand the impact of Covid-19 on the cultural sector (and venues) in Blackpool and to gain insight into challenges remaining and plans for sustainable recovery. To use the evidence gathered to inform the Council's future plans for supporting the local cultural sector and to advocate additional targeted support.

### 2.0 Recommendation(s):

- 2.1 The Cultural Services Team undertake an exercise in gathering information from a cross section of cultural organisations and self-employed creatives (such as visual artists, dancers etc) on the impact of Covid-19 on their ability to deliver their offer to audiences, customers and participants and impact on short term viability and longer term sustainability.
- 2.2 To provide a more detailed report to the Scrutiny Committee in September 2021 with analysis of the intelligence gathered and outline recommendations on actions the Council could take to support the recovery and future development of the cultural sector in the town.

### 3.0 Reasons for recommendation(s):

- 3.1 National research<sup>1</sup> has estimated that up to 55,000 jobs were lost in creative industries and the cultural sector in the first six months after the first lockdown. Live performance venues and museums and galleries have been forced to close their doors for long or indefinite periods, films and television programmes have had to put a halt on production, and self-employed creatives have experienced immense job instability. Given the pace of change, and limited data availability, it has been difficult for policymakers and industry to understand the exact scale of the pandemic's impact on employment within the sector.
- 3.2 In Blackpool, a variety of cultural venues have been required to close and could be at risk due to reduced trading revenues during enforced closure and continuing restrictions when

allowed to open. Maintaining and supporting the cultural sector in Blackpool is of key importance to the town's economic and social wellbeing.

3.3 The full impact of COVID-related restrictions on the cultural sector in Blackpool is unknown as the country cautiously emerges out of lockdown in line with the government's roadmap to recovery. Government financial support has been welcomed especially targeted sectoral support such as the Cultural Recovery Fund (CRF). The results of the latest round of CRF awards will not be known until early April 2021 and it is likely there will be a third funding round.

3.4 Further, the Council via its discretionary grant scheme, the Blackpool Business Recovery Fund (round 2), has encouraged applications from creative businesses who have thus far received little or no support, including freelancers. We will have evidence on the level of need and impact on creative businesses once these have been appraised during. This application round is live at the time of writing with a closing date of the 7<sup>th</sup> April. Over 110 applications have been received as of 31 March 2021.

3.5 The Council will be better informed on the needs and support required by local artists, craftspeople and creative businesses when the feedback received from a recent Heritage Action Zone funded survey undertaken during March 2021 has been analysed.

3.5 Is the recommendation contrary to a plan or strategy adopted or approved by the Council? No

3.6 Is the recommendation in accordance with the Council's approved budget? Yes

#### **4.0 Other alternative options to be considered:**

4.1 The Council could decide not to investigate the impact of Covid-19 on the local cultural sector but this would be severely detrimental to the economic, social and environmental recovery of the town and to the health and wellbeing of local communities. Gathering evidence on the cultural sector will allow the Council as a strategic body to take informed action, decisions on investment, or use the information for bidding for strategic funding that may come available to support cultural recovery and regeneration of the town.

#### **5.0 Council priority:**

5.1 The relevant Council priority is

- "The economy: Maximising growth and opportunity across Blackpool"
- "Communities: Creating stronger communities and increasing resilience"

## **6.0 Background information**

- 6.1 The Covid-19 crisis presents the biggest threat to the UK's cultural infrastructure, institutions and workforce in a generation. Emerging from the pandemic decisions are still to be made on national cultural recovery funds for those organisations that have been eligible to apply including Blackpool based organisations.
- 6.2 It is suggested that the meeting of the TEC Scrutiny Committee be used to agree the scope of evidence gathering about the impact of Covid-19 on the cultural sector in Blackpool; identify the key issues the Committee wish to explore more fully, to agree how the evidence should be obtained and presented at a future meeting. For instance, members may wish to invite representatives from cultural organisations and a cross section of self-employed creatives to present their experience in person.
- 6.3 Appendix 7(a) to the report presents a brief report on the present situation on the impact of Covid-19 on the cultural sector nationally and in Blackpool informed by 'intelligence' gathered through national reports and some sample case studies from local cultural organisations.
- 6.4 Does the information submitted include any exempt information? No

## **7.0 List of Appendices:**

- 7.1 Appendix 7(a) – Impact of Covid-19 on Arts and Culture

## **8.0 Financial considerations:**

- 8.1 Depending on the outcome and or recommendations of the evidence gathering and review by officers there may be some financial implications going forward i.e. funding the production of a Cultural Recovery Strategy and Plan for the town.

## **9.0 Legal considerations:**

- 9.1 None.

## **10.0 Risk management considerations:**

- 10.1 Blackpool Council is recognised regionally and nationally by strategic partners such as the Arts Council for its commitment to a thriving cultural sector in the town and the importance of local communities, in particular young people, accessing quality cultural experiences. The Council can play a strategic role in supporting the recovery of the cultural sector in the town and influence other strategic bodies. The Council has a leadership role within the town to understand the impact of Covid-19 on the cultural sector and to follow this up with action where appropriate otherwise Blackpool could miss out on recovery funds that become available in the future.

**11.0 Equalities considerations:**

11.1 Equalities will be considered in the summary of findings arising out of the research identified and any other relevant national research.

**12.0 Sustainability, climate change and environmental considerations:**

12.1 This report is about taking action to understand and have an influence on the future sustainability of the cultural sector in Blackpool. It does not have any immediate or obvious environmental considerations at this stage.

**13.0 Internal/external consultation undertaken:**

13.1 Limited internal consultation has taken place within Cultural Services and with local cultural organisations. One of the key recommendations is to undertake more detailed consultation to report back in the autumn 2021.

**14.0 Background papers:**

<sup>1</sup> The Centre for Cultural Value is undertaking research on the impact of Covid-19 on the arts and culture, more details of which can be found at:

[Impact of Covid-19 - CultureHive](#)

The Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee enquiry:

[Impact of Covid-19 on DCMS sectors \(parliament.uk\)](#)

The Local Government Association has information on the available support and guidance on arts and culture at: [COVID-19: culture, tourism, leisure and sports | Local Government Association](#)