

Building a Better Harrow Residents Panel: Meeting 18, 29 January 2019

Attendance

Officers: Daniel Lester, Mark Billington, Kerry Blackburn (Harrow Arts Centre)

Panel members: Raj Kumar (facilitator / chair), Consolata Ndungu, Magali Peyrefitte, Joanna Bowyer, Mihir Benison, Tanvi Vyas, Louise Baxter, Manjul Shah and Vishaal Shah

Apologies: None received

Items

Introductions - Raj welcomed the attendees.

Harrow Cultural Strategy – Mark Billington

- Current consultation on a Cultural Strategy for Harrow (not a strategy for Harrow Council).
- Council are able to promote culture and the arts but it is not a duty.
- Obesity, diabetes, isolation and low levels of activity are identified issues for the borough, however engagement in the arts can help to improve mental and physical health outcomes.
- Arts, culture and digital media can also help to create jobs – identified as an important sector in the Economic Needs Development Assessment
- http://www.harrow.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/11456/harrow_economic_development_needs_assessment_-_july_2017.pdf
- Cultural Strategy has a vision to 'Celebrate', 'Involve' and 'Create', and identifies 36 actions to support arts and culture in the borough.

Questions

- How will the strategy be resourced? Details are not included within the consultation documents. *Any resources need to be generated through the success of the programme, but the Council is able to use a range of powers to help promote arts and culture. A bid is also to be made for Arts Council funding via the voluntary sector (covered later in the agenda).*
- Low rates of participation currently has been highlighted, how will those who don't participate be identified and increased? *Measures include a small grants programme*

commissioning things that people want to do/be involved in; addressing barriers such as a lack of knowledge of what is available, people being able to afford activities, people being interested in what is offered; and building capacity to cater for demand.

- Many schools have space that could be made available for activities and this should be utilised to help increase participation and availability.
- What are other outer London boroughs doing? Are there any lessons Harrow can learn?
- Hounslow have a strong arts/drama offer which is helped by the independent sector. Brent have won borough of culture bid. GLA Cultural Strategy has a focus on tourism and attracting people to central destinations – however want to provide an offer in and for Harrow.
- Potential missing element in the strategy to highlight the link between a strong cultural offer and civic pride – the benefit to the borough of supporting a positive local identity and connection should be identified.
- Diversity in Harrow, but this is often in pockets – should not just be a strategy of providing different activities etc. for different groups, but also to promote inclusion and an offer to help all people from different backgrounds to come together.

Cultural Presentation - Raj Kumar

- Diversity of people and ideas is important for making better decisions that reflect community needs. The importance of being involved in the local area was noted, particularly the contribution that the Panel has in the past and can continue to make in helping the borough develop the cultural offer.
- Arc House is ideally located to become a cultural hub, perhaps even Harrow's version of boxpark – a space for film, art, music, other live performances and food.

Questions/Suggestions

- Holding regular and big annual events would enhance Harrow's reputation for culture and as a destination in itself.
- New round of MHCLG funding for town centres, and Council are scoping out a project to put forward for this – to be brought back to the panel in future.

- There will be CIL/s106 money which should be used to develop ideas and spaces at Arc House/Lowlands. Noted that 'Platform 7' (at Harrow & Wealdstone station) and other suggestions from the panel had not been forgotten – still being considered and with small steps and refinement over time can come forward in future.

Good Growth Fund – Kerry Blackburn

- Harrow Arts Centre (HAC) was former school and includes listed building and a range of disparate outbuildings. Provides a mixed-use space that hosted 97 performances and 10,000 classes last year and looking to increase this year.
- Successful bid to the GLA Good Growth Fund for the HAC to improve infrastructure and public realm, support job creation and business growth through making better use of spaces.
- Funding will provide for masterplanning, renovation of buildings, public realm improvements and project management and evaluation.
- Seeking a long term strategy for the site, but also need a short term plan to deliver improvements.
- In addition to Good Growth Fund, the Council are providing £1.1m match funding to be used for improvements.

Questions

- Capacity at the HAC is to be increased but will there be additional parking? *No proposals to increase this, but also need to make sure existing levels are retained as well as improvements to the public realm.*
- Is there any scope through funding to improve public transport links? *Already bus stops served by H12 and H14 adjacent and Hatch End Station very close. Bus services are already being increased in response to demand. Potential to seek announcements on the Overground of the station as 'Hatch End for the Harrow Arts Centre' should be explored.*
- Action: Plan of the existing site to be circulated to the panel for any suggestions to feed into the masterplanning process.

New Creative Places or People

- Harrow has been invited to apply for Arts Council England fund design to allow people to take part in the arts, with time period of 2019-2023.
- Bid is to be led by a consortium including Voluntary Action Harrow, Young Harrow and others, and linked to the Cultural Strategy.
- Bid is to look at providing four hubs at Rayners Lane, South Harrow, Wealdstone and Greenhill and intending for these to result in vibrant hubs led by communities that can expand over time.
- Interested organisations to be involved and contribute are being sought now, with the bid to be submitted in March.

Questions/Suggestions

- L&Q have a foundation who may be a potential source for match funding – contact to be provided.
- Does Arc House fall within Greenhill area? Yes.
- Important to ensure that whatever is delivered is sustainable so that it endures beyond the bid round timetable.
- Raj will be liaising directly with Louise, Magali and Mark regarding initial ideas for Arc House and also South Harrow before March deadline.
- Action: Panel to feed through any links or contacts to Raj and Daniel in the first instance and thereafter Voluntary Action Harrow.

Date of Next Meeting: 7pm, Tuesday 5 March (venue to be confirmed)