

Report of the Strategic Director of Place to the meeting of Regeneration and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee to be held on 23rd November 2021

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Subject:

Museums and Galleries Service

Summary statement:

This report provides an update on the Briefing Note sent to this Committee on 9th January 2020 and reports progress within the District's Museums and Galleries Service, future plans, regional context, current challenges and opportunities and an update on the transformation work undertaken since the last report.

EQUALITY & DIVERSITY:

The Museums and Galleries Service has a duty and a moral imperative to represent all of the collections and stories of the residents and visitors to the District. It should be the first point of contact for visitors or residents wishing to understand where the District has come from and to see themselves reflected in all the history art and culture it represents.

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Portfolio:

Healthy People and Places

Overview & Scrutiny Area:

Regeneration & Environment

1. SUMMARY

The purpose of the report is to update Members on the progress made during 2021, the changes made to the Service, the challenges we faced during the pandemic and our response, the challenges ahead, and the opportunities and options for the repositioning and development of Museums and Galleries in the region and as part of the council's wider cultural ambitions.

2. BACKGROUND

National Portfolio Status.

- 2.1 Before the pandemic we reported to Members on the quality and importance of the Museums Service; the hope for regional success in funding and the transformation plans to achieve that.

The Museums and Galleries Service had planned to carry out a one year programme of transformation starting from January 2020 and leading to a bid for National Portfolio Organisation funding from the Arts Council of England from autumn 2020/Spring 2021.

- 2.2 NPO funding is hard to obtain but extremely important; it puts the organisation amongst a national quality standard, delivering on Arts Council's objectives around community engagement, diversity and quality. These objectives align well with the Council's objectives and would give Bradford District's Museums and Galleries funding for community engagement, new staff, projects and exhibitions and a place in the group of significant services in the region.
- 2.3 Due to the pandemic, the Arts Council has rescheduled the NPO process for 2022, with information about the Fund going live from the end of January, applications open from February 14th 2022 to 26th April and decisions are due by Autumn 2022 for funding starting from April 2023.
- 2.4 To achieve this funding the Service needs to prove, amongst other things, that it is meeting Arts Council principles in 4 key areas:
- **Ambition & Quality** ie the range, high quality and innovation of its programmes and services
 - **Dynamism** ie the responsiveness the Service to new ideas, initiatives and partnerships
 - **Environmental Responsibility** ie the Service's contribution to Climate Action and awareness
 - **Inclusivity & Relevance** ie the genuine inclusivity of all that is offered, from collections to workforce to volunteering to exhibitions, schools and families' services and the accessibility of buildings and services.
- 2.5 The Service is making progress in each of these areas, despite limited development funding. The review of the year below demonstrates how the Service is already delivering on NPO priorities, despite the challenges of the pandemic; opening, closing and reopening sites, redeploying some staff and taking care of closed

buildings and collections as well as keeping the public engaged and served online and through outreach.

2.6 At the same time, progress has been made on developing a Museums and Galleries Strategy, embedding the Service into the cultural offer for City of Culture 2025 and meeting the standard for NPO.

2.7 **Funding bids and Strategy development**

In summer 2021, a staff team bid for and got a grant of £208,000 from the Cultural Recovery Fund. This was a highly competitive fund which originated with the Treasury and was designed to support 'jewels in the crown' stand out cultural facilities, so achieving it is both a success in bidding and an acknowledgment of the importance of Bradford District's Museums and Galleries in the national picture.

This grant has been transformational and has enabled the Service to deliver:

- Reviews of our marketing, how we carry our business planning for the Learning service, how we evaluate our services and gather feedback from customers
- Practical collections storage and rationalisation
- Creating a model of Covid safe events
- Rethinking volunteering to create an additional younger, more diverse volunteer pool
- Capital improvements to support museum shops and install card donation machines
- New digital plans including website and branding
- Training needs analysis for front of house staff and training programme created
- A new space at Cartwright Hall which allows the café to overflow and trade using social distancing, and is also used for community use and commercial hires.
- The start of a new community space at Bradford Industrial Museum

2.8 This programme has been hugely supportive of the Service's resilience, income and business needs and community engagement agenda. A further bid to Cultural Recovery Fund 3 has been submitted and we are awaiting notification of whether successful.

2.9 The programme has fed into the development of the Museums and Galleries Strategy by showing what can be achieved with resources, and by proving that it is the right direction to follow.

2.10 The Strategy has been developed over lockdown, with the input of staff, and an online open public survey which attracted 1100 responses. This survey identified that what respondents appreciate is varied programming, with equal interest in community/local exhibitions and national/international ones; welcoming venues and staff and lots of opportunity for engagement and getting involved.

2.11 Due to lockdown, more detailed in-person community consultations could not happen. We intend to start these in the spring of 2022.

2.12 Summary of activity during the Covid 19 period

Buildings: the 4 museums closed on the 18th March 2020. 3 out of the 4, Cartwright Hall, Bradford Industrial Museum and Cliffe Castle, were able to reopen in the summer of 2020 and obtained Covid Safe certificates to operate. Unfortunately issues with ventilation kept Bolling Hall closed until May 2021. The reopening of 3 venues is a high proportion of the Service compared to other West Yorkshire local authority museums, where on average only one site was reopened in summer 2020. The team in Bradford took on the challenging task of providing Covid safe services and the public response to the reopenings was excellent.

2.13 Community engagement

Despite the pandemic, the Service has carried out a wide range of activity, including community partnerships in creating exhibitions; some examples:

- *Being Young in Bradford* a look at popular culture, music and art in the 1990s; Cartwright Hall
- Bingley Camera Club's *Among our Mills and Hills* Exhibition at Cliffe Castle now.
- Displays by the Lions' Den Men's Shed at Cliffe Castle
- *Industrialised Heart: Islamic Calligraphy* by Razwan Ul-Haq inspired by machinery at Bradford Industrial Museum.
- *Island to Island*, currently on show at Cartwright Hall has been created in partnership with the Windrush Generation and uses photos and objects and memories from local people and Bradford District's collections to celebrate the islands of the Caribbean and link them with the experiences of Caribbean heritage communities in Bradford District.

2.14 There have also been collaborations with Mind the Gap theatre, performing at Bolling Hall and Keighley Pride, creating a community sewn banner for Pride 2021 at Cliffe Castle in partnership with Keighley Creative Space.

2.15 These kinds of projects open up possibilities for communities to tell their own stories in Bradford District's Museums and Galleries, sharing the collections and collaborating with staff and are a new step towards co-creation of content and the new direction for the Service.

2.16 Collections

During the year and during lockdown the Collections team have been incredibly busy showcasing collections online, devising and producing content for social media, including 'what's the object' guessing games, mindful colouring sheets, online virtual tours and features for example about Bolling Hall which was unable to reopen as well as brand new exhibitions featuring our fantastic photograph collections.

- This has been so popular with the public that it has continued after reopening and proves that the Service has the talent to develop an outstanding digital offer and engage people worldwide with the collections.

- Staff have also worked incredibly hard getting online documentation of collections updated so that the Service meets its challenging targets to stay as an Accredited Museum with the Arts Council. We are proud to have maintained excellent progress with over 7,000 records being updated, digitised or improved.
- Other highlights include *Take 3 Streets* at Bradford Industrial Museum, an exhibition telling the story of the city through 3 key streets – Westgate, Kirkgate and Ivegate.

2.17 Digital

During 2021, the Service has created a wide range of new digital content. 21 new exhibitions were created online; collections, exhibitions, events and family activities have all been featured through social media, Visit Bradford and on the website. Other new digital content developed during the pandemic:

- *Inspire me to ...* was a weekly digital family offer activity linked to intriguing culturally diverse collections ran from April – August 2020 using the knowledge of Museums and Galleries collections and stories we knew worked well with children...eg *Inspire me to...draw like David Hockney; Inspire me to ...play like a Victorian*. The activities are here <https://www.bradfordmuseums.org/blog/inspire-me-to/> and have opened the Service and its learning offer to a wide range of new audiences.
- A major success has been the development of the new branding and website for the Service, shortly to be launched, and showcasing the Service in a modern, bright and accessible way.

2.18 Learning – schools and families

In a normal year, the Learning team engages up to 20,000 schoolchildren from every ward in Bradford District. Our schools sessions are award winning and based on a strong understanding of the needs of Bradford District's schools and we use the richness of the District's museum and gallery collections to bring learning alive.

- During lockdown, 2000 activity packs with resources for 12 activities were designed, made up and distributed in the school summer holidays 2020 via community hubs and primary schools, funded by Arts Council's Museums and Schools. The packs contain all the materials you need to do the activities – nothing has to be bought or owned already.
- The activity packs proved so popular that they were also offered free to families coming back to the Museums once we reopened.
- For the under 5's 'Discover & Draw' was an activity delivered in partnership with a local organisation, '50 Things to Do Before You Are 5' and included play activities and drawing materials.
- *Top of Town – Bradford* was a project looking to collect ideas for regeneration when two artists worked with two local schools. The young people's work went live on the Museums and Galleries website in Dec 2020 and is now on display in *The Magic Room*, a new gallery space at Cartwright Hall.

- *Just for School Days* this meant opening each museum on one day – Tuesdays – with just schools, rather than the general public. This has been a Covid safe way of reintroducing schools and has been extremely popular, with bookings right through until Christmas 2021. The Tuesdays will reopen as public days in January 2022.

2.19 **Volunteering and apprenticeships**

At the start of the pandemic, the volunteering offer went online and the Volunteer Co-ordinator created a welcoming package to keep volunteers engaged, including newsletters, online coffee mornings and volunteer blogs.

- Visiteers – once the museums reopened, a group of welcomer volunteers named ‘Visiteers’ started. They were outside museums, chatting to people waiting to enter, giving information about what to expect inside and explaining Covid rules, and were a major part of welcoming visitors back.
- Volunteer gardeners’ groups started Bradford Industrial Museum and Bolling Hall once outdoor volunteering restarted and are going from strength to strength.
- A major change was the temporary CRF funded Volunteer Facilitator who recruited a young diverse volunteer group of Young Ambassadors. We are seeking funding to continue this post and its crucial work in diversifying our volunteer group.

2.20 **Visitor Services**

Throughout the pandemic, the Visitor Services front of house teams have proved their ability to respond to any situation. They have managed all the changes in Covid rules and maintained an excellent welcome and relationship with the public. A number of them also volunteered for essential services elsewhere.

This has demonstrated that we have the capability to offer an outstanding NPO Visitor experience.

3. **OTHER CONSIDERATIONS**

- 3.1 The challenges of the pandemic and the Service’s response to them have shown that we have the potential and the ability to offer a much higher level, regional quality service across all that we do and provide an outstanding support for the people of the District.
- 3.2 The future for the Service is to build on the lessons from the pandemic and the grant funding and to clarify its offer for City of Culture 2025 and to apply for NPO status in 2022.

4. FINANCIAL & RESOURCE APPRAISAL

The level of change and uncertainty through the Covid19 period has left a number of challenges moving forward as would be expected. Recovering from the pandemic has affected the business model which included income and some commercial elements of growth and therefore there will be pressures on service budgets in the coming months as the service recovery plans are implemented and the service returns to normal with growth potential being realised.

Savings targets for 2021/22 will not be achieved and will carry forward into 2022/23. The service will continue to seek opportunities to balance budget sustainability for the Museums service, including achievement of budget savings targets, with the ambitions set out in the Cultural Strategy.

5. RISK MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE ISSUES

The Service is a crucial part of the Council's cultural infrastructure and as such is a key part of the Council's Culture Strategy – Culture is Our Plan and City of Culture 2025 bid.

6. LEGAL APPRAISAL

There are no legal issues as a result of this report (as advised by Legal Services).

7. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

7.1 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

The Museums and Galleries Service has an important role to play in education about the Climate Emergency and in contributing to Sustainable growth and tourism.

7.2 GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS IMPACTS

No Implications

7.3 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

No Implications

7.5 TRADE UNION

No implications

7.6 WARD IMPLICATIONS

The Museums and Galleries serve all wards in the District.

7.7 ISSUES ARISING FROM PRIVACY IMPACT ASSESMENT

None

8. NOT FOR PUBLICATION DOCUMENTS

None

9. OPTIONS

See Recommendations.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the Regeneration and Environment Committee consider the content of this report and the positive work that is taking place in the Museum and Galleries Service.
2. Endorse the direction of travel and the proposal to bid for National Portfolio Organisation status from February 2022, as well as noting the importance of the Museums and Galleries Service in the City of Culture 2025 Bid. The Committee's views are sought on the challenges and opportunities facing the Service.

11. APPENDICES

None

12. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None