

GLA Oversight Committee – Tuesday 4 September 2018

Transcript of Item 5 - Proposed Changes to the GLA Establishment - Culture and Creative Industries

Gareth Bacon AM (Chairman): I would like to welcome the Deputy Mayor for Culture and the Creative Industries, Justine Simons, OBE; the Interim Executive Director for Communities and Intelligence, Emma Strain; and the Assistant Director of Culture and the Creative Industries, Shonagh Manson. Thank you for attending.

Now, Members, to refresh memories, we had this item before us at the last meeting. Members had some concerns around it and so it has been taken away and has been amended to a degree and the Deputy Mayor has agreed to attend today. Deputy Mayor, do you have some opening remarks?

Justine Simons OBE (Deputy Mayor for Culture and the Creative Industries): I do, yes. First of all, thank you very much for the invitation. I really welcome the opportunity to discuss the proposed Culture Team staffing plans with the Committee. What I want to do is to just make a very short statement to outline the vision and ambition for culture, which will set out the rationale for the Culture Team.

Before I start, I just wanted to begin by reassuring the Committee that the officers have taken on board the feedback from the recent GLA Oversight Committee about aligning the proposed restructure with the Greater London Authority's (GLA) budget-setting process. Following my statement, Emma and Shonagh are here to answer any questions about the proposal that you have now received, which is, in summary, to stabilise the existing team and not increase the headcount.

Just to set a bit of context, why is culture so important to us? Culture brings in massive benefits to the economy. It is the driver for tourism, it generates jobs and it is the key ingredient in regeneration. Of course, it is much more than this. It brings communities together and it is a powerful tool to engage people, especially those in need of an alternative path.

I wanted to share a quote from a young woman who had done some art classes in prison. She said, "The thing about art is it allows you to think differently, so you behave differently, so you get different results". To me, that is the definition of rehabilitation.

As well as being a world-class cultural capital, there is much potential for Londoners' lives to be enriched by culture, but of course London has its challenges. Infrastructure is collapsing, talent is draining, not enough Londoners are making the most of the culture we have here on offer in this city, and over recent months there has been a spike in youth violence. The good news is Sadiq [Khan, Mayor of London] has made culture a core priority. We have the most ambitious Culture Strategy ever produced by City Hall, and we know for sure that culture can offer an alternative path to young people and help them to make positive life choices. The cross-policy potential is huge across environment, regeneration and health, and the creative economy is growing fast with big job opportunities on the horizon.

That was a few words about the context. Now I wanted to say a few words about the Culture Team.

To make the most of all this potential I have just outlined, we need brilliant people and, luckily, we have brilliant people in the Culture Team. I just wanted you to know how important it is to me that they receive the support they deserve. I can say hand on heart that the level of talent and commitment of the Culture officers at City Hall is genuinely unparalleled in government. For everyone in the Team, it is not just a job, it is a

purpose. They all care at a deep and personal level about the positive contribution that culture can make to London and to the lives of Londoners. They work supremely hard, many late nights and weekends. You will see them helping young musicians with their kit for the annual Gigs Competition. You will see them going the extra mile to save pubs and small music venues. You will see them making the case to embed culture in planning, environment, regeneration and health. The Culture Team has of course welcomed Sadiq's commitment to raise the ambition for culture in London, but this has meant that the volume of work has more than doubled. We have major new programmes like the brand-new London Borough of Culture Programme, new innovations like the Creative Enterprise Zones. We are doing major works saving culture at risk. We have 300 venues on the books and counting. We have a number of programmes that are squarely targeted at young Londoners and communities.

The Culture Team is still not a big team, relatively speaking, when we look at it in the context of the GLA as a whole. The Assembly is the largest unit with 61 staff. Environment has 60 staff and Regeneration 56. At 28 roles, in context, the Culture Team is still not a very big team. It is also worth noting that the character of the work the Culture Team does is also quite different from the other teams. For example, the Transport Team relates to a single delivery agency in Transport for London (TfL). The Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) relates largely to the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS). The Culture sector has no neat delivery agency. It is made up of thousands of organisations, small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and individuals, and so delivering major culture initiatives is complex and multifaceted. Something like the London Borough of Culture [Programme] has hundreds of partners and funders.

However, current conditions for the Culture Team do fall well below the GLA's average. On average, staff in the Culture Team are working 20% overtime a week and that is a day a week extra for each member of staff, unpaid, on average. If you added it up over the year, it equates to over five posts. Also, if we look at the percentage of permanent posts within the teams, we will see further evidence of concern. Across the GLA, the average number of permanent posts in any unit is 80% and so 80% of roles are permanent; the rest are temporary and fixed-term. Taking the Assembly as an example, you have a great record. Of your 61 posts, 92% of these are permanent. If we look at the Culture Team, only 30% of those roles are permanent. We currently have only one member of staff with an accurate job description on a permanent contract and that is our new Director, Shonagh [Manson]. Everyone else is either a temp, on a fixed-term contract that is about to run out or is acting up into a more senior role as the work has grown in scale and ambition. We really need to address this and provide some stability for the officers.

I am sure what you are thinking is, "How have we ended up here?" When Sadiq was elected, we immediately did put in place temporary arrangements to address this capacity issue very quickly. Then we appointed our new Director, Shonagh Manson, and then we wrote the new Culture Strategy. Therefore, there is a logic to the staff proposal coming after the Director has been appointed and the Strategy written. Shonagh put a proposal together to deliver this, which, as I said, will now be considered as part of the GLA's budget-setting process, but the temporary arrangement we had has run its course. We are at risk of losing the great talent in the Team and so we do need to stabilise the unit.

This stabilisation proposal is not without consequences. A number of programmes have been given new timetables and Shonagh will take you through the detail of that, but I just wanted to express today that my priority is really the people in the Team. I hope you will agree with me that we have a duty of care to the Culture Team. We need to ensure that they have job security and are paid appropriately for the level of work they are delivering and for the benefit of London and Londoners. We at the GLA as a whole need to demonstrate our support for these committed and talented officers. Thank you.

Gareth Bacon AM (Chairman): Thank you very much for that.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM: Can we just get on record the timeline you are talking about? You are saying we are talking about from, what, 2016?

Justine Simons OBE (Deputy Mayor for Culture and the Creative Industries): Do you mean in terms of the restructure or --

Jennette Arnold OBE AM: In terms of the staff that you have outlined. You basically said you have had only 30% full-time staff?

Justine Simons OBE (Deputy Mayor for Culture and the Creative Industries): Permanent, yes.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM: If we said 2016, new world?

Justine Simons OBE (Deputy Mayor for Culture and the Creative Industries): Yes.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM: What was the establishment when you became Deputy Mayor? That is what I am not clear about.

Justine Simons OBE (Deputy Mayor for Culture and the Creative Industries): It was about eight or nine, I think, permanent posts.

Emma Strain (Interim Executive Director for Communities and Intelligence): Historically, though, there has always been a higher number of fixed-term and contract-type posts within the Culture Team in both the previous administration and the current one than there are in other teams.

Shonagh Manson (Assistant Director, Culture and Creative Industries): There were about 18 or 19 full-time equivalents if you take into account freelance and contract roles at that point of the administration change.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM: It is because I am familiar with some of the work that you do and it just seems to me that you have been able to perform at an extraordinary level with your staff in 2016 and beyond and before that. It is just that I am not clear about this imperative that you are giving us in terms of this need to change everything --

Tom Copley AM: We need to be a good employer.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM: -- and that everything's going to suddenly change because of this new approach that you want to take.

Justine Simons OBE (Deputy Mayor for Culture and the Creative Industries): Emma can talk to this, too, but what has happened is that the workload has grown and grown and grown, and what has happened is temporary contracts have been added on and people have acted up into more senior roles as the work has developed. What has not happened is a proper restructure to actually rebuild the permanent structure to relate to the core and current workload. It was a cumulative thing and what we are saying is that it has reached its breaking point now. We have so few staff now on permanent contracts with lack of security. Five people in the Culture Team are on one week's notice. Rather than doing another round of temporary fixes, we were at the edge of human resources (HR) protocols. You need people to be on proper contracts that reflect the work that they are doing.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM: OK. Just one question which I am not clear about in the papers. Are you saying then that your proposal is not to open vacancies that will be created but to then make your establishment permanent with the staff that you have currently? You are going to make everybody you now have on payroll permanent?

Justine Simons OBE (Deputy Mayor for Culture and the Creative Industries): Everyone who is in the Team is in a safe place. That is the purpose of the stabilisation proposal. That means quite a few people who are on temporary contracts or fixed-term contracts will move to permanent and temporary will move to fixed-term. Everyone will get more security, but this is very much an interim stabilisation plan for right now at this moment. What we will do is the original proposal will move forward into --

Jennette Arnold OBE AM: Yes, but it is fair to say that none of these people who will be getting a permanent contract ever -- their jobs were never advertised and so these permanent jobs --

Justine Simons OBE (Deputy Mayor for Culture and the Creative Industries): There are no new jobs.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM: -- that will be created will not be advertised because you will be slotting into them --

Emma Strain (Interim Executive Director for Communities and Intelligence): Yes, but we have done this through HR and so we are really clear that we have followed the protocols properly. When people came in to do a fixed-term post, that post would have been advertised as a fixed-term post at that point for perhaps six, 12 or 18 months. They will have gone through a competitive recruitment process to be allocated into that post. We have gone through each of the changes proposed in here with HR to make sure that we are dealing with the current staff properly but also ensuring that we are not giving anybody a job without a fair and due competition process.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM: Thanks. That is much clearer.

Gareth Bacon AM (Chairman): Any other Members? OK. You have got off fairly lightly. Thank you very much for your attendance.