

Subject: Culture off the Beaten Track

Report to:	Economy Committee
Report of:	Executive Director of Assembly Secretariat
Date:	15 June 2022
Public Access:	This report will be considered in public

1. Summary

- 1.1 This report provides background for the Economy Committee meeting focusing on culture off the beaten track.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 **That the Committee notes the report as background to putting questions to invited guests and notes the subsequent discussion.**
- 2.2 **That the Committee delegates authority to the Chair, in consultation with party Group Lead Members, to agree any output arising from the discussion.**

3. Background

- 3.1 The scope for this meeting was approved by the Chair, in consultation with party Group Lead Members. Officers confirm that the meeting and its recommendations fall within these terms of reference.
- 3.2 London's cultural offer extends far beyond the famous large cultural attractions in central London. In 2019, the city was home to 52 LGBT+ night-time venues, 94 grassroots music venues, 263 theatres and 165 museums and galleries. These organisations are located throughout the city, and many are rooted in their local communities. As well as these more established buildings-based organisations, London's grassroots culture includes local arts festivals, pop-up exhibitions and more informal projects and activities

- 3.3 The sector faces a number of challenges. Research carried out on behalf of the Mayor's Music Venues Taskforce has shown that in the decade leading up to 2015, London lost a large number of grassroots music venues and LGBT+ venues. Local authorities have cut spending on arts and culture, which has reportedly mostly impacted smaller organisations, and there is a risk that this is exacerbated by plans to spend more Arts Council England funding outside London.
- 3.4 The arts and culture sector as a whole was severely impacted by the pandemic, but smaller organisations with fewer reserves were hit particularly badly. However, the recovery from the pandemic may provide opportunities for the sector, with the potential for a growth in cultural activity outside central London and in local communities.
- 3.5 Supporting grassroots culture was a central theme of the Mayor's 2018 Culture Strategy, Culture for all Londoners, which pledged to 'expand access to culture beyond Zone 1 and into every borough and corner of our city'. The Mayor has aimed to support local, grassroots culture through initiatives such as London Borough of Culture, Culture Seeds and Creative Enterprise Zones.

4. Issues for Consideration

- 4.1 The Committee's investigation will seek to understand:
- The value of London's smaller cultural organisations and grassroots culture, in particular the role they play in local communities;
 - The current challenges faced by the sector, relating to issues such as funding, licensing and Brexit, and what action government at all levels can take to address these issues;
 - The impact of the pandemic upon grassroots culture, to what extent the sector is recovering, and whether the pandemic has created any opportunities for the growth of local, grassroots culture; and
 - The Mayor's delivery record in this area, including Mayoral initiatives such as the London Borough of Culture, the Creative Land Trust, the Culture Seeds programme, and the Culture at Risk Business Support Fund.
- 4.2 Members will hold a public meeting with the following invited guests:
- Clara Cullen, Venue Support Manager, Music Venue Trust;
 - Lorna Lee, Assistant Director, Culture and Heritage, London Borough of Waltham Forest; and
 - Vicki Amedume, Creative Director, The Albany, and Associate Director of Lewisham London Borough of Culture; and
 - Paul Bristow, Director, Strategic Partnerships, Arts Council England.

5. Legal Implications

- 5.1 The Committee has the power to do what is recommended in the report.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1 There are no direct financial implications to the GLA arising from this report.

List of appendices to this report:

None

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

List of Background Papers:

None

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