

**London Assembly Economy Committee - Wednesday 15 June 2022****Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Culture off the Beaten Track**

**Hina Bokhari AM (Chair):** We are about to move on to our main item of business, the discussion with invited guests on London's Culture off the Beaten Track. I am really pleased to welcome our guests today: Clara Cullen, Venue Support Manager from the Music Venue Trust; Lorna Lee, Assistant Director of Culture and Heritage, London Borough of Waltham Forest; Paul Bristow, Director of Strategic Partnerships, The Arts Council England; and Aditi Anand, Artistic Director, the Migration Museum from Lewisham. We are joined virtually today by Abdul Shayek, Artistic Director and Joint Chief Executive Officer (CEO) from the Tara Theatre. Thank you so much for joining us virtually today. I understand that you will have to leave, because you are busy rehearsing, at 11.00am. We will make sure that we have plenty of questions for you the first part of the session.

Can I also note that the Committee is very disappointed that unfortunately the Deputy Mayor [for Culture and the Creative Industries], Justine Simons OBE, was not able to attend today's meeting or the dates that we have committed for our roundtable. We are disappointed because we were very keen to hear from her. However, we will be setting out some very direct questions to her by letter and we are sure that the panel will also help us with those questions as well that we need to direct to the Deputy Mayor.

I am going to also start off with the first set of three questions for you. The first question is, how important are London's small cultural organisations and grassroots culture and what role does it play in local communities? I know you are going to say it is very important but let us get down to the detail here. Why?

**Clara Cullen (Venue Support Manager, Music Venue Trust):** In my sector, which is grassroots music venues, small music venues, the way that I describe these music venues are they are sort of like the Artists and Repertoire (A&R) Department of the live music industry. It is where you get artists who are new and developing, just-emerging artists at the beginning of their careers. They play these rooms and that is where they can learn their skills. That is where they can learn how to interact with an audience, whether their songs are any good, what they need to change about their set. It acts as this training and development hub for these artists at this emerging level.

Then obviously the United Kingdom (UK) and London in particular is fantastic at developing artists. We have a great history of artists who genuinely are world-beating and set records and things like that. It all starts at these small venues. You could pretty much mention anyone and I could probably tell you where they played at a small venue in London. That is where it really starts. It is where audiences get their visceral connection with the performer, with the artist, and most of these places literally touch the artist over the public address (PA) and things like that. Therefore, it really acts as the engine of the wider live music economy. Everyone talks about the big record labels or Glastonbury or whatever, but it all starts at playing in front of 100 people, usually playing to about three people and maybe your mum. That is where it starts. That is what my level of the sector does.

**Lorna Lee (Assistant Director, Culture and Heritage, London Borough of Waltham Forest):** I will just pick up on the local cultural, small cultural organisations being part of that wider ecology of London. Often they are the supply chain or they are part of creating some of the bigger pieces that people might be more aware of. From my perspective, which is really important in [London] Borough of Culture and almost came to

life through COVID, was that they really know their communities. They often reflect the diversity of their communities, and they can really garner hyperlocal community participation, even if that is virtually somehow. As part of that, they are very well placed to address some social issues. Whether that is isolation, not necessarily through COVID, mental health, and can really support local wellbeing as well.

**Abdul Shayek (Artistic Director and Joint Chief Executive Officer, Tara Theatre):** I would just like to second all of that. From a Tara perspective, if you look at our history, the things like *Goodness Gracious Me* started life at Tara. Ayub Khan-Din who wrote *East is East* started his life at Tara in terms of having that interaction with theatre and with a live audience. I would also say we know our communities in a way that larger organisations do not. That gives us the upper hand I guess in many ways to connect with those communities and serve those communities and their needs.

We are also, in my opinion, a much easier space for Black, Asian, ethnically-diverse, global majority audiences to go into because it is smaller, it is less intimidating, and we are more welcoming. What we have at Tara is a really diverse team. Therefore, we understand our audiences in a way that larger organisations do not. Yes, all of those things really.

**Paul Bristow (Director, Strategic Partnerships, Arts Council England):** Just a couple of things. Hello, everybody, and I am going to agree with everything that has been said. I am running out of things to say because all the contributions I completely agree with. There is something else I would add, which is as well that often those smaller organisations can be quite fleet of foot. They can take advantage of opportunities in local areas and make a real difference. Some of the things that Lorna was talking about in terms of the social value that can be brought to a place and the real difference that can be made to people's lives, very often those organisations that are smaller are able to spot those opportunities where they are needed and really take them very quickly.

As well, they add colour and life to places in really important ways. If you went to any celebration a few weeks ago around the Platinum Jubilee, you will have seen local artists operating as a part of that and people really loving it. That is because they have come out of a really strong ecology of grassroots organisations across London.

**Hina Bokhari AM (Chair):** Aditi, the Migration Museum is in a shopping mall, is it not? Tell us a little bit about why you think that has been a benefit, or even maybe the challenges that you have found?

**Aditi Anand (Artistic Director, Migration Museum):** Yes, Migration is based at the Lewisham Shopping Centre in what used to be an H&M, since February 2020. Everyone has been saying about flexibility, agility and being able to know your community better, certainly being in the heart of a shopping centre really dissolves those barriers of engagement with our audiences. It is people coming in who might be doing their weekly shop at the Sainsbury's who then pop into the museum. Therefore, it really becomes a welcoming space where you can just wander in. As a result of that, and being a bit flexible, means that community members come in and they have a desire for us to do a programme or to use the space, we can make that available to them as well.

It is an interesting point of saying that smaller cultural organisations can be feeders into larger organisations. However, they can also be just world-class culture on your doorstep in their own right and provide that experience without necessarily having to travel into central London. That is really important for local schools, for local communities, to have that.

**Hina Bokhari AM (Chair):** There are lots of children who are going past your museum all the time, are they not, and just being able to pop in any time they want.

**Aditi Anand (Artistic Director, Migration Museum):** Absolutely. We have a huge contingent of teenagers who hang out in the shopping centre after school. That is what they do because that is really the only place left for people to be. Therefore, to have a place where they can wander in, they do not have a pressure to buy anything, you can just hang out in the space. That is a real opportunity.

**Hina Bokhari AM (Chair):** Yes. Let us touch on the challenges though, because small museums and theatres are facing a lot of challenges, particularly in the financial circumstances that we are finding London in at the moment. Those particularly in outer London, there are some Assembly Members here who represent outer London, who have seen theatres and museums closing. In comparison to the larger culture institutions, what are the challenges that you find? Let us start with the Migration Museum.

**Aditi Anand (Artistic Director, Migration Museum):** First is just awareness and lack of proximity to other organisations. Once we have people through our doors and they know about us, we know that we have very high levels of engagement, learning, we measure really well on that. However, it is just about having that awareness. For an organisation that is small like ours, we really are not able to dedicate a sizable marketing budget to do that. Therefore, to be able to have support from the Mayor's Office or other institutions to put us on the map that is incredibly important.

I would say secondly, I do not know if this applies to everyone, but certainly for us as an organisation that does not have a permanent space, just that lack of security of tenure means it is incredibly difficult to do any kind of long-term planning and to really then invest in the space that we are in and the communities that we are in.

**Hina Bokhari AM (Chair):** If you were to find your permanent place, be honest, where would you really want to be?

**Aditi Anand (Artistic Director, Migration Museum):** Obviously we want to be somewhere where there is footfall and where there is proximity to the Tube and other cultural organisations, so that we can feed off of each other.

**Hina Bokhari AM (Chair):** Are you saying it is easier to be more central for a museum?

**Aditi Anand (Artistic Director, Migration Museum):** Yes, absolutely.

**Hina Bokhari AM (Chair):** That is a challenge, is it not, finding that space if you were to move, yes. Paul, what are the challenges?

**Paul Bristow (Director, Strategic Partnerships, Arts Council England):** There is a significant challenge for smaller organisations in attracting some of the public funding because often the public funders require match funding. If you are a smaller organisation, it can be difficult to get hold of that. That is something that we have done a bit of work looking at and we have reduced the thresholds and we have reduced the requirement for match funding for our National Lottery project grants. However, it is still difficult and how do you get the capacity if you are a small organisation? The bigger ones often have that capacity, those staff members, and the existing relationships to be able to do those sorts of things.

I do know that local authorities are really important in this space as well as providing some of that capacity, some of that networking, some of that brokerage and some of that support. Obviously, they have had their own challenges over the last few years as well, therefore there is a particular issue that is facing that part of the sector.

**Hina Bokhari AM (Chair):** I am going to open it up to the other guests. Who is willing to contribute? I realise we do not want to repeat anything, but, Lorna, Clara, do you have anything to add?

**Clara Cullen (Venue Support Manager, Music Venue Trust):** Sure, I am really worried, if I am honest. The next six months to a year is going to be a really challenging period for grassroots music venues. Everyone is talking about recovery, and I think in truth it is going to be more about stabilisation until maybe even for two years until we see pre-pandemic levels of footfall. We are seeing across the board about a 20% no-show rate, people who have bought advance tickets but not turning up to shows. The cost of living crisis; I was talking to a London venue this morning, their energy bill has gone up from £1,600 to £2,100. That is a big gap when less people are coming to shows, less people are spending money on the bar. Therefore, it is creating quite a pressurised environment. What is that saying, out of the oven and into the frying pan, that is sort of what it feels like in that we have come through the pandemic, which was absolutely an existential crisis for the live music industry, but we have come into a period which has its own very, very challenging circumstances. As someone who tends to be an optimist, it is cause for concern.

**Lorna Lee (Assistant Director, Culture and Heritage, London Borough of Waltham Forest):** Just picking up on the importance of local authorities. The main museum in Waltham Forest is the William Morris Gallery, which is local authority run, and that fared pretty well through the pandemic. Going forward, it is much better connected across the council to the communities and, now that we are looking more at 15-minute neighbourhoods, local people spending their leisure time locally in a way can boost that. Therefore, it is how do we do that?

However, the other side of the coin is quite a lot of the grassroots cultural sector in Waltham Forest is not venue based, therefore it missed out on grants, a lot of them are freelancers, therefore they kept falling through the gaps in the pavement of the grant landscape. They are extremely vulnerable and feeling that they are only just keeping their head above water. Confidence is coming back but it is not quite back there yet. I have spoken to a few that feel that they are still in a very fragile state.

**Hina Bokhari AM (Chair):** Thank you so much. Is there a particular part of London's cultural sector about which you have particular concerns for its survival at all? Can we go for Paul for that question first?

**Paul Bristow (Director, Strategic Partnerships, Arts Council England):** Yes, I am just going to pick up on Clara's point around grassroots music venues. Clearly there are a lot of challenges around there at the moment. The landlords of a lot of those venues are coming under a lot of pressure themselves to meet the cost of living and the inflationary pressures, which puts pressure on rents and puts pressure on booking venues. Therefore, in terms of being able to keep those venues going there is a particular challenge at the moment, which is quite pressing.

A lot of small-scale arts centres, which perhaps have been quite successful in driving earned income through maybe providing services or through catering or hiring out the venue, the people that bought those services are struggling as well. Especially if your venue is free to enter but there is revenue coming from say a café or a shop, people might come now and not visit the café or the shop and that is a real challenge for lots of those smaller arts venues and museums.

Then I do not think we can forget libraries within the context of London's cultural ecology. You will be well aware that lots of stuff happens in libraries, lots of it is cultural in that really broadest sense. People trust local libraries. They are in your neighbourhood, they go to them, they are really important. Several library services are delivered by charitable trusts working on behalf of the local authority. Those charitable trusts often derive income from other sources, which is being squeezed. Or they have other costs, which are a real challenge at the moment. If they are doing sport and leisure services as well, there is a real crisis in that sector. Therefore, if that is your portfolio of operation that can be a real challenge. It puts pressure on really important local services like libraries.

**Hina Bokhari AM (Chair):** Lorna, you have some experience with libraries specifically, have you not, am I right in remembering that correctly?

**Lorna Lee (Assistant Director, Culture and Heritage, London Borough of Waltham Forest):** In the past I have worked with libraries, yes.

**Hina Bokhari AM (Chair):** Do you have any follow up from what Paul just said?

**Lorna Lee (Assistant Director, Culture and Heritage, London Borough of Waltham Forest):** I would agree. In Waltham Forest the council runs the library services and has been investing. We are indeed at that point of saying how can we maximise these very valuable community spaces for cultural use, but also for wider use, to support local communities. Therefore, yes, it is like everything, we need to try to get as much out of them as possible so that people have things on their doorstep that they really need as we go into what feels like another crisis for everybody.

**Hina Bokhari AM (Chair):** I do want to make sure that we are keeping answers brief. Thank you very much. You have done a great job so far. We do want to make sure that whatever we get out of this meeting that we are always referring to what the Mayor can do and how he can support us. Just initially, right now, if there is anything that you would like to say on the particular issues you have just raised, what actions do you think the Mayor could be doing to support you in your particular area?

**Clara Cullen (Venue Support Manager, Music Venue Trust):** What we are seeing on the grassroots level is at the moment it is this issue with insecure tenancy. On average, across the UK - I know we are London focused - but across the UK there is only about 18 months left on a typical lease. That is quite a precarious state if you care about the long-term investment into culture as something that needs to be generational. Therefore, support from the Mayor, in London it would be very interesting to see what we can do on trying to create longer-term leases or focus on community ownership. Outside of Music Venue Trust, I am helping a venue in Lewisham that is trying to do a community offer, a share-raising project. In London, because prices of property and prices of venues are so expensive, some kind of support or maybe even a review into how can we do things on a community level perhaps to create longer-term, more-resilient, tenancies for our grassroots music venues would be really interesting.

That is something where we are slightly abnormal in the cultural landscape compared to other theatres, which may be owned by the council or other ways of ownership. For grassroots music venues and the operators who run them, it is quite a precarious thing. If your lease ends, then you have to leave. If the landlord does not want to renew the lease, then you have to try to find a new space. If there is no new space available or the cost to start up a space is very expensive, that can all result in essentially the permanent closure of a lot of

these grassroots music venues. Therefore, some of it is big, structural, and systemic issues but having a focus on that would be really interesting.

**Abdul Shayek (Artistic Director and Joint Chief Executive Officer, Tara Theatre):** What the Mayor could do is provide support and funding for more civic activity to take place in small organisations. We run a coffee morning for refugee and asylum seekers. At the moment we are funding that and that coffee morning has been really successful. Getting some support to be able to put that on would be great. With the current cuts across other services, theatres and local spaces have a duty to provide other civic services beyond just the theatre and entertainment that they are there for. Therefore, yes, some support around that would be great.

Specifically around Tara, we are in for the National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) at the moment and the Mayor's Office needs to really get behind some of those smaller organisations. Just going back to a couple of points raised earlier, some of the larger institutions have had support from freelance fundraising experts. Organisations like Tara just do not have that capacity and finance and therefore there is a real need for organisations to be identified and support put behind them from the Mayor's Office in this next NPO round. I know there is a real drive from the Government to level up and push money outside of London, but we are really moving the conversation around diversity and equality and equity forward. There is a real need at the moment to look at the landscape in London. We are getting to a point where we have a really interesting range of diverse leaders across a range of different organisations. We now are facing this levelling up agenda, which will mean - or potentially mean - that we might lose out. There is a real need for some of that work to happen from the Mayor's Office.

**Hina Bokhari AM (Chair):** Thank you so much, Abdul.

**Neil Garratt AM:** It was just something that Clara mentioned about audiences and reluctance to come back and so on, post pandemic. I was just curious, because we had a similar investigation last year, particularly looking at larger theatre venues, and we found there was a difference between different types of audience. Younger people at that point were much more willing to come out and older people, for example classical music concerts, were struggling much more. Is that a pattern that is still happening now or is there a different pattern or just a complicated picture with no pattern at all?

**Clara Cullen (Venue Support Manager, Music Venue Trust):** Yes, it is complicated, and it does sort of depend on the programming at the venue and audience demographics. Is the programming aimed more towards an older demographic or a younger demographic? What we are seeing at the moment is generally a 20% drop off regardless of programming. I do not quite know why that is. It might be as simple as people have forgotten that they booked these tickets a year ago or whatever, or it might be that you booked it with your partner, and you are no longer together and you are not going to go to the gig or something. It does not have to be particularly more complicated than that. However, it is a worrying trend when a lot of our venues, the music, at least our grassroots level, when you are putting on artists, by their very nature they are not famous at this stage. Therefore, you do not make a lot of money from putting on the artist; you make money on the bar that subsidises the music. Therefore, if there is just less people coming out, and then less people spending on the bar, it is a really insecure economic model.

To economists it probably does not make sense, but again it is about the motivations of the people who are venue operators and the fact that they want to be part of an industry that is putting on grassroots and emerging acts. Therefore, when we see this footfall decreasing, I was even talking to a venue the other day where it should have been a knockout sell-out gig, and it was 50% attendance. It is a bit difficult to see why that is happening and it is quite worrying.

**Neil Garratt AM:** Thank very much.

**Shaun Bailey AM:** A very quick question. To what extent is this change in attendance behaviour changing? On the other end of our economy, we have seen people go crazy ordering things on the Internet. I spoke to the guy who runs our little local plant thing, and he says he cannot sell plants fast enough. People are building their gardens up basically. Therefore, to what extent do we think this is a change in behaviour that may be permanent or is it just a temporary thing?

**Clara Cullen (Venue Support Manager, Music Venue Trust):** I hope it is temporary. We have lived through a two- to two-and-a-half year period where people's behaviour has changed. We were told to stay inside and all that kind of stuff and that probably is going to take a while, the psychology of that, to work itself out.

On the other hand, I really hope as well, when you do not have access to culture, you probably realise how important it is as well and how much it means to your life. We saw, particularly with grassroots music venues, a lot of local communities set up crowd-funding pages for their own local music venues and that kind of local engagement of "we really want this place to be here when everything comes back", was really encouraging. There is that love for it and I think it will come back. It is just taking longer than we had hoped.

**Zack Polanski AM:** Thank you very much, Chair. Thank you all for your answers so far. I should say, before I was a politician I was an actor and working in grassroots venues, particularly with theatre and community work. Therefore, of all the Committee meetings I have been on in my time in the Assembly, I am really pleased to see this one happening.

Abdul, if I can begin with you. While I am giving you my CV, I worked several times at Tara Arts Theatre, therefore it is very lovely to have you on the panel. What I particularly want to look at this morning is diversity, particularly within the theatre sector, but across culture more generally. I know straight away that Tara Arts has some of the most diverse audiences in London. When you go somewhere like the National Theatre though that diversity is not there, but it is also not there in other grassroots venues. What do you think is going on? What do we need to do to get more diverse audiences in our cultural venues?

**Abdul Shayek (Artistic Director and Joint Chief Executive Officer, Tara Theatre):** That is a big question. There is a lot to do. Just a quick one, it is no longer Tara Arts, it is now Tara Theatre. We have rebranded.

**Zack Polanski AM:** Apologies.

**Abdul Shayek (Artistic Director and Joint Chief Executive Officer, Tara Theatre):** No, no, it is all right, I am just letting everyone know at the moment, I have to do it a lot. Like I said earlier, there is a really important moment within the sector where we have a range of people coming in at leadership level who have really interesting ideas and now is the time for the Arts Council to be brave and support those individuals, those artistic leaders, as opposed to make the cuts that we know is needed in London in order to get money out to the regions. There is a real need for Arts Council to look at the big organisations, the larger organisations that have capacity and access to other financial resource and funding opportunities and get behind the diverse leadership. This could be a really pivotal moment for us in the conversation around equality, equity, and diversity, in our sector.

There is something around etiquette and awareness and understanding of theatre spaces. Different cultures connect and tell stories in different ways. Being aware of those etiquettes that exist, because the British theatre etiquette is a particular etiquette, whereas there are cultures and audiences who go into theatres and respond and are very much in keeping with what Shakespeare's audiences used to do. That can be quite intimidating for audiences who are diverse, who are going into spaces and not knowing what that is and what the dress code is, and so forth. Therefore, there is a bit of work there to be done from our end to connect with large organisations to relax some of those thoughts and ideas and create more relaxed performances, which is happening more and more in bigger spaces. But there is an opportunity here for organisations like Tara to be part of conversations and educating larger institutions in how we diversify our sector.

A couple of things really quickly, I am just aware of time, and I know you asked for short answers. I just wanted to touch on a thing that we spoke about earlier, an analogy. I guess we are speedboats as opposed to the Royal National Theatre, which is a tanker and it takes a long time to shift and change. Again, that is part of the conversation around diversity. We can shift and change and respond quite quickly to what is going on in the world. Whereas the National Theatre takes a year or two to make a decision on what it programmes.

One other thing, in terms of audiences and audience behaviour, we are seeing people come back to the theatre. There is a real appetite for people to get back into spaces. Tara really struggled in our first season when things were not really clear in terms of the pandemic and because we are a smaller space, we could not do reduced audiences, it just did not make any financial sense. However, what we are seeing is audiences are picking up now and our next show, *Silence*, a coproduction with Donmar, is 70% sold out and we have not announced our cast yet.

Therefore, it is what you programme and what you are putting on. We are doing a whole season around Partition and the 75th anniversary of Partition. That is going down really well, and audiences are coming in and it is a really diverse audience.

**Zack Polanski AM:** This is really exciting. Your point on etiquette as well is really well received. I remember I have been in plays with majority Black audiences or global majority audiences, and I remember one thing that Tara do particularly well, and also Stratford East, is allow the audience to congregate after the show. I remember there being this almost culture clash of some theatres wanting to kick audiences out because they need to get the next audience in, but finding that, depending on some cultures, it is quite important to be able to congregate and have conversation or eat food or drink afterwards.

You mentioned quite a lot about finances there and money and I totally accept that a huge part of this is about funding. Do you think there is any other aspects to this that are not about funding where theatres or cultural venues could encourage more diversity beyond funding?

**Abdul Shayek (Artistic Director and Joint Chief Executive Officer, Tara Theatre):** Yes, it is just to create awareness, people being educated and taking antiracism training, organisations bringing in antiracism training, thinking about the stories that we are putting on or how important they are, in terms of the importance of not stereotyping. Tara, the work that it did in terms of representing the South Asian community in the last 40 years has been amazing. There is a real shift now. I always say our tagline before was, "When east meets west." Well east is here, and we are here to stay, and we are west now. Therefore, it is about making that really clear. Making sure that story is being told in an authentic way and there is integrity there around how we tell those stories and how we connect with the younger generation. In this day and age of Netflix and Amazon Prime, when people can get access to stories quite quickly, why should young people come into theatres?



Well, they should come into theatres because we are telling their stories. We are telling those stories in an exciting and interesting way. Therefore, it is all of those things. I am working on this opera at the moment called *Migrations* and Sir David Pountney, who is leading on it, really interesting, but he is clearly of a generation that does not quite understand some of the challenges and issues. We are having to really educate him around that. There is a lot of work to be done around education and connecting with these issues in a variety of different ways and really understanding the nuance that sits within the conversations around equity and equality and diversity.

**Zack Polanski AM:** That is really exciting. Can I move on to another aspect of that? For the last five or ten years I have been involved with Act for Change, I have been going to their meetings, Danny Lee Wynter's organisation for more diverse representation on stage and screen. I do not know if you would agree, but I feel on screen Black representation is improving. There is obviously still a huge gap for East Asian representation and Southeast Asian representation. I remember one thing Rufus Norris said at a meeting and he corrected himself almost immediately but it did slip out, the Artistic Director for the National Theatre. We were talking about Black stage representation and he was saying one of the reasons why it was not diverse is because he needed the best training and the best quality of training. Although he corrected himself, I feel that still does run through some of our cultural sectors. I am just wondering what your opinion is about the cultural workforce.

**Abdul Shayek (Artistic Director and Joint Chief Executive Officer, Tara Theatre):** We need to improve right across the board. There is a real need to train up people to work, not just on stage and not just in creative teams and in executive positions, but right across organisations, whether it is marketing, backstage, technical. Again, there is an opportunity for us to come up with a plan that enables young people to enter into the sector and really get a good sense of what these roles are and how they can get training and access to these opportunities. Tara is hoping to do some of that work. We are hoping, we have a bit of money to raise, but we are hoping to run a training programme right across the UK, which will take away 30 people each year and run a year-long training programme for access into theatre and different opportunities and roles that are available within theatre. There is a bit of work to be done around all of that.

We are talking to the National about how they can support us because they have the resource. They have the building. They have the manpower or the people power. Therefore, how do we attract these individuals and then feed into these larger institutions? Yes, how do we attract people, feed them into these organisations, how do we signpost them, is a really important question. How do we then support them when they go into these huge tankers, like I said earlier, and they do not get lost, and they do not get intimidated, and they do not suddenly feel like they do not want to be there anymore? How do we make sure that we keep supporting them and providing what they need?

**Zack Polanski AM:** Thanks for that, Abdul. If I can just ask you a final question, then I will open up to the rest of the panel. It is around intergenerational diversity. What role does culture play in bringing young people and older people together and telling those intergenerational stories? More specifically, do you think there is anything the Mayor or London can be doing more broadly as a city to be telling those intergenerational stories?

**Abdul Shayek (Artistic Director and Joint Chief Executive Officer, Tara Theatre):** Yes, I mean it is so important. What we are doing at the Donmar is *Silence*, which is an adaptation of a book by Kavita Puri, *Partition Voice: Untold British Stories*. That is really all about making sure that those who lived through Partition - Kavita is a BBC journalist who went out for the 70th anniversary and collected testimonies of people

who lived through Partition - so those lived experiences are there in her book and now we are sharing them on stage with an audience, which is going to be mixed. Those individuals are passing away. We did a project last year, we did a whole season last year, around the 50th anniversary of Bangladesh. Again, that was really important because the pandemic and COVID had a huge impact on the Bangladeshi community and a lot of people who lived through that war of independence have now passed away.

Therefore, the need for bringing together and telling those stories and those histories, which are so important to our communities and to the younger generation, because a lot of us just do not know about those moments, those seminal moments. I am talking about South Asia in particular but I am sure it is the same right across the board, across the Commonwealth, across places where people come from or have a connection to.

Therefore, yes, it is really important, how can the Mayor do more? There is a fair bit that he is doing to be fair, like the Eid celebrations were great, that brought people together in a really interesting way. Let's Do London was really interesting. We were recipients of some Let's Do London funding. We did a piece called *Dawaat*, which went into a whole range of different communities, telling the story of the war of independence of Bangladesh. More of that really, find more support for things that can happen out in communities, which tell those really important stories.

**Zack Polanski AM:** Thank you. That is a really strong community message there and very-well articulated. Thank you very much and good luck with your rehearsals today as well.

**Abdul Shayek (Artistic Director and Joint Chief Executive Officer, Tara Theatre):** Thank you.

**Zack Polanski AM:** Aditi, if I could turn to you now. Obviously, the Migration Museum must have diversity at its heart. In terms of your visitors and the people who access you and your cultural workforce, how are you doing with diversity and how do you think the rest of London could learn or improve?

**Aditi Anand (Artistic Director, Migration Museum):** Thank you. We do a pretty good job in terms of attracting a very diverse audience. I have some statistics to share with you, we have been doing audience research with the Audience Agency through evaluations. At the moment 43% of our audiences are under the age of 34, which is compared to 26% for London museums. Of our audiences, 46% are Black and ethnic minorities, which is compared with 16%. We also have twice the rate of visitors from lower socioeconomic groups at 27% compared with 14% for other London museums.

There is a range of reasons why we do attract this kind of very unusual audience. One is our location and the kind of porous space we are in. It is really attractive to passers-by, it is in the heart of a very diverse community. It is also - as Abdul was talking about - the stories that we are telling represent a huge range of people and experiences and voices. In addition to what stories we tell, it is really important to us who tells those stories. Therefore, engaging our communities and being the story-tellers and their voices coming across is really important to us.

We do not have such a focus on a permanent collection or objects. Really our collection is stories. We do a lot of oral history collection and then work with artists and creative producers to animate those stories in unusual ways and make good use of interesting technology and immersive experiences. Therefore, in terms of taking that forward in other organisations and supporting that, there has to be a level of funding to allow that risk-taking as well, to support organisations to work with artists who may be unknown, who are from migrant and refugee backgrounds, to be able to offer them opportunities.

We have often had artists who we have given residencies to or included in our exhibitions who have never exhibited before. They then subsequently went on to get big commissions at the Imperial War Museum (IWM) or other museums. Therefore really supporting these grassroots organisations who are discovering or highlighting the work of lesser-known artists in communities.

Also, really just financial support, it really comes down to that, to allow organisations like ours to have more marketing, to be on the map in a way that sometimes when we have the Mayor's initiatives, which are great, but it is how do you get smaller organisations like ours part of that strategic planning and have access to that.

I am just thinking about last year we did a big public engagement campaign around the Men's Euros and football and looking at what the pitch would look like if you did not have first, second, third generation migration, and essentially you were left with four players on the field. We did this great campaign, and it had a huge impact online, but I could also see that there were a lot of the Mayor's initiatives around the Euros or even screening the Euros in Trafalgar Square. Therefore, how could our efforts be part of that to amplify that? There are lots of different ways that could be a model for other smaller organisations.

**Zack Polanski AM:** Thank you. That sparks another question, it is for the full panel, this is not a test, it is a genuine question. Last year we had a confirmation hearing for the Cultural Leadership Board that the Mayor runs and Moira Sinclair OBE was appointed the Chair of it. I have been in this same space for about two decades and I did not know this Board existed. I was wondering if any of the four of you knew this Board existed and if you had any interaction with it and if there is anything you think it could be doing more to involve smaller venues at a cultural leadership level?

**Abdul Shayek (Artistic Director and Joint Chief Executive Officer, Tara Theatre):** I am aware of it, and I know that they are recruiting at the moment for new members and a new Chair as well. What can it do more? This recruitment process could be really brilliant in terms of getting some people on there who are from smaller organisations who can bring some of those thoughts and opinions into the mix, alongside some of the larger institutions. If you look at the current group, there are a lot of people there who are either working in large institutions or are connected to. There is less grassroots organisations representation in there. That could be really useful, therefore maybe that is where you guys could push and get some grassroots individuals in there.

**Zack Polanski AM:** Thank you. It sounds like no one knows a huge amount about it.

**Hina Bokhari AM (Chair):** I am really pleased you have raised that, Assembly Member Polanski, we are going to make a note of that. The fact that they all shook their heads is very evident.

**Zack Polanski AM:** That is to you, Clara. Aditi was talking about immersive venues and the fact that unusual spaces can be used for theatre or music. Again, I did a lot of work myself with that and I saw how that brought communities in who would not necessarily go to the theatre or to a cultural event. What more do you think could happen with music in immersive spaces and is there anywhere again that the Mayor or London more generally could support that?

**Clara Cullen (Venue Support Manager, Music Venue Trust):** Yes. We are seeing an increase in the diversity of programming within grassroots music venues. An example is a venue in Sutton called the Sound Lounge, which is a great Americana country music orientated music venue. They do a lot of training days for all kind of people who might want to get involved in sound engineering or just different training skills. They are also vegan-based, therefore they do a lot of events around that. What I am seeing is this move towards

music as the core but a lot of satellite events around it. Kind of diversifying what you do in your space and what a music venue can do. That is an interesting thing where at my level grassroots music venues are needed because, although it is incredible, it is great, Adele and others are cheering and all these people who are now massive stars, there is also this need for grassroots to cater to niche audiences.

Just off the top of my head, the Blackheart in Camden is well known for being a metal orientated venue. Some of that music is never going to get mainstreamed. Some of it you will only ever perform to about 30 people maximum. I would definitely recommend everyone here go to a night at the Blackheart, you will hear some very interesting music, it might not be your taste, but that is important as well. It is about allowing these spaces to cater. There is a need to diversify. It is interesting to go to a space that puts on lots of different types of events. Also having an acceptance that sometimes it is just going to be niche content and that has cultural value in and of itself.

**Hina Bokhari AM (Chair):** That is great. Thank you very much. You have highlighted lots of important factors there.

**Marina Ahmad AM (Deputy Chair):** I have questions for the panel, but what I will do is start with Abdul, therefore if he can answer those before he has to go, and then I will come back to the rest of the panel to ask you to answer these questions as well.

Abdul, first of all, if I can also thank you for raising the issue of how important cultural moments are for people. As a woman of Bangladeshi heritage, to talk about the independence over 50 years ago now in Bangladesh, and what that still means to that community that I belong to, is really important, therefore thank you so much for raising that.

My question is what was the impact of the pandemic, but I would like you to answer this also in terms of the burgeoning and now present cost of living crisis, upon your organisation, including both the artists and the wider workforce, to what extent is Tara now recovering and what do you think needs to happen for the sector to make a full recovery?

**Abdul Shayek (Artistic Director and Joint Chief Executive Officer, Tara Theatre):** I will start with Tara. Before I get on to answering that question, the reason why I raised my hand was just going back to the Mayor's Cultural Board. A really important part of that Board needs to be payment. The members should be paid. The Chair is paid but the rest of the members are not. If you want grassroots organisations or individuals running grassroots organisations, being able to pay them, especially people from diverse backgrounds, being able to pay them for their time is really important. I say this a lot about diversity in boardrooms. A lot of people just do not have capacity and time. If you want people from specific communities or those opinions in the room, sometimes you do have to support and find a way to compensate them for their time. Often people have quite a lot on. Therefore that is something to take back to the Mayor, whether that is an option.

Coming back to Tara and your question, it was a really weird time for us because we were in a difficult financial position regardless of the pandemic. We were being really badly funded by the Arts Council. We get £211,000 from the Arts Council and other organisations, similar size to us, were in receipt of £350,000, £500,000. There are organisations, English Touring Theatre (ETT) for example gets £600,000 a year from the Arts Council. There are a whole bunch of other white-led organisations who are in receipt of much bigger funding from Arts Council England. Therefore, I think we were in a difficult position financially. When I joined the company - I have only been there just under two years - the organisation was always going to have a hiatus, regardless of the pandemic, regardless of COVID.

We have built back. The Mayor's Office did intervene and so did the Arts Council with some intervention support for Tara. We have really kicked on. We have raised over £600,000 and built capacity back up. I was the third person, because the team had been decimated, people were let go, and there was only two people in the team, and I was the third person to join the Tara team. Now we have gone up to ten, about to get an 11th person in.

We are in an interesting position. We have a really great proposition. There is a real need for us as an organisation and we have a really rich history. All of that really works well and it works in our favour in terms of getting support from a range of different individuals and connecting with different communities within the South Asian context.

The theatre sector, at the moment what we are seeing is a pattern of putting on a lot of low-risk work, which is really difficult, or things that are deemed as low risk. We need to find a way to be able to take risk and give artists and organisations and individuals the support they need to take risk, whether that is the stories that are being told, whether that is the form; form is really important. We had a moment where we pivoted to online and we looked at what we could do as theatres online. We need to really understand and take a moment to think about what worked and what did not when we went into that space, and really think about what the future of an online offer might be. We might find ourselves in another lockdown in the future. What is that offer? I think a lot of people pivoted, went into that online digital space, and there was a lot of really great learning. How do we make sure we disseminate that to as many people as possible?

The live part of it is really about risks and who gets to take those risks. The National can take a bunch of risks. I know they would disagree with me, but I think they can take risks, as opposed to us. If one of our shows does not do well, we are in a really difficult financial position. It is tricky because the sector is doing a fair bit. It is shifting and changing, and it is trying to look at new ways of working. Mental health and awareness of people's mental health in the sector is really important. We have seen a huge falloff of freelance staff. We really struggle to get production managers at the moment, stage managers, who have left the sector, because we did not look after them. We did not respond to their needs. When things got difficult there was no support there for them. We need to build back, and we need to think about how we build back in a way that empowers and enables people and how we look after those individuals within the work context.

Theatre, by its very nature, is quite a hard slog at times. You put in a lot of hours and pay is not great and you often do it for the love. However, we do need to move away from that idea that people can just do it for the love of an artform. People cannot survive on just doing things for love. They need money.

**Marina Ahmad AM (Deputy Chair):** Sorry, I am just conscious of your time, and if I could interrupt you and leave it on love, which I think is a really good place to leave anything. Just a really important question again from your perspective, did the pandemic create any opportunities in the growth of grassroots culture in any way, particularly outside of the central London zone? Did your organisation receive any support from Government during the pandemic and, if that is the case, was it enough?

**Abdul Shayek (Artistic Director and Joint Chief Executive Officer, Tara Theatre):** We were not allowed to go in for the support because we were already in receipt of intervention funding. We went in for the final round, but the Government funding was really tricky because they needed money spent within specific timeframes, which we could not do. Therefore, it was hard to get access to support.

Opportunities, yes, we had to become other things. I know that the Battersea Arts Centre was a space, I think they were serving food, we started to do other things as organisations and that was really brilliant. It shows us how important our cultural institutions are, however big or small, in terms of the civic role they play in our lives. I think we really need to hang on to that.

We should not dismiss our community work. Often community was sat on the side, and community and outreach became the central driving force for cultural institutions during the pandemic. People embraced that. We need to make sure we continue to embrace that. Too often there is a really clear definition of community and outreach, which sits to the side of the organisation, and then the kind of mainstage work, which is in the centre of the organisation, and all of the resource is put into the mainstage and whatever is going on centrally for the organisation. The people who will fare better when we come out of this moment are the organisations that really embrace that and understand how they integrate their community and outreach into all parts of the organisation. So, yes, that is the big learning, and the digital aspect that I spoke about earlier.

**Marina Ahmad AM (Deputy Chair):** All right, well thank you very much. Thank you for raising and reminding us all of one of the best sketch programmes ever written, which is Goodness Gracious Me. If anyone has met my mum, they will know that the scene where the woman is shoving samosas into the hospital drip to feed her critically-ill son is my mother, so thank you.

**Hina Bokhari AM (Chair):** You should see what my mum can do with an aubergine. Thank you so much, Abdul, for joining us. Thank you so much.

**Abdul Shayek (Artistic Director and Joint Chief Executive Officer, Tara Theatre):** Thank you, goodbye.

**Marina Ahmad AM (Deputy Chair):** If I could ask the same questions now, and good morning to the rest of the panel. I asked about the pandemic and now presently the cost of living crisis. If it is OK, Clara, I am going to go to you, not because you are first, but because you earlier gave a really good and pertinent example of a fuel bill at one of the venues, which has basically doubled in the last few months. I wonder if you could address the issue of what has happened since the pandemic, what sort of support organisations have received, and recovery in the context of the cost of living crisis and what more can be done.

**Clara Cullen (Venue Support Manager, Music Venue Trust):** Sure. In terms of funding, Music Venue Trust did not receive cultural recovery funding, but we also made a very conscious choice not to apply for it. One of our roles as a representative body can at times have to be a critical friend, therefore we made the conscious decision of, if we have to be in meetings with Government and all that kind of stuff, it is probably better that we are able to say, "Got that thing wrong," so we did not want to go into the funding for that. That was a choice that we made.

In terms of funding for music venues generally, we spent a lot of time working with our grassroots music venues, helping them to learn the language of public funding. A lot of them had never applied for public funding before. It really is a kind of skill unto itself. Therefore, learning how to speak the language of a public funder. We helped review applications, coach people, do lots of seminars and training sessions on that. I am proud to say that was very successful in terms of a lot of our venues did receive Arts Council funding and I think that made a big difference to it. I am hoping maybe going forward there is hopefully an increased confidence within the sector that they could continue to apply for this type of funding and that they would actually be successful.

We are seeing grassroots music venues apply to the Supporting Grassroots Live Music Fund, which is one of the Arts Council's funds, and I am not sure that potentially would have happened had some of the training and stuff during the pandemic not happened. In terms of - I do not want to say "opportunities" - what I have seen as a result of the pandemic, a lot of our venues are really just talking to each other a lot more. That was not really the case before the pandemic, particularly in the live music industry. It was a pretty competitive environment whereas now we are seeing people routinely talking, "Oh, what ticket price did you put on this one?" "What was your take here?" "I need support on this. Would anyone help me on this?" That has been quite an encouraging thing to see, this sense of collaboration growing generally within grassroots music venues.

I am concerned about the next year or so. During the pandemic, Music Venue Trust itself received funding from the Mayor as part of the Cultural Crisis [Culture at Risk Business Support] Fund, which was very good because it meant we could respond very quickly to the needs. A lot of that longer-term funding has now tailed off really. It was crisis funding, but I would like to see potentially an institutionalisation of that type of funding whether it is at Greater London Authority (GLA) level, but even just across the board, understanding that now grassroots music venues are within the cultural envelope and they are considered of cultural importance within the wider context. I would like to see that continued and that supported. I personally think that one of the ways to do that is through small, targeted funds, which is one of the reasons I really like the Supporting Grassroots Live Music Fund. It is quite small, it is quite targeted, it is very specific, and it feels manageable when you are trying to write an application and all of that kind of stuff.

All of that needs to be understood because when you run a music venue - and it goes back to Abdul's [Shayek] point - typically in our sector it is one or two people running a music venue. They are doing the door, they are doing the booking and they create the scene and so the whole apparatus of the culture really comes down to typically one or two people doing multiple jobs at one time. That is one of the reasons, going back to your London Committee point, it is quite difficult to get grassroots organisations on those types of boards because you just do not really have the capacity and time to do it when you are having to do four or five different things within your organisation. Maybe an understanding of how do we share some of that weight and is it to do with training people within the organisation that could help take over things? How do we take some of the lessons that we have learnt through the pandemic? It is generally that culture is important, it enriches everyone's lives, and it is one of the things that makes life worth living. How do we take some of those lessons and make it so that in the next ten years there will still be music venues and theatres and museums and that it is one of our constants that we do not take for granted?

**Marina Ahmad AM (Deputy Chair):** Thank you very much. Aditi, would you like to answer that, please?

**Aditi Anand (Artistic Director, Migration Museum):** In terms of crisis funding, we received some through Lewisham Council and through the Arts Council. Some of it was project-based, so getting funding that is quite unrestricted and that can just be used in whatever way that we need can be sometimes a little bit difficult. I think Abdul [Shayek] also mentioned that quite a lot of the funding had to be used in a certain time period and it was restrictive in lots of different ways. The pandemic provides some opportunity for organisations like ours in that at the moment we occupy temporary spaces and there are lots of vacant retail spaces and lots of vacant other types of spaces that might be available now for smaller grassroots cultural organisations to occupy. Having a commitment to try to link up these organisations with potential spaces would be a really helpful thing that Government could help us do. Also, with rents rising to have some sort of cap on rents and having an agreement that you could occupy spaces for affordable rent would be really important. Part of the pandemic that is challenging is that there is so much uncertainty for organisations like ours and we are so

dependent on landlords and things like that. Being able to have a bit more certainty would allow us to do planning because you just do not know where you are going to be.

**Marina Ahmad AM (Deputy Chair):** How would you get that certainty? What do you think needs to happen to make that certainty happen?

**Aditi Anand (Artistic Director, Migration Museum):** For our organisation in particular, it is having a commitment to helping us find a space, a permanent space, and to make that space affordable for us to be in. That would be the key really. Yes, I think that is it.

**Paul Bristow (Director, Strategic Partnerships, Arts Council England):** The first thing I will say about the impact of the pandemic was just how massively proud I was to work within the cultural sector. You have heard several examples already of how the cultural sector stepped up to support communities. What Battersea Arts Centre did around feeding people was one thing, but they did not forget the core mission as well. They were providing creative packs for local kids, so even in lockdown people could be creative. I am sure everybody has their own stories about how engaging with arts and culture helped them get through that time and artists/cultural organisations and people working in the sector felt they had a responsibility. That is something that we are really proud of the sector for doing.

In terms of the impact and the impact running into the cost of living crisis, clearly it was huge and significant and negative and parts of the sector have been lost as we have gone through that. In the very first weeks of COVID, we did put some emergency funding out there for both individuals and for organisations, which was very quickly snapped up and helped people get through that initial period of the first lockdown. Equally, the Culture Recovery Fund, which people have referred to, was almost £2 billion and it was a significant investment. A large chunk of that money went into London and that played a big part in making sure that the sector came through. However, when you get a big chunk of money like that and it is coming out alongside Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) and the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme, these are big, chunky Government funds being operated at speed and they do not serve every single need. We were talking to the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and to Government along with Music Venues Trust about the particular issues around grassroots music venues. While we did get some things right within it and we did manage to get some of that money out the door early before the rest of the Culture Recovery Fund happened, there will have been other bits of the sector which will have missed that. One thing that we can do is we can look at the experience of the last few months and see some of the things that Abdul [Shayek] was talking about in terms of particular skill sets within the sector that have been lost. Can we collect that evidence? Then we know that if we face this kind of challenge again, we are in a position to put the appropriate support in place.

Thinking about the recovery and its playing into the cost of living crisis, there has been a recovery, audiences have gone up faster in London than elsewhere in the country and that is fantastic. However, as some of the panellists have said, it is patchy, it is different to what it was before, and it is still a recovery. Young people have come back, but we are seeing different patterns of behaviour. People are probably buying tickets a bit later than they would, a bit less advanced, and that can play havoc with your cashflow if you are a small organisation. Then, as Abdul was saying, there have been some issues around staff retention and particular skills sets and when you play that into the cost of living crisis, the recovery from the pandemic is clearly going into a really challenging time. I do not think we have seen how that will play out yet because while we have the examples - and I can think of examples from the museum sector as well that people's energy bills have doubled and trebled - a lot of that is down to when your particular arrangement comes to an end. There is an element of unpredictability as people's individual organisation's circumstances shift. A lot of these things -



most of these things - are not in the control of the cultural organisations or the Arts Council if we are looking at fuel. If you do touring, which is a really important driver for income for organisations in London, including grassroots organisations, the costs of touring are going to go up significantly. We all know how much petrol and diesel costs are rising and that is an immediate cost. Organisations are going to be faced with some really hard choices very soon as to where they spend what is a decreasing stock of capital to draw upon.

**Lorna Lee (Assistant Director, Culture and Heritage, London Borough of Waltham Forest):** I resonate with what has been said across the panel. Again, picking up on what other people have been saying, there has been more confidence in outdoor productions, and we had 20,000 people attend our [Platinum] Jubilee outdoor street party. Ways of working as well there is trying to bring confidence back in the way that we deliver things, which is not possible for everybody.

In terms of opportunity - and I think this probably is because of the [London] Borough of Culture - there is a greater understanding of the power and the value of culture in addressing those wider issues; that culture has featured more strongly than it might otherwise in terms of the Borough's recovery. I can speak from a local authority perspective, but it has been a really core part of our high street recovery and understanding that culture can animate the high street. Ultimately, that is enabling the money, different money, to get to those grassroots organisations. It is the same where we have been working with the Local Plan and making sure, again, that there is workspace provision, and that policy really enables people to get opportunities for developers' funding. It is using the wider resources and making sure that there are pathways for cultural organisations to receive the money that otherwise they just would not have been eligible for. Similarly, cultural jobs have been part of our Borough's jobs recovery, again, working right from schools to understand what the importance of creative jobs is and for parents to understand the importance of creative jobs so that they do not tell their young people to "Go and get a proper job" and then those pathways. We are also working with Soho Theatre and other organisations to understand where their big skills shortages are so that we can work with our diverse local populations and help to start to address some of those workforce issues as well.

**Marina Ahmad AM (Deputy Chair):** Thank you very much and I think we have all had the "proper job" conversation with our parents.

**Anne Clarke AM:** Clara, we have talked quite a bit about the pandemic and also the cost of living crisis, but I am just wondering about the impact of Brexit on the smaller cultural arts sector in London. Has it created challenges or opportunities for smaller cultural bodies that are different to those experienced by the larger, more established institutions?

**Clara Cullen (Venue Support Manager, Music Venue Trust):** Yes, it is a really interesting question because obviously at a grassroots/DIY level, cross-European touring is very important. You get in a van, you go across, you bring your merch, and you play there and then likewise back in the UK. We are starting to see some of the impacts and that was delayed by the pandemic when touring did not happen. We are starting to see some UK bands having issues, trying to play across Europe, what type of carnets do you need, what type of forms, all that kind of thing as well. It is difficult to say what the long-term impact is at the moment. In some ways, what I have seen at least in the last few months is that there is a willingness at least within the UK to do longer tours. Actually, that is quite interesting. Normally, in the last five years or so it was quite common to see a grassroots tour that might hit eight to ten venues maximum, but now you are seeing bands really hungry to play 30-date tours again. Maybe that is probably an effect of the pandemic of not being able to do your job and, if you are an artist, you just want to get out there and tour as much as possible. I am still waiting to see the full impacts of Brexit on touring, and it will definitely make things harder in the short term.

Whether/how we work those things out, I am not too sure, but we are starting to see some of those issues filter through and the ease of what it previously was is not there.

**Shaun Bailey AM:** Morning, everybody. Can I address my question to Lorna in the first instance? What support do local authorities in London provide for small cultural organisations in their boroughs?

**Lorna Lee (Assistant Director, Culture and Heritage, London Borough of Waltham Forest):** The immediate thing that comes to mind is that we have a grant fund. That grant fund was something that we had had for a while, but we really developed it through the [London] Borough of Culture and some of the things that have been talked about and the fact that we really try to make sure that some of that is targeted to the groups that we have been unable to reach in the past. Fundamentally, the importance of it has been that we have had a community panel, which makes the decisions on which projects get the money as well and that, again, brings a real diversity of projects. One is about the direct money through grants.

Certainly, through the pandemic - and we are continuing - is just to be a source of trusted advice and information. Where there were additional restriction grants, we could influence the team which was doing that to try to make sure that it was cultural organisations again who might not have been used to applying for those grants so that they could access that money. It is also about workspace as well, to make sure that there is affordable workspace. We have a Creative Enterprise Zone in Blackhorse Road in Waltham Forest and, again, it is making sure that there is a real awareness of what that means and constructing it in a way that enables local organisations to survive, survive but eventually hopefully grow as well.

**Shaun Bailey AM:** Thank you. You made a comment about you have a Community Panel that receives funding. Who shortlists? Is that done by the Council?

**Lorna Lee (Assistant Director, Culture and Heritage, London Borough of Waltham Forest):** Yes. The shortlisting is done, "Does this meet the criteria?" There are criteria with the grants and then the long list of everybody who fits those criteria goes to the panel. The panel is trained in how you look at criteria and grant applications and people can apply to be on the panel. Again, you have to be so careful you are not selecting people who give you the answer that you may think you want. One of the benefits from that is people who were on the panel now realise what they need to do in their own arts organisations when they are applying for grants, and it has given them insight in to how you put a good application together.

**Shaun Bailey AM:** Thank you. I really appreciate the idea of not selecting people who give you the answer you want. As someone who was a youth worker, I am very used to things being presented as if they are on a level playing field and they are not.

Another small question: is it easier to fund an ostensibly community-based arts project than it is one that has some kind of commercial aspect? We are talking about music venues, and they are very important, but is it harder to fund them because they may have a commercial aspect to them?

**Lorna Lee (Assistant Director, Culture and Heritage, London Borough of Waltham Forest):** I would say it is definitely easier to fund one there is not the commercial aspect to, but we have just done some grants for Fellowship Square. People are selling tickets because there has to be a recognition that sometimes having everything free at the point of entry is not sustainable. We have to have grownup conversations about what is sustainable and how you ensure that people are not excluded when there is a fee. It is not an either-or but, yes, sometimes you have to make more of a case to support organisations that are seen to be commercial.

**Shaun Bailey AM:** Again, I --

**Clara Cullen (Venue Support Manager, Music Venue Trust):** If I could quickly jump in on that point because it is really interesting?

**Shaun Bailey AM:** Please do.

**Clara Cullen (Venue Support Manager, Music Venue Trust):** What we have seen in the last few years from within our grassroots sector is moving towards not-for-profit status, community interest companies, things like that. That is where there is a recognition that at least at the grassroots level what you are doing is really a not-for-profit activity, particularly when you are putting on emerging artists that are very, very early on in their career. Going forward, it is giving advice on how you might want to move towards either not-for-profit status like charities or a community interest company or something that aligns more with the ethos of delivering a community activity. If you speak to a lot of grassroots music venue operators, that is the world that they see themselves in and then it is getting them to realise that does mean them as well. You can move into that kind of bracket and realise you do not just have to be a limited company. There are more options towards that and then sometimes that might result in being better understood by funders.

**Shaun Bailey AM:** Thank you. I just wondered because I can see that. I used to run a community organisation and we were for the community, and you would see people who wanted to do things that were innovative, but they would have to charge, or they came from a slightly different start point and it excluded them. I thought that was a shame because I think charity does not have to be 100% charity, if you see what I mean. We should try to encourage people in business to act charitably in their goings-on.

Let me move on to my second question. Do London grassroots music venues face specific challenges in relation to licensing and what could be done to address these challenges? Obviously, Clara, I am coming to you. I say this because, as someone from the Black community, we have seen many other communities receive support in order to keep their venues going and it has been an absolute desert in the Black community for many, many years. All of our, what I would argue, culturally important venues have gone, and they show no sign of returning. Is licensing something that maybe could be done here at City Hall? Is it being done successfully at council level already? What would you say?

**Clara Cullen (Venue Support Manager, Music Venue Trust):** Yes, absolutely. I am a layperson in licensing in that I am not an expert, but in my role as the Venue Support Manager I can see that more often than not it is at a council level where the Licensing Department does not really interact with the Environmental Health Department, which does not interact with the Planning Department. That all creates friction and pressure in how you then run your business. Some of it also goes down to how you can create more understanding and trust between venue operators to approach their local Licensing Department and ask them, "OK, well, what does this term actually mean?" or "OK, we've had a noise complaint". That does not necessarily mean it is automatically going to be a negative experience or anything like that and it is learning how to navigate some of those systems. At a mayoral or GLA level, some guidance on that and even just some way of integrating some of that understanding across those different departments would be really, really helpful because at the moment it is really lacking.

I will give you an example. In [the London Borough of] Hackney, it had a really interesting cultural programme where it was grants for putting on events and then at the same time there was one venue that had to get their tenders removed for the very funding that was given by the Council. It was an interesting one where clearly those two departments just had not talked to each other about what was going on there. That can sometimes

create pressure that is quite difficult to navigate, particularly if you come from a perspective where maybe you are nervous to confront some of those officers or departments or whatever because you have not had good experiences in the past.

**Shaun Bailey AM:** Yes, I see what you are saying. Do you think there is any scope to centralise licensing maybe at this level, at regional level? Do you think there is any scope for that?

**Clara Cullen (Venue Support Manager, Music Venue Trust):** I am not really sure. For me, what I would be quite interested in seeing at a licensing level is maybe just a directive from the GLA that says to all the boroughs, "You should all be having meetings with your cultural operators once a quarter" or something to start fostering those kind of relationships which currently do not happen. It is getting venues to understand that, yes, you can go to your Licensing Officers or your Environmental Health Officers or your Planning Department. Maybe that will take initiatives from the GLA as well to make some of those things happen.

**Shaun Bailey AM:** Yes, because one of the things the Mayor did get right is the idea that the agent of change has to cater for that change because often licensing is just seen as enforcement. If you are setting up a venue and you are small, you do not want to say to people what you are doing just in case they scoot you off very early on.

**Sakina Sheikh AM:** Good morning, panel. It is great to be joined by you all and it has been really fascinating to hear your perspectives on how we protect, promote and uplift grassroots culture and the wider cultural industry. I wanted to build on the line of questioning from Assembly Member Bailey, which is really pertinent, about particularly looking at the Black community and how especially those who produce music nights have had to navigate that scene for quite a few years. I wanted to draw particular attention to the 696 form that I am sure you are aware of. At the time, it was a form by the Metropolitan Police Service that meant you had to detail the ethnicity of your clientele, which you would have thought rang alarm bells in its formation. It was great to see Sadiq Khan [Mayor of London] scrap that form in 2018 because anecdotally through friends or generally from very clear feedback it felt like it disproportionately - not disproportionately - it felt like it targeted the Black community specifically and Black music nights. I just wanted to get the panel's thoughts on other barriers, whether it is administrative and bureaucratic, that you think the Black community or, more broadly, the Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) community - which is not a term I like, but it serves a purpose when we are discussing things - faces trying to put on diverse events. Are there any recommendations consequently? If it is all right, I will start with Clara.

**Clara Cullen (Venue Support Manager, Music Venue Trust):** Could you summarise the question a bit shorter possibly?

**Sakina Sheikh AM:** Yes, building on the experiences of what we heard around how the Black community felt particularly targeted with the 696 form, do you feel like the barriers that they were facing at the time have been overcome? Do you think there are more? Sorry, I tried to summarise and I have added more questions. Do you think there is a hangover of those barriers? Whether that is through the licensing that is permitted at local council levels, do you think that is still embedded?

**Clara Cullen (Venue Support Manager, Music Venue Trust):** Yes. A few years ago, Music Venue Trust in collaboration with the GLA put out a book called *How to Open a Grassroots Music Venue* and *How to Run a Grassroots Music Venue*. Our aim with that was to simplify at least some of the understanding around licensing, planning and Environmental Health Officers (EHO). Actually, two weeks ago, again in collaboration with the GLA, we did training sessions and one of them was how to build stakeholder relationships with your

local authority or local council. What we saw in doing that meeting is that maybe in our sector, particularly if you get a licensing letter, you automatically assume it is enforcement action. I imagine they are probably standard template letters, but when you receive them they can read incredibly well, quite scary to be honest. That creates an atmosphere where people do not really feel like these things are approachable. There is a lot of work that still needs to be done on that and, yes, I do not think we are at this place where we find a huge improvement on that if I can be honest.

**Sakina Sheikh AM:** OK, thank you. I do not know if I could come to yourself, Paul. I do not know. Perhaps you might have some perspective.

**Hina Bokhari AM (Chair):** Can I just interject? We are slightly running out of time. Do you mind if Paul writes to us with an answer or do you want to hear that now?

**Sakina Sheikh AM:** I would be, to honest with you. I would want to hear it now, thank you.

**Hina Bokhari AM (Chair):** Yes, OK.

**Paul Bristow (Director, Strategic Partnerships, Arts Council England):** I will give a perspective as a funder rather than the regulatory stuff because other people have more expertise in that than me and there are a couple of things that I would highlight there. One, as a funder and as a public body, is we have a responsibility to represent the diversity of this country and we need to be constantly vigilant as to how we are doing that and listening to challenges that come in. Some of the things that Abdul [Shayek] was saying before is clearly a debate we are involved in across the cultural sector and that is a challenge that we welcome and we need to act on. The job is not done, it is not going to be done and there is a lot still to do, but I will give some examples of how as a funder we have responded through some of that listening.

We did a particular piece of work, and I mentioned the matched funding requirement for our funding. We looked particularly at communities across London where applications were coming from and what the reasons were as to why you fell at particular hurdles. We looked at the matched funding and if you are from a Black, Asian or ethnically diverse background, the matched funding appeared to be a particular challenge that you faced. We looked again at that restriction within our funding and practical changes like that can make a difference because that leads forward into who gets to work in the sector and questions around programming. It is a very specific example.

Then another area I will pick up though just from us, as a funder, is thinking about questions of governance and workforce. I do not think this is a recommendation to the Authority and the Mayor, but it might be about best practice that we could explore together. How do you change that within a cultural organisation and particularly in a smaller grassroots organisation where there might be lack of capacity to deal with those challenges no matter how well intentioned the organisation is in wanting to see a change? We can wield some sticks and in terms of our coming NPO of which we will announce the funding decisions later this year, we will be requiring organisations that get money from us to set targets for governance and for workforce to be representative of the communities that they serve. You cannot just wield the stick; you have to encourage people as well. Some of those things that Abdul was talking about in terms of how you would pay people and how you might get people representing particular communities on decision-making and advisory structures like the panel we were talking about can make a difference as well. How you support that capacity is very much something that organisations like the GLA, local government and the Arts Council can collaborate on to put some of that positive capacity-building to go alongside the standards that are expected.

**Sakina Sheikh AM:** Brilliant. Thank you so much.

**Zack Polanski AM:** Paul, if I could keep on the conversation about funding, which has for obvious reasons been very present this morning. The Arts Council funding predominantly has focused on central London, including the Culture Recovery Fund. What is the rationale for this?

**Paul Bristow (Director, Strategic Partnerships, Arts Council England):** There is a fact about where the sector in London is located and where the largest organisations in London are located. If we are talking about grassroots organisations, yes, there are many in central London and inner London boroughs, but there are fewer of those larger organisations outside. In terms of organisations which receive the largest grants - so in terms of where the cash will go - that is clearly into central London. This is a situation that we want to see changing over time and we want to make sure that we are supporting cultural opportunity across London. We recognise that in various parts of outer London and outer London boroughs there is less Arts Council funding, which leads into a less strong cultural ecology and we want to be shifting that over time. We have made some moves in that direction already and we have a clear sense, thinking about the sector we have on the panel, of who our partners are within those locations to grow the cultural sector and grow the cultural ecology in those places.

Clearly, it is going to be more challenging for us to be able to do that in our coming investment round, given the requirement from Government upon us to redistribute some funding from the capital outside of London to support levelling up. That is a very clear Government directive that we have received and, as a public body, we have to respond to that, but that ambition to support the grassroots sector across outer London remains. We have nominated five priority places, which we announced a little while ago, where we have an aspiration to increase our investment over time and, through the course of this investment round, all of those places are in outer London. We have also extended some of our programmes, which are about providing cultural opportunity in a sustainable way, really building on the communities and grassroots organisations and local partnerships. With our Creative People and Places Programme, which is a national programme, there were two partnerships funded in London as part of that Programme and it is now six. We have a clear direction of travel, which is to support those sorts of organisations, but at the same time as well as having local ecologies, there is a London-wide ecology and those larger organisations are part of it. They do work with grassroots organisations, they do work to support touring both in and out of London, and that is something as well that we want to work with them on to see them doing more.

**Zack Polanski AM:** Thank you. On levelling up, what impact do you think this will have on London's grassroots culture?

**Paul Bristow (Director, Strategic Partnerships, Arts Council England):** The first thing is it will make for some challenges for the Arts Council as we make our decisions in the coming funding round. It will clearly restrict the potential to grow the cultural sector within London off the back of Arts Council funding, but we should not forget that it is not just Arts Council funding that leads to growth in the cultural sector. One of the things we have to do is to be smart about the partnerships we are in. Then there is a conversation with the Mayor, the GLA and the Deputy Mayor for Culture [and Creative Industries] about how we engage strategically with this body, operating regionally to make sure our funding works most effectively. We have to make sure that we deliver against our commitments to those priority places to make sure that we are increasing investment in those places over time. What we have to also bear in mind as well - and this is something we have not forgotten - is our commitment within this current funding to have a more diverse portfolio that exists within London as well. We want to see more organisations that are led by a more diverse range of people, we will be looking to bring the organisations into the portfolio, and we want to see those organisations that have

ambition provided with extra support as well. Now, that will clearly create a challenging situation for us as a funder to deal with. I cannot answer your question completely because we do not make the decisions until October [2022], but that is how we are setting up ourselves to deal with the particular challenges of levelling up in front of us. It is important to recognise though there is still going to be over £400 million invested in London so this will still be the world-leading centre of the UK's cultural sector with significant support from the Arts Council.

**Zack Polanski AM:** Thank you and I am going to end it there. Chair, perhaps we could ask if you could write to the Committee once that decision is made in October [2022] to outline how specifically we can protect those cultural venues outside of central London, too. Thank you.

**Hina Bokhari AM (Chair):** Thank you so much.

**Sakina Sheikh AM:** This is about the London Borough of Culture and the impact on the borough and the benefits that it brings. I will start with Lorna, and I will come to you, Aditi, if you did want to contribute from a [London Borough of] Lewisham perspective, seeing as we are the London Borough of Culture this year, but also any of the other panellists. What has the social and economic impact of the London Borough of Culture Programme been in your borough and how have you measured this impact?

**Lorna Lee (Assistant Director, Culture and Heritage, London Borough of Waltham Forest):** We were the first London Borough of Culture in 2019 and I should add we did liaise with the [Mayor's] Cultural Leadership Board during 2018 and 2019. [The London] Borough of Culture brought 500,000 visits to the Borough, we put on over 1,000 events and activities - "we" being the Borough - and 85% of households were engaged. We measured the economic impact from our ten highlight events and that was estimated at bringing £4.1 million into the local economy. We did a lot of work to engage businesses, hospitality businesses, creative businesses and just high street businesses.

In terms of ongoing impact, we were patting ourselves on the back because we engaged 1,000 volunteers from a really fantastic, diverse range of backgrounds and ages as well with quite a lot of young volunteers linked to some of our other programmes. Then COVID hit. We had been saying for some time about the brilliance of culture in addressing many issues, so we were faced with a challenge, but I believe because of [the London] Borough of Culture we met that challenge very well. You were saying "fleet of foot" and our local organisations really were. The volunteers boosted from 1,000 to 3,000 and became the real cornerstone of the Borough's response to supporting its local communities and, although they were different people - some of them were different people - the structures and knowing how best to work with volunteers was practised through [the London] Borough of Culture. The networks, both the local networks and the creative networks, really came into their own.

Again, through the funding that we mentioned, we thought "Actually, who knows best on how to support local communities? The people in them". Within about six weeks, we got a new grant programme out there called Our Virtual Culture Programme, a really fantastic, innovative way of working. There was lots of digital/online, but virtual also meant doing things on the radio. Blackhorse Workshop made kite kits and, using zero emission bike deliveries, delivered 1,000 kite kits right across the Borough, and then it was using social media. There were lots of really innovative ways of working through what were the most extraordinarily difficult times. Also, talking about empowering communities, which can sound tokenistic if we are not careful, it embedded within the Council, the wider Council, both the value of culture but also how amazing it is when you empower communities properly. There were a number of initiatives, for example, a civic forum on looking at race hate crime and how the Borough and its community could address that and what actions. The Council took on

board the actions, which were entirely from a representative group from the community, and it fundamentally changed the ways of working. Some of the other things I mentioned, getting policy changed in the Local Plan and really setting culture centre stage, have meant that various departments across the Council are then working in different ways with the communities.

One last thing I would like to mention is within [the London] Borough of Culture there was a performance called East Side Story. That was a local organisation, Catalyst in Communities, working with 21/22 local young people who, let us say, were from vulnerable backgrounds at risk of falling off the rails. They worked and developed their own story, like you were saying, and put on a performance about their own story. It was probably the first time their parents had been proud of things in their life, but also there were the powerful messages that that sent to the people who worked in social care, looking after young people. I am sure there was somebody with the calculators because somebody said it was better than ten years' mental health support and that actually this fundamentally changed those people's lives. It had those things which are sort of the breadth and the depth of that, which is now continuing and those things are continuing without the cultures impact that they now have their own pathways.

**Sakina Sheikh AM:** Fantastic. You are really setting a very high bar for [the London Borough of] Lewisham to meet and those are really fantastic achievements and 85% of households engaged is a very aspirational figure. I just wanted to congratulate you on the work done because that is a really proud record. A good friend of mine, Ahad [Elley], helped set up Dialed In and I think that was part of the London Borough of Culture which celebrated south Asian art. It was a historic event, I think sort of the first time in London --

**Lorna Lee (Assistant Director, Culture and Heritage, London Borough of Waltham Forest):** They are coming back. They have some great funding, fantastic.

**Sakina Sheikh AM:** Yes, third time running, I think, so the legacy will really live on. If I translate that question to you, Aditi, how would you like to be engaged in [the London Borough of] Lewisham as a local stakeholder that is incredibly important to the borough in the forthcoming programme for the London Borough of Culture in Lewisham?

**Aditi Anand (Artistic Director, Migration Museum):** Yes, we are incredibly proud to be in [the London Borough of] Lewisham during its [London] Borough of Culture year and to be --

**Sakina Sheikh AM:** You and me both.

**Aditi Anand (Artistic Director, Migration Museum):** Yes. It is such a fantastic community and because we have had temporary homes elsewhere in London, the community feeling, embraced from the local community, has just been to a completely different level and maybe it is because people have felt like outsiders and there is a real spirit. It is a great place to be and there is a huge amount of creativity and activities happening. We are involved in that, we are in conversations with the Council and we have received little bits of money to be able to highlight the work of local artists, but we are not in any way really involved in the planning of it as much. Due to our location and where we are, people assume that we are much more involved in the planning of it so we have become a bit of a sounding board for local organisations and artists. That is maybe a unique position where we have gathered a lot of feedback from local people and how they want to be involved. Being more linked up and having a better understanding of all the different activities that are going on, that is a reoccurring thing that a lot of our visitors ask us about, just having a bit more knowledge of everything that is going on. I would say it is a really important question about legacy and how we build on this and make sure that we are telling these stories about the diversity of [the London Borough of] Lewisham's



communities and that there is funding to keep doing that going forward. Building on what you have done in your Borough, that would be brilliant.

**Sakina Sheikh AM:** Amazing and I will ask a final question before I pass back over to the Chair, which wraps up a little bit of what you were just saying at the end about engaging diverse communities. Lorna, this is, I guess. What kind of concerted policies or action plans did you use to engage a diverse community in your area? Again, it would be helpful to begin to build that best practice for London Boroughs of Culture but also, additional to that, did you find that people outside of your borough would come to visit for events?

**Lorna Lee (Assistant Director, Culture and Heritage, London Borough of Waltham Forest):** If I could do the last one first, people did. It definitely brought in people from outside the borough and that was allowed, especially if they brought money and spent it at the local shops. Our ambition was that we would be the centre stage for London, but we soon realised that actually we had to get it right locally and that is what happened really. Well, I do not know if we quite got it right, but we got better as we got on with it. If you get it right locally and that then is the power that brings people to come and find out what is going on, rather than the other way round.

In terms of diversity, we could not measure everything, but we did try through in-person surveys and we did try to measure the diversity not just of the audience but to get participation rather than just audience and also of those organisations involved and the supply chain to what was going on. Our focus was local and I am going to go back to the grants programme again because that was the way that we could really be very agile. I would like to say it was by good planning, but it was probably because of the timescale we were on. We evaluated every quarter, but that meant that because we had not completely sorted out our programme for the full year, for example we found after the first quarter we have quite a high Polish population and we were getting very little interaction. We sought out somebody who could sit on the panel, who was from a Polish film background. They could use their networks and encourage people to apply so we had a very iterative approach. There were still people who felt left out because the grants did not fit with what they were going to do. As much as we could, we had very much an open door and we were out there, we were having conversations, formal and informal, and trying to understand where sometimes those invisible barriers were. We now encourage people to apply for grants, for example, through video, not just through a written form.

**Sakina Sheikh AM:** Good. Yes, that is fantastic. Thank you very much for those answers and, yes, I hope those who are listening will be coming to Lewisham for the London Borough of Culture events. Thanks very much.

**Hina Bokhari AM (Chair):** Thank you. We do not have to live in Lewisham to love Lewisham.

**Sakina Sheikh AM:** I could not agree more. Let us get that on a t-shirt.

**Hina Bokhari AM (Chair):** On the point about the Migration Museum, it is such a shame it does not have a permanent base because it is such a valuable museum and the stories that you are telling, there is no better time right now for those stories of migration to be talked about on a wider level beyond Lewisham, beyond London.

**Shaun Bailey AM:** A very specific question for your museum. Would it be better to have a permanent base or permanent funding? It strikes me that your activity is a London-wide activity, and it would be great to have you there if you could move around. Is it more about the base or the funding?

**Aditi Anand (Artistic Director, Migration Museum):** I think base first to be honest. It sounds like a really compelling idea to have a Migration Museum that migrates, and we absolutely have ambitions to have a kind of hub and presence, not only in London but outside of London across the country because it is a national story. It is completely draining on our staff to have to keep moving and the costs of putting up and making a space good and putting up exhibitions and then being able to engage with the local community and build because those relationships take time, as you know, to build those relationships. It is not possible to do it if you are just constantly on the move so we do need a base where we can operate from and then the funding will follow that probably.

**Shaun Bailey AM:** Thank you.

**Anne Clarke AM:** Lorna, just to you, I am a Councillor in the [the London] Borough of Barnet who have sadly never bid to be the Borough of Culture and listening to all the wonderful things and having witnessed Brent right next door to us being the Borough of Culture and having such a vibrant year, even during the pandemic, it is really inspiring. Obviously, you may know [the London Borough of] Barnet is now under a new administration, and I am just wondering, would you recommend boroughs bid for this?

**Lorna Lee (Assistant Director, Culture and Heritage, London Borough of Waltham Forest):** Definitely. It is a rollercoaster, but definitely because as I know Cities of Culture have found, if the bidding is done correctly and the bidding is done as a -- I would say it is Borough of Culture not Council of Culture. If the bidding is done properly, that brings people together and we have heard all about the importance of collaboration. I do not know why the arts world all seems to be quite competitive, but bringing people together, the collaboration and even within the council because it was a real cross-council thing, people talk about members of staff feeling better unity with the borough, with the council, better ambitions so yes, yes, yes.

**Hina Bokhari AM (Chair):** Thank you and thank you, Assembly Members. We have ample time now for Assembly Member Garratt's questions.

**Neil Garratt AM:** Thank you very much. Just sticking with the question about the London Borough of Culture which is coming to my patch in Croydon next year, it is lessons learnt for you, Lorna, although other people may indicate if you wanted to come in as well. It was about what support you had from the Mayor's Culture [and Creative Industries] Team and what recommendations you would make to them on how they could better support future either bids or, in particular, winning bids to make that a success?

**Lorna Lee (Assistant Director, Culture and Heritage, London Borough of Waltham Forest):** There was quite a lot of support during the bidding process and because it was the first round, there was quite a lot of collaboration just to refine and define exactly what things meant. I would definitely say that the bidding process itself, there is advice on how you can do that so that the community engagement does not start once you have won because you are starting off from the wrong position there.

Lessons learnt? Time for us was a real pressure, but on reflection that was quite good. It enabled decisions to be made more quickly and when we are talking about legal procurement and all those sorts of things, we had to just find new ways through because we just did not have the time to do those things. The Culture [and Creative Industries] Team at the GLA held sort of speed dating events where they put you in contact with different organisations across London to try to develop those partnerships and that was useful. There does exist a network. I think the person has now left, but I have spoken to colleagues in Croydon about sharing the learning that we have had, the good bits and the not so good bits. Yes, it is definitely about partnerships and

there is probably a lot we learnt in terms of how we evaluated things. It was quite difficult to evaluate the impact on businesses and just those sorts of very practical things about how we delivered the year.

**Neil Garratt AM:** On the evaluation question, that might be something for you to write to us rather than going into at length now, but I am always quite interested to understand how we have measured what we think the impact was. It is very easy to spend a lot of money and to assume that it has all worked well and sometimes you find that some of it has worked well and some of it has not so then one of the lessons learnt is to do more of the stuff that worked well.

On that point, what has been the long-term legacy? Again, one of the concerns I have for Croydon is that it is not a one-year thing. I would like to see, and I know a lot of local residents would like to see, something established that can then continue, maybe a concert in a park that is the first annual concert in that park, something like that. What have the longer-term impacts been and is there anything that was unexpected or surprising in that?

**Lorna Lee (Assistant Director, Culture and Heritage, London Borough of Waltham Forest):** I have mentioned a few of them. For example, the volunteers and how they came into their own through COVID because obviously 12 weeks after the end of our Borough of Culture we went into lockdown so the legacy that might have been planned, but a lot of it is about investment. During 2019, the council announced that it was going to invest in a 1930s art deco cinema known as the Former EMD and that is going to open next year with Soho Theatre, Walthamstow, a brand new theatre, which again will absolutely change the centre of Walthamstow. That was a commitment, a long-term commitment, made. I actually think fundamentally it was a better understanding and raised the profile of culture in the council as well as in the borough, but it was in the council and the council clearly has a huge influence in how it structures the borough and how it supports the borough. That was it and that came from the strong leadership within the council, both political and Chief Exec and there was a lot of support throughout from the GLA.

**Neil Garratt AM:** OK, that is great. My final question, which I think is the final question, and I will go along and I will start with Aditi on the end, which is a big question and probably some of these things will have come up already so I will suggest that you bullet point things that have come up already. Just a final thought on what is it that you think in particular the Mayor because obviously this is the Mayor's purview here, could be doing to better support culture, particularly outside of the big, well-known venues and the central London venues.

**Aditi Anand (Artistic Director, Migration Museum):** To start with, it is just more awareness-raising of the fact that these venues/organisations exist, putting that out on the map, whether that is through marketing or digital efforts or making marketing available to these organisations. Secondly, it is about involving the smaller grassroots organisations in decision-makings and cultural leadership wards, as we talked about. Yes, just having a better access to the Mayor's Office because I think a lot of us small organisations find this incredibly frustrating to try to get through to people and actually have that dialogue there. We have been really lucky. The Mayor has visited the museum and he used it as a backdrop for a press conference that was held when President Trump was visiting, but actually translating that support for the museum into financial support and other kinds of practical support is what would really help.

**Neil Garratt AM:** Thank you. If it is any consolation, we found it quite difficult to get access to the Deputy Mayor as well because she is not here today. Paul, did you want to add, so the broad question about what could the Mayor or the mayor's office or the GLA be doing more of?

**Paul Bristow (Director, Strategic Partnerships, Arts Council England):** It is about where you have the ability - the Mayor has the authority and the ability to act. There is something around planning. We have heard today about the challenge of finding a home and we look at what is happening on our high streets and the increasing vacancies there. I do not think we are talking meanwhile space anymore. I think we are talking about permanent shift and how our high streets operate so what is the best way that the London Assembly with its planning powers can help organisations like the Migration Museum but also, in doing so, help those town centres and those high streets to change for the future. That really will be grassroots because people go there for retail purposes at the moment now or decreasingly so they will find other reasons to go there and that could be positive and make a difference to places.

As well, there is that power that the Mayor and the Authority have to engage some people that the cultural sector struggles to. Developers are really important in this space and those developers often sponsor some of the big organisations in London, but maybe the Mayor and the Authority can play a role there in terms of helping them engage with some of the issues around grassroots culture.

Then there is something about - we talked about the challenges of diversity in the sector is not how we want it to look and be at the moment in terms of both the people that work in it but also audiences. If you think around things like interventions in the economy and around skills policy, in a broadest sense it is not going to be cultural interventions that will make a difference there. It will be some of things that the Mayor has responsibility for in terms of setting priorities and strategies and how they impact on culture and the creative industries. That needs consideration.

Then there is something about some of the policy challenges that are on the doorstep at the moment. We talked about some of the lack of capacity that cultural organisations have, the smaller ones. If their workforce is freelance or if they do not have a call on some of those specific skills that some of the larger organisations can do, it is a capacity challenge. If you think about UK Share Prosperity Fund coming on stream soon, how can that support to build some of the capacity that could really support the cultural sector moving forward?

The final thing we will reference is just a very little line in the White Paper that was not in the Levelling Up White Paper, which was not about culture but was about saying to the GLA, inviting to come forward for requests - I think the phrase is "sweeping new powers". Well, what would the sweeping new powers be around culture? Actually, they are probably quite likely to be beyond culture. It is in that planning, that regulation - we have heard about regulation and licensing space today - it might be about access to particular sorts of finance like that that got the help to get the Creative Land Trust off the ground. It is these things which are not immediately cultural but could come through further devolution which might make a big difference to culture in this city and think about that from the grassroots perspective.

**Neil Garratt AM:** That is useful. I think the Mayor's convening power is an important one you mentioned. It is interesting to hear your echo thinking, coming from our previous investigations about the Mayor's Adult Education Budget, which obviously has a role to play particularly in terms of we looked at apprenticeships and obviously there are lots of those potentially in this field and licensing. Our previous investigation was into street markets and licensing is a big factor there as well, so it is interesting to hear that echoed again. Lorna, again about what the Mayor or the GLA could do?

**Lorna Lee (Assistant Director, Culture and Heritage, London Borough of Waltham Forest):** It is that connectivity and we have heard some good case studies today. Sometimes, it is about the case studies of how they have navigated the non-traditional routes or the existing routes, how have they solved the problems because it is quite likely that those similar problems are right across London. It is supporting people who do

not have probably the time to go to conferences and seminars. How do you have a really quick How To guide for some of these things. There have been initiatives like the Night Time Economy, London Borough of Culture obviously put culture on -- they used the GLA platform to really talk about outer London culture, which I think is important and also the work on the Jobs Academy. I really do think it is as well as funding, which I shall almost say is going without saying, it is promoting best practice but promoting best practice to people who are not necessarily in that cultural sphere so that they really understand how their area might wish to engage with culture because it can achieve their goals, too.

**Neil Garratt AM:** Great, thanks. Clara?

**Clara Cullen (Venue Support Manager, Music Venue Trust):** I have a few thoughts on it. One of the things that could be a very practical thing that the GLA could do is some form of maybe registry of empty spaces that might then be able to be used for either grassroots music venues or theatres. At the moment, what we are seeing is a lot of venue operators are having to leave their premises, whether it is because of their lease or rent reviews or things like that. At the moment, they are struggling to find, "Well, where do we move to?" and so I think some kind of collaboration or a networking or a mapping exercise where we could start reviewing where is the spaces that people could move into? Traditionally, that has not been on the high street for grassroots music venues. It has been things like industrial estates and things like that, but maybe now because things are moving more locally maybe it is the high street and so where can we find these spaces and create friendly and benevolent conditions where we are saying, "No, we want you to be there on a long-term basis. You're contributing 20/30 years and so finding those spaces could be a practical thing.

Again, from a Music Venue Trust perspective, we have been working with the GLA for years and particularly the Culture [and Creative Industries] Team there. Our next big project is called Own Our Venues and it is about trying to secure the freehold of grassroots music venues to create that long-term resilience. That is quite difficult in London, again property prices are so expensive - but it is an ambition to work towards and it actually could be really exciting in London. Getting an understanding of that and what that could mean in London potentially some sort of cultural matched funding, best practice learning from other organisations as well, the Creative Land Trust, things like that. Yes, there are loads of really good opportunities and it could be both bigger sky structural blue-sky thinking as well as just very practical spaces. If I want to open a grassroots music venue, where should I do it?

**Neil Garratt AM:** That is very useful. Thank you very much.

**Zack Polanski AM:** Clara, my colleague Siân Berry [AM] has just done a big piece of work on this called *Dead Spaces*, which is looking at the empty buildings that are council or publicly owned and I would love to hook you up with that so they could be some ideas.

**Clara Cullen (Venue Support Manager, Music Venue Trust):** Absolutely, 100%.

**Zack Polanski AM:** There is not really a question there actually. I just wanted to make sure that --

**Clara Cullen (Venue Support Manager, Music Venue Trust):** I did not know about that so I would absolutely love to read about that.

**Zack Polanski AM:** Brilliant, thank you. Yes, I was trying to find the question but there is no point.

**Hina Bokhari AM (Chair):** I will let you off there just this once. Thank you so much. I would like to thank the Assembly Members. You have managed to pull out some really interesting points and one that I did not expect, which was about mental health. I was really pleased that we have managed to pull that out with the guests here. Thank you so much for enlightening us and bringing forward so many ideas that we need to put within our report to the Mayor, but also specifically the Deputy Mayor [for Culture and Creative Industries] and the Assembly Members here will be working together to make sure that we pull out a lot of the questions that you have brought to us, particularly on the GLA's Culture [and Creative Industries] Team and on the London Borough of Culture's programme. Thank you very much, guests, for attending this meeting and for all the answers to our questions.