

<b>Committees</b>	<b>Dates</b>
Culture, Heritage & Libraries Finance	23/05/16 07/06/16
<b>Subject:</b> City of London Festival – the future	<b>Public</b>
<b>Report of:</b> David Pearson - Director of Culture, Heritage & Libraries	<b>For Decision</b>

### Summary

Following the decision by the Committee in March 2016 to turn down the additional funding proposals from the City Arts Trust, the Trust is winding itself up and will no longer run annual City of London Festivals. The current Festival allocation of £355,285 remains in the Committee's budget and there is broad support for the principle of establishing a suitable successor event, which captures the distinctive strengths which the Festival used to bring to the City's cultural offer. An officer workshop held in April has suggested that a collaborative delivery model could be developed which would help to showcase the collective cultural strength of the City, and support the momentum for the Cultural Hub. Further work is needed to model the options in more detail.

The Finance Committee agreed on 12 April to the writing off of the £150,000 loan to the Trust for the Bowler Hat on condition that any remaining funds after the 2016 grant was applied to the Trust's winding-up costs be returned to the Corporation. It is now proposed that £20,000 of such remaining funds are used to model options for successor activities with the remainder - still to be determined but potentially in the region of £15,000 - being set against the costs of writing off the Bowler Hat loan

### Recommendation(s)

It is recommended that the CHL Committee:

- a. Agrees in principle that the sum which is available within its budget from 2017 onwards, that was previously allocated to the Festival, be dedicated to a replacement activity which meets agreed criteria including the enlivening of the Square Mile, the opening up of spaces and buildings, and the broadening of audiences; and if so,
- b. Agrees that Finance Committee be asked to allocate a one-off sum of up to £20,000 from any balance which is returned to the Corporation after the City Arts Trust wind-up process is complete to the Director of Culture, Heritage & Libraries, to commission further work on modelling that replacement activity.

It is recommended that the Finance Committee:

- a. approves a one-off allocation of up to £20,000 from any balance returned to the Corporation from the City Arts Trust wind-up process, should the CHL Committee support this, with any remainder set against the costs of writing off the Bowler Hat loan.

## **Main Report**

### **Background**

2. In March 2016, the Culture, Heritage & Libraries Committee considered the financial position of the City Arts Trust, the separate charity which managed the City of London Festival, and its proposals for a future funding envelope to sustain the Festival. It decided against supporting those proposals, resolving instead that no further funding be awarded to the Trust, and that plans for a 2016 Festival be abandoned. It further resolved that the Finance Committee be recommended to write off the £150,000 loan to the Trust for the Bowler Hat, and that further consultation be undertaken around the options for the delivery of a festival from 2017 onwards, with a report brought to the May Committee.

### **Current Position**

3. The Finance Committee agreed on 12 April to the writing off of the loan, on condition that any remaining funds after the 2016 grant was applied to the Trust's winding-up costs be returned to the Corporation. The wind-up process is in train and it is anticipated that there will be a balance to be returned. Although the quantum is not yet clear, the sum could potentially be in the region of £35,000.
4. The sum which sits within the CHL Committee budget for the Festival is £355,285 p.a., and unless diverted elsewhere, this should be available from 2017 onwards for whatever replacement activity the Committee decides upon.
5. Since March, a number of conversations have taken place around the best way of filling the gap which the Festival will leave. There is wide recognition that it was successful in opening up spaces across the Square Mile for cultural events, that it provided a banner under which many partners could come together, and that it enlivened the City for a broad range of audiences in ways which no other cultural offer could match. These are all qualities which enriched the City's cultural landscape and which many would like to see retained.
6. There are other providers of festival-type events in and around the City, most obviously Spitalfields Music and the Totally Thames Festival, who might be invited to make proposals as to whether and how they could respond to a brief to deliver a suitable programme in the City, for the available budget. Alternatively, the Barbican Centre might be commissioned to undertake this, building on their programming experience and infrastructure.

7. There have been a number of successful collaborations in recent years across the City's cultural family, to stage various kinds of public events. Celebrate the City!, in summer 2012, part of the City's contribution to London's Olympic summer, was a weekend programme which included street markets, concerts, and various other entertainments; it involved many cultural providers as well as livery companies and churches, and was delivered primarily as a partnership between the Barbican Centre and Culture, Heritage and Libraries, with a dedicated project manager. More recently, two well-received Son et Lumiere presentations have taken place in Guildhall Yard, a collaboration between CHL and Guildhall School of Music and Drama; the Shakespeare one, in April 2016, attracted ca.14,000 people over two nights.
8. These events have demonstrated models for delivery based on cross-Corporation collaboration, and at a time when this is particularly being fostered through the Cultural Hub planning, there is momentum around developing a framework like this as a permanent successor to the Festival, as an alternative to commissioning it out as suggested in para 6.
9. An externally-facilitated officer workshop was held on 15 April, with representation from CHL, the Barbican, GSMD, the Museum of London, Remembrancer's, Open Spaces, Mansion House and Town Clerk's; notes are attached as an appendix. Key points which were agreed included: the importance of creating something that is distinct and sustainable, and carries forward the Festival's key strengths; a wish to develop new and broader audiences; the practicality of focusing on a smaller window of time than the Festival's 2-3 weeks; and enthusiasm for delivering something collectively and collaboratively, to help showcase the City's many cultural strengths.

### Options

10. One option, therefore, would be to invite one or more of the other existing festival organisers to propose what they might offer if the budget was made available to them. They would be given a brief based around key criteria which future events would need to satisfy, including being based in the City (we would not be suggesting that their current festivals are merely extended). The Barbican Centre could be asked to respond to a call like this also although concerns have been raised at previous Committee meetings around whether the Centre could be expected to have the capacity to take it on.
11. Alternatively, or additionally, the possibilities around developing a collaborative model such as was recommended from the workshop could be explored further.
12. Whichever route is preferred, more work needs to be done on developing fully costed models of future operations which could sustainably fill the gap which the Festival has left. It is therefore **recommended** that the **CHL Committee**:
  - a. Agrees in principle that the sum which is available within its budget from 2017 onwards, that was previously allocated to the Festival, be dedicated to a replacement activity which meets agreed criteria including the enlivening of the Square Mile, the opening up of spaces and buildings, and the broadening of audiences; and if so,

- b. Agrees that it be recommended to Finance Committee that a one-off sum of up to £20,000 from any balance which is returned to the Corporation after the City Arts Trust wind-up process is complete be allocated to the Director of Culture, Heritage & Libraries, to commission further work on modelling that replacement activity.

13. It is further **recommended** that the **Finance Committee** approve a one-off allocation of up to £20,000 from any balance returned to the Corporation from the City Arts Trust wind-up process, should the CHL Committee support this, with the remainder set against the costs of writing off the Bowler Hat loan.

14. The figure in 12(b) is an estimate of the cost of an appropriate consultant who could be dedicated to this on a 3 day/week basis for 3 months, which ought to be sufficient to complete this work in sufficient detail to bring a fuller report to Committee in October 2016. 12(a) recognises the possibility that the existing budget figure may need to be revised in order to meet the departmental Service Based review targets.

### **Corporate & Strategic Implications**

15. The demise of the Festival in 2016 has generated a moderate amount of negative publicity for the Corporation, although its effect has been mitigated by well managed communications. There is inevitably some external perception that the Corporation has acted in a miserly way towards the Festival, without any understanding of the financial realities of the City Arts Trust's situation. Creating something new to take its place, which can help support the growing momentum for the Cultural Hub, will be a positive and proactive response to these criticisms. It would support the strategic aims of the City's Cultural and Visitor Strategies which in turn underpin the key policy priority to increase the outreach and impact of the City's cultural, heritage and leisure contribution to the life of London, as expressed in the Corporate Plan.

### **Conclusion**

16. There is considerable support from Members and Officers to develop an appropriate and sustainable annual event to fill the gap left by the City of London Festival. This would be unlikely to be as extensive an undertaking as the two-three week Festival used to be, but enough money should be available to create something which is distinctive, appealing, and contemporary.

### **Appendix**

Report from Caterina Loroggio, on the Workshop held at Guildhall on 15 April 2016.

### **Background Papers**

City Arts Trust/City of London – Culture, Heritage & Libraries Committee, 7 March 2016, Members Only item

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## **1. Purpose**

This paper outlines a suggested way forward for the Department of Culture, Heritage and Libraries to progress plans to repurpose funding previously allocated to the City of London Festival.

Recommendations within the paper follow a workshop meeting held at Guildhall Library on Friday 15 April 2016 for cultural organisations and facilitators working within the City.

## **2. Background**

The City of London Festival ran annually from 1962 to 2015, recently concentrated on a 2-3 week spell in summer, augmented by a weekly winter concert season. It was run by the City Arts Trust, an independent charity which received an annual grant from City of London (in recent years, ca. £350K p.a.). The Trust augmented this income with private and corporate sponsorship, and box office sales, to meet the annual costs of running the Festival, around £1.3M p.a. A vortex of increasing costs, and declining sponsorship, led to budget deficits and in early 2016 it became apparent that the model was no longer sustainable. It was decided in March that City of London funding to the Trust should cease.

At the present time, the £350K annual allocation remains an element in the Culture, Heritage and Libraries Committee budget. There is an aspiration within the City that this funding should be repurposed in order to continue, in some way, to provide the distinct celebratory cultural offer previously provided by the festival.

The City's main cultural partners (including the Barbican, Museum of London, Guildhall School of Music and Drama) were invited to a 2-hour workshop at Guildhall Library on Friday 15 April 2016 to discuss possible options for a way forward. Twelve participants attended the workshop (appendix one lists attendees) which was independently facilitated by Caterina Loriggio.

## **3. Workshop outcomes**

- 3.1 Participants agreed that they would like to work together to create a new cultural event to replace the City of London Festival. They agreed that one of the key benefits of the festival was that it had given them an opportunity to collaborate and work together.
- 3.2 It was agreed that this new model should not be a smaller-scale festival. It was felt that this was unsustainable and in the current cultural context, undistinguishable. Furthermore, the core music programme delivered within the festival is now delivered by other partners within the City.
- 3.3 The group did not support the idea of using the money to develop another pre-existing event such as the Spitalfields Festival. Likewise, the new model must not duplicate other events that take place in the centre of London. It was important to create an inspiring and unique offer, that added value to the City and to London as a whole.
- 3.4 There were a number of key features of the festival that partners would like to see carried over to the new model: opening up City spaces and buildings; developing sense of place; accessible to more diverse audiences; combination of pop-up and landmark events; animating the whole of the square mile.
- 3.5 The group had a preference for focussing activity into a long-weekend or a condensed 24-hours. Participants liked the idea of using both City roof tops and traffic-free roads as a platform for the event. Critically, the event must celebrate and tell the story of the City – its past, present and future.
- 3.6 It was agreed that the new event must have London-wide appeal. Within the City the group identified key audiences as: workers, residents, politicians and to a lesser extent, schools and visitors.

- 3.7 Participants stressed that it was important for this new model to attract a different kind of audience to the current offer. The event, on the most part, should be free to audiences but the group agreed that it could contain some ticketed elements.
- 3.8 The group felt that it was not feasible to seek sponsorship for a 2017 event. It was agreed that if this new model was funded solely by the City of London then it would have to more closely reflect the strategy and organisational policy of the Corporation.
- 3.9 It was agreed that the Department of Culture, Heritage and Libraries should lead the development, delivery and marketing of the new event. It was suggested that each year could have a new lead curator/artist-in-residence that could keep the event feeling continually refreshed and cutting-edge. It was acknowledged that there would need to also be a consistent role to hold partnerships together and retain knowledge.

#### **4. Recommended next steps**

- 4.1 The Department of Culture, Heritage and Libraries to allocate resource for a project manager (either internally or externally sourced). The project manager will build on the outcomes of the workshop and undertake further scoping to define a framework which exploits the assets of the City and develop a model for a new partnership-led event to replace the festival. The new model must encapsulate and showcase the spirit, spaces and the stories of the City, add value to its strong cultural reputation, and attract diverse audiences.
- 4.2 Establish a project board reflecting a similar grouping to the organisations present at the workshop. The board may also offer places to other interested parties such as businesses, especially those from Tech City who could assist with digital developments. A representative of the Corporation to Chair this board.
- 4.3 The board to work with the project manager in the scoping, development and delivery of the new model. Board members will be responsible for delivering key artistic and creative content; they will also work in wider partnership where appropriate.
- 4.4 Investigate and audit audience data in order to profile who is currently 'missing' from City audiences. Set and prioritise target audiences, create a framework and content suitable for such targets.
- 4.5 Consult the tourist survey and audit other London events in order to inform event development in terms of vision, timings and attracting visitor-rich audiences.
- 4.6 Explore further the desirability of a schools element within the model. School participation will greatly influence timing and content of the event. Consider alternative learning/education elements that could be included.
- 4.7 Allocate some investment now in order to make timely plans for 2017.
- 4.8 Align the development of the new model to a revised cultural strategy for the City, also due in 2017.
- 4.9 2017 to be viewed as a seed event which can develop year-on-year. Closely evaluate the 2017 event to inform any future development.

Caterina Loriggio  
19 April 2016

## **Appendix One**

### **Workshop participants**

#### **Culture, Heritage & Libraries department, City of London**

David Pearson, Director of Culture, Heritage & Libraries

Nick Bodger, Head of Culture and Visitor Development, Culture, Heritage & Libraries

Chris Earlie, Head of Tower Bridge, Culture, Heritage & Libraries

#### **Mansion House, City of London**

William Chapman, Private Secretary, Mansion House

#### **Open Spaces department, City of London**

Paul Maskell, Leisure & Events Manager (Res), Open Spaces,

Louise Allen, City Garden Manager, Open Spaces

**Town Clerk's department, City of London**

Matthew Pitt, Policy & Projects Officer, Town Clerks

**Remembrancer's department, City of London**

Nigel Lefton, Director of Remembrancer's Affairs, Remembrancer's Office.

**Barbican Centre**

Nicholas Kenyon, Managing and Artistic Director

**Guildhall School of Music and Drama, City of London**

Ronan O'Hora, Head of Advanced Performance Studies and Keyboard Studies

Jonathan Vaughan, Director of Music

**Museum of London**

Sharon Ament, Director, Museum of London