

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

meeting date: TUESDAY 9 JANUARY 2024
title: ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND FUNDING BID
submitted by: ADAM ALLEN DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES
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1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To seek Committee approval for the Council to submit a bid to Arts Council England, for the funding of an Arts Strategy for the Borough.
- 1.2 Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities
 - Community Objectives – To help make peoples' lives safer and healthier.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Council has been involved in many arts' development initiatives in recent times, for example, the successful art walks and this year's Contemporary Art exhibition. In addition, the Council provides grants to art bodies for a range of arts initiatives, as well as providing the Platform Gallery, which is an important venue for many local artists to show their works there and at the Clitheroe Castle Museum.
- 2.2 The Borough has not fared well in recent years with receiving grants from Arts Council England, though organisations in the Borough have received funding, comparatively the area under achieves in comparison to other Lancashire boroughs.
- 2.3 Following recent discussions with our regional officer about developing a place-based strategy for Arts, he suggested that an application for funding to carry out the work to produce a strategy is very much in line with what A.C.E. are seeking to support currently. Such a strategy would help the arts sector in the Borough both currently and in the future, potentially leading to further funding being attracted into the area.

3. ISSUES

- 3.1 The project would be focused on Research and Development initially, potentially leading to the creation of a place-based framework for embedding creative opportunities and experiences into communities across the Borough. The project is about making a difference to a place or community, either during the project or in the future. It will seek to develop and test new ways of working as well as create new partnerships and networks for delivery.
- 3.2 This approach will mirror the work that has already been undertaken successfully through the Council's involvement in the Together an Active Future project (TaAF). There is a collaborative approach to working within the targeted village of Dunsop Bridge and driven by a community champion, this has led the way for a 'whole village' contribution towards a positive culture of embracing new ways of being physically active. Something which Sport England is now heralding as a model of good practice.
- 3.3 In preparation for this proposed application, some work is currently being undertaken to update an existing database of Ribble Valley arts activity providers and updating of the existing Ribble Valley Arts Website. This will give us a visible mapping of present activity and gaps in provision. This will help to determine potential community location/s for piloting the project.

3 THE PROPOSAL

- 3.1 It is proposed in the first year the Council employs part-time staff/contractors to work in chosen areas of the Ribble Valley to tailor an arts development plan specifically to its needs. The initial approach will be to understand the demographics and the diversity of the area, looking at the latest Active Lives Survey, Health Profiles, and relevant National Statistics insights. Identifying key partners and people that would help us understand the reality of the local areas and its residents especially as some statistics will not break down into parish/village level.
- 3.2 They would take time to speak to as many residents and organisations as possible to understand the true reasons why people are / aren't participating in cultural arts activity. The reality of what the current offer / opportunity is, how well that works, what could be different to make a difference. Connect with partners to learn from past experiences, avoid future duplication and develop relationships to work in partnership in future.
- 3.3 This work would also ensure all cultural assets are represented on the Ribble Valley Arts website to ensure it is a comprehensive tool to signpost residents to cultural activities.
- 3.4 The initial insight work may take the form of surveys, in person, online and through social media, focus groups and creative engagement events to involve different people and groups in an interesting way.
- 3.5 This will identify key challenges that will inform a plan of action to ultimately raise the access and participation to arts activity in the area. The freelancer will develop the plan of action into workable steps identifying key partners to work with to enable the plan to be implemented. From this work the Culture and Leisure Manager and Arts Development Officer will propose an overall action plan for year 2 to be approved by CMT.

4. FUNDING

- 4.1 The project will require a total budget of £60,000 over two years, and it is proposed that £5,500 of the Arts Development budget from this year 23/24 and from next year 24/25 is included with the application as match funding. This represents 18% of the total funding request. The Arts Council recommends a minimum match contribution of 15% for this programme of funding.
- 4.2 In year 1 the project costs will comprise of the engagement of local champions who will seek to apply solutions developed through a test and learn approach in the chosen communities. Up to 3 local champions would be employed for 2 days a week for 27 weeks with a £1000 budget to spend on creative engagement. Total cost £30,000.
- 4.3 In year 2 the £30,000 budget will be committed to activity responding to findings in year 1, a plan will be put to CMT for approval.
- 4.4 The duration of the project will be for two years from commencement, though the start and end dates are unknown at this stage and dependent on the application being successful. The funding would be used in part to pay for such a role, though the details of a bid will be worked up with the help of the regional officer, CMT have already considered this proposal and are in favour of a bid being made subject to Committee approval.

5. CONCLUSION

- 5.1 There is a synergy between this proposal and the work already been done under the TaAF banner, as such there is an opportunity for staff and community volunteers to share learning and make the most of any funding which the Council can attract. Place based working is very much the way which the national bodies such as ACE and Sport England are now working, and this also fits with the strategic approach of the NHS.
- 5.2 Although no funding is guaranteed, the fact the regional officer is encouraging such a bid, is positive and the leverage for the relatively small financial contribution from existing budgets makes this a sensible route to pursue.
- 5.3 The Arts Council have a specific Place Partnership funding pot for projects of over £100k but we have been deterred by the regional officer to apply for these and encouraged to apply for the smaller project grant initially. We hope that this preliminary project into what our area needs will instil confidence in more ambitious projects in future.

6 RISK ASSESSMENT

- 6.1 The approval of this report may have the following implications.
- Resources – The current year's budget provision is available and would need to be placed into an earmarked reserve, to be used as match funding for the bid. Were the bid unsuccessful, the earmarked funds would be used for arts development work in the 24/25 year alongside the existing budget.
 - Technical, Environmental and Legal – If successful the Council would be required to enter into the usual ACE funding agreement, which is standard for these types of grants.
 - Political – No implications identified.
 - Reputation – The Council is the only Borough wide organisation which could realistically apply for this funding, and it would enhance the status of the arts sector generally as well as providing opportunities for local people to be more involved in arts activities.
 - Equality & Diversity – It would be expected that any project developed would be inclusive as per the requirements of the funding partner and the Council's own ambitions.

6 RECOMMENDED THAT COMMITTEE

- 6.1 Approve the proposal to make a funding bid to ACE, as outlined in the report.
- 6.2 Delegate authority to the Director of Community Services to submit the bid and enter into any subsequent agreement with ACE on behalf of the Council.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS – None

For further information please ask for Mark Beveridge, extension 4479.