

## **Greater Manchester Culture and Social Impact Fund Committee**

Date: 21 January 2022

Subject: GM Town of Culture 2022

Report of: Councillor Martyn Cox, Portfolio Lead for Culture

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### **Purpose of Report:**

This report sets out a proposal for GM's second Town of Culture in 2022 as put forward in the GM Culture Strategy. The report also provides an update on GM's first Town of Culture, Bury with activity delivered in 2021 as a result of CV19 restrictions preventing delivery in 2020. This paper was approved by GMCA in October, 2021.

### **Recommendations:**

The Culture and Social Impact Monitoring Committee is requested to note the paper and process agreed by GMCA in October, 2021.

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BOLTON  
BURY

MANCHESTER  
OLDHAM

ROCHDALE  
SALFORD

STOCKPORT  
TAMESIDE

TRAFFORD  
WIGAN

# 1. Background

- 1.1 The GM Culture Strategy set out an ambition to ‘Celebrate the distinctive identity of our cities and towns, developing cultural programmes that reflect and respond to place’. To deliver this ambition, in 2019 GMCA ran its first ever Town of Culture programme, supported by Strategic Project funding from the GMCA Culture budget. The process was approved by GMCA in September 2019, and was followed by an invitation for expressions of interest from GM’s ten local authorities.
- 1.2 The quality of proposals was high with an independent panel awarding Bury the first GM Town of Culture and £50,000 from the GMCA Culture Fund to support programming. Bury put forward an ambitious and exciting programme called “Happy” celebrating Victoria Wood. Delivery was planned for 2020.
- 1.3 As a result of CV19 restrictions in 2020, the difficult decision was made to postpone Bury’s Town of Culture programme to 2021. A hugely successful programme was delivered in 2021, while the country was under some form of restrictions for more than half the year. Despite this, organisers were able to curate and deliver a hybrid programme of online and live events, starting the year with a 24-hour United We Stream party being beamed into more four million homes in more than 22 countries around the world. Throughout the year there were a host of programmes, initiatives and events, including Happy Festival (with The Halle), investment in local artists and a final two-week festival, Burrs Live, which saw the Bury park play host to Head For The Hills featuring Everything Everything and Badly Drawn Boy.
- 1.4 £50,000 investment from GMCA brought in more than £150,000 in additional funds for the programme from Bury Council, Arts Council England and the Victoria Wood Foundation, bringing the total budget to £200,000. There is strong legacy for the programme in Bury with the town in the process of developing a Culture Strategy, with a focus on placing culture at the heart of economic regeneration of towns in the borough.

## **2. Purpose**

- 2.1 The GM Town of Culture programme has been designed to provide an opportunity to spotlight and celebrate the distinctive culture of GM towns as well as to raise local ambitions for cultural provision, a night-time economy, increase pride in our places and where relevant align with the ambitions for town centres across GM.
- 2.2 The Town of Culture programme will also help better understand existing cultural provision in GM towns, increasing GMCA and LAs ability to support activity in local areas and that local residents care about.

## **3 Proposed Town of Culture Programme**

- 3.1 To establish the 2022 GM Town of Culture, it is proposed that local authorities will be invited to put forward a single proposal for Town of Culture within their borough. This short proposal should set out the proposed programme, ambition and impact of securing Town of Culture for their nominated town.
- 3.2 To ensure a focus on the town when the very best activity is happening, LAs will be able to nominate the length of their programme (min. 3 months, max. 6 months), providing flexibility if a place has a particularly strong summer, autumn or winter programme.
- 3.3 The GM Town of Culture will build on existing cultural strengths within the selected town, as well as being able to work with GM Culture Fund recipients (35 current recipients including the Halle, The Lowry, Bolton Octagon, The Royal Exchange, Oldham Coliseum, Bury Met, etc) to build a programme of activity.
- 3.4 An independent panel made up of non-LA members or representatives from the GM Culture and Heritage Steering Group will select the winning bid, based upon the bids ambition, impact and additionality. As previously, it is intended this group will be co-chaired by Lisa Nandy MP (Chair - Centre for Towns) and a member of GM LEP.

- 3.5 The successful 2022 Town of Culture borough would be awarded up to £50k programming budget, allocated from the Strategic Projects element of the GM Culture Fund 2022/3. It is expected that this amount would be matched either in cash or kind with the support of the relevant local authority. Places will be encouraged to approach local businesses and organisations to support activity.

## **4. Timescales**

- 4.1 The second GM Town of Culture will be in 2022.
- 4.2 Local authorities will be able to submit a single short proposal (no more than 5 pages) identifying their proposed Town of Culture and the proposed programme of activity by the deadline of Friday 10th December 2021.
- 4.3 The independent panel will consider proposals and the selected proposal announced by the 7<sup>th</sup> January 2022.
- 4.4 As with the first GM Town of Culture, the programme will be evaluated and any learnings will inform the process and timescales for future rounds of GM Town of Culture.

## **5. Recommendation**

- 5.1 The recommendations can be found at the front of the report.