

8 JULY 2021

## SERVICE DELIVERY EXECUTIVE ADVISORY BOARD

8 July 2021

- \* Councillor Angela Goodwin (Chairman)
- \* Councillor Ramsey Nagaty (Vice-Chairman)

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|---------------------------|-----------------------------|
| * Councillor Paul Abbey   | Councillor George Potter    |
| * Councillor Dennis Booth | * Councillor Jo Randall     |
| Councillor Andrew Gomm    | Councillor Tony Rooth       |
| * Councillor Ann McShee   | * Councillor Pauline Searle |
| * Councillor Bob McShee   | * Councillor Fiona White    |

\* Present

Councillors Joss Bigmore, Chris Blow, Julia McShane, John Redpath and James Steel were also in attendance.

### **SD26 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Andrew Gomm and George Potter. Councillor Will Salmon was present as a substitute for Councillor George Potter.

### **SD27 LOCAL CODE OF CONDUCT AND DECLARATION OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS**

There were no declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests. Councillor Chris Blow declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item number 4 as the councillor representative for liaison with Southern Pro Musica.

### **SD28 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Service Delivery Executive Advisory Board held on 1 April 2021 were confirmed as a correct record, and would be signed by the Chairman at the earliest opportunity.

### **SD29 CLASSICAL MUSIC GRANT**

The current recipient of the Classical Music Grant was Southern Pro Musica (SPM). The related mandate was introduced by the Leader of the Council who explained that the mandate formed part of the agreed Savings Strategy, which constituted one of four strands of the Council's commitment to addressing its budget gap over the next five years. Whilst the contributions of all organisations in receipt of a Council grant were valued, it was necessary for the Council to identify savings as it was not in a financial position to continue to fund the organisations at the same level as in previous years. The EAB's views in respect of the mandate options were welcomed.

The mandate consisted of a Strategy, Options, Considerations, Resources, and the strategic Risks, Assumptions, Issues, Dependencies, Constraints and Opportunities. The Strategy and Communications Manager advised that the strategic options available to the Council to deliver a solution consisted of:

- a) Do Nothing - Allow the existing agreement with SPM to end in June 2021 and cease funding classical music provision in the Borough to deliver a financial saving of £60,000 per annum.

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- b) Do Something - Due to Covid-19 related disruption to the musical programme, SPM had agreed that £30,000 of its 2020/21 funding would be rolled forward into the next financial year. With expected continued Covid-19 disruption, invite SPM to provide a reduced programme in 2021/22 at a cost of £30,000 pending a review of future classical music provision.
- c) Do More - Enter a new funding agreement with SPM to deliver a reduced future programme at a lower annual cost to the Council or invite expressions of interest from classical music providers to offer a programme of classical music at a lower annual cost to the Council.
- d) Do Most - Extend the existing funding agreement with SPM on the existing terms and invite expressions of interest from classical music providers to offer a programme of classical music on similar terms to the existing.

At its meeting on 27 January 2021, the Executive / Management Team Liaison Group had recommended that the £30,000 underspent grant from 2020/21 be rolled forward into 2021/22 to enable SPM to deliver a reduced programme and that the grant be discontinued in future years.

Further to related questions, comments and discussion, the following points arose:

1. In-year financial savings were being sought during the current year in line with the Savings Strategy and SPM had been advised accordingly.
2. The councillor representative for liaison with SPM advised that the organisation had a strong appreciative following in the Guildford area and this sentiment was echoed by other councillors.
3. SPM had commenced preparation of a reduced programme of events, including a variety of concerts and the 'Strings Scheme' work with schools, in the expectation that the unspent returned portion of last year's grant, amounting to £30,000, would be rolled forward for expenditure in 2021/22. It was confirmed that this would be the case and councillors indicated that the reduced programme was impressive representing good value for money. In the event that planned events in the programme could not be delivered for any reason, discussions around solutions such as re-scheduling events over an extended period of time would take place.
4. It was currently difficult for the Council to commit to a further four year funding cycle in respect of classical music provision. However, there was a number of existing community and amateur musical groups, including Guildford Choral Society, the Friary Band, Guildford Symphony and a visiting Police Band, which may be able to provide an alternative offering in the future.
5. The value of music in assisting with mental health and emotional wellbeing issues was highlighted and it was hoped that the Executive would be amenable to reconsidering its recommendation to discontinue the grant in future years in the event that circumstances indicated that residents would benefit from this type of support.

The Board confirmed its agreement to recommend to the Executive that Option B (that £30,000 of SPM's 2020/21 funding be rolled forward into 2021/22 to provide a reduced programme in 2021/22 at a cost of £30,000 pending a review of future classical music provision) be pursued subject to review in one year's time when circumstances may have changed.

### **SD30 GUILDFORD BOOK FESTIVAL MANDATE**

The Lead Councillor for Environment introduced the above mandate and advised that the Council was seeking to balance its need to reduce expenditure in line with the agreed Savings Strategy against its wish to continue to offer financial support to the Guildford Book Festival (GBF) to enable the organisation to maintain its viability. Attention was drawn to the

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four funding options contained in the mandate and the alternative option agreed by the Executive / Management Team Liaison Group on 3 March 2021. The EAB's views in respect of the options were invited.

The Strategy and Communications Manager presented the mandate and outlined the related Strategy, Options, Considerations and Resources, together with the strategic Risks, Assumptions, Issues, Dependencies, Constraints and Opportunities. The options consisted of:

- a) Do Nothing - Continue with the existing annual grant at the current level of £23,000.
- b) Do Something - Introduce a gradual phased reduction in funding of £18,000 (2021), £13,000 (2022), £8,000 (2023) and £5,000 (2024).
- c) Do More - Reduce funding to £11,500 in 2021/22 and discontinue all funding in subsequent years.
- d) Do Most - Discontinue all funding with immediate effect.
- e) Alternative Option - A future funding path of £12,000 (2021), £6,000 (2022) and £2,000 (2023).

The EAB was reminded that one of the prioritised workstreams of the agreed Savings Strategy was to identify discretionary services savings of £2million. This included delivering savings approaching £1million in respect of culture and heritage services.

Mr Andrew Hodges, the Chairman of the Board of Trustees of GBF, was a registered speaker at the meeting and spoke in support of the Festival and provided some historic information regarding the levels of financial support which GBF had received from the Borough Council. In conclusion, Mr Hodges advised that GBF appreciated the grant from the Council and requested that, in the event that the grant was reduced, the reduction was not severe and that there was no decision to phase out the grant entirely.

Some of the EAB's questions were directed to Mr Hodges owing to his background knowledge of GBF and he responded in the following terms:

- GBF had anticipated a reduction in Council grant in 2021. A deficit in the region of £11,000 had occurred in 2020/21 owing to constraints associated with Covid-19 and related factors. The Festival required working capital of approximately £30,000 as expenditure was incurred early in the planning process to fund publicity and organisational costs whilst revenue was received later through ticket sales. Although GBF could continue in 2021 on the basis of the receipt of a Council grant of £18,000, there was doubt regarding its financial viability the following year. Whilst sponsorship could assist with filling funding gaps, it could be challenging to obtain and be subject to conditions. Low level sponsorship, for example from publisher sponsors, had been received in respect of individual events and high level sponsorship from sponsors such as national newspapers was sought. However, there was no guarantee that the receipt of sponsorship would continue. Reducing the scale of GBF due to funding constraints was likely to render it less attractive to sponsors. Obtaining sponsorship from authors was unlikely as they tended to charge a fee to appear at book festivals and many were arranging their own literary events as a source of personal income leading to limited interest in attending events such as GBF unless they particularly sought publicity.
- No book or literary festivals comparable to GBF were held in the local region.
- GBF intended to offer some future on-line literary workshops, events etc.

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The following points arose from further related questions, comments and discussion:

1. GBF was a wide and inclusive event which had been operating for 30 years and provided a literary offering to cater for a broad range of interests and ages attracting a number of celebrated authors. The event was a point of connection for residents and enhanced the community's wellbeing in the widest sense.
2. The Board acknowledged that the Festival was a significant local event and an appreciated aspect of Guildford's cultural offering.
3. Whilst recognising the Council's need to secure revenue savings, the EAB expressed the view that the grant to GBF should not be reduced to the point that the Festival became unviable and ceased to continue.
4. A clear trajectory of future funding reductions, as depicted in some of the options, could incentivise GBF to intensify its efforts to identify alternative funding sources such as benefactors who may be willing to assist in the absence of a Council grant.
5. The possibility of offering Council support other than that of a financial nature to GBF, such as reducing costs in relation to the use of venues for events, was raised. However, there was an associated risk of the displacement of income in other areas resulting in a need to identify savings elsewhere. As an alternative, there could be scope for the Council to support GBF in areas such as communications, promotion and utilising commercial or other contacts to obtain sponsorship in the long term.
6. It was emphasised that there was a need for EABs to review potential savings in a holistic manner to ensure that decisions were made in a wider context and not individually in isolation. As details of other proposed mandates in the culture and heritage stream were unknown, it was difficult for councillors to make comparisons leading to the selection of appropriate funding reductions. Further information concerning the main savings targets and mandates to come forward would facilitate informed choices. In this connection, reference was made to the amount of funding allocated to the Yvonne Arnaud Theatre and the EAB was advised that the related mandate would be complex as it involved the use and ownership of land and a building. Such complexities did not apply to the GBF mandate.
7. Whilst the importance of culture and heritage services was recognised, some members felt that they should not currently be prioritised over other services to support residents directly.
8. Arts and heritage had received a low priority rating in the public consultation in respect of future spending priorities undertaken from November 2020 to January 2021. However, this consultation had coincided with waves of Covid-19 and the associated lockdowns when residents had been unable to access cultural offerings and were likely to have prioritised other matters such as wellness and protecting the elderly and vulnerable under the circumstances. It was not felt that these views would reflect residents' priorities in future years when the situation had changed. Councillors did not share the view that culture and heritage services were a low corporate priority.

The EAB agreed that Option B (introduce a gradual phased reduction in funding of £18,000 (2021), £13,000 (2022), £8,000 (2023) and £5,000 (2024)) be recommended to the Executive.

### **SD31 EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN**

The above was noted without comment.

### **SD32 EAB WORK PROGRAMME**

EAB members were invited to submit any work programme suggestions to the Chairman or Vice-Chairman prior to the EAB / O&S Work Programme meeting on 21 July 2021. Items scheduled for the next EAB meeting, to be held on 9 September 2021, were noted and

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councillors were reminded that a special Joint EAB was taking place on 20 September 2021 to consider the Local Plan Development Management Policies.

The meeting finished at 8.51 pm

Signed .....

Date .....

Chairman