

Public Document Pack

Southend-on-Sea Borough Council

Legal & Democratic Services

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30 October 2020

Dear Councillor

CABINET - TUESDAY, 3RD NOVEMBER, 2020

Please find enclosed, for consideration at the next meeting of the Cabinet taking place on Tuesday, 3rd November, 2020, the following reports that were unavailable when the agenda was printed.

Agenda No Item

9. **Culture Vision**

Report of Executive Director (Adults and Communities)

11. **The Beecroft Trust - Council Options**

Report of Executive Director (Adults and Communities)

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Southend-on-Sea Borough Council

Report of Executive Director (Adults and Communities)
To

Cabinet

3 November 2020

Report prepared by: Scott Dolling, Director of Culture and
Tourism

Agenda
Item No.

9

Culture Vision

Relevant Scrutiny Committee(s) Place
Cabinet Member: Councillor Kevin Robinson
Part 1 (Public Agenda Item)

1. Purpose of Report

To update Cabinet on progress with community engagement towards developing our Culture Vision meeting 2050 objectives and shaping the cultural offer in Southend.

2. Recommendations

2.1 That Cabinet agree the following recommendations

2.2 Members note the engagement with our residents and local practitioners on the cultural offer. Information is appended and a short film can be seen on www.southendculture.co.uk

2.2) Members note the key themes identified through engagement so far and that the Culture Vision is further coproduced in partnership with the Southend creative sector, residents and businesses.

3. Background

- 3.1 Culture can play a significant role in regeneration, skills and our changing town centres. There is also increasing evidence of the role that culture plays in our health and wellbeing. This tangible link has been developed in Southend with joint outcomes embedded into the cultural management team closely aligning with public health outcomes.

- 3.2** Successful transformation of cities like Hull and Derry following their Capital of Culture status provide examples of how place-making and civic pride are boosted through a cultural focus.
- 3.3** Culture is a key sector for regeneration providing opportunities for the region to be redefined. Southend as part of ASELA is involved with various projects to maximise economic growth opportunities through a cultural led agenda. The Thames Estuary Production Corridor and Thames Estuary Growth Board identify the sector's economic benefits and Southend is well positioned to benefit from inward investment and enterprise opportunities.
- 3.4** In Southend, a project is underway to increase involvement in the shape and priorities for our cultural offer. Between January and April 2020, 749 people responded to a communications platform considering our current status and future priorities for the cultural offer in Southend. Further face to face events also took place at a variety of venues.
- 3.5** Questions were composed and agreed with cultural sector colleagues and the engagement programme was promoted across many different forums including social media and face to face sessions. Invited groups were approached along with some bespoke sessions addressing inclusivity and accessibility.
- 3.6** Several key themes have emerged which have been assessed independently by research specialists BMG which will help inform the collective vision and associated action plan for the Council and local cultural organisations to respond to.
- 3.7** The ability to engage in this process via a series of events and an interactive website has totally accorded with the service co-design principles of our 2050 Active and Involved outcomes.
- 3.8** Previous strategies have been written documents, the aim with this vision will be to provide a more dynamic and ongoing response. This will address the expectations of residents, those involved in the sector and visitors supported by an action plan, to be developed, focusing on the growing benefits of culture to our community.
- 3.9** Several key **themes** from the engagement stood out and will inform the vision's objectives and action plan some of these are identified below:
- **The value of outdoor event and festival based activity is strong. This theme, along with heritage sites and places, were the top responses for funding priority.**
 - **Lack of awareness is a common theme and improvements to communication and marketing methods were identified.**
 - **The importance of community led cultural activity was identified. Libraries were recognised as an important part of this offer with potential for more events and activity.**

- **Residents identify a need for a more accessible and inclusive cultural offer.**
- **The Pier, theatres, museums and festivals are considered the most important to older respondents in the Southend community. Cinema, Adventure Island and music are more valued by younger audiences**
- **Investment priorities for the next 5 years identified Youth, The Pier and Music.**
- **Developing new cultural uses in vacant town centre spaces were referenced widely.**

3.10 Recognition from residents regarding the importance of cultural activity was also clearly demonstrated during the COVID-19 lockdown. Demand for online creative content through various channels significantly increased during this period. Feedback from residents states that access to participatory cultural and creative activity played a crucial role in supporting their physical and mental wellbeing, greatly helping those who were struggling with major challenges such as loneliness, anxiety, depression and stress. The Council was able to respond to this demand with our museums and galleries increasing online content and our libraries providing online offer as well as click and collect services.

3.11 The Council's culture team led on a Livewell leaflet during the summer that was distributed to every household and provided tools to support home schooling, activities and stimulate creativity. Focal Point Gallery delivered a 'Why don't you' series whilst the museum service's 'design your own museum' was a popular feature.

3.12 Arts Council England has very recently published two new pieces of research that also concur with key trends from the Culture Vision engagement around the value of cultural organisations to our high streets.

The first of these publications is a [data report](#) which shows that cultural buildings that are located at the heart of our high streets help to support local economies by creating jobs.

Another report commissioned by Arts Council England demonstrates culture's role in revitalising the high streets by promoting social cohesion and supporting local economies up and down the country, the [Arts and Place Shaping: Evidence Review](#) indicates that culture supports community cohesion, increases footfall, helps repurpose vacant buildings and creates economic growth.

3.13 Following the recent decision to cancel the town centre based Forum 2 building, several educational and cultural outcomes still need to be delivered. The above Arts Council evidence adds more weight for the need to progress alternative options which has been agreed by Cabinet .

4. Other Options

Previous cultural strategy work has not reached out in this co-production approach and is not recommended.

5. Reasons for Recommendations

This trajectory aligns 2050 outcomes with an overarching cultural theme and has been developed with the community and practitioners in the sector.

6. Corporate Implications

6.1 Contribution to Southend 2050 outcomes across several themes.

P&J 1	There is a tangible sense of pride in the place and local people are actively, and knowledgeably, talking up Southend.
P&J 2	The variety and quality of our outstanding cultural and leisure offer has increased and we have become the regions first choice coastal tourism destination.
S&W 2	Southenders are remaining well enough to enjoy fulfilling lives, throughout their lives.
S&W 4	We are all effective at protecting and improving the quality of life for the most vulnerable in our community
A&I 1	Even more citizens agree that people from different backgrounds are valued and get on well together.
A&I 2	The benefits of community connection are evident as more people come together to help, support and spend time with each other.
A&I 3	Public services are routinely designed, and sometimes delivered, with their users to best meet their needs.
A&I 4	A range of initiatives help communities come together to enhance their neighbourhood and environment.
O&P 2	We have a fast-evolving re-imagined and thriving town centre, with an inviting mix of shops, homes, culture and leisure opportunities

O&P 3	Our children are school and life ready and our workforce is skilled and job ready
O&P 5	Southend is a place that is renowned for its creative industries, where new businesses thrive and where established employers and others invest for the long term
C&S 4	Southend is a leading digital city with world class infrastructure

6.2 Financial Implications

Specific projects will be brought forward through due processes for any funding, there is no specific financial asks related to this paper.

6.3 Legal Implications

N/A

6.4 People Implications

N/A

6.5 Property Implications

6.6 Consultation

A series of events and an online platform were managed to establish a co-produced vision taking themes and priorities from participants. Over 900 respondents provided feedback to develop the vision. The ongoing action plan will be delivered in partnership.

The Business, Culture and Tourism working party saw the emerging themes at their meeting in July 2020 and were supportive of the co-production approach and the themes so far identified.

6.7 Equalities and Diversity Implications

Specific sessions were facilitated for accessibility and inclusion and included several bespoke workshops and presentations. Each project will have its own Equality assessment. Specific theme around inclusion is within the themes.

6.8 Risk Assessment

N/A

6.9 Value for Money

The research sessions were carried out by SBC staff and partners with no external costs but engaged widely at a series of events and online feedback platform also developed internally.

The feedback will help inform ongoing funding decisions for increased value for money.

The progress involved also contributes towards the action plan within the tourism strategy – Destination Southend

6.10 Community Safety Implications

N/A

6.11 Environmental Impact

7. Background Papers

8. Appendices

Research graphs

A Vision for the Cultural Future of Southend.

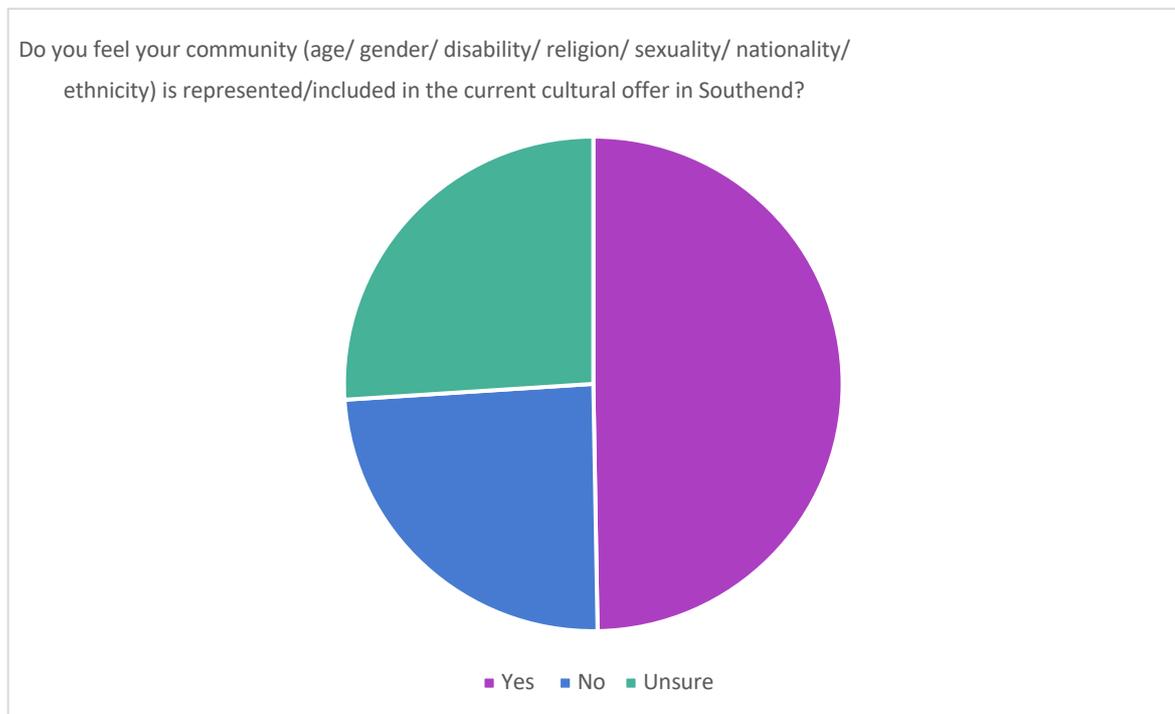
A total of 749 people accessed the campaign which ran from 30th January to 31st March 2020, being extended a further week to close on 7th April 2020.

The consultation was promoted across social media and was available online and in a hardcopy format if requested.

Please note - not all respondents participated or responded to every question.

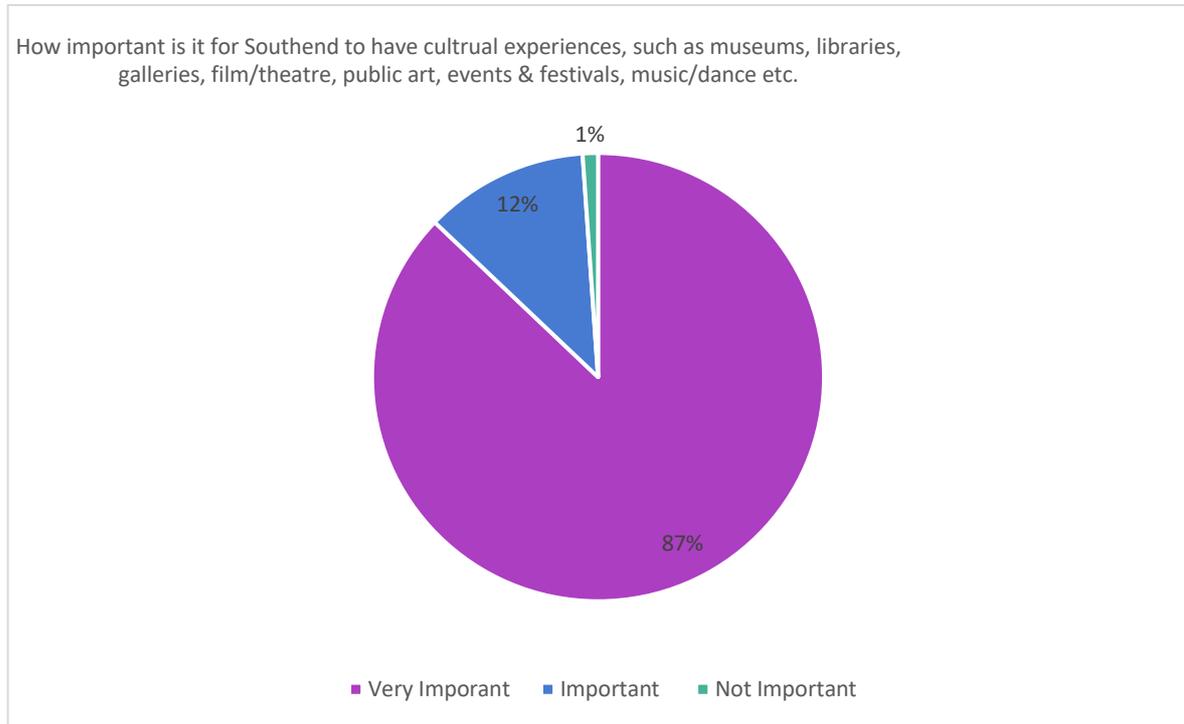
2 Do you feel your community (age/ gender/ disability/ religion/ sexuality/ nationality/ ethnicity) is represented/included in the current cultural offer in Southend?

This was a single response and was answered by 735 respondents with 50% stating this was the case.



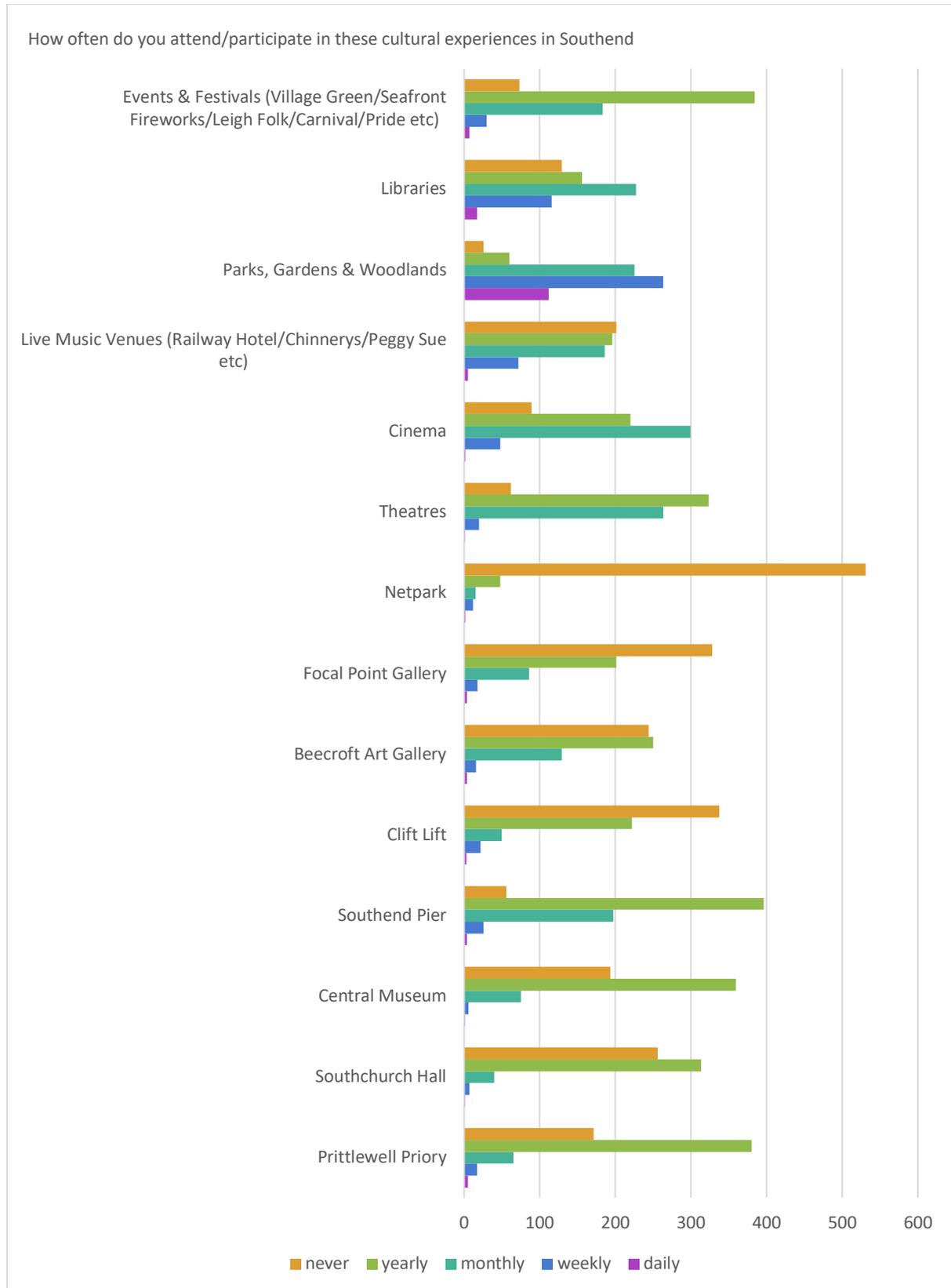
3 How important is it for Southend to have cultural experiences, such as museums, libraries, galleries, film/theatre, public art, events & festivals, music/dance etc.

This is a single response question and was answered by 732 respondents, overall 87% identified that it was very important.



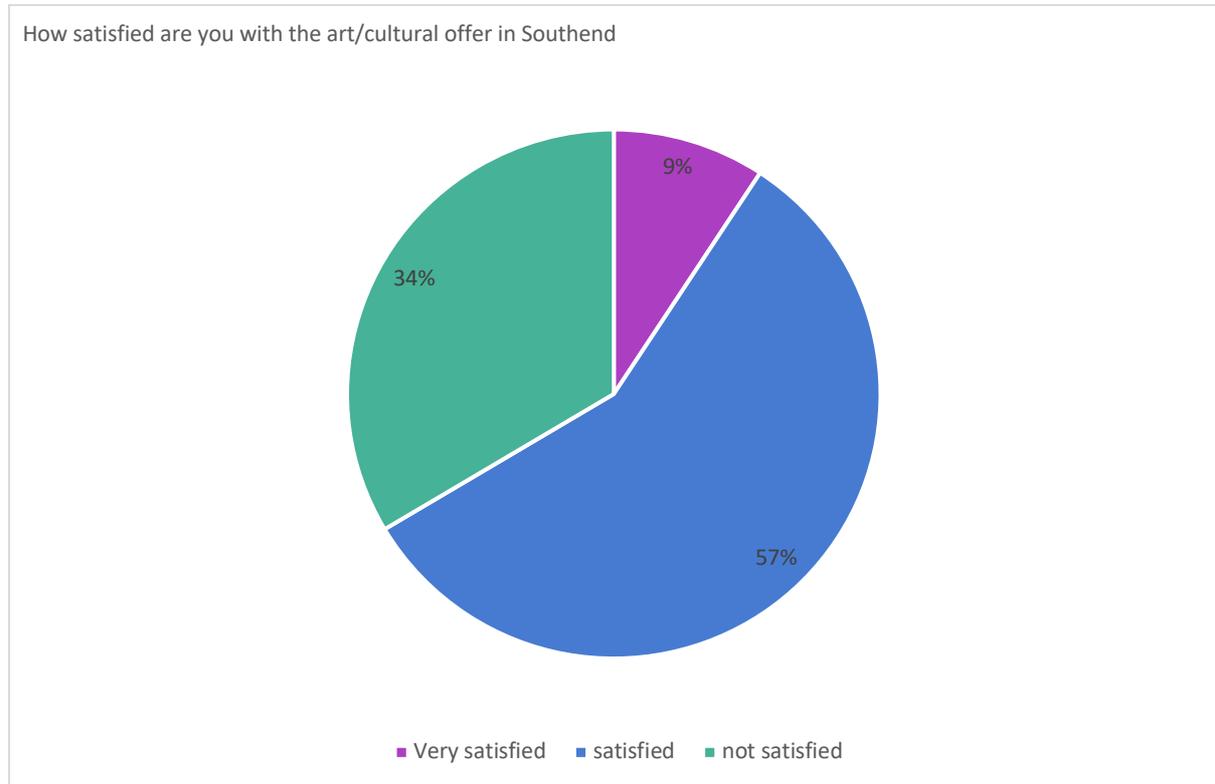
4 How often do you attend/participate in these cultural experiences in Southend

The overall picture is that a majority of those that responded visit monthly or yearly, to various places except for parks & gardens, and libraries which were visited weekly



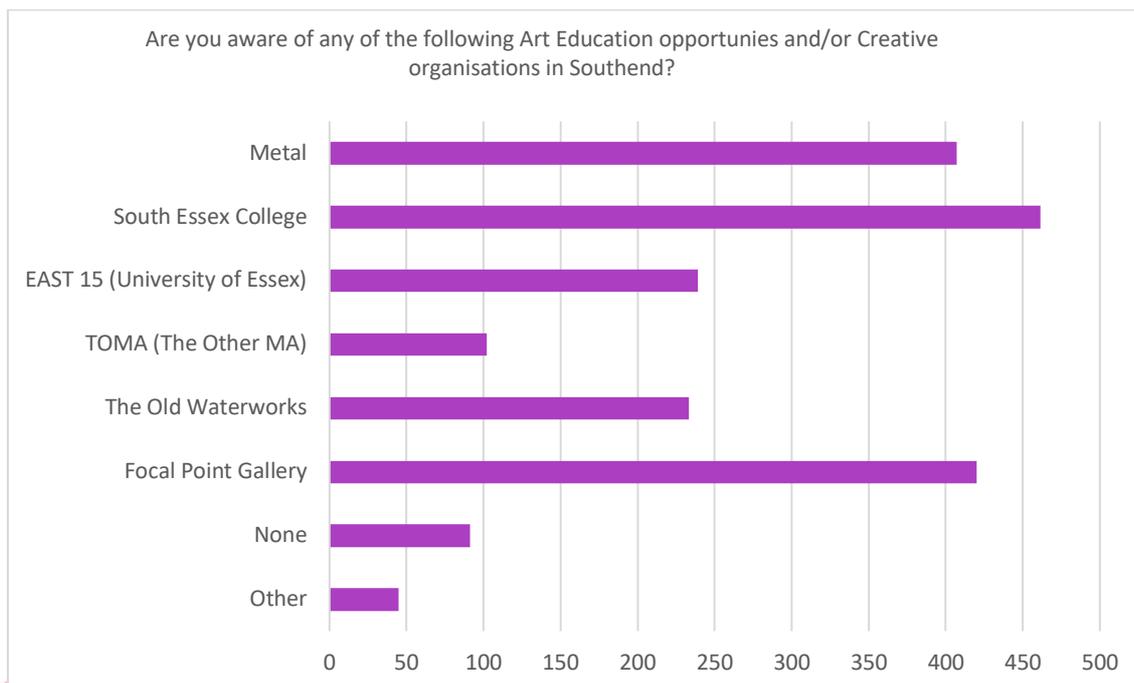
5 How satisfied are you with the art/cultural offer in Southend?

This was a single response question and 690 respondents answered with 57% were satisfied with the offer in Southend.



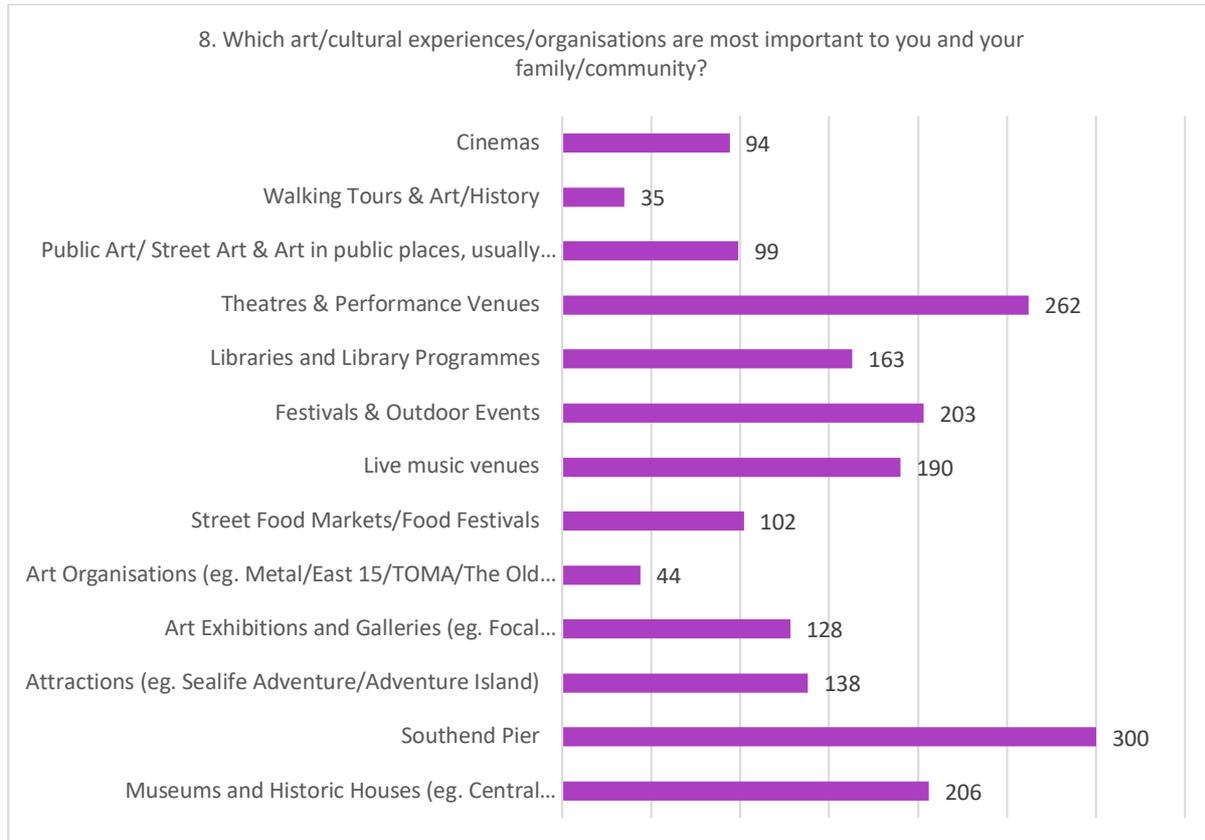
7 Are you aware of any of the following Art Education opportunities and/or Creative organisations in Southend.

67% of respondents are aware of South Essex College, closely followed by the Focal Point Gallery with 13% identifying that they were not aware of any of them.



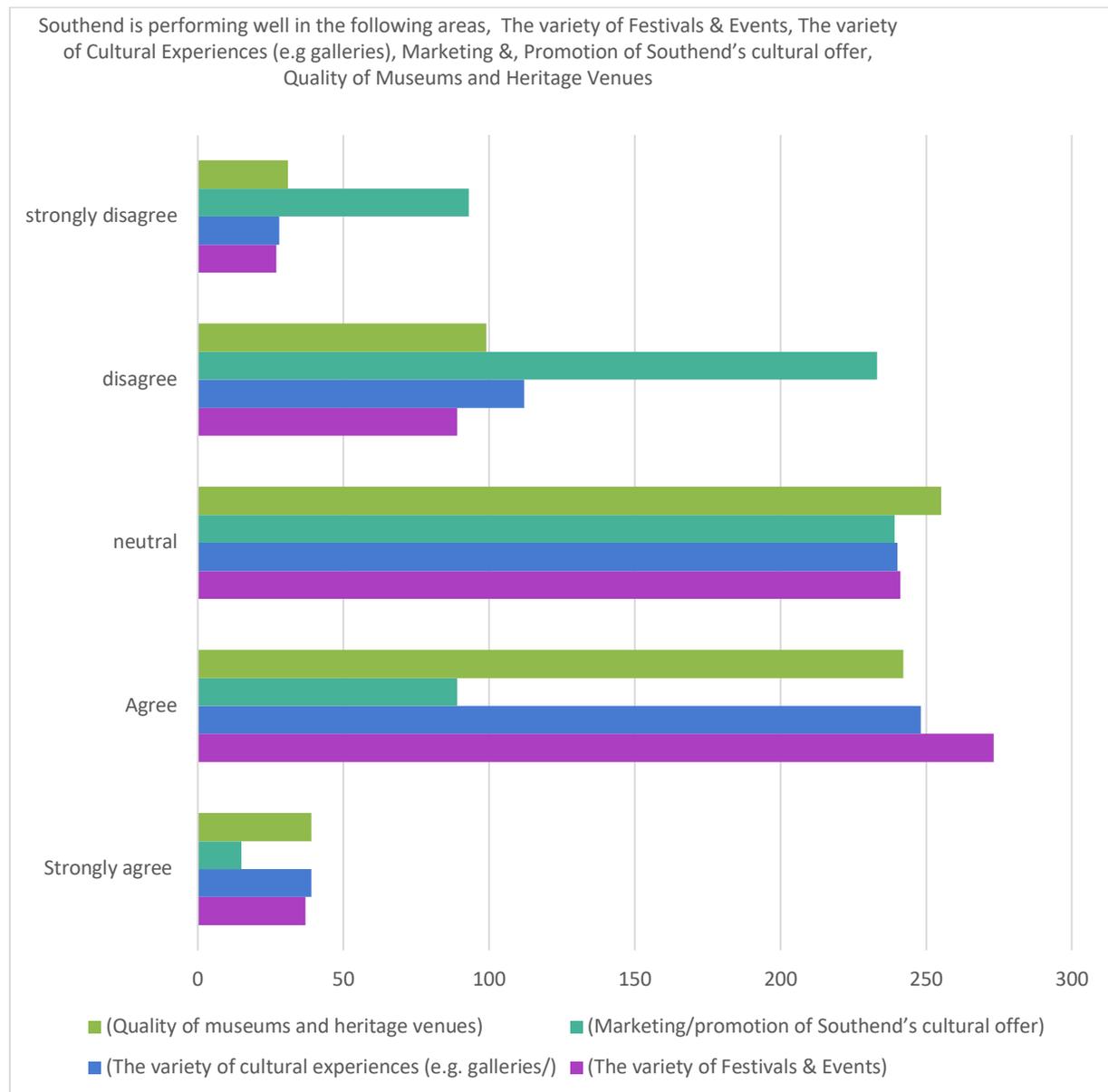
8. Which Art/cultural experiences /organisations are most important to you and your family/community.

This was a multiple response 44% identified Southend Pier as most important followed by Theatres and performance venues at 38%.



9. Southend is performing well in the following areas, The variety of Festivals & Events, The variety of Cultural Experiences (e.g. galleries), Marketing &, Promotion of Southend’s cultural offer, Quality of Museums and Heritage Venues

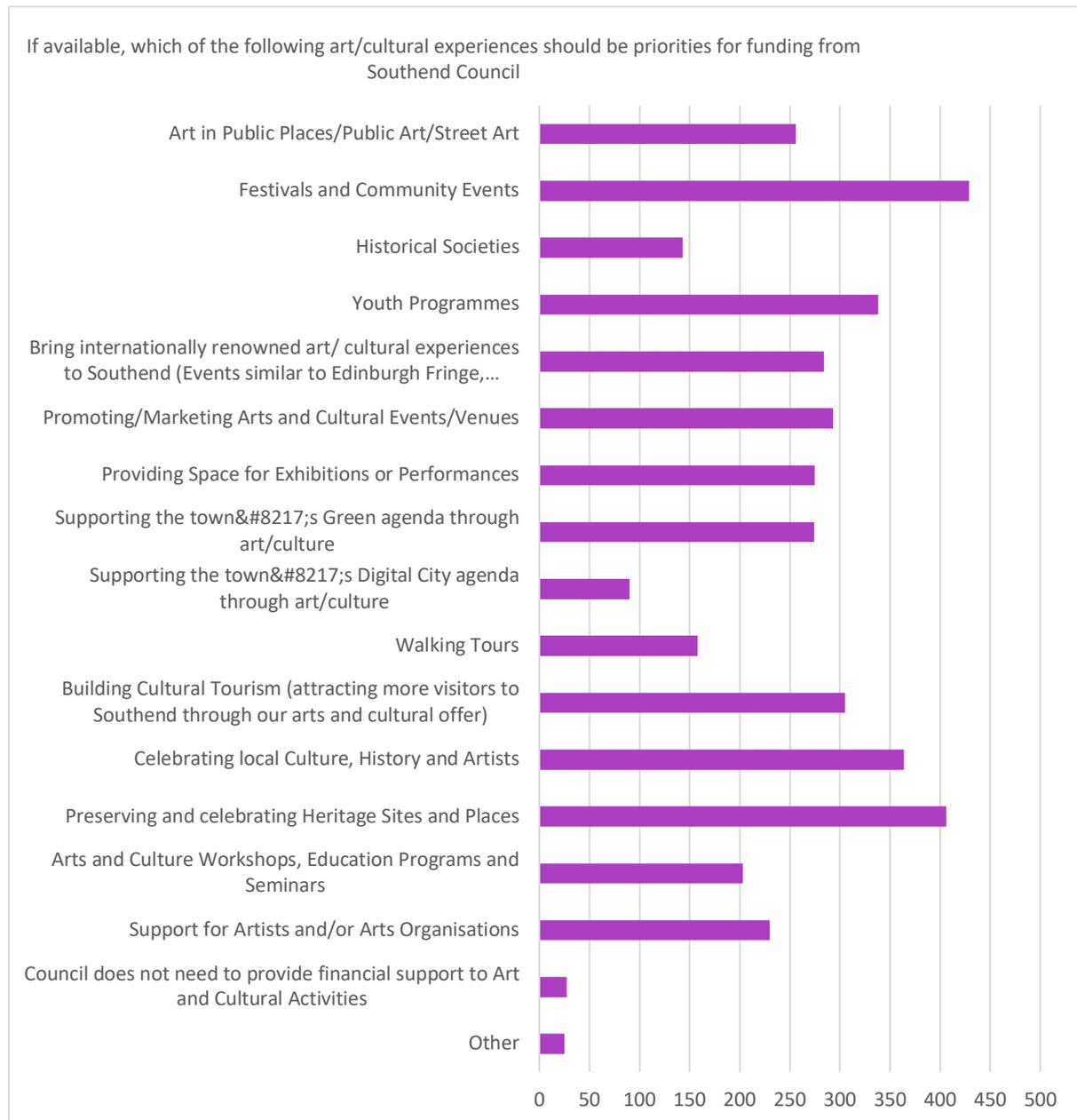
Of those responding most agree that Southend is performing well in the variety of festivals and events and in the quality of the museums and heritage venues. However, the Marketing and promotion of what is on offer requires improvement given the responses received.



10. If available, which of the following art/cultural experiences should be priorities for funding from Southend Council

The was a multiple response question and the top three

65% identifying Festivals and Community Events should take priority, closely followed by Preserving and celebrating heritage sites at 62% and 55% through celebrating local culture, history and artists.



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Southend-on-Sea Borough Council
Report of Executive Director for Adults and Communities
to
Cabinet
on
3rd November 2020
Report prepared by: Scott Dolling
Director of Culture & Tourism

**Agenda
Item
No.**

11

The Beecroft Trust
Place Scrutiny Committee
Cabinet Member: Councillor Kevin Robinson
A Part 1 (Public Agenda Item)

1. Purpose of Report:

- 1.1 To update upon the current position with regards the Beecroft Art Gallery (“the Trust”) and with the proposed renovations into artist’s studios.

2 Recommendation:

- 2.1 That the Council notes that the proposal to convert the former Beecroft Art Gallery into artist’s studios is no longer feasible.

3 Background

3.1 Historical Background of the Beecroft Art Gallery and Westcliff Building.

- 3.1.1 The Beecroft Art Gallery and collection was founded in April 1949 by the late Walter G. Beecroft of Leigh-on-Sea, for the advancement of Art, Music and Literature in the Borough of Southend on Sea. The gallery on Station Road, Westcliff, (“the Former Gallery”) was purchased in October 1951 with Trust funds. The Former Gallery first opened in October 1953. Over time the collection has grown through donations from Friends of the Beecroft Art Gallery and when Sydney Thorpe Smith bequeathed his collection of local topographic works.
- 3.1.2 The Trust’s assets consist of the art collection and the site of the Former Gallery. These are fixed assets, the Trust has no liquid assets.
- 3.1.3 The art collection is extensive and of national significance with notable works by Constable and Reynolds. In the current venue, former central library in Victoria

Avenue (“the Former Library”) there is not enough appropriate conditioned display or storage space hence some of the collection is in storage

- 3.1.4 Following a building survey in 2013, the Former Gallery had to be abandoned and the collection was moved to the Former Library. This move was regarded as temporary with the original expectation that the Southend museum and Trust would all ultimately move to the developing Thames Estuary Experience (TEE) on the seafront. In summer 2018 the Council decided not to progress with the TEE.
- 3.1.5 The operational objectives of the Trust are delivered by Southend Council’s museums service. Along with the Trust’s art collection, the Former Library is also host to other temporary art exhibitions and lectures, The Hive business centre (2nd and 3rd floor) and the Jazz Centre UK (basement).
- 3.1.6 The Trust has no resources of its own to curate, manage and develop its art collection. The role has been undertaken through the Council’s Museums and Galleries Team. The Trust is considered an integral part of the cultural offer for Southend’s citizens and visitors. For the Trust to deliver this service independently would require significant organisational costs and a demand on resources that it does not have the liquid assets to cover.
- 3.1.7 In 2019 further structural damage was identified. The Former Gallery is still deteriorating and presents a risk should anyone be injured on the premises. Despite it being secured with hoardings, it has been raided and squatters have also been present on occasion.

3.2 Why is there one paper here and a further report for the General Purposes Committee?

- 3.2.1 The Trust is subject to a scheme dated the 18th February 1980 of the Charity Commissioners for England and Wales (“the Scheme”) and therefore the Council’s 51 Members are the Trustees of the Charity. The Scheme forms the current terms under which the Trust operates and is governed.
- 3.2.2 When acting as Trustees, Members are required to act in the interests of the Trust and not the Council. Where there is any potential of a conflict of interest between the Council and the Trust then independent legal or professional advice should be provided to the Trustees.
- 3.2.3 Therefore, Cabinet considered a report on the 16th June 2020 that detailed the improved governance arrangements and decision making for the Trust.
- 3.2.4 Cabinet approved the following recommendations:
- (a) That the Council’s General Purposes Committee act on behalf of the Trust and make recommendations for Full Council to consider.
 - (b) That independent advice is provided to the Beecroft Trustees through the General Purposes Committee to fulfil its objectives in the best interest of the Trust.

(c) That specific independent advice is provided on the former gallery site at Station Road, Westcliff.

3.2.5 Cabinet agreed, as part of these arrangements that that the General Purposes Committee (GPC) will, at first instance, consider matters whereby the Trust needs to make a decision and then the matter will be considered by Scrutiny Committee before consideration by Full Council. Wider input from external advisors was also recommended to support Members of the GPC in reaching an informed view.

3.3 Background of the proposals regarding the Artist's Studios

3.3.1 During the course of 2015, officers investigated a range of options and undertook public consultation on the future of the Former Gallery on behalf of the Trust. Following the outcome of this consultation, permission was granted for a feasibility study to investigate the viability of converting the building into artist studios. (**Cabinet paper 10th November 2015: Outcome of consultation on the future of the former Beecroft Art Gallery Building (Background Paper 1)**).

3.3.2 Following completion of the feasibility study, further permission was granted by Cabinet 28th June 2016 for the preparation of a formal bid to Arts Council England's Capital Grant fund and other external funding sources for the conversion costs of creating affordable artist studios within the building. (**Cabinet paper 28th June 2016: Artist Studios Feasibility Study (Background Paper 2)**).

3.3.3 The feasibility study suggested a future governance model which saw the Beecroft Trust working directly in partnership with Focal Point Gallery, the Council's jointly funded Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation, to provide the day to day management of the Project. As an NPO, Focal Point Gallery were eligible to apply to Arts Council England's Capital grant Scheme; something the Beecroft Gallery Art Trust were not able to do in their own right.

3.3.4 Planning permission for the conversion of the Former Gallery into an artist studios complex was granted in February 2017.

3.3.5 External funding totalling £575,000 was successfully secured from three external sources (Arts Council England £495,000, Foyle Foundation £30,000 and the Garfield Western Foundation £50,000).

3.3.6 The Council proposed funding of £300,000 from the Capital Reserve to progress the conversion of the Former Gallery into the artist's studios via its Capital funding programme (2018/19) but this was not completed. The business case had been revised and would have only returned any income upon very successful levels of occupancy and upper end of chargeable rates. The addition of VAT to income on the project resulted in a challenging business case. With an objective being to raise income, this rendered a significant change to project viability.

- 3.3.7 A project board was established to oversee delivery of the conversion project and appointed Neobard Burnson Architects Ltd to manage the conversion of the building, who subsequently undertook some initial work to prepare the building for construction which included a package of remedial works and further structural surveys.
- 3.3.8 This phase identified that the estimated build costs contained within the feasibility study were greater due to the state of the building and that additional funding would need to be secured to enable the Project to progress to completion.
- 3.3.9 Therefore, the Council applied for Local Growth Funding (LGF) in the sum of £680,000.00 from South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP).
- 3.3.10 The SELEP Funding unfortunately was not approved and therefore, without this funding being sourced from elsewhere the proposal to convert the Former Gallery into artist's studios became untenable.
- 3.3.11 The Council has returned the Arts Council Funding of £495,000.00. Further the Foyle Foundation grant of £30,000.00 had to be returned. The £50,000 was not claimed as the project to convert the Former Gallery to artist's Studios could not progress.
- 3.3.12 If the Council were to fund the shortfall of £680,000 (the amount not secured from SELEP) from Council funds then it would have to do so at a commercial interest rate. This would mean that the Trust would be subject to paying a commercial interest rate whilst the Council would still need to secure the occupation of the Trust in the Former Library (or elsewhere).

3.4 Moving Forward, How the Council and Trust could work together

- 3.4.1 The Beecroft Trust objectives are as follows: *"the promotion of the study of art, music and literature and in particular, but without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing, the provision and maintenance of the beecroft art gallery at southend-on-sea in the county of essex as a public art gallery and library."*
- 3.4.2 In considering these objectives the Council can continue to work closely with the Trust and especially with the enhancement of music and literature, as well as art, but this is beyond the remit of this report.
- 3.4.3 The physical space offered as part of this ongoing commitment to the Trust and its objectives is 450 sqm and is currently provided within the Former Library building on Victoria Avenue. The collection is presented professionally attracting positive responses from visitors, sector commentators and strategic partners. The relationship has worked successfully in the past with the aims of the Trust being delivered as part of the council's cultural team for the benefit of the Borough's citizens and visitors.
- 3.4.4 Both the Council and the Trust need to apply a commercial mind-set to ensure the long term sustainability of the Trust and at the same time protecting the Council's financial position and the Council managing its property assets. An

update in this regard will follow in a further report at a later date in the wake of negotiations with the Trust.

4. Other Options

4.1 None.

5. Reasons for Recommendations

5.1 The proposal to convert the Former Gallery into artist's studios is no longer financially viable.

6. Corporate Implications

6.1 The Council will continue to work with the Trust to achieving their cultural objectives to enhance the cultural and creative agenda for Southend and this features significantly in the Council's Southend 2050 Ambition.

6.2 Financial Implications

If the Cabinet approve the proposed recommendation then there are no financial implications to the Council in that decision. However, if the proposed recommendation is not approved then there will be a need for a significant capital investment into a scheme with no external funding and an operational scheme which is financially unviable to be progressed.

6.3 Legal Implications

N/A

6.4 People Implications

N/A

6.5 Property Implications

N/A

6.6 Consultation

NA

6.7 Equalities and Diversity Implications

N/A

6.8 Risk Assessment

NA

6.9 Value for Money

N/A

6.10 Community Safety Implications

NA

6.11 Environmental Impact

NA

7. Background Papers

7.1 **Background Paper 1.** Cabinet paper 10th November 2015: Outcome of consultation on the future of the former Beecroft Art Gallery Building.

7.2 **Background Paper 2.** Cabinet paper 28th June 2016: Artist Studios Feasibility

8. Appendices

None