

Public

Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council
Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Castell-nedd

Democratic Services
Gwasanaethau Democrataidd

Chief Executive: K.Jones

Date: 21st July 2021

Dear Member,

EDUCATION, SKILLS AND CULTURE CABINET BOARD - THURSDAY,
22ND JULY, 2021

Please find attached the following urgent items for consideration at the next meeting of the **Education, Skills and Culture Cabinet Board - Thursday, 22nd July, 2021.**

Item

10. **Culture and Heritage Strategy Report** (Pages 1 - 6)

Yours sincerely

p.p Chief Executive

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Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot
Neath Port Talbot Council

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Education Skills and Culture Cabinet Board

22 July 2021

Urgent Report of the Chief Executive

Matter for Decision

Wards Affected:

All Wards

Report Title: Culture and Heritage

Purpose of the Report:

1. To seek endorsement of proposed work to develop a heritage and culture strategy for the county borough
2. To note that the Council has not submitted an expression of interest as a City of Culture in the current round

Background:

The way in which funding is being arranged by the UK Government is changing as Members will be aware from recent reports brought to authorise submissions to the Levelling Up Fund and Community Renewal Fund.

These changes present challenges in the short term but also provide opportunities to access funding for activities where it has been difficult to attract funding in recent years.

Within the Levelling Up fund criteria, bids that promote an area's heritage have been invited. In submitting proposals for the Neath and Aberavon constituencies, we have included features that will celebrate the sporting, cultural and industrial heritage of our place – something we have in abundance. We will be able to access some capacity funding to help develop project ideas and if the bids are successful there will be other resources that can be used to implement future project ideas.

Recent debates at Cabinet have demonstrated that the heritage of our place is something that is very important to elected members and to residents too. However, to move this important area of work forward, it is timely to consider developing a clearer sense of where heritage and culture is positioned within the Council's overall priorities and then, subject to that debate, to agree a strategic direction for this area of work. Clarifying the priority that Members would wish to give to this work will enable officers to provide a clear assessment as to whether the Levelling Up Fund resources are adequate to take the work forward, or whether additional investment may be required. We would wish to be in a position to discuss this in the autumn 2021 when Members will be considering the Council's wider recovery priorities.

Since submitting the bids to the Levelling Up Fund, we have also received correspondence from the UK Government inviting expressions of interest to become a City of Culture. The criteria has been relaxed in this round to enable areas that are not cities to put forward submissions. Having considered the work that is needed to submit a quality expression of interest against other current priorities within the extremely challenging deadline of July 19th 2021, officers have reluctantly concluded that we are not in a position to submit a bid on this occasion. However, if Members were to agree that a focus

should be given to developing a cultural and heritage strategy for the county borough as outlined above, the Council would be in a stronger position to consider bidding in future rounds.

Financial Impacts:

There are no direct financial impacts associated with this report, however, should Members determine that a focus should be given to this area of work, investment will be required and officers would aim to develop the detail of what this would entail autumn 2021.

Integrated Impact Assessment:

There is no requirement to undertake an Integrated Impact Assessment as this report is to seek initial direction in relation to this matter.

Valleys Communities Impacts:

All of the valley communities in the county borough are characterised by strong cultural, sporting and industrial heritage which are important to the people who live there but also to the county borough more generally. Each community has a distinct identity. Any work developed in relation to this agenda will need to reflect what is common across the county borough but also respect what is unique and marks out each place in its own right.

Workforce Impacts:

New capacity will need to be created to develop the Council's work in this area.

Legal Impacts:

The Council has some limited legal duties in relation to culture and heritage but much of the work is undertaken under discretionary powers. Like many areas of work which are not a statutory requirement, investment in culture and heritage has been reduced during the many years of austerity when priority has had to be given to protecting the Council's ability to meet its statutory duties.

Risk Management Impacts:

The Council's work in developing its place brand has emphasised how important culture and heritage is to people's sense of identity. People across Neath Port Talbot are proud of the sporting, cultural and industrial heritage of the area and as we look forward, there is a risk that we lose this strong sense of place in our forward plans if we do not invest in creating a strategic approach to this important part of our past and present community life.

Creating the opportunity for investment will require innovation and creativity as the Council's revenue and capital resources are under considerable pressure already and the pandemic is adding to this. There are opportunities to lever in funding from elsewhere and to draw upon the network of cultural and heritage groups that exist across the county borough, however, some capacity to identify and develop these arrangements will be essential if this area of work if a greater focus is to be given.

Consultation:

There is no requirement for external consultation on this item

Recommendations:

1. Members of the Cabinet Board endorse the proposal that officers undertake work to scope out what would be involved in developing a culture and heritage strategy for the county borough that can subsequently be used to inform and support investment decisions and bids for funding.
2. That Members of the Cabinet Board note the Council is not in a position to submit an expression of interest for the current round of the City of Culture competition but that this opportunity be revisited when new rounds of bids are invited.

Reasons for Proposed Decision:

To review the positioning of culture and heritage within the Council's wider planning and service delivery arrangements.

Implementation of Decision:

The decision is proposed for implementation after the three day call in period

List of Background Papers:

- Cabinet June 2021 – Levelling Up Fund Proposals
- Department for Local Government and Housing – Letter from Secretary of State for Wales dated 26th June 2021

Officer Contact:

Karen Jones, Chief Executive [Tel:01639 763284](tel:01639763284) or e mail chief.executive@npt.gov.uk

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