

Report to:	EXECUTIVE CABINET
Date:	23 March 2022
Executive Member:	Councillor Leanne Feeley – Executive Member Lifelong Learning, Equalities, Culture and Heritage
Reporting Officer:	Emma Varnam – Assistant Director, Operations & Neighbourhoods
Subject:	GREATER MANCHESTER TOWN OF CULTURE 2022
Report Summary:	This report sets out the bid submitted to the Greater Manchester Combined Authority for Stalybridge to be the Town of Culture for 2022. Following the successful award the report details the current programme and the proposals for developing this further over the coming weeks. It details the overall budget requirements to enhance the programme and that this is a significant and important opportunity for celebrating Stalybridge and the start of developing a sustainable cultural offer unique to Stalybridge and Tameside.
Recommendations:	That Executive Cabinet be recommended to agree that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) The Stalybridge Town of Culture proposal and the awarded £50,000 to deliver the programme in 2022 is noted. (ii) That the proposed current programme of activity is noted and that a more developed programme will be determined over the coming weeks. (iii) The Council's contribution to support the enhanced delivery of Town of Culture is noted. (iv) Consideration is given to the potential for Stalybridge to achieve Purple Flag status, as a part of the Greater Manchester Night Time Economy Strategy.
Corporate Plan:	Stalybridge's Town of Culture accolade and accompanying cultural programme significantly adds to the towns and the boroughs communities' sense of pride, our place and shared heritage. It increases opportunities for people to participate, learn new skills and fulfil their potential. It can increase aspirations and hope through learning, moving with confidence from childhood and into adulthood. It can support levels of self-care through a social prescription of cultural participation.
Policy Implications:	It is essential that any proposals demonstrate value for money and make a clear contribution to Council priorities. Where possible the events and associated plans will take the Council's Environmental strategy into account through recycling, restricted use of plastic and impact on the environment is considered for each event.
Financial Implications: (Authorised by the statutory Section 151 Officer & Chief Finance Officer)	The report sets out details of the Stalybridge Town Of Culture programme for 2022. The programme will be financed via the Council (£89,000), the Town Of Culture grant received from Greater Manchester Combined Authority (£50,000) and Historic England Grant

(£20,000), a total programme investment of £159,000 (section 4.2, table 1 refers).

The £89,000 Council budget investment will be financed via business rates 100% retention funding which is allocated to support economic growth within the borough and the creation of improved town centre environments where businesses can start up, grow or invest.

Additional grant funding bids via the Arts Council and Heritage Lottery are being explored in order to further enhance the programme and create a stronger legacy for the initiative (section 4.3 refers).

It is essential that the programme of events are procured in accordance with the Council's financial regulations and procedures with the provision of related advice via STAR where appropriate.

A subsequent evaluation of the benefits realised within the borough via the programme investment should be facilitated and reported to Members accordingly at a later date.

**Legal Implications:
(Authorised by the Borough
Solicitor)**

This report provides Members with an update in relation to the funding and programme for Stalybridge to be the Town of Culture for 2022.

The events in the programme will be subject to their own due diligence and decision-making particularly where a procurement exercise is required.

Risk Management:

A predominantly outdoor events and activities programme come with organisational and significant risk due to adverse weather conditions. This can require last minute decisions to cancel or alter events to ensure these are safe for audiences, performers and equipment alike.

All events and activities are subject to the health and safety of audiences, performers and staff. These can mean last minute alterations and both the reputational and financial implications of this also needs to be considered.

Background Information:

The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting Marie Holland, Arts and Engagement Manager



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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In 2019 Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) ran its first ever Town of Culture programme which saw Bury crowned GM Town of Culture 2020.
- 1.2 The Greater Manchester Town of Culture (ToC) programme celebrates the distinctiveness of one town each year, selected from the ten districts of Greater Manchester. It puts a spotlight on the remarkable art, culture and heritage that exists across Greater Manchester and provides an opportunity to highlight and celebrate the distinctive culture of specific towns as well as to raise local ambitions for cultural provision, a night-time economy, and increase pride in a place.
- 1.3 It is about celebrating our towns and what these have to offer, showcasing what they have, better, to friends, neighbours and visitors who don't yet know about it.
- 1.4 Greater Manchester is known globally for its significant contribution to culture, and every part of Greater Manchester has many culturally rich neighbourhoods, all of which are unique to that particular place. Applications to become GM Town of Culture are invited with the successful Authority being granted £50,000 from the GMCA Culture Fund to support programming.
- 1.5 The annual accolade has been awarded to Stalybridge for 2022 and is a prestigious opportunity for Stalybridge and Tameside. It will enable the borough to showcase the excellent infrastructure and development opportunities within the region and nationally.
- 1.6 Stalybridge Town of Culture significantly contributes to the Tameside Town Centre Framework, with ambitions to create improved town centre environments where businesses feel that they can start up, grow or invest. Moreover, they should also be places where residents can access the facilities and services they need, and provide a strong sense of place which the community are proud of and engage with.
- 1.7 This report details the application giving rise to the successful award and the plans being developed to deliver on this unique opportunity. Additionally the possibility of working towards Purple Flag status for Stalybridge.

2. TAMESIDE'S APPLICATION

- 2.1 Culture is generally agreed to include the following areas: arts (including visual arts, literature, music, theatre and dance), architecture, crafts, creative industries, design, heritage, historic environment, museums and galleries, libraries, archives, film, broadcasting and media and food. The definition is relatively broad and it was up to applicants to determine which activities to include in their programme with the expectation that they would appeal to a wide range of audiences and increase engagement and participation.
- 2.2 In 2020, the world paused, and as we started to consider a new way of living, working, learning and creating, we also quickly realised what was most important. Access to food; access to the internet; access to conversation as well as family; patience; fresh air; equality; and culture. We were forced to slow down, and as we isolated, we found ways to fill our time. Walking, reconnecting to our local environment, shopping locally, cooking meals at home, and even growing our own food. As we stood on doorsteps to clap our hands for frontline workers, we would look at our neighbours and smile, sometimes they were sad smiles as the reality of the situation was dark but they were equally resilient smiles: they were knowing-we-will-meet-again smiles.
- 2.3 As we start to return to 'normality', we are starting to see the light and joy in our daily routines. However we are torn between maintaining what we now realise is important and rushing to

catch up with what we have missed out on. The Stalybridge Town of Culture 2022 programme will promote projects and activities which enable us to slow down, connect with the local environment and celebrate the cultural value in conversation, community and creativity.

- 2.4 The Town of Culture 2022 will provide a key focus for an enhanced Stalybridge cultural programme. It will use what is already planned and it will provide an additional layer of aspiration, talent and connection to create an embedded cultural offer for Stalybridge residents and businesses and a sustainable future including workshops, artists' commissions, community content, and events.
- 2.5 The Town of Culture programme can extend to a maximum of 6 months and a minimum of 2. The Stalybridge application put forward a 4-month celebration of cultural activities which would be developed, using creativity, art and design to build a series of community-driven campaigns to promote slow art, slow food, slow movement ideas, enabling communities to initiate conversations and ideas around climate, equality, access, health and identity. These conversations will result in a series of projects, activities and events to create accessible opportunities for local communities, businesses and visitors to engage in global issues at a local level. Building on what is already planned, GM Town of Culture will provide an additional layer of aspiration, talent and connection to create an embedded cultural offer for Stalybridge residents and businesses and a sustainable future.
- 2.6 The Stalybridge Town of Culture 2022 programme will build and develop collaborations with Stalybridge dance schools, music groups, theatre and carnival organisations, local growing groups, schools and health centres to:
 - co-design and deliver a series of 4 commissions - walking tours, sound walks, dance pieces and promenade performance
 - increase access to the heritage and natural landscapes (river, canal, woodland) in the town centre, connecting with Street Fest events
 - encourage intergenerational conversations and storytelling
 - increase pride and participation in and around Stalybridge
- 2.7 The GM Town of Culture programme for 2022 will promote projects that enable people to slow down, connect with the local environment and celebrate its cultural value in activities such as artist-led walks and trails, community growing projects and outdoor activities such as theatre and storytelling. These will tie in with existing cultural highlights in the town, such as the popular monthly Street Fest event. Inspiration will be taken from the town's heritage to provide a new narrative for future-thinking and future-doing projects, promoting the sustainability of the town, the environment and the community: a place where people can express their own cultural identities and celebrate their own everyday creativity:
 - Slow Food / Food for Thought - community orchards, doorstep growing, allotments, recipes, food waste
 - Slow Making - knitting, embroidery, yarn-bombing projects
 - Slow Art - storytelling, art-led research residencies, conversations, performance, writing and literature
 - Slow Pace - walking, canal cruises, cycling
- 2.8 Stalybridge is one of England's High Street Heritage Action Zones (HAZ) and in 2021, The Bridge - Stalybridge's cultural consortium, was set up to deliver creative community engagement activity to engage locals in the HAZ investment programme. The Bridge will be a key delivery partner for the Council to make Stalybridge Town of Culture happen and grown in Stalybridge. As part of this initiative, Stalybridge has also been selected as one of six high streets to receive an outdoor celebration in 2023, commissioned by Historic England, produced by Emergency Exit Arts and co-designed with the local community. This will provide Stalybridge with a legacy opportunity for Town of Culture 2022.

3. DEVELOPMENT OF THE CULTURAL PROGRAMME

3.1 The programme will be developed over the coming weeks and will be subject to constant change and update as engagement with the community/organisations bring forward those who wish to get involved. £15,000 of GMCA ToC grant funding has been allocated to the creation of cultural content for the 4 months including all costs relating to its delivery. Whilst the requirement for GMCA Town of Culture funding is a programme of between 2 and 6 months with our application being for 4 months, there is a desire to maximise the benefit of this accolade and extend cultural programming across the whole year. The Council will support the budget requirement to enhance the programme that will be funded from the ToC monies.

3.2 The announcement that Stalybridge was awarded Town of Culture 2022 status was made public in January 2022. Since then the Bridge and the Council's Cultural Services Team have been busy beginning to build the programme for 2022. The focus of the Cultural Services Team together with the Bridge, as named in the bid, is to develop a programme steeped in Stalybridge's location at the foot of the Pennines and as such is now a key location for walkers and cyclists exploring the surrounding hills and tracks. But it is also closely related to Stalybridge's industrial heritage which makes it a land locked town but crucially with waterways linking it to the rest of the country and beyond. It is a melting-pot of new and old, past and future and as such it is at a crucial point of re-imagining itself as 21st century climate conscious cultural hub for adventurers and people wanting to explore the best of both town and country with easy links to Manchester and Leeds and the Pennines. The programme being developed with take this into consideration and will result in activities, workshops, artist commissions all related to:

- Dance and movement
- Food and growing
- Fashion and textiles
- Walking and cycling
- Canal and water

3.3 Some key activity programmes are already in place and these will be further amplified with content developed as part of the Town of Culture programme. The marketing of this online through a dedicated website and through the branding of the Town of Culture will be undertaken by the Bridge with their contribution of £4,000 and with £5,000 allocated through the GMCA ToC grant. These activity programmes are detailed below:

3.4 **Street Fest**

A report was presented to Executive Cabinet in January 2022 and approved to secure the budget and plan for Street Fest to take place monthly between March and December 2022. The 4 key Street Fest dates in June, July, August and September will form the core of the Stalybridge Town of Culture programme. The 4 themes mentioned in the Town of Culture application will act as catalysts for activities at these events taking place on:

- Friday 10 June 2022
- Friday 8 July 2022
- Friday 12 August
- Friday 9 September 2022

3.5 At these events content will be developed to be presented and for people to participate in. It is anticipated that these events will have a key focus but central to all of these is that they are developed through the Bridge as part of their "*Sensing the Town*" strand for the HAZ programme. This is about making the best use of funds already allocated to the Bridge through Historic England (£16,000), which will mean that only £4,000 of the £50,000 GMCA funding needs to be spent on this content allowing for the Council to make best use of the funding provided by GMCA for Town of Culture to programme more content. This programme

will form commissions such as artists' residencies, workshops, dance and performance pieces, textile creations, growing and links to the landscape of Stalybridge and the surrounding areas.

- 3.6 The Bridge is already working on content for this through its partners and through its community links with Action Together.

Theatre and Theatre in the Park

- 3.7 Tameside Cultural Services have traditionally programmed family theatre in venues across Tameside. This year the focus as part of Town of Culture will be on programming theatre within Stalybridge at the Astley Cheetham Art Gallery. Four different pieces of family theatre will take place at the venue and form the core of a children's Town of Culture strand in Stalybridge.

- 3.8 This will be accompanied by two theatre performances in Cheetham's Park during August 2022. The team continues to look for opportunities across GM which can result in more programming for a children's strand of Town of Culture. This is funded through core revenue budgets and a request for content from other GMCA funded cultural organisations is also being explored.

3.9 Heritage open Days

The annual heritage open days take place in September across the Country. It is proposed that this year Stalybridge becomes the centre of the borough's involvement with the scheme. This would see additional walks and talks taking place in the town linked to the focus of this year's theme: *Astounding Inventions*. This would see an increased focus on Stalybridge's heritage and past which can also be explored through an exhibition at Astley Cheetham Art Gallery and online.

Community events and activities taking place in 2022

- 3.10 A core part of the Council's application for Stalybridge Town of Culture focused on amplifying what was already taking place in Stalybridge in 2022. This includes the Stalybridge Carnival (26 June 2022) and the 10th Beer Festival taking place the 16 - 17 September 2022.

- 3.11 It is also recognised that many more individuals and organisations would like to be part of the programme. A £12,000 budget provided by the Council would support the creation of fringe events and activities which will complement the themes and core programme for the town. This amount would be given as grants of up to £500 to individuals and organisations meaning a minimum of an additional 24 pieces of content could be programmed as part of ToC. It is proposed that this is administered through Action Together via their presence on the Bridge Consortium. A selection panel would be in place to approve and allocate the funds. This would allow for the programme to fully invest in the local scene of creatives and community activities in the Stalybridge area. It would also build a platform of content from which future projects can take place as part of a sustainable cultural programme for Stalybridge which has the potential to draw down further external funding in future years.

New programmes:

- 3.12 To make the most of this year's focus on Stalybridge as the Town of Culture and to leave a lasting legacy for Stalybridge's cultural calendar it is proposed that the finale event for Town of Culture will be a Canal Festival stretching over a weekend in September.

- 3.13 Content is already being sought for this to take place. Local Carnival Arts organisation Global Grooves has been selected as the only Northern organisation to create content for the Queen's pageant taking place in London this year to celebrate the Queen's platinum jubilee. It is proposed that this content of up to 200 performers, music, flags and puppets are brought to Stalybridge and re-imagined with local residents taking part in workshops to re-create an up to 200 strong procession of content as the central focus for the canal festival on that weekend.

- 3.14 For that content to be part of this the Council will provide an additional £25,000 budget for Global Grooves to programme the artistic content for this event. This will complement the festival feel of the weekend with activities for the whole family to take part in as well as see in their town centre. For this event to run smoothly and safely £9,000 has been allocated from the GMCA ToC grant and the Council will support this event with a further £3,000 towards event logistics such as medics, barriers and SIA stewards.

Children's and Young People's Town of Culture

- 3.15 As a core part of the programme is about Stalybridge's future it is important the programme is relevant to all ages. It is therefore proposed that a special fringe Children's and Young People's Town of Culture programme is created to sit alongside the main programme. This will involve working closely with Stalybridge schools on creative content made by pupils but also opportunities for pupils and families to participate in and meet professional artists, authors, musicians through performances and workshops. For this to happen the Council will allocate £10,000 to support programming and management of this strand whilst a further £5,000 has been allocated via the GMCA ToC grant.
- 3.16 For the Stalybridge Town of Culture programme to reach its full potential and a festive and proud atmosphere to be experienced by all showcasing what Stalybridge can do it is important to set the scene for activities to take place. This would mean that money needs to be identified to spruce up signage, and arrange for flags or bunting to decorate the town. Money has already been identified through Welcome Back and the HAZ programme to pressure wash and clean up areas of the town centre. But budget is required for the 4 months to ensure that the town is shown to its best potential. The Council will therefore provide an additional £11,000 budget for this purpose.
- 3.17 To make this ambitious plan happen in the timescale and in order to maximise the potential for further investment into the varied programme, that is safe at the point of delivery, results in maximum benefit to the town and that the money and various strands come together it is necessary for the Council to provide additional budget to support the artistic curation and programme management. £12,000 has been allocated via the GMCA ToC grant and the Council will provide £3,000 to support this also. To ensure all events are delivered safely and in line with both national and TMBC event guidelines the Council will commit an extra £20,000 towards on the ground event management with an additional £5,000 towards general event logistics.
- 3.18 Stalybridge's position as 'Town of Culture' gives Tameside the opportunity to consider working towards Purple Flag status, a nationally recognised award showcasing that we have a safe, vibrant, diverse and welcoming night time economy. The night time economy work will focus strongly on strengthening and developing thriving night time economies in the region's town centres.
- 3.19 GMCA are committed to seeing all boroughs of Greater Manchester achieve Purple Flag status. Since GMCA published the first night time economy Blueprint, Bury has retained its Purple Flag status and Stockport has achieved it for the first time. GMCA has offered to work with all those areas in Greater Manchester who also want to achieve accreditation. The Place Directorate will consider the potential for Stalybridge to achieve Purple Flag status.

4. BUDGET

- 4.1 Only one town can be named as Town of Culture annually as part of the GM programme. There are over 96 towns in Greater Manchester and it is therefore unlikely that Tameside will get another chance to host a town of culture over the coming years. It is therefore important to maximise this opportunity the borough now has for putting itself and one of its towns firmly on the GM and further afield map.

- 4.2 GMCA is behind the bid and are working to ensure that other cultural organisations fully support the programme, they are also ensuring that the town can be filmed and documentaries can be made about the town and its offer. However, it should be recognised that the award is for £50,000 which when broken down into activities and events is not a large sum of money. However, additional budget of £89,000 has been allocated by the Council to fully realise the content and ambition of the plan. Table 1 sets out the programme and related budget allocations.

Table 1

Programme	Council £'000	Historic England - The Bridge £'000	GMCA Town Of Culture £'000
Cultural programme incl all costs re logistics etc			15
Marketing		4	5
4 street fest event programme		16	4
Community programme (grants of up to £500)	12		
Finale content (Jubilee)	25		
Canal Festival logistics	3		9
Children and Young People's Town of Culture	10		5
Town enhancements (flags, bunting, signage, planters)	11		
Artistic curation of programme	3		12
Event Management	20		
General event logistics (SIA stewards, barriers, medics etc)	5		
Total	89	20	50

Additional funding

- 4.3 Additional funding is already being used to support the project via the Bridge who has allocated £20,000 to support the creative programming and the marketing for ToC. This is an allocation from their own Historic England grant. It is also being explored if Arts Council England may be able to match this with an additional grant to further enhance the programme and create a stronger legacy for the project. It is also being explored whether a National Heritage Lottery Fund bid can be submitted to especially support on the food and growing strand of the project.

5. RISK

- 5.1 Most of these activities will take place outdoors. There is always risk with programming activity that is to a lesser or larger extent reliant on the weather to accommodate the event and activities to take place. This can especially be a concern for programming carnival content for the proposed Canal Festival.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 Stalybridge Town of Culture is a great accolade to not just Stalybridge but all of Tameside. It is an opportunity to highlight and celebrate all that is great about Stalybridge and thereby also Tameside. It has already received much positive feedback and many community groups, individuals and schools are keen to be part of the celebration. There is immense opportunity for furthering the pride and civic joy residents have in their town of Stalybridge.
- 6.2 The accolade significantly contributes to the Tameside Town Centre Framework, with ambitions to create improved town centre environments where businesses feel that they can start up, grow or invest. Moreover, they should also be places where residents can access the facilities and services they need, and provide a strong sense of place which the

community are proud of and engage with. Furthermore it gives Tameside the opportunity to consider working towards Purple Flag status.

- 6.3 The successful programme hinges on it being closely linked to Stalybridge as a place, a home and a venue for celebrating its past, present and future through an ambitious 4 month programme of workshops, activities and events. The programme has been designed to enhance and amplify events already taking place in Stalybridge such as Street fest, the Stalybridge Carnival, the theatre programme within Astley Cheetham Art Gallery and Cheetham's park and the Beer Festival as well as it being closely aligned with projects happening as part of HAZ.
- 6.4 The Bridge is Stalybridge's cultural consortium set up as part of the HAZ programme. Their vested interest in the town and their desire to programme high quality cultural content will act as a springboard for further programming as part of ToC. Theatre, Beer Festival being expressed in these.
- 6.5 The community programme proposed as part of the report will enable Stalybridge to grow and develop its own talent pool for a sustainable future of cultural programming bringing with it opportunities for future funding to support the new initiatives proposed as part of the programme namely the Canal Festival and the Emergency Exit Art Commission for 2023.
- 6.6 This is the opportunity to showcase Stalybridge, to re-invent Stalybridge as a 21st century climate conscious cultural hub for adventurers and people wanting to explore the best of both town and country with easy links to Manchester and Leeds and the Pennines.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 As set out at the front of the report.