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| Date | Monday 15 February 2021 |
| Time | 10.30am |
| Location | MS Teams |
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| Present | Sukhy Johal (Chair), Fiona Allan, Sarah Brigham, Pawlet Brookes, Cllr Abi Brown, Pippa Frith, Lara Ratnaraja, Ayub Khan, Cllr Diana Meale, Cllr John Reynolds, Cllr Piara Singh Clair, Gary Topp, Tanya Raabe-Webber (plus PA Jackie Cooley)Peter Knott, Richard Russell, Rebecca Blackman, Maureen Gaynor, Hugh James, Kelly Johnson, Liz Johnson, Sharon Joinson, Salla Virman, Natalie Querol, Harinder Matharu  |
| Apologies | Jennifer McKie, Simon Fitch, Kathy Fawcett, Sarah Kennedy, Mark Done, Toby Norman-Wright |
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**Notes**

**Midlands Area Council Meeting**

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|  | WELCOME AND APOLOGIES1.1 The Chair welcomed Council Members and Management Team to the meeting.1.2 Apologies were noted as above.1.3 The Chair welcomed Harinder Matharu, Senior Relationship Manager, Strategic Partnerships, to the meeting and to the Arts Council. The Chair welcomed Natalie Querol, Senior Project Manager, Place, to the meeting. |
|  | DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST2.1 Members were asked to check their declarations of interest register circulated at the meeting. Members are required to keep their declarations up to date and a copy of the register will be available at all meetings.  |
| 3. | DELIVERY PLAN3.1 Richard Russell introduced a paper updating Area Council on the proposal to publish the Delivery Plan in two phases and to share the content for the initial phase. 3.2 One member asked what the investment principles will mean and what they will look like going forward. Richard mentioned details would be circulated on what the investment principles are likely to mean. We will share with members. ACTION ShJ/MG 3.3 There was a discussion about resources and the capacity of Arts Council to deliver, where it was pointed out that we do recognise a significant capacity issue which is why the first phase will be delivered in March giving us more time to work on the second phase. In terms of delivery we will have to look at phasing over a period within the resources we have available.3.4 A member asked how much the Delivery Plan is an agenda for change. Richard responded that this does and should represent a significant agenda change. He said the strategy itself was a change strategy and was based on a theory for change. Whilst the strategy still stands well, the Delivery Plan will need to look at how we plot the road map out of the pandemic. 3.5 Members noted the Delivery Plan items for March publication.**Equality Objectives and Actions**3.6 Members then discussed the draft Equality Objectives developed with the External Advisory Groups on Race and Disability. 3.7 Members of the Midlands Area Council from the Race Advisory Group said that they had a positive meeting recently. People accepted the issues put forward. The plan was considered to be very good. It was now about the delivery and monitoring to ensure it happens. There will be another meeting of the group to go through the equality objectives again. 3.8 A member from the Disability Advisory Group said that there was a very useful and interesting conversation at the last meeting of the group around the equality objectives and the actions around governance and leadership. The group will be looking at next steps. 3.9 Other comments included:* The proof will be in how the equality objectives are delivered.
* We will have to be prepared to lose organisations who are not taking them seriously.
* The rest of the industry will be watching the Arts Council.
* How do we assess who is assessing?
* The Eurocentric gaze remains an issue; if we are looking at equality we need to understand and consider this.
* We have got to manage the sector’s transformation and act appropriately for our sector and provide creative tools to help the sector do this.

3.10 The Chair pointed out that the equality objectives will not be an add on but a primary.3.11 Richard said that this will build upon our experience of the work we have done for several years. Organisations should also set their own metrics and be challenged on this and look at feedback. He stressed that he was not suggesting it was going to be easy with organisations struggling to open and the changes that we are trying to introduce to help those organisations to move forward.3.12 Richard said the Chair would take any points to the next National Council meeting on Monday 22 February.**Priority Places**3.13 Peter Knott and Rebecca Blackman presented ‘Establishing a framework for selecting priority places’. Peter reminded members that the publication of the first Delivery Plan had to be postponed so that we could re-prioritise our work to concentrate on delivering our emergency response to Covid-19 and the Government’s Culture Recovery Fund. The impact of Covid-19 on the sector also meant we needed to rethink the content of the Delivery Plan. Key amongst the refreshed Delivery Plan proposals is our approach to place.3.14 Rebecca went on to present the framework we are proposing for selecting specific priority places which will be an evidence based approach combined with local knowledge, and will specifically set out to create change in the places where opportunities for creative and cultural development are under developed.3.15 Area Council was then asked to discuss the framework for identifying priority places presented in the meeting and approve plans for its continuing development and implementation.3.16 There was a discussion about whether the Arts Council was having conversations with other organisations, where it was pointed out that we will be having those conversations and that it is part of our ambition and plan to work more closely with other bodies.3.17 The following discussion points were made:* Maybe we need to look at the definition of deprivation considering the impact of Covid-19 with a high level of people in isolation and homeowners becoming food bank users.
* Foodbanks could be the community groups to get in touch with.
* When doing balancing evidence, we will need to be clear why we are investing in some places and not others.
* It should not be a competitive process; competition fatigue is difficult for local authorities.
* A census is imminent which could show that the demographic has changed.
* The IMD is a useful measurement.

3.18 Members were informed that whilst the Arts Council investment shows data to the end of 2020, we will be talking to the new data officer about how we measure lives. We could look at health data and employment data. What we are looking at now is how we identify places, but we need to get a data set that factors in these things. 3.19 Natalie Querol said we are committed to looking at a much wider range of data. We are looking at data around social isolation for instance and are very open to suggestions of other measures we might consider. Regarding IMD the way we have used it now is primarily to help identify places that have pockets of deprivation as data at local authority level can mask these places. We are very keen to make sure that cultural and ethnic differences are considered which is why we are taking a little longer to find the most relevant datasets.3.20 Members noted that this item would come to the meeting on 21 April at which members would discuss the list of Priority Places.3.21 Area Council approved plans for the continuing development and implementation of Priority Places. |
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| **4.** | **MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 2 DECEMBER AND MATTERS ARISING**4.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 2 December 2020 were agreed as an accurate record.* 1. There were no matters arising.
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| **5.** | **AREA DIRECTOR AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR UPDATE**5.1 Richard spoke on the Executive Director’s report which included updates on the Culture Recovery Fund second round, the Spending Review, Brexit, and an update on Loneliness Funding.5.2 Members received the Area Director’s report which included updates on Coventry UK City of Culture, Birmingham Commonwealth Games 2022, the Creative Local Growth Fund, Capital Kickstart awards, Project Grants and Disabled Artists, and staff news. |
| **6.** | **Chair’s Update**6.1 The Chair thanked staff for the work they had done and continue to do in delivering the Culture Recovery Funds, recognising that the Arts Council was in its third round of the CRF. 6.2 The Chair also thanked members for their time today and the discussion around equality objectives and place. He said we would think about the nature and length of the next meeting with the intention of leaving enough time for discussion. |
| **7.** | **Any Other Business*** 1. There was no other business.
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| **8.** | **Dates of future meetings****2021*** Wednesday 21 April
* Friday 4 June
* Wednesday 1 September
* Wednesday 10 and Thursday 11 November – National and Area Council conference - tbc
* Wednesday 1 December

**2022*** Wednesday 16 February
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