

Community Engagement and Wellbeing
Islington Town Hall

Report of: Executive Member for Homes and Communities

Meeting of: Executive

Date: 14 March 2024

Ward(s): ALL

Subject: Establishment of a Black Cultural Centre

1. Synopsis

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to set out progress to date in the establishment of a Black Cultural Centre for Islington, in line with the Manifesto and Islington Together 2030 Plan commitments. Furthermore, to outline the vision for the Black Cultural Centre, its measures of success and social value to Islington residents.
- 1.2. This report also details the identification of a building for a Black Cultural Centre 16-18 Hornsey Road, alongside capital works for renovation of, Islington in preparation of the establishment of a Black Cultural Centre
- 1.3. Requests approval for renovation works, progressing the lease and finalising an operator for delivery of the Black Cultural Centre.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. To delegate authority to the Corporate Director of Community Engagement and Wellbeing, for final lease approval in order to confirm an operator to deliver the Black Cultural Centre service provision and social value for Islington residents.
 - 2.1.1. To grant a lease at 16-18 Hornsey Road to a provider; with a built in break clause as agreed with legal services, in order to establish the Black Cultural Centre, inclusive of a 'Peppercorn Rent' arrangement in support of Islington's equality

commitments made through our Borough Manifesto and Islington Together 2030 Plan

- 2.2. To approve funding being drawn down from the grant allocations for the Black Leaders Alliance of £50k, in order to support the Establishment of a Black Cultural Centre through year one seed funding.

3. Background

3.1. Establishing a Black Cultural Centre – business case

- 3.1.1. Islington Council committed to establishing a Black Cultural Centre in the borough, in line with the Labour manifesto commitment and Council vision to create a fairer more equal borough for disadvantaged and marginalised groups through its Islington Together 2030 Plan.
- 3.1.2. The need to deliver a centre for the Black community is evidenced in our Let's Talk Islington engagement finding and in addition, research that was commissioned and delivered by the Ubele Initiative 'Being Black in Islington'. The research unveiled six key themes that were used to create a vision and purpose for a Black Cultural Centre. That Vision being:
 - Create a space that primarily unites residents from Black African and Caribbean backgrounds but is inclusive to all ethnic groups.
 - Provide a safe environment that allows groups to come together to address issues that impact the community disproportionately.
 - Provide opportunities for education and provide positive representation of Black history, Black icons, art, culture and heritage.
 - Empower marginalised groups and create a sense of connection and belonging to the borough.
 - Signpost services and opportunities that can support marginalised groups.
 - Provide health (*mental and physical*) and wellbeing services including holistic and therapeutic support in response to trauma and abuse.
 - Develop and nurture budding entrepreneurs and new community organisations.
 - Demonstrate Islington's commitment and dedication to supporting and empowering marginalised groups.

3.2. Site appraisal and Capital Works for the Centre

- 3.2.1. In preparation for establishing a Black Cultural Centre, an options appraisal was conducted comparing the feasibility of two potential sites for the centre. Holly Hall, a disused community centre on the northern edge of the borough and 16-18 Hornsey Road which is centrally located, comprising two shop fronts.
- 3.2.2. 16-18 Hornsey Road was selected as the preferred site for several key reasons:

- The site has a central location in the borough and is highly accessible via public transport.
 - Close proximity to Arsenal football stadium and therefore has an extremely high footfall on match days.
 - The site only required moderate renovation works.
 - It would be possible to renovate the site and deliver the cultural centre offer in a timely manner.
- 3.2.3. In November 2022, the Major Projects Board approved the proposal to carry out capital works to 16-18 Hornsey Road in the pursuit of establishing Islington's first Black Cultural Centre.
- 3.2.4. A separate competitive tender process was subsequently carried out through the Capital Programme in November 2022, resulting in the building work being carried out from September 2023.
- 3.3. **Next Steps in agreeing and confirming a lease holder and service delivery provider.**
- 3.3.1. Completion of an open and transparent process to appoint and confirm an operator for the Black Cultural Centre. setting out:
- The site has a central location in the borough and is highly accessible via public transport.
 - Objectives for the first year to three years with key milestones
 - Evaluation and monitoring criteria for success
 - Mobilisation plans for the first 12 months.
 - Risk management strategy
 - Engagement strategy including comms and marketing plans.
 - Plans for partnership working including details of partners engaged/committed.
 - Income generation strategy with details of sponsors, investors or funding opportunities the centre could access.
 - Social value offer
 - Expectations for an ongoing relationship with the council
 - Set up as a legal entity/trader.
 - Identify how the council can provide support and assistance to build capacity within the first year of operation.

4. Implications

4.1. Financial Implications

- 4.1.1. The Black Cultural Centre business case seeks to mobilise lease agreement with an organisation who will be responsible for the operating model for the site,

including overall site management, maintenance costs and necessary staffing costs.

- 4.1.2. As part of the lease agreement, the Council has agreed to provide financial 'seed' support to the future operator in the first year of operation.
- 4.1.3. The Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) service has a 2023-24 budget of £2,243,200 and sits within Community Engagement and Wellbeing Department. VCS had allocated £90,000 of its reserves in the 2021-24 agreed grant allocations for the Black Leaders Alliance, which was not fully utilised. There is now £50,000 available for the Establishment of a Black Cultural Centre, which we can utilise to fund the one-off "seed" costs for year 1 delivery.
- 4.1.4. The £50,000 contribution will be a one-off revenue drawdown from VCS reserves and no other additional spend will be incurred as part of the Black Cultural Centre commitment.
- 4.1.5. The Black Cultural Centre was a manifesto commitment and does not contribute to MTFS savings.
- 4.1.6. Allocation the Hornsey Road site for the Black Community and Cultural Centre, results in potential to forfeit approximately £21,000 each year in loss of commercial rental income.
- 4.1.7. A member of the Challenging Inequality and Events team will be assigned to support the tenant to provide ongoing support to the tenant for a period of 12 months, as part of our commitment to the success of the initiative. This will be limited to monthly check-in meetings and ad hoc advise and guidance. This cost will be met within the Policy and Equalities budget.

4.2. **Social Value**

- 4.2.1. The market rent for the Premises has been assessed by the Corporate Landlord as £21,000 per annum and using a matrix adopted by the Community Wealth Team for lettings of affordable workspaces. A chosen lease holder would need to identify through the selection process and business plan, however they would return social value of at least that amount through proxy calculation.

4.3. **Legal Implications**

- 4.3.1. 16-18 Hornsey Road is owned freehold by the Council and is held for housing purposes under Part II of the Housing Act 1985. The Council has power under s32 of the 1985 Act to dispose of the Premises with Secretary of State's consent. The current consent issued by the Secretary of State under s32 is the General Housing Consents 2013 (the 2013 Consents). Paragraph A3.2 of the 2013 Consents provides that a local authority may dispose of vacant land held for the purposes of part II at any price determined by the local authority. Vacant land is defined by the 2013 Consents to include land which has buildings on it such as commercial premises.

- 4.3.2. In accordance with the Constitution, Part 3, Section 5 (matters delegated to the Voluntary and Community Sector Committee (the VCSC), the VSCS can agree the disposal or leasing of council owned properties to voluntary sector and community bodies including, where relevant, the rent to be set.
- 4.3.3. The Corporate Landlord has confirmed that the heads of terms for the grant of the lease are still being drafted but that the proposed lease will be excluded from the protection of Part II of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954, meaning the tenant will have no automatic right to renew the lease at the end of the term and to allow the Council to include a rolling break clause which the Council or Operator can use to terminate the lease on giving six months' notice at any time after the first anniversary of the grant of the lease in the event that the operator is not delivering the social value expected in return for the use of the building at a peppercorn rent.
- 4.3.4. Although the Council may have the necessary power (Section 32 and the 2013 Consents) to grant the lease of the Premises at less than market rent, any decision to do so must be taken (i) reasonably (ii) in the light of the market rent of the land/building and the amount of the proposed undervalue and (iii) with due regard to the Council's fiduciary duty.
- 4.3.5. Accordingly, in deciding whether to grant the lease of the Premises at a peppercorn rent to a future lease holder, the Council must consider properly the benefits of doing so (such as the social value delivered to the community) as set out in this report and weigh up and balance those benefits against the foregoing of a market rent.

4.4. **Environmental Implications and contribution to achieving a net zero carbon Islington by 2030**

- 4.4.1. An Environmental Impact Assessment was completed on 20th February 2024. The main findings are there is no impact on achieving a net zero carbon borough by 2030 and the goal of eliminating carbon emissions. The contractor has put measures in place to minimise emissions and use sustainable materials.

4.5. **Equalities Impact Assessment**

- 4.5.1. The council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and to advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations, between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it (section 149 Equality Act 2010). The council has a duty to have due regard to the need to remove or minimise disadvantages, take steps to meet needs, and encourage people to participate in public life. The council must have due regard to the need to tackle prejudice and promote understanding. An Equalities Impact Assessment has been completed and approved (appendix 1).

- 4.5.2. An Equalities Impact Assessment Screening was completed on 29th January 2024. The main findings are: The establishment of a Black Cultural Centre would have positive impacts on the protected groups and would be an inclusive space that reflects the diverse intersections of the community a full Equality Impact Assessment is not required. The Equalities Impact Assessment Screening is appended.

5. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

- 5.1. In conclusion, a comprehensive process has taken place since 2022, shaping the business case, vision and approach to establishing a Black Cultural Centre, as set out in this report. Capital work are taking place in order to develop a Centre to house the Black Cultural offer for Islington residents.
- 5.2. As a result, we are recommending the approval of delegated authority to the Corporate Director of Community Engagement and Wellbeing for lease arrangements to finalise the selection of an operator in delivering Islington's first Black Cultural Centre, in line with our Manifesto and Islington Together 2030 Plan.

Appendices:

- EQIA January 2024

Final report clearance:

Authorised by: Executive Member for Homes and Communities

Date: 1 March 2024

Report Author: Raj Chand, Corporate Director for Community Engagement and Wellbeing
Email: raj.chand@islington.gov.uk

Financial Implications Author: Ellena Smith – Finance Manager
Tel: 0207 527 4257
Email: elena.smith@islington.gov.uk

Legal Implications Author: Helen Coyle - Chief Property & Development Lawyer
Tel: 020 7527 3082
Email: helen.coyle@islington.gov.uk

Environmental Implications Author: Simon Bishop
Tel: 0207 527 3691
Email: simon.bishop@islington.gov.uk

