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**To: Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee**

**Date: 25<sup>th</sup> November 2020**

**Subject: UK City of Culture – City Readiness**

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## **1 Purpose of the Note**

- 1.1 To update Members of the Board – with detailed presentations to the Board – on Coventry’s preparations to be UK City of Culture 2021 (UKCOC), including the impact of COVID-19 on planning for 2021; support for the local cultural, hospitality and retail sector; programme plans and milestones for the revised May 2021 to May 2022 title year; changes to City Readiness governance; and developments in the city’s capital programme.

## **2 Recommendations**

- 2.1 The Scrutiny Co-Ordination Committee is recommended:
- 1) To consider the content of the presentations
  - 2) To make recommendations to the Leader of the Council in order to support and secure delivery of a successful UK City of Culture for Coventry from May 2021 to May 2022.

## **3 Information/Background**

- 3.1 On 7<sup>th</sup> December 2017, Coventry was awarded the title of UK City of Culture 2021. The process of implementing and further developing planning for the title year (originally 1 January 2021 to 31 December 2021) commenced with immediate effect.

## **4 COVID Response and Impact on Planning**

- 4.1 In Spring 2020, in recognition of the emerging impact of COVID on planning for delivery of UKCOC 2021, the Coventry City of Culture Trust (the Trust) worked with all its principle partners, including the Department for Digital Culture Media and Sport and the City Council to agree revised dates for the city’s year as UKCOC 2021.
- 4.2 The main UKCOC programme will now run from 15<sup>th</sup> May 2021 to early May 2022.
- 4.3 As well as scenario planning, during the first national lockdown, the Trust delivered a number of initiatives to support the local cultural and voluntary sector – including a small grants programme for freelancers and individuals and commissioning a series of events to be produced online.
- 4.4 Critically, the Trust continued through this time to make its commitments to local and regional artists and organisations – accelerating decision making with regards the UKCOC programme, to ensure that these partners had some clarity and certainty about their involvement in 2021

- 4.5 Working with city partners, the Trust had planned a series of test events, which have now been postponed due to the two periods of national lockdown. However, the Trust has been able to use the planning of these events effectively and expects to be able to roll-out a series of test events early in 2021.
- 4.6 It is clear nationally and locally that COVID-19 has had an enormous impact in the hospitality and tourism sector, as well as the cultural sector. Working with partners, including the Coventry and Warwickshire Local Enterprise Partnership, Coventry Business Improvement District, Coventry and Warwickshire Chamber of Commerce and the West Midlands Combined Authority, the Trust is devising a number of hospitality and retail support programmes which are intended to equip businesses in these sectors with the skills and resources to take advantage of the commercial opportunities that City of Culture brings.

## **5 Programme**

- 5.1 On 21 October 2020, the Trust announced 15 major events for 2021, in addition to the Coventry Moves signature event which is planned to open the City of Culture year on 15 May 2021.
- 5.2 The Trust has further been working with partners to plan for the Coventry Glides ice rink event in the Cathedral ruins for Winter 2020. Tickets went on sale on Friday 13 November, with more than 4,000 sold in the first 24 hours. This event was the first time that the Trust's new ticketing box office system was used
- 5.3 Capital programmes across the city continue to make excellent progress (see City Readiness section below), with the Trust now confirming its plans to go ahead with a city centre "Festival Hub", a city centre retail space and a new Digital Gallery.

## **6 Milestones**

- 6.1 With 6 months to go the Trust has established a revised set of milestones relating to test events, ticketing, apprenticeships, capital projects, volunteering, fundraising and the release of the full City of Culture Programme.

## **7 City Readiness Governance Structures**

- 7.1 The City Readiness Board was established by the City Council to lead on overseeing and coordinating operational management of the city's preparations for hosting European City of Sport 2019, UK City of Culture 2021 and the Commonwealth Games 2022 programme.
- 7.2 The City Readiness Board was founded with three sub-groups, for Infrastructure; Programme Evaluation and Engagement; and Licensing, Operations, Planning and Safety.
- 7.3 In the past year, a 2021 Member Panel has been established and additional City Readiness Sub-Groups for Communications and the Cultural Capital Programme have been added to the governance arrangements.
- 7.4 The Cultural Capital Programme was launched in 2018 with a £5m investment from the Council, in order to support key capital projects and lever in external funding in support of the Five Goals and Seven Big Ideas for Cultural Growth, as outlined in the Coventry Cultural Strategy 2017-2027.
- 7.5 The Cultural Capital Programme is now actively supporting the development a range of cultural performance, heritage, exhibition and production spaces within the city

with a projected programme value (including direct and matched funding) in excess of £40m.

- 7.6 Alongside investment in the city's cultural infrastructure, an ambitious and creative programme of public realm works, delivered in close collaboration with artists and the Trust, is transforming the City Centre in preparation for Coventry's year as UK City of Culture.

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