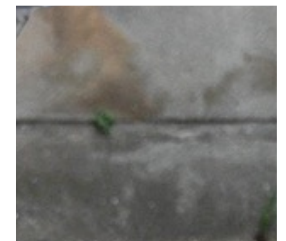


# A CULTURAL STRATEGY FOR TRAFFORD 2023-28

Trafford Council  
February 2023



**ctconsults.**

**The Intelligence Agency**

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**TRAFFORD**  
**COUNCIL**



*"Talent is everywhere,  
but opportunity is not."*

Darren Henley CBE, Chief Executive,  
Arts Council England

# FOREWORD

Culture matters. For everyone. It has the power to change lives for the better. There is a reason we place such value on fashion, music, art, film or sport. It helps to define us. It helps us understand who we are. It gives us an identity, a sense of belonging.

And councils should play an integral role in the cultural world. Consider a library. This is the most altruistic concept available to a council.

For free, anyone - whatever their age, gender, ethnicity or wealth - can borrow books or music.

For free, they can immerse themselves into another world, go sailing with pirates, explore with astronauts, dive deep into history. The only limit is their imagination.

For free, they can expand their learning, learn new hobbies, better understand the world around them.

This is what we can do as a Council. But we can and should be doing more.

As a Council, we can and should play a large part in the cultural world, showcasing our many cultural assets here in Trafford. Helping to attract creative businesses to the borough. Encouraging young people into exploring their artistic side. Enabling residents to enjoy live performances.

This then is what this Cultural Strategy for Trafford is about. The creation of this has enabled us to reflect on where we are as a borough and as a Council, what we are doing well and what we can do more of in the future.

It is right that we have an overall strategy to work from. We expect our town centres to be planned strategically, rather than haphazard developments. It is the same here. We consider what culture we want and then plan for it.

We want a cultural strategy that makes the most of the amazing talent and cultural assets that we have here in Trafford and builds on the heritage of the borough.

We want to make sure we make the most of our borough's superb buildings and open spaces.

We want to make sure we attract talent and audiences into Trafford.

We want to make sure that what we offer is right for our residents and our creative industries, and that everyone has the opportunity to access the culture they want.

Our culture is an essential part of Trafford life and it is what makes living and working in this borough so special.



**Councillor Tom Ross**

Leader, Trafford Council

# A. CONTEXT



Image: Three Trees,  
Sarah de la Hoyde,  
OT Creative Space

# A1. INTRODUCTION & OVERVIEW

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

Trafford has a strong positioning within Greater Manchester (GM) as a desirable borough of ‘choice’. But we know this isn’t the whole truth – within Trafford are significant variances. But the perception of (relative) affluence persists, even with some close strategic partners in GM. Essentially Trafford is known for sport, education and nice leafy places and communities. We can tell a better, more nuanced, diverse and truthful story – one that will better serve the residents of Trafford.

So, a Cultural Strategy for Trafford needs to support the Council’s quality and equality of life ambitions across the whole borough; strengthen defined communities and neighbourhoods; access its key players; and in so doing activate its key ‘public’ spaces (town centres, community care and leisure venues, green & blue spaces), and then join it all up. This should give culture in Trafford’s diverse neighbourhoods and places a voice that is more representative, accurate, coherent, visible and accessible locally, across the borough and GM.

But any strategy produced in 2023 must recognise the challenging fiscal environment. This speaks directly to Trafford as a lower Council Tax borough, with limited access to additional resources (Levelling Up, Priority Place). A Cultural Strategy in Trafford has to communicate a level of ambition that will attract and generate external investment, aggregate resources through better internal alignments and via new strategic and delivery partnerships.

## 1.2 CULTURAL CONTEXT

Trafford is a unique place and deserves a uniquely well-designed and focused cultural strategy.

Trafford’s uniqueness has a number of foundations:

1. It is rich in civic tradition and activity – with a great heritage of voluntary and community organisations, some of whom play an absolutely vital role in community cultural expression.
2. It is seen from outside as Greater Manchester’s historic, smart, independent place that punches above its weight as a critical part of the city-region’s reputation and performance through sport, hospitality, leisure tourism, retail and industry.
3. It is a polycentric place (with more than one important ‘centre’). Trafford’s polycentricity allows for cultural richness and diversity. This cultural strategy can help celebrate this, creating a greater sense of identity and local pride in each place, and making Trafford much more than the sum of its parts.
4. It is the birthplace of the NHS – and community health & wellbeing are a vital driver for activity in Trafford. This is showcased by its strength and ambition in sports, leisure and activity. Both provide inspiration and models for arts and culture, and add to the borough’s (general) image as a good place to live.



### COMMUNITY HUBS

Set up as an emergency response unit for the Covid-19 crisis, the Community Hubs have continued to support Trafford residents beyond the pandemic. By working collaboratively and being embedded in communities, the Hubs successfully navigate the difficult balance of working strategically (via the Trafford Community Collective) whilst directly supporting the needs of their respective communities. The model is one to consider emulating for cultural organisations, to deliver tailored neighbourhood programmes alongside borough-wide ambitions.

[www.traffordhubs.org](http://www.traffordhubs.org)

5. It has a diverse creative ecology and asset base, including theatres, museums, heritage assets, arts centres, dance schools, creative infrastructure and supply chain, cinemas, events and music venues, public art, community hubs, visitor attractions and an active lifestyle offer.<sup>1</sup>

This cultural strategy is seeking to build as cleverly as possible on Trafford's uniqueness, as well as addressing its most pressing needs.

All of which requires a strategy, and a cultural vision for Trafford, written precisely for this moment. This is obviously a difficult time for central government's public finances; for local authority finances; for commercial and third sector organisations across the cultural sector; and for communities having to weather an unprecedented cost of living crisis.

### 1.3 EXEMPLARY CULTURAL LEADERSHIP

Against such a fiscal backdrop, Trafford Council, like other councils across the country, cannot in the short-term promise quick revenue injections or significant infrastructure investments. But Trafford Council can display outstanding cultural leadership which seeks to build directly and incrementally on Trafford's strengths.

What will this leadership entail?

1. The Council helps ensure Trafford becomes a truly **inclusive cultural place** - in which all of its voices, and lived experiences of its communities, can find creative expression.
2. The Council commits to developing a long-term, highly focused **community capacity** and **talent building** approach.
3. The Council champions and showcases culture in Trafford as something that everybody sees as 'their thing', and of value to their communities, as they make, listen, play, watch, learn and have fun in safe, welcoming places.
4. The Council acts as a generous convenor and **energetic agent for change**, ensuring that all cultural, civic, and commercial partners are working effectively together to make Trafford a culturally vibrant and active place.
5. The Council actively builds on the networks and hubs already in place to develop social and economic master plans that fully **integrate culture into neighbourhood life**. Trafford deploys culture in a targeted way in areas of need through its internal and external partnerships and agencies.

<sup>1</sup> A dynamic online map of cultural & creative assets is available to continue to be populated at: <https://bit.ly/3HXf8KU>.

 **THE SUPER SLOW WAY**



#### SUPER SLOW WAY

Super Slow Way is looking at more permanent interpretation of the canal linking Pendle and Blackburn.

<http://superslowway.org.uk/the-super-slow-way-linear-park/>

#### BURNLEY CANAL FESTIVAL

Burnley Canal Festival is a community-driven, arts-led, place-based festival inspired by the waterways.

<https://burnleycanalfestival.org>

6. The Council **nurtures, connects and animates** existing cultural and heritage assets - from buildings to green spaces; to community groups and voluntary arts activities.
7. **Trafford is innovative** in the way in which the Council supports artists and creative talent, enabling them to develop their practice whilst enriching outcomes central to Trafford's future wellbeing and success.
8. Trafford works with cultural partners to provide inspiring opportunities for **young people** to find their passions and shape the world around them.
9. The Council takes a more confident **cultural leadership role in GM**, using the strategy to build on status as the workforce and audience lifeblood of the city region, connecting to core Trafford and GM-wide priorities, e.g. environment, health, early years education.

#### 1.4 DO WE NEED A DEFINITION OF CULTURE?

The importance of discussing definitions for terms like 'culture', lies not so much in the need to necessarily arrive at a strict, fixed definition. Terms like 'culture' become job titles, departments, national agencies. But that doesn't fix anything in the minds of people seeking to understand what is, and isn't 'culture'.

As Arts Council England puts it: "*Culture means many things to many people and is often used to refer to food, religion and other forms of heritage.*" Whilst our focus in this strategy is more on arts, culture and creativity, it cannot be narrow as this breadth helps ensure inclusivity and routes in for the widest possible audience.

What is vitally important is not to exclude people from arts, culture and heritage by making it one thing and not another. Nor should we spend days workshoping what a definition of culture might be in Trafford. We see it, we experience it, we make it, we celebrate it. The edges of any definition should be porous - letting ideas and new thinking in.

So, if culture in a place means sport, or horticulture, great. This is an opportunity for diverse activities in diverse communities to experience new things, together. How it all works together in places is important too. By 'arts' and 'culture', do we mean being artistically creative or experiencing something creative and original? Or do we look even wider, across all activities that indicate ideas, learning and skills inspired by people and place? We know that culture can help in health and wellbeing, education and regeneration. Does that shift our thinking?

Perhaps Arts Council England can help again. Taking from their Let's Create 2020-2030 strategy: "*Creativity is the process by which, either individually or with others, we make something new: a work of art, or a reimagining of an existing work. Culture is the result of that creative process: we encounter it in the world, in museums and libraries, theatres and galleries, carnivals and concert halls, festivals and digital spaces.*"

Everyone has a different view, a different definition, and that is a positive and inclusive starting point for this Strategy. So, the good news is we don't have to have a set definition. We get to decide, - and even evolve it over time. **Trafford = culture.**

**TRAFFORD MUSIC SERVICE**  
*music makes a difference*



#### TRAFFORD MUSIC SERVICE

Trafford Music Service is considered an exemplar in its field, introducing music-making to all young people in Trafford schools, and creating opportunities across a full range of instruments and musical styles, for all talent levels. Trafford Music Service partners with the GM Music Hub to provide opportunities across the metropolitan area, such as working with Brighter Sound, RNCM and Chethams. TMS builds cultural capital by enabling performances at the likes of the Stoller Hall and Bridgewater Hall. It also seeks to support new residents, such as offering free tuition and instrument hire to Ukrainian refugees.

<https://traffordmusicservice.co.uk>



# A2. INSIGHTS

## 2.1 LOCAL CONTEXT

It is well-known that in general Trafford residents are collectively wealthier, more educated and less likely to receive benefits than most of the rest of the North-West and Great Britain<sup>2</sup>. Overall, the statistics for the **economic health and wider wellbeing** of Trafford residents draws on its high levels of ‘professional’ working and retired households. However, the needs of 35,000 residents who are economically inactive, and in particular workless households (11%) and working-age benefit claimants (also around 10% of the population), are not to be overlooked. Trafford Council strategies acknowledge that there are wide imbalances to address, and that the impacts of COVID and the cost-of-living crisis have had a more ‘democratic’ impact across the whole community, in particular on mental health.

The typical narrative for the borough focuses on its reputation for **international / national sporting and cultural brands**, educational attainment and economic prosperity<sup>3</sup>. Within the Greater Manchester ‘mix’, Trafford residents are seen as culture / leisure-sector ‘props’ – the reliable, heavy-use patrons of the city-region’s cultural and leisure offer. But this misses the story of **everyday ‘cultural’ life** in Trafford which revolves around a number of distinct towns and neighbourhoods. These are largely desirable, and for the main part, ‘on-the-up’, benefiting from community-centred, hyper-local, characterful regeneration.

In these neighbourhoods, people are highly active, pursuing their own creative and cultural interests and passions. Across the

borough people are singing, making things, acting, playing instruments – as social and personal activities, investing in their own wellbeing, talent development and community opportunities.

Culture and heritage is a key contributor to this **hidden story**, and not yet fully understood, valued or ‘backed’. Trafford’s cultural sector is more diverse and vibrant than is recognised – notable in its structure, variety and distribution – ranging from global brands and venues to the smallest of community arts groups or sole-practitioners.

When we refer to the ‘cultural sector’ in Trafford, we are referring to all of these disparate, fragmented organisations and groups, all of which impact on creative participation and sense of identity for Trafford’s residents and visitors. How these layers connect and collaborate in order to realise collective ambitions is key to the success of **Trafford’s cultural potential** – as is the physical cultural geography of the borough; its places and spaces which connect physically and through shared heritage and identity.

A distinctive feature of Trafford is the scale of its **creative workforce**, which is significant and ‘leading’, especially when taken within the context of the Greater Manchester Combined Authority and the Manchester City Region. Trafford’s creative

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/la/1946157089/report.aspx?town=Trafford>.

<sup>3</sup> <https://traffordleadership.com/about-area>.



### GORSE HILL STUDIOS

*Achieve-Create-Evolve.* A simple but powerful mission.

Gorse Hill are a local arts organisation with a particular focus on creative engagement with young people. They place arts in a wider context – championing the role of culture in social, emotional and educational development. This is an investment in people, but also in their local community and the positive pathways that young people can take for their futures and those of the place they call home.

<https://www.gorsehillstudios.org>

industries provide 7,000 jobs, which is 4.7% of all employment in the borough (+1,000 jobs between 2015-2020). This compares to 2.2% for the North-West and 2.3% for Great Britain. Trafford also provides one quarter of all sector jobs<sup>4</sup>! Looking at Greater Manchester as a whole, this represents 25% of the GM creative and cultural industries workforce (28,000), making Trafford the biggest contributor of the 10-districts to the city-region's creative workforce – a priority for the economy. This isn't currently recognised at a Greater Manchester level, where Trafford is valued more as 'audience' for Manchester's cultural and creative sector, rather than the workforce / lifeblood.

When taken to a more neighbourhood level, three of Trafford's *Middle Super Output Areas* are within the top ten areas of creative employment in the Manchester City Region. It is also the second highest growth area for creative industries employment in the region. These are significant numbers, which demonstrate that Trafford is both a desirable place for creatives to work, and to locate creative businesses. However, it is worth noting that these employees and businesses are predominantly located in the areas of Trafford which are well-connected by tram to Manchester City Centre (where many work) and beyond. So, much of the economic and social benefit of culture is being 'exported' from Trafford. Moreover, areas such as Partington are cold spots for both creative employment and creative industries' location, consistently scoring in the lowest quotients across the Manchester City Region<sup>5</sup>.

One of Trafford's clearest strengths lies in its **active communities**. Trafford Council has already effectively piloted and implemented multi-hub models for its Communities and its Leisure services – realising ambitions; collaborating and co-producing with communities; and therefore, responding to local needs with intelligence, relevance and integrity. We believe this offers up a potential **sustainable delivery model for culture** which aligns and intersects with these existing networks and hubs.

Sport is another inspiration. It works in Trafford from international elite to informal groups and all things in between. A similar pyramid could be modelled for culture:

- International clubs and grounds (e.g. Manchester United FC, Lancashire Cricket, Sale Sharks);
- Training facilities and educational institutions (e.g. University Academy 92);
- Well-managed voluntary sports clubs with good facilities and membership bases (e.g. running, rowing, tennis, football, netball, rugby, hockey, handball, lacrosse, cycling at various levels).

<sup>4</sup> Greater Manchester figures for cultural and creative industry employment provide even starker contrast: Manchester - 1.7%; Stockport 1.4%; Salford 1.6%; Wigan 2.4%; Bolton 1.4%; Bury 1.8%; Oldham 1.5%; Rochdale 2%; Tameside 2.1%. Overall for GM, creative industries account for 2% or employment / 28k jobs (excluding freelance and self-employed data, an admittedly significant category).

<sup>5</sup> NOMIS Open Access Data, as interpreted in 'Creative Clusters and Sparse Spaces: Manchester's Creative Industries and the Geographies of Deprivation and Prosperity', Prof. Bruce Tether, 2022.



## SPORTS AND ACTIVE LEISURE

Culture can learn a lot from how sports operates at all levels across Trafford.

Formal pathways from these clubs (via Trafford, GM and regional links) are well-established. Strategic connectivity exists with Trafford Leisure CIC, schools, sport science and health (e.g. physio and community therapists, programmes for older people, as well as commercial gyms, personal trainers, classes and informal social leisure groups).

*Image: Emirates Old Trafford, courtesy Lancashire Cricket*

2.1.1 Trafford has an enviable asset base in culture

How such a cultural ecology works together can be positively influenced over time by a balanced amount of centralised direction - including this Strategy. It's vitally important that the layers interact creatively and strategically in a variety of ways - place-based, thematic, time-based, audience-led.



## 2.2 SUMMARY SWOT ANALYSIS

| STRENGTHS  | WEAKNESSES   |
|--|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Cultural engagement levels, and appetite for attendance and participation at a large number of existing venues, organisations and programmes.</li> <li>2. Resident national and global sporting brands.</li> <li>3. The range of cultural organisations across the borough and their proximity to their own communities lends itself, with support, to a similar hub &amp; spoke model to Communities and Leisure.</li> <li>4. Waterside's need for a post-pandemic response is an opportunity to review and revitalise its arts centre programming approach.</li> <li>5. A funded Arts Centre for the borough.</li> <li>6. Entry point to both Manchester and rural Cheshire - there is a sense of being perfectly located.</li> <li>7. Industrial heritage of national importance, notably Bridgewater Canal, Barton Swing Bridge Aqueduct, Trafford Industrial Park.</li> <li>8. Desirability to live - in numerous parts of the borough.</li> <li>9. Cultural and creative talent living and working in the borough.</li> <li>10. Excellent access to Manchester International Airport.</li> <li>11. Transport connectivity, esp. Airport and Metrolink - to city and across much of the borough.</li> <li>12. Trafford Centre (and trading district) attracts huge numbers.</li> <li>13. A national museum - IWM North - and a prominent, ambitious National Trust presence.</li> <li>14. A very active volunteering resident population - "34,000 and counting".</li> <li>15. Grassroots cultural activity - including amateur societies that are highly active, semi-professionalised, and exceptionally high-quality.</li> <li>16. A strong private / commercial arts sector offering opportunities music, drama, dance, art activity at various levels for young people and adults.</li> <li>17. Altrincham seen as UK market-town regeneration / BID exemplar and Purple Flag pilot for GM (well-managed early evening and night-time economy).</li> <li>18. Regarded education provision - schools and colleges are high achieving and highly-sought.</li> <li>19. Cultural education and extracurricular - notably music service, and individual school approaches.</li> <li>20. Trafford Centre area commercial power and continued investment.</li> <li>21. Effective community hubs established / embedded; Trafford Leisure CIC adopting similar model.</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Cultural engagement has marked cold-spots in the borough.</li> <li>2. Trafford associations are dominated by sports and retail.</li> <li>3. Waterside struggles to reconcile conflicting priorities within its resources, as a commercially viable venue, but also as a community &amp; regeneration resource, and vessel for Council policies / priorities.</li> <li>4. Waterside struggles to reach beyond its walls, and be more porous, in cultural engagement and partnership working terms. And its post-pandemic recovery is slow, affected by many external factors that are beyond its own control, but still need a new response.</li> <li>5. The overall relatively strong economy masks areas of deprivation.</li> <li>6. Cultural &amp; creative talent focused outside of the borough - drawn by its proximity to Manchester. Trafford has two new NPOs, but majority of current work is across GM / beyond.</li> <li>7. Identity and belonging: "Half of Trafford wants to be Cheshire, half Manchester".</li> <li>8. Green and blue spaces are rich in cultural-heritage but under-utilised for cultural activity.</li> <li>9. Local transport connectivity; doesn't work for all.</li> <li>10. Greater Manchester's most active cultural consumers, but often in Manchester / Salford Quays.</li> <li>11. Some perceptions of Council lacking cultural confidence and leadership (historically).</li> <li>12. Long-term funding for arts limited to Council functions - rest is more project / short-term based.</li> <li>13. Data analysis on cultural audiences.</li> <li>14. Insight into culture's social impact.</li> <li>15. Major cultural / sporting assets' agendas unclear.</li> <li>16. 'Joined-up' working, networks, collaborating.</li> <li>17. Sector digital infrastructure, skills and capacity.</li> <li>18. Uneven digital access / poverty across borough.</li> <li>19. Creative Industries Trafford's impact (resources).</li> <li>20. Third-sector organisations financially insecure.</li> <li>21. Trafford's LCEP yet to get going.</li> </ol> <div data-bbox="1583 1176 1974 1352" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-top: 10px;"> <p><b>Strengths &amp; Weaknesses</b> assess skills, resources, culture, historical factors, communications, management and so on - internal factors which are within the control and influence of the Council.</p> </div> |

| OPPORTUNITIES   | THREATS  |
|---|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Trafford aims to be the most 'active' borough in England (outside London).</li> <li>2. Further investments in outdoor active agenda (inc. leisure centres, opportunities for partnership).</li> <li>3. The range of cultural organisations across the borough and their proximity to their own communities, lends itself (with support) to a similar hub &amp; spoke model to Communities and Leisure.</li> <li>4. Waterside's need for a post-pandemic response is an opportunity to review and revitalise its programming approach.</li> <li>5. Health &amp; wellbeing - identify viable integration of patient activity referrals with social prescribing.</li> <li>6. Regeneration of Sale and Stretford underway - on a similar trajectory to Altrincham?</li> <li>7. Cultural organisations partnering more across sectors, e.g. education, health, regeneration, environment (weakness / threat = capacity / resilience).</li> <li>8. Greater Manchester's most active cultural consumers live in a number of key Trafford postcodes.</li> <li>9. Building data-led insight of cultural audiences and participants.</li> <li>10. Potential for more inclusive, accessible and free cultural provision.</li> <li>11. Cultural tourism - using access / transport links to disperse large numbers of culture-sport visitors from key Trafford hotspots (Quays, Sport-events, Civic Q) and Manchester to its town centres.</li> <li>12. 'Culture everyday' agenda (as per leisure &amp; fitness strategy).</li> <li>13. Studio / workspaces for Creative Industries - closures in GM displaces artists - Trafford relocation? A more holistic and merged approach to sport, leisure, culture, events, heritage, creativity.</li> <li>14. Council-owned / run assets to commit to supporting and facilitating cultural / creative activity.</li> <li>15. Major cultural assets to overlay data and ambitions to explore collaborative working.</li> <li>16. Create, harness and extend digital infrastructure to support collaboration and communications (within the sector, with consumers). Aligned with digital upskilling / capacity increase in sector.</li> <li>17. Local excellence in animation is underexploited e.g. Cosgrove Hall Film Archive / existing businesses.</li> <li>18. New collaborative funding arrangements including local government, businesses, community foundations, local high net worth individuals.</li> <li>19. Improved networking, amplification and collaboration for all types of cultural organisations.</li> <li>20. A bespoke LCEP-type model for Trafford which reflects the local needs and opportunities.</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Received narrative within Greater Manchester as a 'less in need' borough - where significant pockets of real need are disguised by a few postcodes.</li> <li>2. Lacks identity and civic pride (in Trafford).</li> <li>3. Big players (with wide reach and influence) such as Trafford Centre, MUFC, Trafford Park, Victoria Warehouse, do their own thing.</li> <li>4. Cost-of-living crisis, and its impacts on both national and local funding, rising organisational costs (e.g. energy), and resident's disposable income.</li> <li>5. Post-pandemic reductions in quantity / quality and consistency of cultural touring product available to Waterside affects the venue's ability to rebuild its income / audiences.</li> <li>6. Changes in cultural consumption / engagement patterns post-pandemic (and the cost of living crisis) increasingly affects all of Trafford's cultural providers. One example is the need to shift the amateur arts sector reliance from older volunteers and engage with younger volunteers successfully and for the long-term / succession.</li> <li>7. The 'pull' of big cultural players' just beyond Trafford's borders (e.g. city centre) - brings issues of perceived quality, status of local work.</li> <li>8. Voluntary / amateur cultural provision is running out of money, space, good will, and resource.</li> <li>9. Trafford Council is not providing a clear point of cultural leadership or facilitation.</li> <li>10. The current cost-of-living crisis may impact on disposable income / discretionary spending, where 'nice to have' extra-curricular cultural engagement is squeezed out of family budgets e.g. music lessons, dance classes, especially impacting on young people's cultural capital and future talent pathways.</li> </ol> <div data-bbox="1336 1178 1968 1342" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-top: 10px;"> <p><b>Opportunities &amp; Threats</b> cover governmental matters, wider funding issues, other organisations' behaviour and priorities. These factors are external and normally beyond the scope of direct management influence. The chart addresses only issues directly relating to arts &amp; culture, and some elements will be related to wider policy and management issues.</p> </div> |

## 2.3 DRILLING DOWN: CULTURAL & COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS

Stakeholder and community engagement centred around strengths and opportunities for Trafford, and for Trafford Council. The following principal messages were most consistently and emphatically highlighted by contributors.

|                            |  |
|----------------------------|--|
| <b>Participation</b>       | There is a large appetite for cultural participation in Trafford - primed to be built upon. Artist studios have waiting lists decades long. Trafford residents are significant attenders at Manchester's cultural institutions - but pricing is key to the viability of cultural activity. Trafford is a borough of socio-economic inequalities, and whilst some areas boast residents with high cultural capital, many residents will not attend culture until well into their adult lives due to lack of disposable income. Strategy implementation will find routes to rebalance access to cultural provision in light of the existing inequalities, and within the context of the current cost-of-living crisis, to meet demand for creative expression across all communities. Projects such as LCEP will help to address this. |
| <b>Polycentricity</b>      | Trafford's polycentricity can celebrate cultural richness and diversity; in all towns, villages, neighbourhoods - for all communities. Creating a greater sense of identity and local pride - in each place - can make Trafford more than the sum of its parts.  |
| <b>Local to hyperlocal</b> | Community-led, hyperlocal and neighbourhood work is a bedrock of the Strategy via its models, programmes and investment recommendations. Trafford should support a 'doorstep' cultural offer which supports community co-creation and participation.   |
| <b>Culture everyday</b>    | Enrichment is key - people should happen across cultural activity in unusual public places and spaces. Culture & creativity should become part of everyday activity (in line with Trafford Leisure CIC's ambition to be the most 'active' borough outside London).   |
| <b>Culture everywhere</b>  | There is a need to create 'accidental' opportunities. Residents want to happen-upon culture, and learn about local heritage, in parks, in town centres, in residential areas, along canals and walking routes. They want spaces to feel animated - and safe.   |
| <b>Integrated delivery</b> | A holistic approach to events, sport, culture, creativity and heritage - a more integrated offer - is needed across Trafford, building on its existing strengths and international reputation. This principle can be applied to all levels and layers of the cultural provision in Trafford - from international to hyperlocal, from commercial to voluntary.  |



**THE DUKES, LANCASTER**  
Talent development

Open Space events at The Dukes provide R&D opportunities for performers to test work in progress, with space, lights and sound offered free of charge. Audiences attend for free or pay as they feel. The Dukes identifies emerging artists and companies to work with for 18-24 months to develop their creative practice through structured support. BLAST! is a festival of new work including artists commissioned with seed funding, technical and marketing support, and free access to space. They are also a member of Venues North, a network of venues which particularly welcome new work and emerging artists.

The new LCEP and Waterside could look to The Dukes for input in developing their embryonic artist programme.

|                                  |  |
|----------------------------------|--|
| <b>Leverage all the assets</b>   | There is a clear sense that the Council's 'cultural estate' is shrinking – although there is a strong devolvement model emerging e.g. Stretford Public Hall. The perception that Council assets such as libraries, leisure centres and ex-Town Halls do not support or facilitate cultural activity needs to be addressed. A refreshed, cross-departmental mindset should be an aspiration of the Strategy and community-based businesses helped to put together viable business plans.        |
| <b>Third-sector under threat</b> | There is an urgency to the threat of the voluntary and community cultural sector, which is ageing and often running low on finances, spaces to operate, goodwill and resource. It feels like it is running on empty and will disappear without a concerted, coordinated resource – especially in the current financial climate.  |
| <b>Towards a model?</b>          | The hub model deployed by the Community and Leisure hubs is well-considered, managed and is working – it is primed to be integrated / aligned with the cultural sector. This is an exciting, pivotal opportunity to build on local success and develop cultural offers which respond to genuine neighbourhood needs.   |
| <b>SMART funding</b>             | Council to provide guidance and coordination in exploring options to signpost, access or co-create grants to sustain activity and develop new activity. Being able to take a borough-wide view of arts funding will reveal natural synergies, joint bid opportunities and other advantages. A coordinated model could develop with local partners. (SMART = specific, measurable, ambitious, realistic, timed. This approach then naturally aligns with SMART objectives and action planning.) |
| <b>Enable culture</b>            | Trafford Council needs to clearly articulate and enact its support for and resourcing of culture through licences, grants, provision of spaces, communications and networks.   |



### WATERWAY ANIMATION

Trafford's canals and waterways provide ample opportunity for animation through culture, which would help residents feel safer when using blue routes, and better value their heritage and environment.

Image: [www.thingsthatgoonthings.org](http://www.thingsthatgoonthings.org)

## 2.4 FOCUS: WATERSIDE

Waterside is Trafford's only funded arts centre, comprising the majority of Trafford Council's direct arts provision and resource. It is a flagship development, receiving c.£500k annual support from Trafford Council with additional income generation through grants and funds, ticket and bar sales, venue hire and other commercial income. It also operates [Creative Industries Trafford](#) - the only creative industries professional development programme currently in Greater Manchester, is the home of the internationally significant [Cosgrove Hall Film Archive](#), and of Greater Manchester's only gallery dedicated to contemporary photography (although awareness and visibility of these are low).

The leadership at Waterside is well liked and respected, and there is a clear sense that Waterside's staff carry out their work with quiet dedication, integrity and care. But despite these best intentions and efforts from the leadership of Waterside, overall it seems to be missing the mark in how it is responding to the changed post-pandemic model. There is a perception that in trying to please everyone and deliver to multiple, sometimes competing goals, Waterside cannot focus on building the deeper relationships, programmes or long-term momentum that real impact requires. This creates issues for a clear identity, purpose and sense of place, and ultimately delivering sustainable impacts. This 'good work' with communities and artists is often behind-the-scenes and not promoted or celebrated as much as the main programming.

*"There is limited evidence of community consultation, co-creation or responding to place-based need."*

Arts Council England assessment, 2022

In particular:

- Architectural challenges create a feeling that it isn't welcoming, or a place for the local community, let alone owned by them.
- Pressure to generate revenues could be seen to price out local amateur and voluntary groups, as well as perpetuating more mainstream programming, perception and positioning. A lack of availability of space for non-professional arts could compound the issue.
- Demands of running the venue allows little time for the depth and sustained partnership working, collaboration, creative learning and engagement programmes or artist development opportunities, which Waterside want to be able to deliver and present.

Local organisations and community groups have said that Trafford needs an overarching [cultural service](#), a demand that will only increase as the sector responds to the cost-of-living crisis, and on top of the extended impact of COVID. There is an expectation that Waterside should step into this space, and deliver a broad cultural service remit and not just as a venue – but Waterside does not feel able to do so in its current business and operating model, despite good intent and an ambition to do so.





The 2022 application in the latest round to Arts Council England for NPO status, setting out a more arts development-led role and Model, was unsuccessful. Feedback was that Waterside needed to better demonstrate its 'readiness' for such a shift. Initiatives such as *Refract*, Cosgrove Hall Film Archive exhibitions and *Pride in Trafford* are a clear move in the right direction, but still lack sufficient porosity and talent / community-development focus or impact. So, there is a need to reset, with consideration of how best Waterside can respond to a new Trafford Cultural Strategy.

One option is for Waterside to play a more strategic role in the borough and support its own, and other, creative and cultural organisations' ambitions to nurture, value and celebrate creative talent and professional development in the community. In this scenario Waterside is the hub for an effective borough-wide cultural and talent development service. A sense of being a welcoming, 'open door' resource is one to be continually reinforced with partners and communities. This can be as simple as creating free-to-access spaces to meet, plug-in and get online with a hot drink. It can also be about access to technical resources and spaces to progress formal cultural practice.

However, in the short to medium term Waterside needs to prioritise its own recovery and resilience as a venue, responding to challenges and opportunities to refresh its arts-centre model, and develop a purpose-led business which delivers to a dual bottom line of income generation and social impact / purpose. For example, there is increasing recognition that Waterside should be

there to support Trafford residents in an acute cost of living crisis – *'What are we doing for summer and half term holidays? How are we helping parents of young children? Who are we reaching?'*.

And partners are looking for more evidence of impact - for example, Waterside actively connecting to Sale's burgeoning food & drink scene to support regeneration investments. And as ACE has discussed with Waterside, it does have a core strength (and motivation) for nurturing early career performers. An opportunity to build on this might look beyond its own walls and work in a multi-disciplinary way with dynamic local partners like OT Creative Space and Inch Arts.

None of this is simple 'business as usual' for Waterside, and needs a focused transformation response of its own. This venue transformation will enable sustainable community activity. And so, despite expressed ambitions, it is highly unlikely, in the short-medium term at least, that Waterside has the capacity or capability to take on responsibility to lead the drive to activate the Cultural Strategy. Over time this may (or may not) evolve, but there is a need for an interim solution.

A service review and forward plan is required, including the need to consider new governance and operating models for Waterside. This will inevitably raise options including operating as an arms-length subsidiary of Trafford Council, or wholly independent body (e.g. trust) in receipt of subsidy. A similar approach has been taken for Trafford Leisure CIC with notable success.



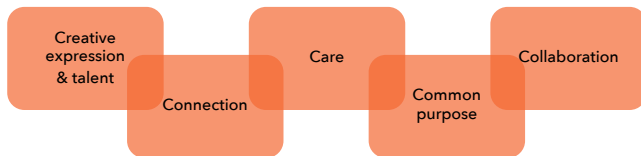
A live music performance on a stage. The stage is lit with blue light. A band is performing, including a guitarist on the left, a lead singer with long hair in the center, and a bassist on the right. The audience is in the foreground, many with their hands raised. The background features decorative structures with hanging lights and streamers.

## B. A CULTURAL VISION FOR TRAFFORD

# B1. VISION STATEMENT

## 1.1 TOWARDS A POWERFUL CULTURAL VISION

This agenda – for what cultural leadership needs to look like in Trafford – reflects the views of key stakeholders all across Trafford, including the Council. The essence of what we have heard from everyone we engaged with, who are all heavily invested in Trafford’s future cultural success, was the vital importance of these five dominant and interlocking themes:



And crucially, they are a clarion call for Trafford to develop a very clear long-term cultural vision and accompanying set of ambitions.

Ambition – not for grand new cultural institutions or facilities, as nice as those would be. But rather clear ambitions for how culture can be carefully nurtured and supported in order to enrich the lives of people who live in Trafford, creating new connections and opportunities as a positive thread at all stages of life and all levels of involvement<sup>6</sup>.

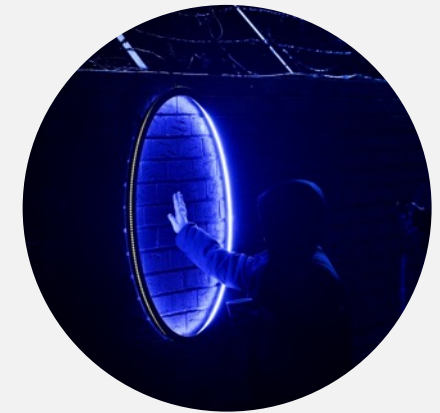
Hard times of course necessitate setting realistic expectations for short-term progress. But they are also the moment when a steely clarity of vision is even more vital in ensuring that culture can take centre stage in the lives of Trafford residents, and in their future

success. Engagement with culture and creativity is the soil out of which new ideas, jobs, innovative practices, movements and moments can grow – professionally, personally, as individuals and as place-based communities.

Therefore, the vision of this cultural strategy is as follows:

We will make Trafford a place powered by cultural and creative expression that comes from everyone, and which will enrich lives and life chances.

<sup>6</sup> Manchester was voted the UK’s most liveable city and 28th in world according to the EIU’s Global Liveability Index 2022. Trafford will no doubt have made a strong contribution to this ranking!



### THINGS THAT GO ON THINGS

The Trafford-based company TTGOT have recently delivered a programme in Wigan... well, from *Wigan to Leigh and Back Again*.

<http://www.thingsthatgoonthings.org/fromwigantoleighandbackagain>

*Image overleaf: Paintings, Spencer Turner, OT Creative Space*



We will make Trafford a place powered by cultural and creative expression that comes from everyone, and which will enrich lives and life chances.

# B2. THE TRAFFORD CULTURAL NARRATIVE

## 2.1 LEADERSHIP

The Trafford Council approach to 'leadership' is an established one of devolved partnership-working with residents, key agencies, businesses and stakeholders to a shared vision and strategic framework. This works within a tight fiscal operating environment. This also applies to Trafford's role within the wider Greater Manchester context. If Trafford is positioned much more as a leading talent-generator for the city region it can elevate its profile, role and importance with partners across GM - not least GMCA and the Metro Mayor's Office. This must be consistently applied across all levels of the Council.

There are three agreed Council priorities:

- To reduce [health inequalities](#);
- To support people out of [poverty](#);
- To address our [climate crisis](#).

What does activating and protecting culture do for Trafford? How does it connect with these three critical agendas?

This connection can be with progress / outcomes measured against [commitments](#), where 'everyone' feels the benefit:

- All our residents will have access to quality learning, training and jobs;
- All our communities will be happy, healthy and safe;
- All our businesses and town centres will be supported to recover and flourish in an inclusive way.

This is a context in which a cultural and creative sector in Trafford can work effectively. However, there is currently no clear cultural 'leadership' or convening, which is a priority issue that the cultural strategy needs to address and communicate.

### 2.1.1 When supplying cultural leadership

We want to build on the networks and hubs already in place to develop social and economic master plans that fully integrate culture into neighbourhood life. For the Council as the primary driver of cultural development, this means creating a clear set of goals and strategic plans to achieve them - and then empowering partners across the borough (and beyond) to help deliver. In other words, a more dispersed model will help to place the Council as a partner rather than a sole leader, funder or policy maker. The goal is to encourage and empower cultural and creative business and communities to work together in their place. Just as the emerging community hub model is now operating.

There will be a need for central hub leadership and coordination to support and drive collaborative activity, but the responsibilities and opportunities for delivery will be devolved to local partners. This is critical given the resource challenges that the sector faces now and in the coming years. Defining and establishing the hub is a key task.



### TRAFFORD ARTS ASSOCIATION

TAA is a network of amateur and voluntary clubs and organisations spanning drama, music, musical theatre, film, art and photography. Its number and breadth of membership is testament to the strong cultural participation of Trafford residents. TAA aims to cross-promote and elevate members' shows, events and activities. The value of organisations such as those involved in TAA cannot be underestimated in their contribution towards promoting better health, wellbeing, reducing social isolation, community building and more. The intent behind the Association is laudable but is indicative of the need to support the amateur and voluntary arts sector to enable the survival and success of a major point of appeal for Trafford residents.

[www.trafford-arts.org](http://www.trafford-arts.org)

Partners will be able to look to [the hub](#) for strategic help and guidance in accessing and leveraging additional investment, funding and partnerships that will allow the local creative economy to grow, and the ecology to be better understood, bringing in trained people to help support more hyperlocal activity, identifying talent, fostering more community-led activity, and targeting those partners (internal and external) dealing more acutely with social / wellbeing needs.

We will work with civic and commercial partners to ensure that our strategy for venues is being coordinated to maintain and support a joined-up approach to arts infrastructure, enabling both grassroots activity and mainstream programming across key areas (e.g. music; visual arts; outdoor; animation & film; drama and dance etc.) to grow and thrive across the borough.

## 2.2 TALENT

We want to creatively and continuously develop the cultural offer, and access to it – in areas that traditional, emerging and potential audiences recognise – raising and diversifying provision levels across the borough and looking to develop / enhance ‘talent’ and other cultural, educational and participatory programmes. Trafford has an exceptionally strong foundation of cultural activity – a talent base. This needs support, new skills and resources of course, but it also needs more recognition for its scale, scope and value. The demand is there. Literally dozens of amateur groups and

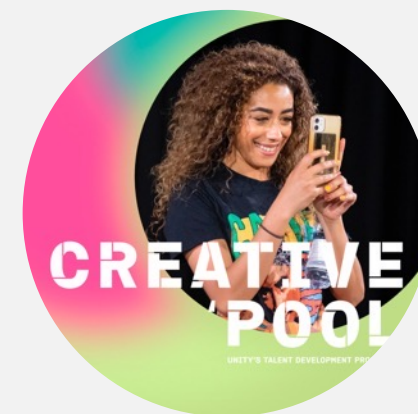
associations are finding barriers to growth (and sustainability) because the good range of facilities that are available are often not affordable and accessible – rehearsal spaces, performance and exhibition spaces especially.

How can the Council help to surmount these barriers? How can a proactive local authority connect culture with leisure, libraries, health policy, community hubs, parks and public realm, town centre planning, masterplanning & regeneration, and private sector liaison? How can the Council, where necessary, create supportive networks, communications, mentoring, training, volunteering opportunities and connectivity with creative and educational partners including schools?

### 2.2.1 Schools

Civic buildings are a community resource. Schools are an example of an institutional asset with a number of key additional benefits:

- Evenings, weekends and school holiday periods provide capacity for extra-curricular uses and hires;
- Schools are already proactively engaged with cultural activities, including events and projects linked to cultural players including Waterside;
- When we talk about talent, young people are a key grouping to support, but it is also about building creative skills and confidence as citizens;
- Active partners like LCEP and Curious Minds are able to create and support existing and pipeline initiatives.



### UNITY THEATRE LIVERPOOL Talent development

Creative'pool is a scheme operated by Unity Theatre to enable freelance creatives to access low-cost artistic product and skills development opportunities. There are different membership levels to suit different experience levels and needs.

The Unity hosts a range of community focussed engagement activities, from the expected such as youth theatre and community choirs, to the more unique such as the 'Reimagine' conference. Aimed at young people from global majority backgrounds, it is a creative activist space to explore racial injustice. It is produced by, for and with young people pertaining to local and global issues important to them.

There is a large, but fragile set of cultural networks across Trafford. This needs to become a more dynamic, coordinated and resilient cultural people and skills bank, spanning professional, amateur and cultural education provision.

Trafford will be known as the ‘talent belt’ for the city region. We have ‘green belts’<sup>7</sup>. There is a correlation to green belts – what they were once focused on (planning and development) to what they have become (about biodiversity, leisure, wellbeing, food, community).

Based on workforce data, Trafford is already acting as a talent-belt for GM (and especially for City of Manchester and MediaCityUK / Quays as cultural development and delivery hotspots). Trafford talent now needs to be realised for the benefit it brings to this wider region, in terms of delivering talent as well as audiences.

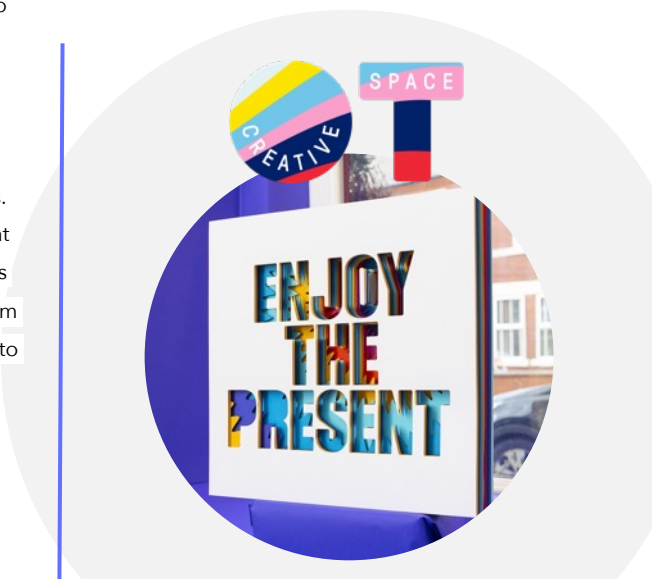
This narrative can start to build its credibility over time, to demonstrate what it looks like and how it can benefit both local people and other places and organisations. Its agenda will expand as Trafford’s collective to talent evolves as part of a co-design and co-production ethos – and as we track and gather evidence of individual progress and growth across further education, employment, volunteering and participation opportunities across the borough and beyond into GM. This can create a virtuous circle of creative exchange and growth that the role of the Council / Waterside can foster through a central role as the talent

development hub. The Trafford Music Service already delivers to this agenda in its artform with young people, and the LCEP can add to this strategic focus in the future.

We need to note that this is not all about finding talent and creating diverse career paths into culture and creative industries. Not just. It has to be about talent, experience and participation at all levels and ages. The importance of nurturing amateur talent is a key component of what makes culture in Trafford what it is, from introducing school children to musical instruments and singing, to supporting older people to keep up creative hobbies as part of their active lifestyle. If Trafford is ‘active’, then being ‘culturally active’ not only serves this strategy but the borough’s wider ambitions for a healthy, happy, active population.

We now commit to developing a long-term, highly focused community capacity and talent building approach. This will involve more lateral thinking, more embedded activity, more co-design, more community partnerships, and more working in neighbourhoods as well as borough-wide. In other words, a robust long-term strategic approach designed to ensure that cultural expression is thriving in all our communities. Digital innovation will be a prerequisite for success, allowing us to expand our reach and engagement, and creating new opportunities for people in the town to discover, create, view and participate in and enjoy cultural experiences.

<sup>7</sup> *What is the Green Belt, and why does it matter?*, The Countryside Charity, <https://bit.ly/4319Ci2>



Based in a former shop on Ayers Road, **OT Creative Space** provides a neighbourhood-focused, high street presence for exhibitions, art studios, classes and workshops. Recognising that any threshold can be a barrier to creative participation, OTCS manages:

- *The BACK gALLERy* - utilising alleyways as exhibition space to combat fly-tipping and anti-social behaviour.
- *OT Art Trail* commissions local artists to paint murals around the neighbourhood to promote a ‘doorstep’ cultural offer.
- *Brew on the Bench* is a non-threatening way to reduce social isolation and enjoy looking at art.

<https://otcreativespace.co.uk>

Image: *Notes To Self*, Robert Lomas

## 2.3 COMMUNITIES

We want to occupy a positive, high-profile place in the minds of communities, operators and partners (like GMCA) with a clear vision and positioning, supported by consistent and relevant engagement, messaging and communication.

We will work with partners to deliver programmes that support reconnecting with our communities, building resilience and improving mental and physical health and wellbeing.

*“Why shouldn’t art be available to local people in their everyday lives, when you nip to the corner shop for some milk?”*

Lynda Sterling, founder, OT Creative Space

We will use culture and creativity, working with our civic and commercial partners, as a means to foster more community focused participation in innovation and problem solving. Why is this so important? Because there are great ideas in our communities, as well as in our campuses and cultural and creative institutions<sup>8</sup>. In this sense the challenge is not so much ‘taking communities with us’, but rather letting communities take us with them, enabling and supporting their ambitions and aspirations. As such, this Cultural Strategy strives to direct available resources and the means to invent in the hands of local people.

Therefore, what matters most is that programmes and people we support are seeking to distribute opportunity and engagement across neighbourhoods. This can connect people, talent and institutions in new ways, so they can work to address the problems that matter to them, whether that is climate change, cost-of-living crisis, mental health or community pride. This will help to support a vibrant pipeline of new ideas and talent, and we will work with our partners to hardwire creative and cultural practices in schools, building stronger education, skills and talent pathways for the culture and creative sectors in Trafford. The result will be more visible and impactful cultural infrastructure for young people, increasing participation rates and attainment levels across key demographics - all building from grassroots up.

There is an initial piece of work to understand and build local clusters. This will enable local hubs to be nominated / emerge. This should not be prescriptive - it could be a funded or third-sector organisation, a programme of the Council, an individual change-maker. We do know that there are a number of obvious candidates already in place: OTCreative, Inch Arts, Altrincham BID, Partington Youth Zone, Stretford Public Hall, Gorse Hill Studios, Quays Culture, Waterside, Trafford Music Service. Mini-profiles of a number of these organisations are featured throughout this strategy.



### SUFFOLK LIBRARIES

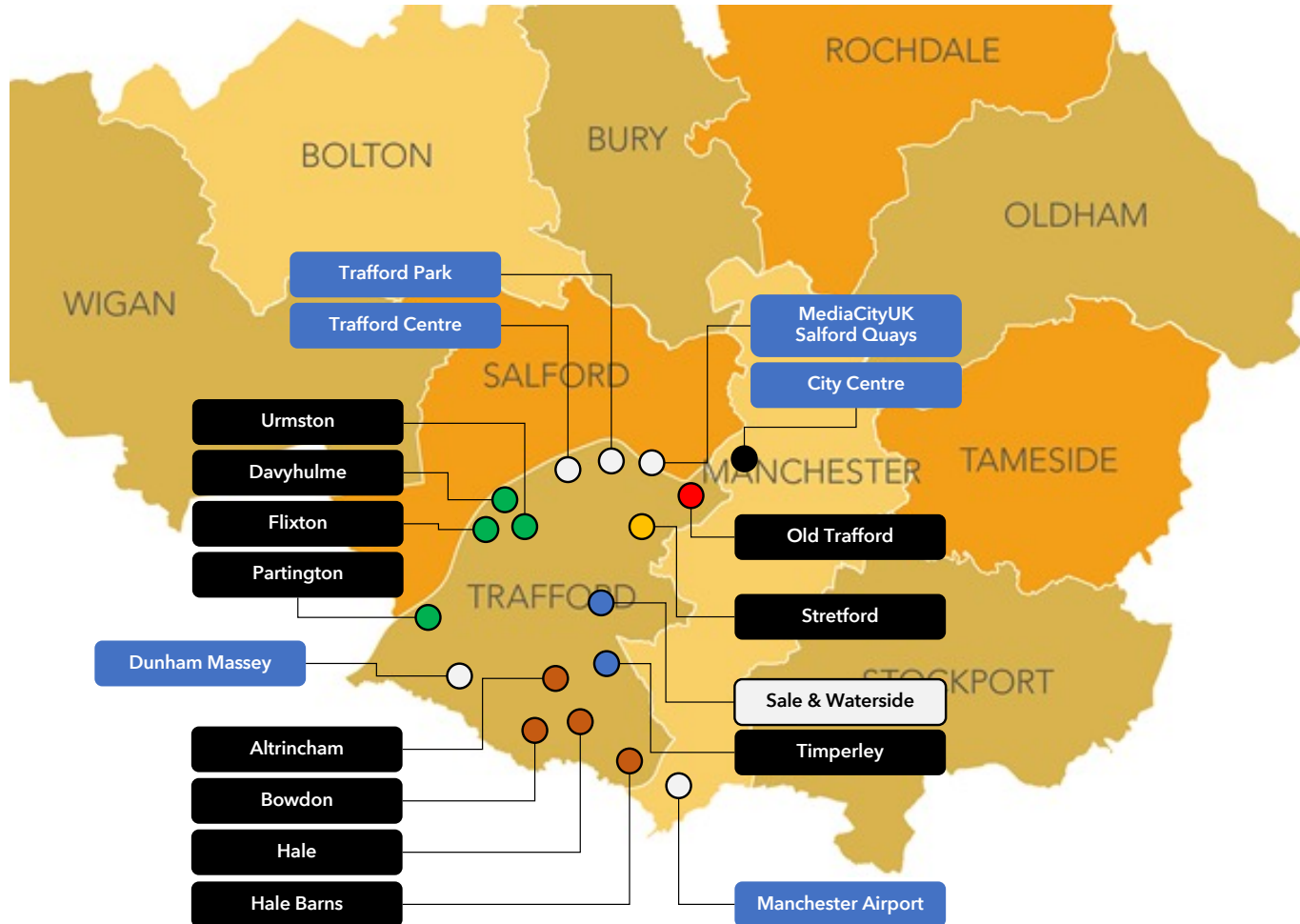
In 2012, Suffolk County Council made the bold decision to create an independent charity to run the library service. This has enabled the service to attract additional funding, and it became an ACE NPO in 2018 in recognition of its excellence in cultural programming. Across 45 sites, there are 48 trained cultural ambassadors who programme gigs, theatre, exhibitions, workshops and classes. The service knows its role as a trusted cultural venue - embedded within and unique to its individual communities. Trafford Libraries is undergoing significant change in its estate. It has dedicated, enthusiastic staff and exceptional reach across Trafford’s residents. There may be valuable lessons from Suffolk about a cultural leadership role and upskilling staff.

[www.suffolklibraries.co.uk](http://www.suffolklibraries.co.uk)

<sup>8</sup> Changemaker Chat with Marc Stears’ - The Commons Social Change Library, <https://bit.ly/3Me5RyJ>



2.3.1 Cluster mapping with a view to a hub & spoke model



**STREET ART, SALE HIGH STREET**

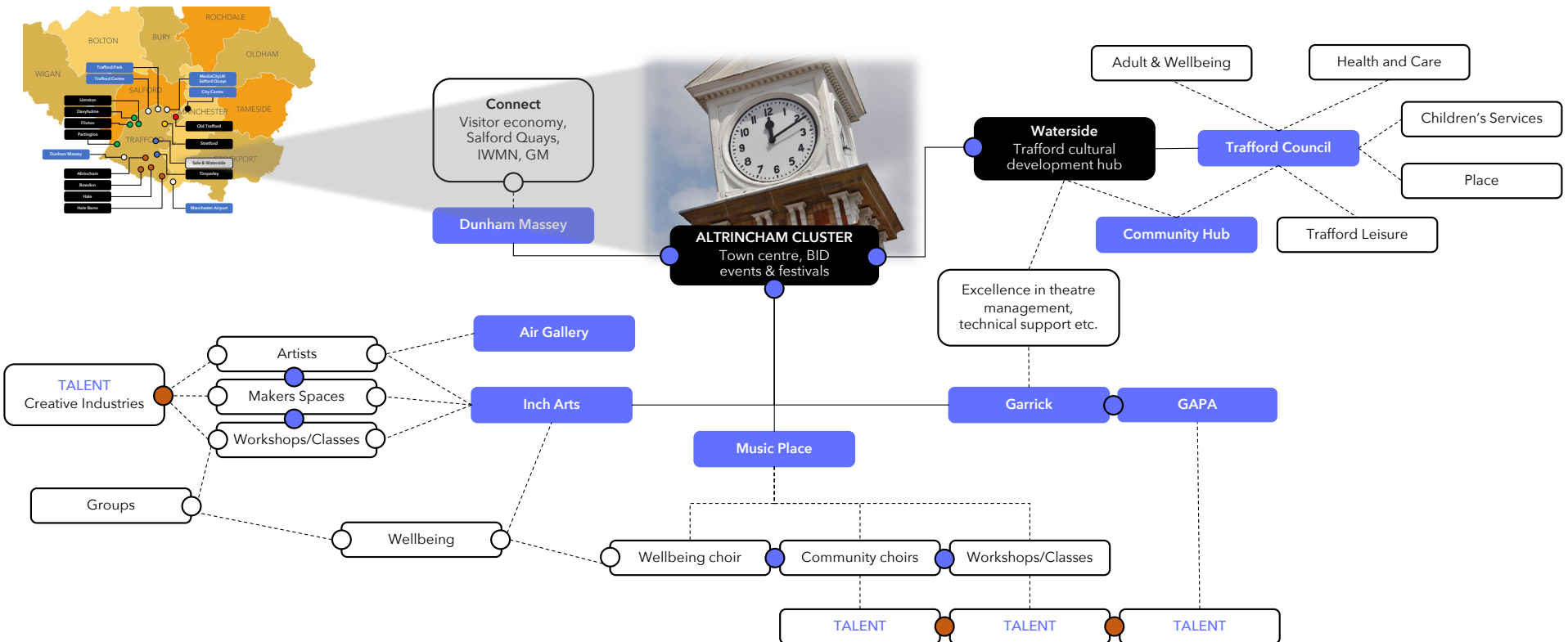
The Roy Castle Lung Cancer Foundation marked the opening of a new charity shop with a fantastic mural of the beloved entertainer, supported by Bradley Edge LLP. Art at every turn.

Leadership + Talent + Communities = hub & spoke model.

### 2.3.2 Example: a potential cluster - Altrincham

With a local coordination, the potential of the assets can be harnessed, linking across communities and strategic priorities such as health, wellbeing and activeness. As part of the borough-wide 'hub & spoke' model the aim is to create a transformation

cultural model, where organisations, groups and businesses are strengthened and supported so that they can lead and contribute to the development of specialist networks and neighbourhood hubs, e.g. Urmston, Old Trafford, or in this case, Altrincham.



# B3. STRATEGIC AIMS & OBJECTIVES

## 3.1 AIM 1

Trafford will develop a distinctive and inclusive approach to cultural leadership, based on a shared set of priorities with key partners.

### 3.1.1 Objectives

1. Develop a clear positioning for Trafford as a place that welcomes, supports and energises and nurtures cultural creation at all levels of cultural activity. Position Trafford, eventually as a regional leader in cultural talent celebration, nurturing and development. In other words, making cultural activity a normal part of (enriching) everyday life<sup>9</sup>.
2. Trafford Council will help create a sustainable, dynamic cultural infrastructure designed by, in and for Trafford - fully developing and activating a creativity 'hub & spoke' model, connecting the Council, arts organisations, businesses and groups; artists, makers and practitioners; and communities, agencies and neighbourhoods.
3. Trafford to become a cultural thought-leader in the borough and across GM, advocating and leading the debate through the activation of its creative workforce and by empowering creativity and co-design in the community.
4. Audit and map the public places and spaces that can be a part of the Trafford cultural offer, and make it easier for communities and organisations to use them for cultural and creative purposes (e.g. 'how to' toolkits, changes in internal processes, pricing).
5. Support the climate crisis priority for Trafford through exploring how culture can connect and coordinate in many and varied 'everyday' ways with the borough's green and blue spaces - working the sports & leisure, horticulture, community programmes etc. to build locally-rooted events and activities that build civic pride.
6. As a more confident and proactive contributor, develop Trafford's role within GM and specifically the working partnership with the GM Culture Group to identify shared learning, joint projects (e.g. Big Imaginations Festival), maximising limited resources, and advancing key agendas (e.g. creative workforce, empowering 'creative local communities, use of canals and outdoors, animation etc.).
7. Build a shared framework of insight / metrics that support the strategy - from grassroots organisations to national-level institutions and businesses - that can inform local and regional engagement and audience development.

<sup>9</sup> The principle of successful culture being normal - or ordinary - is a long-held vision for cultural engagement: *Culture Is Ordinary* article, Raymond Williams, <https://bit.ly/3IkHiPM>



### KNOWLE WEST MEDIA CENTRE, BRISTOL

The vision of KWMC is to support people to make positive changes in their lives and communities, using technology and the arts to come up with creative solutions to problems and explore new ways of doing things. An important part of their work hinges around The Factory, their award-winning making and training space based at a business park.

KWMC has an emphasis on working collaboratively with people from different backgrounds to develop new and creative models for achieving positive social change - and supporting people to develop the skills and confidence to be change-makers themselves. This way of working has allowed KWMC to develop a wide range of creative programmes exploring issues from housing to health.

<https://kwmc.org.uk/about/>

### 3.2 AIM 2

Trafford will become a creative factory - GM's 'talent belt' - driving opportunities for embryonic, emerging and established cultural talent, with clear pathways for skills, talent and career development.

#### 3.2.1 Objectives

1. Develop a clear policy of supporting a circular creative economy, actively seeking: **Internal** (within and across Trafford); **Inbound** (bringing in skills and expertise to enhance programmes); **Outbound** (exporting talent and experience, notably in working with our GM partners).
2. Build into cultural planning and programming (at borough and neighbourhood level) a co-design and co-production working practice as standard, to increase ownership, local benefit and sustainable cultural provision, and diversity of partners, contributors and participants / audiences.
3. Conduct targeted and coordinated studies (feasibility, transition, transformation) to identify gaps and maximise existing assets within the context of the new Strategy, e.g. Waterside, Cosgrove Hall Film Archive, public spaces and places, physical infrastructure and workspaces; third-sector cultural organisations and networks etc.
4. Invite artists (paid) to respond and generate a bank of ideas and opportunities, including artist-in-residences. This should respond to the outcomes of co-design processes, and can signpost the new positioning of Trafford's cultural communities.

### 3.3 AIM 3

Trafford will champion and nurture connected cultural communities from the grassroots up, by supporting more hyperlocal and community-led activity.

#### 3.3.1 Objectives

1. Align the neighbourhood cultural hubs with the existing Trafford community hubs - geographically, but also explore communications, spaces and other shared resources and networks.
2. With further feasibility, create a plan to reinvigorate Waterside as a programming venue, allowing it to be a showcase of the cultural strategy. Offer a vibrant and dynamic programme that increasingly engages the talents of the borough's artists and communities and delivers to dual bottom line or impacts as well as income.
3. Ensure clear (sector and public-targeted) information provision and data capture are effectively managed. Identify and pursue practical technology and skills needs, e.g. listings platform, hyper-local information sharing etc.
4. Trafford will ensure that culture animates and enriches much loved spaces across Trafford - from parks and local heritage sites, to the canals and walking routes.

*"We are pleased that local authorities are increasingly recognising the ability of the arts and culture sector to generate positive change in their areas."*

*Culture-led regeneration achieving inclusive and sustainable growth, Caloustie Gulbenkian Foundation and Local Government Association, 2019*

*"If cultural activities are to play a strategic role in supporting urban regeneration initiatives, many new kinds of partnership will be needed - between departments and disciplines, between the public and private sectors and, critically, with the voluntary sector and community organisations."*

*The Art of Regeneration: Urban Renewal through Cultural Activity, Charles Landry, Lesley Greene, Francois Matarasso, Franco Bianchini.*

5. Undertake a skills and capacity audit to identify SME and third-sector skills capital, gaps and skills development needs in critical areas (e.g. logistics, communications, administration, fundraising, digital). This will inform ongoing planning, fundraising and investment at a borough and neighbourhood level.
6. Build in resilience and sustainability to community cultural delivery. Do this through: a longer-term approach to capacity planning; partnership building and cross-cutting collaboration (all shapes and sizes of culture player, and cross-sector, e.g. libraries, hospitality, sports, leisure, high street, waterways); resident involvement alongside visitors / established audiences.
7. Trafford will actively support the voluntary and community cultural sector through the more creative use of Council assets, and through a coordinated funding model to sustain key activities.



#### INCH ARTS

Inch Arts is a gallery and workspace in Altrincham which offers an array of classes, exhibitions, and facilities for young people and professional creatives. Inch receives regular support from Arts Council England and Youth Music and works in partnership with the likes of Trafford Young Carers. During the pandemic, Inch turned its makerspace to manufacturing visors, coordinating a team of 50 volunteers and crowdfunding £8k for suppliers to supply 20,000 visors to frontline health workers across the North-West. A secure base and funding for core staff salaries would enable Inch to realise its ambitions to as a high-quality community arts centre, supporting community health and wellbeing.

<https://www.inch-arts.co.uk>

## C. STRATEGY



Image: Cosgrove Hall Film Archive

# C1. A ROUTE MAP - CONVERGING COMMON PURPOSE ACROSS TRAFFORD

The cultural sector will look to the Council for strategic leadership (and guidance and advice for regional connectivity, funding and advocacy of course).

In recognising that this strategy is for Trafford, as opposed to Trafford Council, it invites the necessary partnership mentality and 'culture'.

In viewing the cultural & creative industries as regenerators, social and economic value creators, the Council can respond with tools, expertise and support to drive demonstrable impacts, including through nurturing cultural partnership and entrepreneurship.

The Council can be a fulcrum for cultural development, co-designing (across departments and with external partners) and deploying local and hyperlocal responses and programmes, as well as borough-wide.



# C2. RECOMMENDATIONS

## 2.1 LEADERSHIP

1. Create a new **strategic panel** for cultural development, chaired by Trafford Council with representation from culture, creative industries, places and placemaking, and communities and a clearly defined set of roles and responsibilities to drive the vision for this strategy.
2. The panel should consider making an application to **Greater Manchester Towns of Culture programme** as a means of providing impetus to the activation of the strategy – the timing of this is important as, if successful, it needs sufficient lead-in time.
3. Recruit a temporary **Cultural Transformation ‘director’ role** – an inspiring and proactive individual who will activate the ‘hub and spoke’ model, building confidence and capability across the partnership, and drive the alignment of relevant Trafford Council assets and resources in support of the strategy, including Waterside, Music Service, Libraries, Trafford Leisure CIC, and other departments. An outcome of their role will be a strong application and foundations programme for Year of Culture.
4. Establish an internal, cross-departmental **cultural leadership training programme** for Council officers. This can provide the means, focus and confidence for engaged services like Libraries and Communities and Town Centre Managers to apply their energy into culture with purpose.
5. As a result, it can build depth and consistency in empowering and devolving Trafford’s **cultural ‘welcome’** in practical terms, e.g. licensing, community grants, use of parks, etc. As a model, it can strengthen hyperlocal cultural programming, and roll-out across the borough. It may also provide an attractive proposition for funders.
6. Using the relationships that the Council has across sectors and with its **supply chain** (including with partners, including Trafford Leisure, Trafford Housing Trust, Bruntwood), revisit and develop more effective mechanisms for cultural community groups to be able to access facilities in an affordable and timely manner.





## 2.2 TALENT

7. Conduct a detailed **audit of all cultural facilities** and technical assets to set against demand and need from creative industries, practitioners and the community. For example, the provision of media, editing, digital and photographic stores, dark rooms, studios, display etc. for community and professional image-based activity, including animation.
8. Conduct a detailed **review of the sector**, sensitive to the cost-of-living crisis and post-pandemic situation, to inform immediate and mid-term priorities:
  - a. **Collaboration** (e.g. strategic interventions and development programmes, events, cross-sector partnerships);
  - b. **Coordination** (e.g. marketing communications, programming, role of Creative Industries Trafford);
  - c. **Capability & Capacity building** (e.g. skills development, data capture, shared learning, resources, potential for green and blue public spaces for cultural activity)
9. Invite organisations, practitioners and community-based groups to contribute **ideas and programme** for a Towns of Culture application.
10. Support the fledgling **LCEP** to establish clear pathways for young people in Trafford to access creative and cultural activities (for skills, talent and career development, enterprise or 'just' life-enrichment) beyond Key Stage 4 / 5, and also outside of the formal education environment.
11. Build resilience and expertise into this approach to **cultural education** with strategic partnerships with formal education partners, e.g. UA92. Cultural education can be delivered via an innovative and blended model, including building on existing strengths in sports and leisure education.
12. Review how **third-sector and community networks** – such as Trafford Arts Association – support voluntary and amateur activity (individual and organisational), to improve how needs (skills & training, getting involved and learning, funding, communications, creative exchange, social exchange etc.) are defined and responded to as part of the third-sector 'talent belt'.
13. Research and **create a talent pool** of active / experienced cultural and creative professionals living in the borough (and perhaps working elsewhere) to mentor talent (both community-based groups and individuals).



### PRECARIOUS CARNAVAL

The Precarious Carnival celebrated the 250th anniversary of the Bridgewater Canal throughout Salford.

R&D with local community and Salford residents, culminated in a special 3-day long performance event July 2022.

[www.creativetourist.com/event/precarious-carnaval/](http://www.creativetourist.com/event/precarious-carnaval/)

## 2.3 COMMUNITIES

14. Commission primary research (e.g. from The Audience Agency - noting that Audience Finder data will not be sufficient) to build a shared **understanding of cultural engagement** across Trafford, with a specific goal of mapping and making recommendations on how to develop a shared cultural data capture and management capability. This would pull together for the first time the full cultural ecology of the borough - major players like IWM, Lancashire Cricket and Waterside alongside smaller, community and privately run organisations and enterprises. Data is currently generated, captured and applied in different ways. There is an opportunity to aggregate data to inform cultural investment and partnership activity. The more data can be captured digitally, the easier it will be to capture, track and report.
15. Building on an enhanced **understanding of cultural diversity**, provision and opportunities (from the shared data approach noted above), develop an audience development plan that has as its starting point the whole cultural ecology, and not just by organisation.
16. Apply the enhanced data, networks and connectivity of the 'hub & spokes' model to build a **Trafford listings platform** online - a channel to promote the offer, but also build sector engagement and partnership.
17. Ensure that **digital capability and connectivity** is a priority, including infrastructure, programmes and upskilling re: the capture and use of data, and how to harness to drive better intelligence & insight; digital engagement and communications activity; events promotion, commerciality and income generation.
18. Activate the connectivity of the '**hub & spokes' model digitally** - to build a comprehensive Trafford-wide online events listings platform / digital channels and services (such as websites, e-newsletters, digital noticeboards, town centre screens) to showcase and promote the offer, build sector and partner engagement and encourage audience / community discovery, participation and exchange around the borough. These need to be in place in advance of a Towns of Culture Year - and will take 6-9 months to deliver and embed.
19. Work with community-led cultural organisations on a **twin-track participatory approach**. Firstly, develop new membership and volunteering opportunities, especially for younger people. Secondly, work with these (often ageing) same organisations to extend this into longer-term leadership roles. In effect, sustainability through succession planning.



### BOOKS BARGE

The Book Barge in Kings Cross is a floating book shop.

Customers browse books displayed outside or can jump aboard and cosy up with a book by the stove. Every inch of the barge is cleverly used. *Word on the Water* runs talks on art, technology, feminism and politics. Musicians and performers also make use of the barge's roof stage and solar sound system for open mic sessions and occasional poetry slam. *Word on the Water* is permanently moored on Regent's Canal Towpath

[www.kingscross.co.uk/word-on-the-water-bookshop](http://www.kingscross.co.uk/word-on-the-water-bookshop)

# D. ADDENDUM



# D1. LIST OF CONSULTEES

| Role   | Organisation                     |
|--|----------------------------------|
| Director Town Centre & Consumer Brands at Bruntwood Works        | Bruntwood                        |
| Leader   | Trafford Council                 |
| Sales Director   | Lancashire Cricket               |
| Manager (& Chair, Trafford LCEP)                                 | Gorse Hill Studios               |
| CEO  | Trafford Council                 |
| Arts Centre Manager, Waterside                                   | Trafford Council                 |
| Corporate Director for Adult Services                            | Trafford Council                 |
| Heritage Development Officer                                     | Trafford Council                 |
| Libraries and Development Lead                                   | Trafford Council                 |
| General Manager, Dunham Massey                                   | National Trust                   |
| Imperial War Museums   | Executive Director IWM Institute |
| Director of Finance  | Trafford Council                 |
| Director   | Castlefield Gallery              |
| Head of Leisure  | Trafford Council                 |
| Arts & Outreach Coordinator                                      | Stretford Public Hall            |
| CEO  | Trafford Leisure CIC             |
| CEO  | Inch Arts                        |
| Senior Environmental Contract Manager                            | Trafford Council                 |
| Executive Member for Culture, Leisure and Strategic Partnerships | Trafford Council                 |
| Business & Communications Manager                                | Altrincham Unlimited BID         |
| Manager  | Stretford Public Hall            |
| Network Coordinator  | GM Arts                          |

**One-to-one consultations** were conducted with representatives from a variety of culture, creative and other sectors. The tables below set out who has responded to consulting approaches to date, from a larger database of over 150 contacts, which also served the workshops.

| Role  | Organisation                          |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| Partnerships Director   | Lancashire Cricket                    |
| Artistic Director   | Z Arts                                |
| Director & Studio Manager   | OT Creative Space / The Back Gallery  |
| BID Manager   | Altrincham BID                        |
| Principal, Culture and Creative Policy                                | Greater Manchester Combined Authority |
| Area Manager Libraries South (& Co-Chair, LCEP)                       | Trafford Council                      |
| Director of Tourism   | Marketing Manchester                  |
| Senior Relationship Manager   | Arts Council England                  |
| Creative Consultant   | Freelance                             |
| Project Manager, Producer   | Quays Culture                         |
| Senior Environmental Contract Manager                                 | Trafford Council                      |
| Head of Planning and Development                                      | Trafford Council                      |
| Music Relationship Manager  | Arts Council England                  |
| Corporate Director of Place   | Trafford Council                      |
| Head of Music Service   | Trafford Music Service                |
| Director  | Art with Heart                        |
| Deputy Chief Executive & Corporate Director of Strategy and Resources | Trafford Council                      |
| Head of Customer Service, Libraries & Culture                         | Trafford Council                      |
| Partnerships Manager  | Imperial War Museums                  |
| Sports Relationship Manager   | Trafford Council                      |
| Manager, Capacity Builder Team  | Trafford Housing Trust                |

| Organisations                              |                                |
|--|--------------------------------|
| Altrincham Arts Festival                   | Sale Arts Trail                |
| Altrincham Choral Society                  | Sale Brass Band                |
| Altrincham Garrick Society                 | Sale Festival                  |
| Altrincham Little Theatre                  | Sale Moor Art Club             |
| Artzu Ltd                                  | Spotlight Drama Youth Theatre  |
| Bruntwood                                  | Stretford Public Hall          |
| Davyhulme Art Club                         | Stretford Street Art Club      |
| Gorse Hill Studios                         | String of Hearts CIC           |
| Imperial War Museums North                 | Sweet Rhythm Big Band          |
| Inch Arts                                  | Things That Go On Things       |
| IntoPlaces                                 | Trafford Arts Association      |
| Jo Lavelle Jewellery                       | Trafford Council               |
| Lancashire Cricket                         | Trafford Housing Trust         |
| M33 Facebook Group                         | Trafford Libraries             |
| Making Futures CIC                         | Trafford Local Studies Service |
| Manchester Association of Speech and Drama | Urmston Musical Theatre        |
| Manchester International Roots Orchestra   | Waterside                      |
| Old Trafford Creative Space                | What's The Sketch              |

A series of **community and stakeholder engagement workshops** were held at Stretford Public Hall and Waterside, Sale in September 2022. These workshops tested some early and emerging themes developed from the desk research and one-to-one consultations already undertaken, through use of stimulus questions and facilitated discussions. Attendees included community, cultural, heritage, sport and voluntary groups and organisations; businesses; creative practitioners; and Council officers, with representatives from the following organisations:

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