

SAFER STRONGER COMMUNITIES SELECT COMMITTEE			
Report Title	Local Assemblies Review		
Contributors	Executive Director for Community Services	Item:	7
Class	Part 1	Date	8 March 2017

1. Purpose

- 1.1 This report provides the Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee with information on the performance and achievements of the Local Assemblies programme during the 2015/16 and 2016/17 financial years. It also identifies areas for the potential future development of the Assemblies programme.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 Members of the Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee are recommended to note the content of this report and to consider the questions raised in section 6.

3. Policy Context

- 3.1 Section 138 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act came into effect on 1 April 2009. It places a duty on a local authority to involve local representatives when carrying out 'any of its functions' by providing information, consulting or 'involving in another way'. The Local Assemblies programme is a key aid to the London Borough of Lewisham in fulfilling this duty.
- 3.2 Prior to the Act, in May 2007, the Mayor's Commission on Empowering Communities and Neighbourhoods recommended that the London Borough of Lewisham introduce local ward assemblies for each of the borough's 18 wards. The Commission's objective was that these localised bodies, defined by the active involvement of ward councillors, would enable the people living and working in each ward to have a stronger and more direct influence in shaping their local community, supporting an ongoing process for identifying and resolving local concerns and implementing local solutions. The Local Assemblies programme was established in March 2008.
- 3.3 The Local Assemblies programme particularly helps to deliver the Lewisham Sustainable Community Strategy priority outcome 'empowered and responsible – where people can be actively involved in their local area and contribute to supportive communities'. The programme is also helping to deliver the corporate priority 'community leadership and empowerment – developing opportunities for the active participation and engagement of people in the life of the community'.

Individual projects funded by the assemblies also help to deliver other corporate priorities.

4. Local Assemblies Programme Update

- 4.1 This report provides an update for the Safer Stronger Select Committee.
- 4.2 2015/16 represented the 8th full year of the Local Assembly programme. Average attendance at Assembly meetings for the full 2015/116 year rose to 107 people from 93 in 2013/16, with an overall attendance of 5,704 for the year.
- 4.3 Figures up to the end of January 2017 show the average attendance now stands at 144 for 2016/17. This figure is high as many assemblies will organise at least one social event which will attract a larger turnout. However, there has been an increase in very large formal assembly meetings in 2016/17 including 153 attendees at Catford South, 144 at Crofton Park, 116 at the Telegraph Hill Youth Assembly, 112 at Grove Park and 105 at Rushey Green.
- 4.4 An analysis of 2016/17 across 9 random wards shows that 36% of assembly attendees stated that they were attending the meeting for the first time and that 85% of all attendees stated that they will definitely attend another assembly meeting.
- 4.5 It is evident that there are a small number of assemblies that are struggling with attendances and over a period of time the numbers have dropped significantly. With these assemblies the number of first time attendee figure is lower. Officers are working with local coordinating groups to find bespoke ways of engaging with their particular communities including:
- Changing the venue of the Assembly
 - Changing the format of the Assembly to make it more interactive/welcoming
 - Increasing the promotion of the Assembly including the use of established local social media platforms
- 4.6 Coordinating Groups continue to play an active role in the planning of the assembly meetings and at present there are 134 active Coordinating Group volunteers (not including ward councillors). Coordinating Groups are integral to the programme and a good Coordinating Group will fulfil many functions including:
- Planning the assembly meeting
 - Evaluating the feedback, what worked / did not work
 - Ensuring that the assembly is representative of the ward and fully inclusive
 - Helping to promote the assembly
 - Provide information to assemblies to assist them in making decisions
 - Where relevant, help to assess funding applications to ensure that they meet the assembly's agreed criteria, benefit the ward,

are value for money, that there is evidence of local need and are not duplicating existing provision.

- 4.7 In Sydenham a Coordinating Group volunteer writes and designs the assembly Newsletter and in Catford South members of the Group help to ensure that the Love Catford website is regularly updated.
- 4.8 In 2015/16 and 2016/17 each Assembly was allocated a fund of £15,000 to run local projects. £2,500 of this sum is known as the Councillor Discretionary Fund and this can be utilised directly by Ward Councillors to address other areas which may arise during the course of the year or are not identified by residents as key priorities but which still have an impact on the local area.
- 4.9 All the Assemblies review their approach to the allocation of funds, however most assemblies are now using a small grants process to allocating funds. However, wards such as Catford South will ensure that applications are targeted at certain areas identified by the Assembly.
- 4.10 A number of Assemblies simply advertise generally for applications. Prior to this the Coordinating Group/Assembly will agree the criteria including the maximum amount that an organisation can apply for. This approach often results in an increased number of applications but requires the coordinating group to carefully sift and analyse applications to ensure they represent value for money, are robust / deliverable, benefit the ward and are not duplicating existing provision. This will mean that some applications have been extensively worked upon and improved before going to the Assembly.
- 4.11 The advantage of this approach is that it encourages organisations which have not previously worked with the assembly to come forward and the creation of new local organisations. This sometimes provides a catalyst for further involvement by organisation users and supporters who subsequently attend Assembly meetings to promote the benefits of their work. This has been the case in many wards. In Grove Park ward this approach is so successful that some organisations were asked to take a 'year out' from applying to enable new organisations the opportunity to apply and deliver projects.
- 4.12 An increasing number of Assemblies use the marketplace approach to enable funding applicants to engage with Assembly participants. The marketplace allows for a dialogue to take place between residents and potential projects, followed by a voting process. This approach further increases resident engagement and ownership of projects, as well as offering an opportunity for vibrant dialogue between residents and local organisations. Marketplace Assembly meetings are hugely popular and extremely well attended. Feedback is generally very positive and residents welcome the opportunity to have a genuine say in which projects are funded and relish the informal atmosphere. Piloted at the Grove Park Assembly, the voting mechanism for the marketplace has now evolved with a fairer system in place which allows a wider

participation in deciding who gets funded rather than 'the usual suspects' which was a common past criticism.

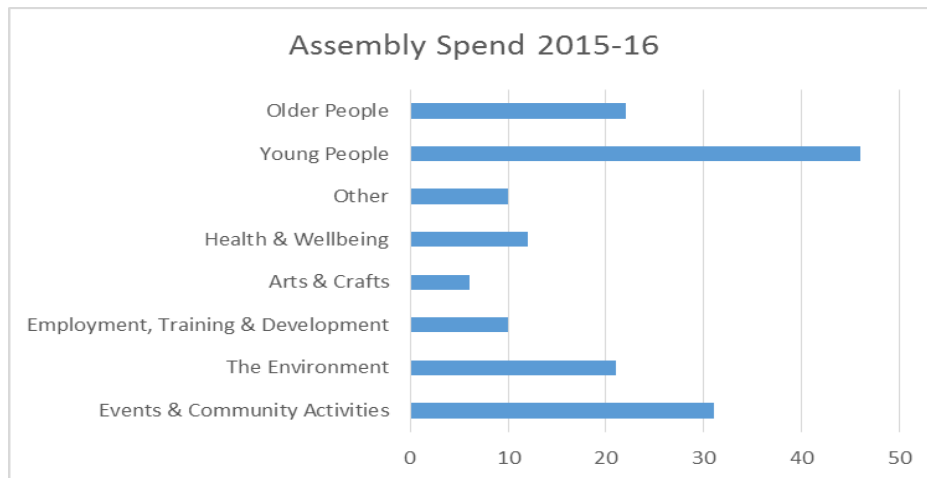
- 4.13 Once funds have been agreed, Assemblies require successful projects to provide regular updates at meetings. These presentations are often popular as they enable residents to find out how projects are progressing and to review the work they have undertaken. This also provides an opportunity for groups to promote what they do, gain volunteers and enable residents to access their provision.
- 4.14 Lewisham People's Day saw the return of the Little Big Top Assemblies Tent showcasing the work undertaken by the Cultural and Community Development Team and our Resident DJ's Lang & Lopez and Memphis Souls Stu filling in between acts. Diamond Zumba returned to get everyone moving and showcase the work with older people's groups, whilst Lewisham Youth Theatre performed three short sets. Assembly Funded Artist Joe Grossi created an interactive wishing tree so residents could relay their wish for their ward. Throughout the day visitors to the tent could make hats and hair accessories with Carmen Miranda aka Danielle, one of the Main Grant funded Community Development Workers. There were performances from a steel band, Heart of Steel and Bellingham in Harmony who crowdfunded on Space Hive to create a new choir especially for the day, whilst the boxing club's sporting half hour proved so popular that it ran for an hour.



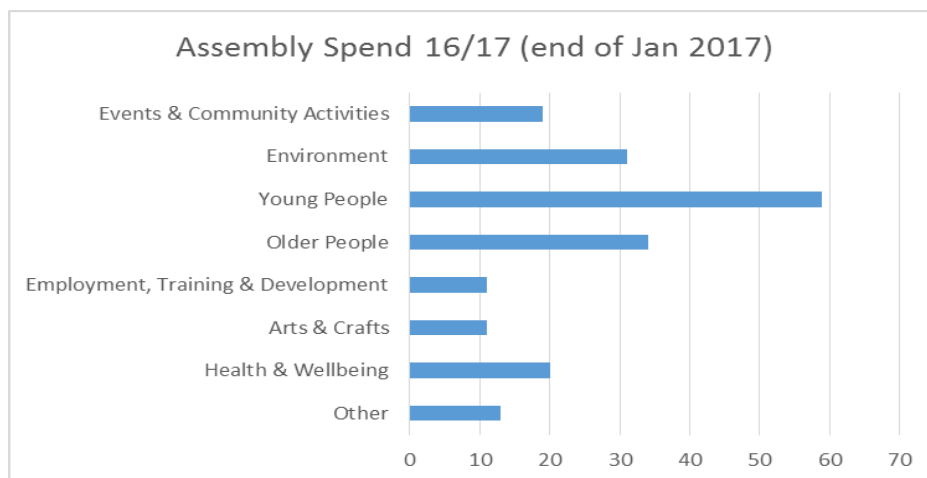
Image: Little Big Top Assemblies Tent at Lewisham People's Day

- 4.15 A total of 141 projects were funded in 2015/16, this does not include Evelyn ward which carried over all of its funding into 2016/17. Of these, 14 were for over £3,000, with the highest award being for £8,500 in Crofton Park, this was to the Neighbourhood Forum enabling the funding of multiple smaller projects within the ward. The lowest award was £200 towards a theatre trip for older people in Grove Park.
- 4.16 In 2016/17 (as of the end of January 2017) 195 projects benefitted from Assembly Funding. Of these, 12 were for over £3,000, with the highest figure awarded £9,000 in Lewisham Central ward for a project titled Greening Lewisham which is all about renewing public spaces

within the town centre. The lowest award was £276 for an older people's trip in Crofton Park ward. Overall in 2016/17 there has been a significant rise in the number of smaller projects funded by the assembly programme.



4.17 Of the 141 groups funded in 2015/16, we have seen a slight increase in the number of projects funded which benefit older people and a small decline in funding for community events and activities as the organisers establish new methods of fundraising such as crowdfunding.

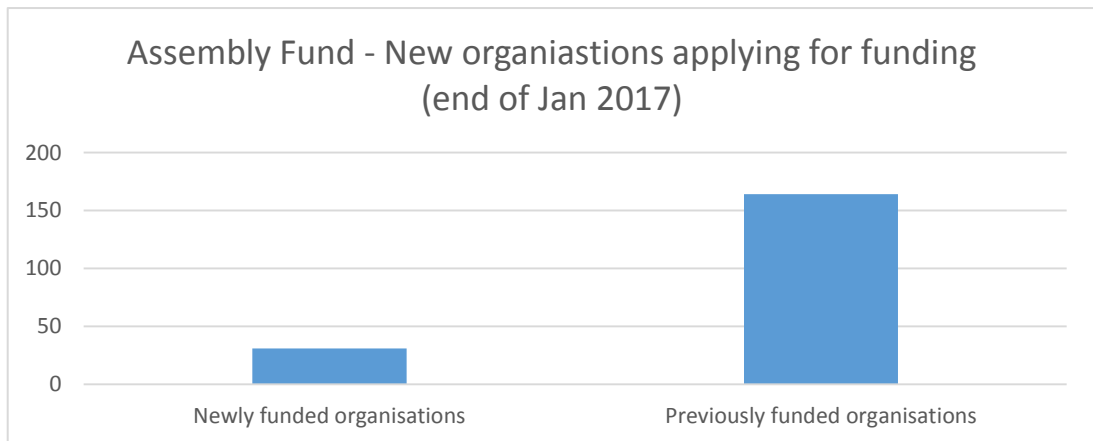
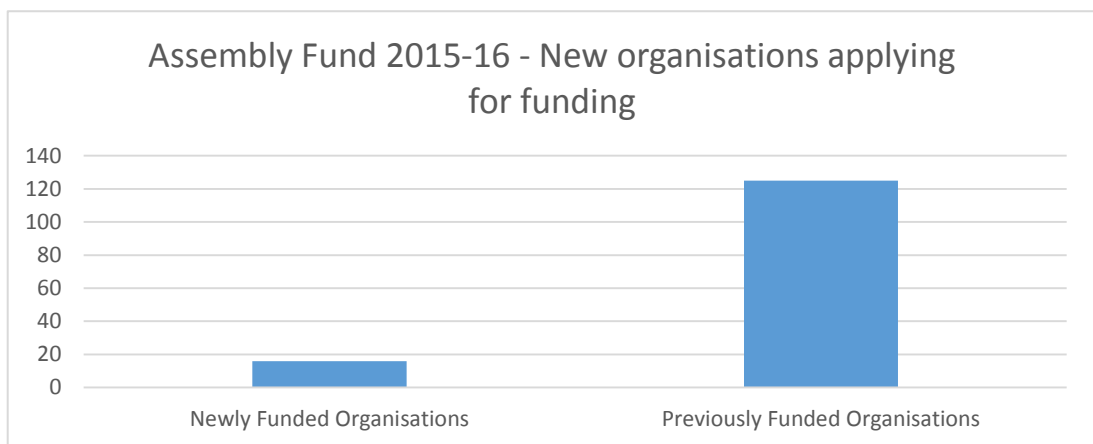


4.18 With most of the 2016-17 allocated a significant reduction in the funding of events and community activities can be seen. In general Assemblies are encouraging regular events to become more sustainable and to apply to other funds following initial support from the assembly fund. In addition to this Development Officers are actively encouraging Crowdfunding.

4.19 There has been a steady increase in the number of projects funded which benefit older people, already this year the number of projects exceeds previous years. Many older groups are now feeling more confident about submitting an application and fundraising. In addition to this many of these groups are linked to POSAC and Community Connections who provide invaluable support. The Assembly Fund has been prominently featured in the POSAC Newsletter and there is no

doubt that this has increased the number of applications. Significantly, this year there has only been one hand written funding application submitted, in previous years across the borough about ten hand written applications will be received, these will be from predominantly older generations. It is therefore pleasing to see that our older groups appear to be increasingly IT literate.

4.20 Youth projects continue to be well supported throughout the borough. Lewisham’s young demographic is well represented by the funding awards allocated and many of our youth organisations work very well alongside the assembly. As of the end of January this year 30% of Assembly Funded projects are primarily youth related, compared to 28% for 2015-16 and 26% for 2014-13.



4.21 As of the end of January 2017, 31 new organisations are receiving funding from the 2016-17 Assembly Fund to deliver projects, this already exceeds 2015/16 when there were 16 new organisations. It is always encouraging to see new organisations successfully approach the Local Assembly for funding and this year the Blackheath Assembly allocated £1,800 to the Single Homeless Project (SHP) to enable them to create their own Sustainable Garden.

4.22 During the course of the year, through the combined approaches to distributing funds described above, a number of new initiatives have

been established. In addition Assemblies have acted as a catalyst for some key areas of community-led action, including the following.

Lewisham Central – Improving the local environment

4.22.1 Following local feedback, Lewisham Central has had a strong focus on improving and greening the streetscape around the centre of Lewisham. Assembly funding has been used amongst other things to power clean the pavement around the market area and install planters. Volunteers have been mobilised (including linking in with Good Gym at Glassmill) to plant bulbs on a range of small plots of unused land with a view to brightening the area in the spring.

Crofton Park – A Cinderella Line

4.22.2 This is a new organisation set-up to improve the train service from Crofton Park Station, it is working closely with the Crofton Park Assembly and the Neighbourhood Forum as it campaigns for services to London Victoria to be reinstated. The assembly allocated £1,000 to this project.

Catford South – Dementia Friendly Community

4.22.3 The Lewisham Dementia Action Alliance (LDAA) was formally launched in May 2015 and is Lewisham's vehicle to become a more Dementia Friendly Community. Dementia Friendly Communities are defined by Alzheimer's Society as a community 'in which people with dementia are empowered to have aspirations and feel confident, knowing they can contribute and participate in activities that are meaningful to them'.

4.22.4 Becoming a dementia-friendly community has been recognised as a process taking several years. The LDAA feels that becoming a Dementia-friendly community in an area as big as Lewisham is likely to prove challenging. Therefore, it was decided that the process of becoming a dementia-friendly community should start in a geographically defined area as a pilot project to be rolled out across the entire borough in the future.

4.22.5 The Catford South area and local assembly has been chosen to work with to become Lewisham's first dementia friendly community for a number of reasons.

- A ward with the second highest number of residents above the age of 65 and has a higher proportion of people living with dementia compared to Lewisham as a whole.
- Initial conversations with councillors and key members of the local assembly have established a real interest in Catford South becoming a dementia-friendly community.
- Catford South has very active and engaged community organisations who are keen to work together and work on new projects.

- In June 2015 Catford South and Lewisham were formally accredited as working towards Dementia Friendly Community Status.

4.22.6 Working with the Catford Assembly has been an extremely positive experience and supported the on-going development of the LDAA. The networks it operates in has enabled the assembly members and Catford South residents to be much more aware of dementia as well as supporting local residents through direct one-to-one support and more accessible groups, shops and venues which supports local residents living with dementia feeling confident and an active member of their community.

Telegraph Hill – Knife awareness

4.22.7 The Coordinating Group in Telegraph Hill closely evaluated a bid to the assembly centred around working with young people to raise awareness of the dangers of carrying knives. The Group wanted to ensure that work undertaken was appropriate and carried out by community organisations with expertise. They also felt that it should be integrated with the work of the Crime Reduction Service and Youth First. The ward councillor chaired a meeting to agree a joint strategy for Telegraph Hill and New Cross. This group will meet regularly to share information, working with young people and organisations to develop services that address serious youth violence. To support this work the Assembly in December was co-organised with the young people of Honor Oak Youth Club who undertook some joint work with young people in Hackney who has experienced similar losses of their friends. They presented the work that they undertook including performances and a report, to the community, The Mayor and the Chair of Youth First.

New Cross and Downham – Lewisham Local

4.22.8 New Cross and Downham Assemblies are working with Lewisham Local to increase giving of time money and resources in the ward. The Coordinating Groups identified opportunities for residents to get involved on Giving Tuesday which was created as a reaction to Black Friday. Students from Goldsmiths helped to decorate a container which acts as a bike workshop at Somerville Youth & Play Provision. In addition, young people from Somerville baked cakes and delivered them to isolated residents on their estate and Phoenix Housing hosted a job club with HR professionals who gave their time as part of their corporate social responsibility. Both wards are now supporting activities in Student Volunteering week which include food distribution with Fare Share, supporting services for homeless people, Good Gym sessions and clearing up a community garden. There will also be a Social Hackathon where students can feed in ideas of how they can help to tackle a range of social issues.

Evelyn – Community Infrastructure Levy Trial

4.22.9 In response to a request from the Assembly for more information on Section 106 funding, officers have been working closely with the Head of Planning on a full report and the transition to Community Infrastructure Levy. New processes will be trialled in Evelyn Ward before roll out across the borough. Deptford Folk, a park user group for Deptford Park and Folkstone Gardens have been undertaking consultations with a range of residents at their events to identify potential projects and these will be included in a the wider consultation at the Spring Assembly.

Brockley – Number 1 Pensioners Club

4.22.10 The Brockley No 1 pensioners club has been meeting at St Andrews for many years , it started around the time of the war and is a club for men and women who would like a couple of hours, mixing with other people, just for a chat or to play a game. Current regular activities include going out for lunch once a month, playing games, outings in the warmer weather to parks and the seaside. They also arrange short holiday breaks a couple of times a year. The group is now run by volunteers, with help from community work students and the centre manager.

4.22.11 This project is run by community connections, and they received £1,000 of assembly funding.



4.23 Overall feedback on the Assemblies programme is very positive with examples of the types of quotes received on feedback forms listed below:

The atmosphere was convivial and friendly, it felt like everyone was welcome – Grove Park Assembly

I didn't have any expectations, but I was happy that I was given my say. I learnt quite a lot as well – Lewisham Central Assembly

A wide range of information was provided – Lee Green Assembly
The meeting was very informative with some useful tips – Perry Vale Assembly

It was all very good as usual – Telegraph Hill Assembly

A really good turnout, with lots of passion – Evelyn Assembly

The Forest Hill Assembly is an engaging thing that does great work, keep it up – Forest Hill Assembly

We didn't get funded so other groups chipped in to help us, I was touched – Bellingham Assembly

A really informative meeting – Rushey Green Assembly

4.24 However, there is some negative feedback received as detailed below:

- *Acoustics were poor, more thought needed about venue choice*
- *Better time management needed, not enough time to tackle all the issues*
- *I couldn't hear much as the PA system was really poor*
- *More control needed over irrelevant questions*
- *Some decisions seem to be approved / agreed before coming to the assembly*
- *Better advertising needed, not enough young people*

4.25 Development officers take this negative feedback very seriously when it is received and seek to address the specific issues to ensure that the next meeting is a more positive experience for all concerned.

5 Other Developments

5.1 **Main Grants Neighbourhood Funding** - In 2015, as part of the updated Main Grants programme, a new strand of funding to support Neighbourhood Development was introduced. An opportunity was created for ward-based organisations to bid for funds to undertake Neighbourhood Development activities. Following a review of applicants, eight organisations were recommended for funding. During the period July 15 to December 16, the organisations in question developed their activities at differing rates. In some wards, effective partnerships were developed and the neighbourhood organisations acted as catalysts in developing work with community groups and facilitated positive partnership working. However, in some areas the delivery organisations failed to establish their neighbourhood development roles. As part of the Main Grants review in the second half of 2016, it was recommended that two of the organisations that had originally received funding should have their funding discontinued from April 2017. It is hoped that the remaining six organisations will continue to work closely with Local Assemblies and jointly undertake community development functions.

5.2 **Crowdfunding** - In June 2015, at the Local Assemblies Borough-wide Co-ordinating Group event organised to share best practice across the borough, a presentation was made by Spacehive, a crowdfunding

organisation with a specialism in working with the public sector, about their services. This was well-received. Following this presentation and subsequent discussions, Spacehive was contracted to work with the Council to jointly deliver the Small and Faith Fund programme. The experience of working with Spacehive was generally very positive in that a significant number of projects were developed. In fact, in a short period of time, the number of projects in Lewisham became the largest number of projects of any local authority in the country on Spacehive's platform.

- 5.3 A number of community organisations, although initially apprehensive about the crowdfunding process, were successful in raising a significant amount of funds to complement Council grants. At the end of the project, a review was undertaken which identified a number of learning points as well as the benefits of crowdfunding. It identified that Spacehive did not necessarily provide the absolute ideal service for community organisations as the main focus of their work is improving the public realm. It was therefore decided that a new provider should be engaged and, in December 2016, the Council engaged the services of a new crowdfunding provider, Crowdfunder. It is hoped that the lessons learned from the management of the Small and Faith Fund will in future be transferred to Assembly based funds. Assemblies may wish to explore the advantages of crowdfunding to support local organisations in the coming year.

6 Considerations for the future direction of Local Assemblies

- 6.1 The Assembly Programme has been in operation for 9 years and a number of lessons can be drawn from its operation. These include:
- They are an effective way for Ward Councillors to engage with local communities
 - They provide an opportunity for active engagement on community-wide issues
 - There are still groups that are not attracted to attending formal Assembly meetings, e.g. young people and people with caring responsibilities
- 6.2 In receiving this report, the committee is asked to consider the following in developing the Assembly programme for the future:
- How Local Assemblies can further develop the use of social media especially around promoting meetings to young people.
 - How Local Assemblies can (in some wards) form greater partnerships with schools and local youth organisations.
 - How Local Assemblies can continue to engage with communities outside of meetings and maintain a strong and pro-active profile in challenging fiscal times
 - How Local Assemblies can continue to act as a forum for engagement between the Council and its communities and play an integral role in influencing policy

- How Local Assemblies that have a seen a fall in attendances can be reinvigorated to attract new people.
- How Local Assemblies can build upon the successful marketplace events which are hugely popular with attendees and provide a vibrant / informal aspect to the assembly meeting.

7. Financial Implications

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

8. Legal Implications

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

If there are any queries about this report please contact James Lee, Head of Culture and Community Development on 020 8314 6548.