

Public Report  
Audit Committee

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**Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting**

Audit Committee – 17 June 2025

**Report Title**

Children's Capital of Culture Audit Report Update

**Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan?**

No

**Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report**

Andrew Bramidge, Strategic Director of Regeneration and Environment

**Report Author(s)**

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**Ward(s) Affected**

Borough-Wide

**Report Summary**

The purpose of this report is to provide assurance to the Audit Committee in relation to the actions taken and implementation of the recommendations made with regard to the partial assurance Internal Audit report on Children's Capital of Culture governance and procurement for the programme of events.

**Recommendations**

That the Audit Committee note the contents of the report.

**List of Appendices Included**

N/A

**Background Papers**

None

**Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel**

None

**Council Approval Required**

No

**Exempt from the Press and Public**

No

## Children's **Capital of Culture Audit Report Update**

### **1. Background**

- 1.1 In 2025 Rotherham became the world's first Children's Capital of Culture. This high-profile programme is delivered through an agreed governance arrangement with the Cultural Partnership Board and funded through a range of external grant programmes with the Council as the accountability body for core funding.
- 1.2 At the request of the Chief Executive this audit was added to the Audit Plan for 2024/5 and completed in January 2025. The overall objective of the audit was to provide assurance on the Council's roles and responsibilities for the delivery of effective governance and procurement for the Children's Capital of Culture programme of events.
- 1.3 The Audit gave a 'Partial Assurance' and provided seven recommendations for implementation. All recommended actions are now complete.

### **2. Key Issues**

#### **2.1 Recommendation one: Partnership Business Continuity Risks**

- 2.1.1 This recommendation noted that the Children's Capital of Culture's 'project risk register and monitoring arrangements do not document the failure or merger of a key partner and the subsequent impact on the Children's Capital of Culture project as a whole.' This was rated as a 'low' risk.
- 2.1.2 The agreed action was for the risk to be added to the project's risk register and for finance to be requested to perform checks on key partners.
- 2.1.3 This action was completed prior to the final audit report being circulated in January 2025.
- 2.1.4 The project's risk register is monitored on an ongoing basis in the following ways:
  - at monthly meeting of Rotherham's Cultural Partnership Board
  - at six-weekly meetings of the Strategic Oversight Group (SOG), an internal Council group with oversight of Children's Capital of Culture
  - at monthly meetings between Children's Capital of Culture's Programme Manager and Programme Coordinator

#### **2.2 Recommendation two: Declaration of Interest**

- 2.2.1 The recommendation noted that staff members could be open to allegations of impropriety, and that 'to allay any perceptions of supplier favouritism, clear communication is required on how such histories and relationships are to be effectively managed. Whilst robust controls may be in place their existence needs to be completely and clearly communicated including on the project website.' This was rated as a 'low' risk.

- 2.2.2 The agreed action was for a Programme Decision-making Framework to be introduced for this purpose.
- 2.2.3 This action was completed prior to the final audit report being circulated in January 2025.
- 2.2.4 The Programme Decision-making Framework is clearly and openly promoted on the Children's Capital of Culture website and in other relevant Children's Capital of Culture communications channels (e.g. the quarterly printed highlights guide).
- 2.2.5 In addition, all Children's Capital of Culture staff members have completed a Declaration of Interests form, and line managers have completed an associated risk assessment as needed. All new Children's Capital of Culture staff are requested to complete a Declaration of Interest form during their induction period.

### **2.3 Recommendation three: Rotherham Children's Safeguarding Partnership**

- 2.3.1 The recommendation noted that 'whilst Safeguarding is a key risk on the project risk register and measures are planned to manage safeguarding at events, the high profile of Children's Capital of Culture presents a heightened level of risk that the service may not be fully aware of.' This was rated as a 'medium' risk.
- 2.3.2 The agreed action was for senior Children's Capital of Culture staff to request attendance at the next Rotherham Children's Safeguarding Partnership meeting to present the programme and seek advice how best to strengthen the controls in place.
- 2.3.3 This action had an implementation date of 28<sup>th</sup> February 2025.
- 2.3.4 Chris Siddall (Head of Sport, Leisure and Strategic Partnerships) and Leanne Buchan (Head of Creative Programming and Engagement) met with Rotherham Children's Safeguarding Partnership colleagues in January 2025. As a result, additional measures were implemented into the service's safeguarding and event management plans, specifically with regard to recording, reporting and dealing with unauthorised spectators and people presenting suspicious behaviour at events. As such this recommendation was implemented prior to the agreed implementation date.

### **2.4 Recommendation Four: Grant Compliance Actions**

- 2.4.1 The recommendation noted that the service must 'ensure that all expenditure meets funders as well as RMBC's transparency and procurement requirements,' noting that there were cases when the procurement of goods or services were compliant with the Council's FPPRs but not with the terms and conditions of grant funders, such as Arts Council England. This was rated as a 'medium' risk.

2.4.2 The agreed action was to produce a briefing to ensure that all relevant officers understand the terms and conditions of funding, as well as the Council's FPPRs, as it relates to procurement thresholds.

2.4.3 This action had an implementation date of 28<sup>th</sup> February 2025.

2.4.4 Children's Capital of Culture's Programme Manager gave a detailed verbal briefing to all manager-level staff within the service; this included sharing a copy of the Council's FPPRs with all managers, sharing copies of external funder's grant agreements relevant to each manager's workplan, and encouraging managers to book onto the Council's Procurement Training. As such this recommendation was implemented prior to the agreed implementation date.

**2.5 Recommendation Five: Ensure compliance with FPPR 67.1.14 for all Children's Capital of Culture contract exemptions.**

2.5.1 The recommendation noted that whilst 'FPPR 67.1.14 requires that 'Where an exemption is approved details of the contract must be advertised on the Council's contract register and on Contracts Finder (for Contracts above £25,000) in accordance with data transparency and reporting requirements'', historically there were occasions where the service had not complied with the regulation. This was rated as a 'low' risk.

2.5.2 The agreed action was to develop a Children's Capital of Culture Contracts Register to monitor contracts and procurement routes as they arise.

2.5.3 This action had an implementation date of 28<sup>th</sup> February 2025.

2.5.4 Children's Capital of Culture's Programme Coordinator checks on a weekly basis that all current contracts being awarded are logged on the Contracts Register. The Head of Creative Programming and Engagement reports to Strategic Officers Group on a six-weekly basis; this includes reporting to the group on tenders, grants and contracts related to the Children's Capital of Culture project. The Children's Capital of Culture work closely with Procurement to ensure all Contracts above £25,000 are advertised on the Council's contract register and Contracts Finder, including recent commissions for a Guest Director and a Marketing and PR Partner. As such this recommendation was implemented prior to the agreed implementation date.

**2.6 Recommendation Six: Ensure RMBC intellectual property rights guidance for the Children's Capital of Culture is compiled and complete.**

2.6.1 The recommendation noted that 'intellectual property rights are an emerging issue for the Children's Capital of Culture project that needs to be considered now so that adequate arrangements are in place when the key programme of event exists' and that at that time no documented guidance on the protection of RMBC's intellectual property rights existed. This was rated as a 'medium' risk.

2.6.2 The agreed action was to develop a Partnership Agreement that enables use of the Children's Capital of Culture brand, whilst protecting the Council's Intellectual Property.

2.6.3 This action had an implementation date of 28<sup>th</sup> February 2025.

2.6.4 A partnership agreement was drafted in February 2025, which included a clause related to intellectual property rights. This was checked with the Head of Service for Creative Programming & Engagement on 17th February, before being shared with colleagues in Legal for final amends and approval for roll-out across all Children's Capital of Culture delivery partners, as identified through the service's formal Programme Decision-Making process. As such, this recommendation was implemented prior to the agreed implementation date

**2.7 Recommendation Seven: Ensure all Rotherham children have the opportunity to participate and benefit from the Children's Capital of Culture.**

2.7.1 The recommendation noted that 'gaps [in reaching all of our community's children] have been identified both by the service and the auditor, and as such some form of inclusivity review is required to provide assurance to external funders and the Council that these gaps are not significant once the final programme of events has been agreed.' This was rated as a 'low' risk.

2.7.2 The agreed action was to review the service's Equalities Impact Assessment and Action Plan.

2.7.3 This action had an implementation date of 28<sup>th</sup> February 2025.

2.7.4 The Children's Capital of Culture Programme Manager completed a detailed review of the service's Equalities Impact Assessment and Action Plan in early February 2025. As a result, the service has undertaken a number of actions, including:

- meeting with colleagues in Public Health to formalise appropriate, compliant and pragmatic tools for consistently collating demographics information from project participants and stakeholders;
- delivering an extended full team meeting to identify key actions across all aspects of the service to improve and develop our equalities provision;
- commission equalities training, attended by the Children's Capital of Culture team and key project partners; and
- ringfencing dedicated funding to deliver targeted activities to better reach groups who have had low engagement with the project and/or face significant barriers to participation.

As such this recommendation was implemented prior to the agreed implementation date.

### **3. Options considered and recommended proposal**

- 3.1 No further options considered.

### **4. Consultation on proposal**

- 4.1 Not applicable.

### **5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision**

- 5.1 The Assistant Director for Culture, Sport & Tourism is accountable for the actions in the audit report and the Head of Creative Programming & Engagement and Children's Capital of Culture Programme Manager are responsible for implementation. All actions are now complete.

### **6. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications**

- 6.1 The report provides an update on previously agreed actions and therefore there are no direct Financial & Procurement implications arising from the report.

### **7. Legal Advice and Implications**

- 7.1 The report provides an update on previously agreed actions and therefore there are no direct Legal implications arising from the report.

### **8. Human Resources Advice and Implications**

- 8.1 The report provides an update on previously agreed actions and therefore there are no direct Human Resources implications arising from the report.

### **9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults**

- 9.1 The report provides an update on previously agreed actions and therefore there are no direct implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults arising from the report.

### **10. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications**

- 10.1 The report provides an update on previously agreed actions and therefore there are no direct Equalities and Human Rights implications arising from the report.

### **11. Implications for CO<sub>2</sub> Emissions and Climate Change**

- 11.1 The report provides an update on previously agreed actions and therefore there are no direct Climate Change implications arising from the report.

## 12. Implications for Partners

- 12.1 The report provides an update on previously agreed actions and therefore there are no direct implications for Partners arising from the report.

## 13. Risks and Mitigation

- 13.1 Implementation of the actions agreed during the audit will help to mitigate the risks it identified.

### Accountable Officer(s)

Polly Hamilton, Assistant Director for Culture, Sport & Tourism

Leanne Buchan, Head of Creative Programming & Engagement

Sarah Christie, Children's Capital of Culture Programme Manager

Approvals obtained on behalf of:

	Name	Date
Chief Executive		Click here to enter a date.
Strategic Director of Finance & Customer Services (S.151 Officer)	Named officer	Click here to enter a date.
Assistant Director of Legal Services (Monitoring Officer)	Named officer	Click here to enter a date.
Assistant Director of Human Resources (if appropriate)		Click here to enter a date.
Head of Human Resources (if appropriate)		Click here to enter a date.
The Strategic Director with responsibility for this report	Please select the relevant Strategic Director	Click here to enter a date.
Consultation undertaken with the relevant Cabinet Member	Please select the relevant Cabinet Member	Click here to enter a date.

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