

**Report to:** The Economy, Arts, Sports & Public Realm Policy and Accountability Committee

**Date:** 21/07/2025

**Subject:** Black History Project Update

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**Responsible Director:** Mark Raisbeck, Director of Public Realm

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## SUMMARY

This report provides an update on work that is in progress in response to the priorities set by the Cultural Compact reflective of the commitment in the borough's cultural strategy to explore the feasibility of having a Black history hub to celebrate the heritage and contributions of Black communities within the Borough. It describes the arrangements in place for a Community Collecting and Engagement project, initiated in co-production with residents, to generate content for the project.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Committee is recommended to review and comment on the report.

**Wards Affected:** ALL

Our Values	Summary of how this report aligns to the <a href="#">H&amp;F Corporate Plan</a> and the H&F Values
Building shared prosperity	The Black History Project supports the local creative and visitor economy, contributing to the aims of the Upstream strategy by boosting cultural tourism and creating opportunities for local organisations and artists.
Creating a compassionate and inclusive council	The Black History Project seeks to raise awareness and address issues of equality and diversity to all residents and increases access to heritage and cultural opportunities.
Doing things with local residents, not to them	The Black History and Heritage Steering Group comprises local residents from the Black Community and is chaired by Cllr Sharon Holder. It functions as a sub-group of the Heritage Partnership that is under the umbrella of the Where

	Culture Connects Compact which is the Borough's principal stakeholder partnership for culture.
Being ruthlessly financially efficient	By working with Fulham Palace Trust and community partners, the project is able to leverage in-kind support to deliver outcomes in the most cost-effective way.
Taking pride in H&F	The Black History Project promotes local heritage and the contribution of different groups in the community, helping to build pride of place and celebrate H&F's rich diverse cultural identity.
Rising to the challenge of the climate and ecological emergency	The project takes a sustainable approach (such as digital collecting and the use of existing resources).

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## Background Papers Used in Preparing This Report

None

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## BACKGROUND

1. The Administration's commitment to black history was reflected in the co-produced cultural strategy. The Cultural Compact that was formed to deliver the Cultural Strategy agreed this was a priority and that creating a Black History Steering group would enable the development of the Black History Project to be co-produced with Borough's Black Community.
2. The Black History Steering Group was established by Cllr Sharon Holder (previously the Cabinet Member responsible for culture) and has been meeting since autumn 2024.
3. The Black History & Heritage Steering Group membership is included in the Terms of Reference (see Appendices).
4. The project is being undertaken in partnership with Fulham Palace Trust (FPT), which is one of six nationally recognised Anti-Racist Museums, and which is the principal heritage asset in the Borough.

## PROGRESS TO DATE

5. As a key first step in the project, the need to define what we mean by Black was identified by the Steering Group. The definition agreed on at the Steering Group meeting of 26th February 2025 is:

*“Black is used to refer to people who self-identify as having non-white backgrounds, including people with African, Asian and South American heritage, indigenous minorities (such as Māori, Aboriginal and Native American populations) and people with complex heritage, sometimes described as ethnically diverse.”*

6. Establishing a Black History Hub implies collection, conservation, interpretation and exhibition of relevant materials. The Borough does not currently have such a collection. Therefore, the first stage of the project has been to engage the local Black community and explore the extent to which artefacts and personal items and memories could form part of a future hub offer. FPT has expertise in collections management and care and has engaged a project officer to lead on the community collecting and engagement project coinciding with the search for a feasible location to showcase a collection.
7. To engage with the Community across the Borough, the Steering Group agreed to run an 18-month Community Collecting & Engagement project. This is planned in 3 phases, each of 6 months' duration, taking place in Hammersmith, Shepherds Bush and Fulham. The programme will be repeated in each of the three areas, giving different communities the opportunity to participate and shape the detail to reflect any local differences in emphasis or experience.
8. For each of the areas a host location will be identified. This may be a public library, but consideration will also be given to other potential locations which may offer advantages in being more prominently located and better able to attract footfall. By the end of this phase, the project will have gathered a range of collected material (both digital and physical) and established strong community partnerships.
9. The activity of the project will also identify potential locations to display the items collected as well as funding opportunities to ensure the perennity of the project. Eventually the Steering Groups aim is to establish a 'hub' where a range of related activities could take place.
10. The first phase of the project is focused in Fulham with a working group comprising residents in the local area. The framework of activities, which will feature in each of the 6-month projects, are set out below and the costs are funded from the Library & Archives revenue budget.

## **Stories**

11. *The Ethnic Communities Oral History* project that ran in Hammersmith & Fulham from 1987 until 1994 is used as a stimulus and inspiration for engagement and reflection on the experiences of current residents in the borough. A new oral and visual history project will capture the lives of our communities, providing fresh insight into the experiences of the 30 years since 1994.

## ***Artefacts***

12. An “antiques roadshow” style event will run 2 to 3 times over the 6 months in each location. The emphasis will be to identify the personal and social value rather than the economic value of the object, and its potential for inclusion in any future Black History collection.

## ***People***

13. A high-quality photography project, capturing the lives and the environment of residents from the perspective of Black history and creating compelling images to be shared in public exhibitions.

## ***Writing***

14. A programme of talks by Black writers – building on and expanding existing contacts with authors and exploring the broader cultural context of Black experience, linked to creative activities in libraries.

## ***Volunteering***

15. A programme that will train people in skills that relate to content management, events, and community engagement to embed practice locally and facilitate continued activity in the 3 locations beyond the lifetime of the project.
16. The Fulham working group has been meeting and working with the project officer from FPT to develop activities aligned to the framework of activities identified above.

## **Activities in the Fulham project**

### **17. Workshops**

- a. 2<sup>nd</sup> July Sharon Tomlin at West College London: engaging with older college students, interactive family history and genealogy, and social and geographical history.
- b. 4<sup>th</sup> July at Wendell Park Primary (KS2) Kamapala Chukwuka providing a half day workshop about Cameroon, storytelling, Q&A, and bracelets making from fabrics.
- c. 17<sup>th</sup> July at Wendell Park Primary (KS2) Isabella Richards: providing a workshop on Caribbean and African clothing, and storytelling through clothing.
- d. 30<sup>th</sup> August Fulham Library Workshop: focussing on Health, working in services. health and transport, traditional jobs, and migrant stories.

### **18. Roadshows**

Friday 25<sup>th</sup> July and Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> September 2025 in the Great Hall at Fulham Palace. Residents who identify as Black are invited to bring an item of social or cultural significance with a historian present to tell us more about the objects we have collected.

## 19. Photography and Filming

Through Generations – highlights the legacy of Black history through family portraits – at least three generations in each portrait / three families / location in home setting, heritage setting, in a studio (families from Fulham). This element will run for all parts of the Borough so that everyone can be involved in the project.

Black Joy - Black children, particularly boys to counter negative narratives about them, playing, dancing, running with friends. The project is seeking involvement from Chelsea and Fulham academies, Brunswick Club for Young People, and Action on Disability.

20. Oral History drawing on recording key figures, and individuals from organisations in the community.

21. Black History Tapestry - a national project with the potential for contributions from Borough residents to be included. The Tapestry will be exhibited at Fulham Palace from 8-15 October 2025.

## **CREATION OF A BLACK HISTORY HUB**

22. Co-production with the local Black community is key to ensuring the relevance, usefulness, appropriate form and location of a facility, together with a long-term and sustainable business model.

23. The generation of content for exhibition and educational purposes, as set out above, will provide the basis for display of Black history and the ongoing engagement of residents with Black heritage. This collection in the immediate future is most likely to be incorporated into the Council's existing property portfolio, such as libraries.

## **APPENDICES**

### **1. Terms of Reference for the Steering Group**

#### **Black History & Heritage Steering Group Terms of Reference**

##### **Introduction**

1. H&F's cultural strategy, Where Culture Connects, commits to investigating the feasibility of creating a Black History Hub and a more prominent Black History Month as part of the ambition for Inclusive cultural provision in the Borough. It sets an action to work with historical groups, members of the Windrush generation and others to progress the feasibility of a Black History Hub - to review sites, content, and funding options.
2. This ambition builds on work to date to acknowledge and celebrate the cultural contribution of the Black community locally, and to record and share Black heritage through publications, blue plaques, heritage trails, educational activities in schools and the naming of spaces at the new Civic Campus after prominent figures.
3. The Cultural Compact has been established to oversee the delivery of the Cultural Strategy and intends to develop subsidiary partnerships for destination, heritage, and cultural education. The Heritage Partnership is expected to be established in early 2025.

##### **Purpose**

4. The purpose of the Working Group will be to act as a specialist advisory body to lead on developing the concept of the Black History Hub and the initial stage of community collecting and engagement which will inform both the wider strategy and the search for potential locations for a permanent home. It will also serve to steer the development of Black History Month into a more prominent event in the Borough's calendar.

##### **Scope**

5. This group will work collaboratively with the staff team at the Council and with the Cultural Compact and its emerging subsidiary partnership for Heritage, specifically to:
  - a. Develop a clear vision for researching, recording, and celebrating Black heritage in the Borough
  - b. Support three local Steering Groups for Black heritage community collecting and engagement to ensure effective connection between the initial phase of the project and the ambition to develop a Black history hub
  - c. Spread information about the project through their networks to broaden the range and number of organisations and individuals involved in the project
  - d. Use its collective expertise and experience to inform and advise on best practice relevant to the project, within the wider strategy for heritage in the Borough

- e. Advise on the development of proposals for a hubbub or cultural centre dedicated to Black heritage including on potential content or programme, location or facilities and any partnerships that would support its sustainable operation

## **Membership**

6. The working group is an advisory, not a decision-making, body. To fulfil the terms above, membership of the group should include a range of perspectives on Black heritage including community, cultural and heritage expertise.
7. Members include:
  - a. Cllr Sharon Holder
  - b. Cllr Nathalia Perez
  - c. Cllr Mercy Umeh
  - d. Jamila Bolton-Gordon – Westway Trust
  - e. Barbara Bees – local resident
  - f. Jazz Browne – Nubian Life
  - g. Rosie Peters – Wendell Park School
  - h. Vishanee Naidoo – Fulham Cross School
  - i. Camille Curtis – Urban Partnership Group/Masbro Centre
  - j. Sian Harrington – Fulham Palace Trust
  - k. Sharon Tomlin – Local Historian
  - l. Bishara Mohamud – Anti-Tribalism Movement

The Group is supported and facilitated by H&F Officers and Fulham Palace Trust

## **Initial Arrangements**

8. The Chair shall be either Cllr Holder or agreed from time to time by the membership of the working group.
9. Meetings will normally be scheduled every two months at a venue agreed by the Members, or online if preferred. Where required, more frequent meetings may be agreed by the Members.
10. It is expected that members attend at least 60% of scheduled meetings.
11. The Council will provide the secretariat and ensure the timely production of agendas, papers, and minutes. The Council's Head of Libraries, Archives and Heritage will be the lead contact officer.

## **Expectations of Members**

38. Members will be expected to respect the confidentiality of some discussions and documents to support decision-making.
39. The group will operate to good practice principles with the expectation that its members will:

- a. work in the public interest - contributing positively to discussions consult as plans are developed - working with other members to achieve consensus on key issues to address priorities for action
- b. balance the interests of the Borough with the interests of their organisation, their sector and themselves
- c. actively contribute experience and expertise to achieve good workable solutions
- d. encourage mutual trust, respect the views of other members, and work collaboratively
- e. declare and manage conflicts of interest
- f. act with due diligence
- g. be prepared to attend regular meetings.
- h. be actively committed to addressing equality of opportunity

### **Review of Arrangements**

40. The initial draft Terms of Reference and membership will be subject to review on the anniversary of the first meeting or at the next available scheduled meeting. This will be undertaken in consultation with the Cultural Compact (or its Heritage Partnership once established), to ensure that the Working Group remains relevant and useful and integrated with other related structures.