

To: City Executive Board

Date: 4th April 2012

Report of: Head of Policy, Culture & Communications

Title of Report: CULTURE STRATEGY – REVIEW AND CONSULTATION

Summary and Recommendations

Purpose of report: This report provides background to the development of a revised Culture Strategy, a new draft strategy, and proposals for consultation on the draft strategy.

Key decision? No

Executive lead member: Councillor Bob Price

Policy Framework: Corporate Plan 2012-2016: Strong Active Communities and Vibrant, Sustainable Economy
Regeneration Framework

Recommendation(s): That City Executive Board approves the new draft strategy and the proposals for consultation.

Background

1. In 2007 the Audit Commission inspected culture in Oxford. The inspection concluded that the quality of cultural activities was 'good'. There was, however, a recognised need for a strategy which would help co-ordinate the work of cultural organisations, improve access to high quality arts activity, and increase community engagement. A three-year Culture Strategy was adopted by Full Council in September 2009 and a Cultural Action Plan was developed in consultation with the sector.
2. The 2009-2012 Culture Strategy has played an important role in: developing partnerships; setting benchmarks for the evaluation of cultural provision to Oxford's communities; highlighting the Council's commitment to cultural regeneration through new projects; enhanced public realm activity; as well as supporting organisations to offer

subsidised ticket schemes for young people in particular. In the past three years, Oxford has seen vast improvements in the quality of buildings delivering culture - Pegasus Theatre, Modern Art Oxford, the Ashmolean, plus the development of the Old Fire Station.

3. The Annex to this report sets out an evaluation of the Council's Culture Strategy.

Development of a new Culture Strategy for Oxford

4. Since the publication of the last strategy there have been substantial changes to Government policies, restructuring of the national, regional and local development agencies, a downturn in the economy and reduced funding for arts and culture.
5. The funding situation for the arts has changed significantly in the past two years and cultural organisations find themselves competing locally with each other and externally for ever-decreasing pots of money. It will become increasingly important to identify efficiencies and delivery models that encompass different partners, investors and agencies over the next three to five years. Our new strategy needs to be ambitious and also realistic in its ability to support and innovate.
6. Also, what was not sufficiently explicit in the last strategy was the link between the vision and the city's demography. The levels of disadvantage in the city underpin the City Council's belief that access to high quality cultural experiences can play a significant role in social regeneration. We aim to work through partnerships to create a truly "joined-up" Oxford for our local communities.
7. The review of the Culture Strategy is being led by Oxford City Council on behalf of the Cultural Action Group, a partnership involving organisations in Oxford funded by Arts Council England and Oxford City Council. The group consists of: The Playhouse, Pegasus Theatre, Modern Art Oxford, Oxford Contemporary Music, The University Museums, and Oxford Inspires. In addition, it is anticipated that Arts at the Old Fire Station, Film Oxford and The Arts Council of England will be invited to join the group.

Draft vision and priorities

8. Our shared vision for culture is:
to work in partnership with Oxford's key stakeholders and cultural partners to grow, improve and promote cultural activities and events that enhance and leave a legacy in the lives of individuals and communities, offer affordable, excellent experiences, encourage attainment amongst young people and promote cultural ambition.

9. Our priorities

There are four key priorities:

- leading a partnership-based approach to sustaining, developing and improving the cultural life of the city
- improving opportunities for young people to access and actively participate in high quality cultural activities
- improving opportunities for the diverse range of communities and faith groups in the city actively to participate in high quality cultural activities that reflect their own identities and can be shared with the whole community
- exploring the barriers to participation in cultural activities encountered by different sectors of the community and finding ways of removing them.

Equalities implications

10. An equalities impact assessment is attached. The City Council's overriding concern in formulating its consultation Culture Strategy has been to engage communities currently excluded from participation in the city's cultural life.

Consultation

11. The consultation period will begin on 9th April, following City Executive Board approval on the 8th April. The consultation will last for four weeks. A draft amended in the light of consultation will come back to City Executive Board in June and proceed to full Council.
12. Consultation will consist of:
 - Face to face discussions with key stakeholder groups, including cultural partners and community groups
 - Workshops
 - A website survey
 - Website link sent to key stakeholders and community groups
 - Scrutiny Committees.

Financial Implications

13. The draft strategy can be delivered through existing financial resources and through partnership agreements.

Legal Implications

13. There are no current legal implications.
14. The Council must ensure that the consultation is effective and that responses are properly evaluated, considered and taken into account

when finalising the strategy

15. Issues relating to governance and/or contractual matters may arise where cultural partners assist with delivery of objectives within the strategy.

Risk Management

15. The Cultural Strategy is low risk, although its non-adoption might result in the reduction of funding to arts partners. A summary risk register is set out below.

*Likelihood: 1 = Rare and 5 = Almost Certain
Impact: 1 = Insignificant and 5 = Catastrophic]*

Risk & Description	Likelihood	Impact	Counter Measures
Staff member leaving	Possible (3)	Major (4)	Contingency appoint new staff member
Change in Central Government and national and regional policy direction	Possible (3)	Moderate (3)	-
Change in Local Government	Possible (3)	Minor (2)	Try to work closely with all Members
Committee meeting dates amended	Unlikely (2)	Moderate (3)	Allow enough time in schedule in case meeting dates brought forward
Executive Board not approving document	Rare (1)	Major (4)	Continued liaison with Key Members
Full Council does not approve new Culture Strategy	Unlikely (2)	Major (4)	Need to ensure that document is properly prepared, consulted upon and supported by good evidence base

Climate Change/Environmental impact

16. The strategy adheres to the City Council's policy on climate change.

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List of background papers: Summary Evaluation Report Cultural Strategy, Evaluation of Cultural Strategy Action Plan, Draft Culture Strategy 2012-2017.

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