

**Report of:** Leisure and Parks Business Unit Manager

**Title:** Arts Strategic Plan (adoption)

**Ward:** All

**Report author(s):** Neil C Smith, Arts Officer (Strategic Development)  
Claire Thompson, Arts Officer (Dance and Theatre)

**Contact Tel No:** 01865 252829

**E-mail address:** ncsmith@oxford.gov.uk

**Key Decision:** Yes

**Lead Member:** Cllr Maureen Christian

**Scrutiny responsibility:** Community

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

That the Executive Board agrees to:

1. Adopt the Arts Strategic Plan, as endorsed by the Executive Board on 1<sup>st</sup> November 2004, with subsequent amendments following the final public consultation in March 2005.
2. Approve the annual procedure for reviewing and updating the Action Plan for the Arts Strategic Plan, as set out in the report.

## **1. Summary**

- 1.1. Oxford City Council has an important role to play in providing a strategic focus for the development of the Arts in Oxford, as expressed in the Arts Strategic Plan. This plan forms part of an emerging wider and robust framework for cultural development in Oxford, linked to the delivery of the Council's vision and Oxford's Community Strategy.
- 1.2. The Executive Board endorsed the Arts Strategic Plan on 1<sup>st</sup> November 2004, and authorised the Leisure and Parks Business Unit to enter into a final period of public consultation prior to returning the plan (with any necessary amendments) back to the Executive Board for adoption.
- 1.3. This report seeks adoption of the Arts Strategic Plan. It also sets out a proposed annual procedure for revising and updating the Action Plan linked to the delivery of the Arts Strategic Plan.
- 1.4. There are no additional financial or staffing implications involved with the adoption of the Arts Strategic Plan.

## **2. Council's Vision and Strategic Aims**

- 2.1. The Arts contribute to the delivery of the following areas of the Council's vision –
  - Providing More Affordable Leisure Activities
  - Creating Local Prosperity
  - Improving our Environment
  - Improving Dialogue and Consultation
  - Making Oxford a Safer City
- 2.2. The Arts contribute to the delivery of all five themes within Oxford's Community Strategy –
  - A Vibrant and Inclusive Economy
  - Safer Communities
  - A Better Living Environment
  - Opportunities for Life
  - Active and Healthy Communities
- 2.3. The adoption of the Arts Strategic Plan will provide a focus for working with the Arts across the Council and with our partners, linked in to the Council's vision and the Community Strategy.

## **3. Background and Context**

- 3.1. Oxford is seen as an icon of excellence and aspiration in the Arts, and this was an important reason for Oxford being designated as a Centre of Culture, and nominated by Arts Council England as one of three centres for cultural leadership in the South East. The Arts are an

essential part of life, as well as being an important driver of economic and social change.

- 3.2. Oxford City Council has a key role to play in providing a strategic lead for the development of the Arts in the city, and ensuring that this sector can continue to thrive into the future.
- 3.3. Each year, Oxford City Council invests almost half-a-million pounds into the Arts, but it is essential that this investment forms part of a long-term shared vision for the development of the Arts in the city. The Council set out its aspirations for the development of culture in Making The Difference (June 2002). However, it is ten years since Oxford last had a comprehensive and committed strategy for Arts Development.

#### **4. Consultation**

- 4.1. The Arts Strategic Plan was developed through two periods of consultation during 2004. A closed consultation with selected Arts organisations, external bodies and Council departments happened during May – June 2004. A wider open consultation followed through July – September 2004, leading to the final draft endorsed by the Executive Board in November. The final public consultation on the endorsed draft happened through March 2005.
- 4.2. Details of the final consultation were released through the local media, published on the Council's website and Intranet, and sent to 550 local arts professionals through the weekly ArtsNews email bulletin. The plan was made available for download on the Council's website, and some printed copies were distributed via Area Coordinators and Arts Organisations.
- 4.3. Fifteen people responded with specific comments on the Arts Strategic Plan or the accompanying Action Plan. Approximately three times this number have expressed their approval of the plan verbally or by email to the Arts Officers and Cllr Christian. As expected, the number of people responding was lower than the first round of public consultation.
- 4.4. No-one commented on the Arts Strategic Plan through the Forward Plan consultation process.
- 4.5. The revised version of the Arts Strategic Plan reflects the comments that have been received. Comments related to specific actions within the Action Plan will be fed into the Action Plan review process.

#### **5. Action Plan review procedure**

- 5.1. Within this report the Executive Board is asked to adopt the Arts Strategic Plan and the priorities contained within it. These priorities were used as the basis of an Action Plan covering the period 2004-07 that has guided the Council's work with the Arts over the last year.

- 5.2. It is recommended that the Action Plan be updated annually between April and June of each year, including a review of the previous year's activity, and covering a rolling three-year programme. The revised Action Plan will be agreed with the Culture, Events and Tourism portfolio holder, and feed into the business planning process from September.
- 5.3. A review of actions from 2004/05 is currently underway. The majority of these actions have been delivered as planned, and a full report will be available in June.
- 5.4. The Arts Development section is working with Neighbourhood Renewal on an Arts Funding Review linked to the wider Grants Review. Current funding agreements with Arts Partners come to an end in April 2006. It is envisaged that service specifications linked to any future Arts Partner funding will be more closely integrated with the Arts Strategic Plan Action Plan. This will make it easier to monitor delivery on the strategic priorities agreed for the Arts, and their contribution to the Council's vision and Community Strategy.

## **6. Financial Implications**

- 6.1. There are no additional financial implications arising from the adoption of the Arts Strategic Plan.
- 6.2. Each Action Plan review will be made on the basis of existing investment in the Arts. The resources column within the Action Plan recognises where additional resources need to be secured, primarily through external fundraising.
- 6.3. A coherent and committed strategic framework is essential for securing investment into the Arts in Oxford. Not adopting the Arts Strategic Plan could negatively impact on the ability to secure further external investment into the Arts in the city.

## **7. Legal Implications**

- 7.1. There are no legal implications to the adoption of the Arts Strategic Plan

## **8. Staffing Implications**

- 8.1. There are no staffing implications related to the adoption of the Arts Strategic Plan.
- 8.2. Staffing capacity within the Arts Development section remains seriously low, and the Arts Strategic Plan reflects the move towards more strategic development in partnership to support and enhance the Council's core Arts service.

## **9. Recommendation**

9.1. The Arts Strategic Plan provides a necessary strategic framework for the Arts in Oxford. The Executive Board are asked to adopt the Arts Strategic Plan, and agree the recommended procedures for the annual revision of the accompanying Action Plan.

## **10. Appendices**

- Arts Strategic Plan for adoption

THIS REPORT HAS BEEN SEEN AND APPROVED BY:  
Portfolio Holder: Cllr Maureen Christian (Culture, Events and Tourism)  
Strategic Director: Sharon Cosgrove  
Legal and Democratic Services: Lindsay Cane  
Financial Management: Claire Reid

Background papers:  
Arts Strategic Plan – Action Plan 2004/07