

Report of: Strategic Director, Physical Environment

To: Executive Board

Date: 8th October 2007

Item No:

Title of Report : Culture Strategy 2007-2012: Authority to consult

Summary and Recommendations

Purpose of report: To inform Executive Board of progress with the Council's preparation for the Cultural Inspection and to seek authority to consult the public and stakeholder organisations on the Culture Strategy 2007-2012.

Key decision: No

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Caroline van Zyl

Scrutiny Responsibility: Environment

Ward(s) affected: All

Report Approved by:

Portfolio Holders – Councillor van Zyl and Councillor Rundle

Local Services – Sarah Fogden

Financial Services – Jeremy Thomas

Policy Framework: None

Recommendation(s):

That the Executive Board agrees to:

1. Approve the draft Culture Strategy 2007-2012 for consultation, in line with the requirements of the Policy Framework

Introduction

1. An inspection of the Council's cultural services has been agreed with the Audit Commission for October 2007 and the Council is currently progressing work on a self-assessment and evidential documents to support this.
2. The Council's preparations started at the end of 2006 and have been led by the Strategic Director, Physical Environment who established a cross-corporate staff group from all the Council's cultural services to gather evidence, prepare our self-assessment and analyse value for money.
3. This early work identified that the Council's strategic 'golden thread' that should join the vision and objectives of Community Strategy with individual service plans and strategies was incomplete and in particular that the Council's 2002 'Making the Difference – a Cultural Strategy for Oxford' was poor and not fit for purpose.

Strategy Revision

4. It was agreed at a Member, staff and stakeholder workshop that revising the Culture Strategy should be a corporate priority and that the development of a replacement strategy should be undertaken collaboratively.
5. Earlier in the year the Audit Commission, based on good practice, provided some challenge to the Council's cultural services in advance of the autumn inspection. The Commission held two workshops to help the Council consider the potential and impact of its cultural services, cultural strategy and value for money (vfm). The Commission also wanted to assess whether the Council was on track to provide a fit for purpose strategic framework that can be translated into vfm performance measures.
6. The Commission was also concerned about the 2002 Cultural Strategy as it did not set the cultural vision, establish the Council's role as a cultural leader and enable and drive the provision and improvement of cultural services.
7. The Council developed the draft Culture Strategy 2007-2012 and supporting action plan collaboratively
 - Oxford Inspires were commissioned to work with our cultural stakeholders to develop an overarching strategic direction statement to form the starting point for this strategy
 - The strategy was developed over two workshops with staff, Councillors and stakeholders and a further two staff workshops

8. This collaboration ensured that the draft Culture Strategy 2007-2012 provides a clear strategic framework that sets aims for the Council's Cultural Services to:
 - Provide focus and direction to its role as a cultural leader and taking strategic responsibility for ensuring a high quality and clearly defined cultural offer;
 - Define the delivery of the cultural offer by clearly directing what should be directly provided, and detailing the Council's enabling, funding and partnership roles in all cultural areas;
 - Establish value and worth with a clearer focus on the 'instrumental' nature of culture in terms of opportunities, achievements and benefits;
 - Assure that cultural services are delivered in a planned and targeted way to make a difference in people's lives;
 - Focus on culture's role in supporting the priorities of the Community Strategy and in the Council's 2007-2010 Corporate Plan; and
 - Take direct action to improve cultural services
9. The draft Culture Strategy 2007-2012 and a supporting SMART action plan (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic with Timescales) will be circulated separately from this report ahead of the Executive Board.

Financial implications

10. No immediate financial implications have been identified in relation to the approval of this strategy for consultation. Many of the actions will necessitate a shift in the way we work and provide for cultural services rather the application of new resources. It is anticipated at this stage that the resource implications will be managed within the Council's proposed reorganization, however a further assessment will accompany the Strategy when final approval is sought.

Legal implications

11. No immediate legal implications have been identified in relation to the approval of this strategy for consultation.

Staffing implications

12. No immediate staffing implications have been identified in relation to the approval of this strategy for consultation.

Timetable

13. The draft Culture Strategy 2007-2012 is now ready for consultation. Following Executive Board approval, and publication of the timetable for the proposals in the next Forward Plan, 28 days of public consultation will be undertaken primarily through the Council's Citizen Panel, stakeholder organizations, user groups and Area Committees.

In order to maximize the response, we will also advertise the consultation process to the general public by way of a press notice and people will be able to access the draft Strategy and consultation questions on our web site. Consultation will include the relevant Scrutiny Committee.

14. At the end of the consultation period, the Culture Strategy 2007-2012 will be amended in light of an analysis of the consultation responses before coming to the Executive Board for final approval in December 2007, due to be ratified by Council in January 2008.
15. Once the Culture Strategy is approved, it will allow the development of underpinning thematic service plans. These thematic action plans will provide more information on how each of the Council's Cultural Service Areas will contribute to the delivery of the objectives and targets set out in this Strategy.

Recommendation

16. That the Executive Board agrees to approve the draft Culture Strategy 2007-2012 for consultation, in line with the requirements of the Policy Framework.

Name and Contact details of author:

S Cosgrove Tel: 252360 Email: emace@oxford.gov.uk

Background Papers

None for this report