

**To: City Executive Board**

**Date: 14<sup>th</sup> October 2009**

**Item No: 9**

**Report of: Head of Service, City Development**

**Title of Report: Oxford City Council Cultural Strategy Action Plan (2009-2012)**

### **Summary and Recommendations**

**Purpose of report:** To obtain approval for the revised Cultural Strategy Action Plan for 2009-2012

**Key decision?** No

**Executive lead member:** Cllr Bob Price

**Report Approved by:**

**Executive Director of City Regeneration:** Mel Barrett

**Finance:** Anna Hedges, Group Accountant

**Legal:** Jeremy Thomas, Head of Legal Services

**Environmental Development:** John Copley

**Policy Framework:** Improve the local environment, economy and quality of life policy objective of the Oxford City Council Corporate Plan.

**Recommendation(s):**

To recommend to Council that the revised Cultural Strategy Action Plan be adopted.

## **1.0 Introduction**

- 1.1 This report sets out the request to adopt the Cultural Strategy Action Plan in line with the Cultural Strategy (adopted by Full Council on 20<sup>th</sup> April 2009). In addition it sets out how the Cultural Strategy was developed, and how the Action Plan has since been modified. A copy of the Action Plan is at Annex 1.
- 1.2 Comments and recommendations made by Full Council at its meeting in April are set out under 'Alterations to Cultural Strategy Action Plan on recommendation by Full Council' in point 2.0.
- 1.3 Comments and recommendations made on the draft revised Action plan by Scrutiny panel on 4<sup>th</sup> August are set out under 'Alterations to Cultural Strategy Action plan by Scrutiny panel' in point 3.0.
- 1.4 The Council's Cultural Strategy has been defined as encompassing:
  - The performing and visual arts
  - Landscape, architecture & buildings
  - Museums, archives and local identity
  - Fashion, media, design, film, writing & publishing
  - Tourism & heritage
- 1.5 Cultural policies play a significant part in the Council's wider policy framework relating to the transformational perspective built into the Corporate Policy. Four priority corporate themes in particular are addressed by the Cultural Strategy:
  - Physical regeneration
  - Community cohesion and diversity
  - Creative skills and employment
  - Tackling social deprivation and reducing crime
- 1.6 The Cultural Strategy Action Plan forms the delivery framework for ensuring that the vision for culture as laid out in the strategy and the related service delivery plans are implemented and delivered.

## **2.0 Alterations to the Cultural Strategy Action Plan on recommendation of Full Council (April 2009)**

- 2.1 At the April Full Council meeting, the Cultural Strategy Action Plan was withdrawn by the Executive in order to improve the document. In addition members raised a number of issues. These are set out below together with the actions subsequently taken.
  - (1) Action plan objective 2 – it was inappropriate to delete reference to May Day and Christmas. The Board Member said that this had not been the Executive's intention.

*Action taken: under Objective 1.2 reference to Christmas and May Day has been reinstated alongside other significant events in Oxford's calendar.*

- (2) The strategy made no reference to match funding for the Cowley Road Carnival. The Board Member said the document was a strategy for a period of time. It was not the purpose of a strategy to deal with detailed funding issues.

*Action taken: This had been dealt with separately and Cowley Road Carnival has received grant funding through the Community & Voluntary pot.*

- (3) There was an absence of income figures for the Tourist Information Centre. The Board Member explained that tourism was the subject of a separate strategy. However, cross referencing could be done.

*Action taken: Objective 1.3 relates to the emerging tourism strategy that directly refers to improving and enhancing the cultural tourism offer.*

- (4) Action Plan objective 4 – Key Partners, including those shown deleted, had been and would continue to be involved.

*Action taken: there is continued emphasis on partnership working and key partners for delivering the strategy are now indicated in a separate column.*

- (5) The Board Member said that the action plan would be looked at by the appropriate Scrutiny Committee before it came back to Council.

*Action: This report was submitted to Scrutiny for comment.*

- (6) The Empty Shops Project (action plan objective 3) was a good one but officers must be adequately briefed on it in order sensibly and consistently to advise. The Board Member said she would see whether one officer could be designated to advise on the project.

*Action taken: Protocols for facilitation of accessing empty properties have been drawn up and are available on the Council's website led by the Arts Officer. Objective 1.1 of the Action Plan highlights the need to establish art in unusual and disused spaces.*

2.2 Since April a new Cultural Development Manager has been appointed and subsequently the Cultural Strategy Action Plan was re-drafted with the following priorities:

- a) Emphasis on partnership and cross-service delivery to encompass community development, social inclusion and participation, particularly for priority groups.
- b) Clear outcomes to be implemented via a new Cultural Services Delivery Plan, other Service Plans and through partnership Service Level Agreements.
- c) Focus on regeneration

- d) Demonstrating clear links to the Council's new Corporate Plan objectives.

Core partners were invited to comment on the new plan and pertinent suggestions incorporated.

### **3.0 Alterations to the revised Cultural Strategy Action Plan on recommendation of the Communities and Partnership Scrutiny Committee (August 2009).**

3.1 The revised Cultural Strategy Action Plan was re-submitted to Scrutiny committee in August. A number of recommendations were made by the committee. These are set out below, together with actions taken:

- (1) Specific cultural activities for older people should be strengthened and highlighted within the Action Plan;

*Action taken: Older people are a target audience within the commissioned partners' service level agreements and measured accordingly through the annual review process. The service is working with the County Council on a Reaching Communities lottery bid for a large scale project targeting older people through arts. (Under Action Plan Obj.2.1 ) The Museum of Oxford will be hosting a reminiscence project and project officer in partnership with the University Museums as part of the Renaissance scheme (Under Action plan Obj.2.1)*

- (2) The Action Plan should be cross referenced with more detailed service delivery plans;

*Action taken: Reference now made to all relevant OCC service plans and strategies, not just those relating directly to Cultural services.*

- (3) The wording of the Action Plan should be reviewed to ensure that sufficient emphasis was placed upon the means by which the plan would be judged, as well as a specific timetable for achievement;

*Action taken; wording and timetables have been revised, with Actions deleted that cannot provide measurable targets.*

- (4) The Communities and Partnership Committee should received regular reports concerning the progress of the Action Plan.

3.2 The new draft Cultural Strategy Action Plan can be found in Annex 1 of this report.

### **4.0 Financial Implications**

4.1 The Action Plan demonstrates the need for the Council to have an effective leadership role for culture stakeholders and providers to deliver

the vision and priorities. The majority of actions are to be implemented through existing resources and the new Cultural Development Manager will lead on the implementation.

- 4.2 However, there are some resource implications for managing the delivery of culture:
- Any reduction in the commissioning pot will reduce the capacity to deliver the Action Plan in full.
  - Some resources need to be allocated towards development and fundraising to identify sources and models of funding arts and cultural activity for the future.

## **5.0 Legal Implications**

- 5.1 If the Council proposes to enter into formal contractual agreements with any of the cultural partners it must ensure that the Contract rules as set out in the Constitution are complied with.

## **6.0 Risk management**

- 6.1 The Cultural Strategy Action Plan presents low risk, although its non-adoption will result in the likelihood that some external funding body income to arts partners and the city's providers may be reduced.

## **7.0 Equalities Implications**

- 7.1 The Cultural Strategy Action Plan adheres to the City Council's Equal Opportunities policy.

## **8.0 Climate Change Implications**

- 8.1 The Cultural Strategy Action Plan adheres to the City Council's policy on climate change.

## **9.0 Conclusion**

- 9.1 The process of developing the revised Action Plan has resulted in continued recognition of the value that all sectors and partners play in the delivery of cultural services and strong support for its adoption.

There is strong emphasis on partnership working to increase capacity for delivery, and to encourage future inward investment to cultural activity that will benefit the people of the city.

- 9.2 Culture has a core role in delivering a range of other strategic priorities for the council, including social inclusion, improving the local environment, economy and quality of life. This was recognised by the Audit Commission in the feedback received in the draft Inspection Report and is identified within the new Cultural Strategy and recent Regeneration Inspection.
- 9.3 Officers believe that the vision and strategic priorities contained within the document have the support of all partners and stakeholders. Investment in the cultural life of the city will support the City Council's aim to become a World Class City for Everyone.

## **10.0 Recommendations**

- 10.1 To confirm support and re-submit the Cultural Strategy Action Plan to Full Council for adoption.

## **11.0 Name and contact details of author**

Colin Reid, Cultural Development manager, City Development  
Tel: 01865 252590. E-mail [creid@oxford.gov.uk](mailto:creid@oxford.gov.uk)

## **Annex 1: Cultural Strategy Action Plan – Draft September 2009**