

To: City Executive Board

Date: 15 October 2014

Report of: Head of Policy, Culture and Communications

Title of Report: Culture Strategy 2015-18

Summary and Recommendations

Purpose of report: This report provides background to the development of the Culture Strategy and an overview of the vision and priorities of the proposed Culture Strategy 2015-18.

Key decision: No

Executive lead member: Cllr Christine Simm, Board Member for Culture and Communities

Policy Framework: Corporate Plan 2014-2018: Strong, Active Communities and Vibrant, Sustainable Economy.

Recommendation: That the City Executive Board approves the consultation of the Draft Culture Strategy as set out at Appendix 1.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Consultation of the Draft Culture Strategy 2015-18 (this will be sent to a professional proof-reader before the final version is published)

Appendix 2: Initial Equalities Impact Assessment

Appendix 3: Risk Assessment

Background

1. The 2015-2018 Culture Strategy plays an important role in developing partnerships, enhancing cultural provision for Oxford's communities, and highlighting the Council's commitment to cultural regeneration through new projects.

2. An evaluation of the Council's Culture Strategy 2012-15 will commence in April 2015.
3. Since the publication of the last Culture Strategy there have continued to be substantial changes to Government policies, restructuring of the national development agencies including the addition of Museums, Libraries and Archives to the Arts Council England portfolio, and reduced national funding for arts and culture. Cultural organisations find themselves competing locally and externally for ever-decreasing pots of money.
4. It will become increasingly important to identify efficiencies and delivery models over the next three to five years. Our new Culture Strategy is ambitious and also realistic in its ability to support and innovate.
5. 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 as well as economic regeneration. We aim to work through partnerships to create a truly "joined-up" Oxford for our local communities.

Consultation

6. Subject to CEB approval, we will send invitations to join the consultation on the Draft Culture Strategy to a comprehensive database of around 500 Oxford-based cultural, educational and community organisations. This consultation will be open from end of October-December 2014.
7. The Culture Strategy will be revised following this public consultation and the updated version will be sent to City Executive Board in February 2015. At this point, we will ask CEB to recommend the final version of the strategy to full Council for adoption.

Draft vision and priorities

8. Our shared vision for culture is to ensure people in Oxford have access to and are inspired by affordable and excellent cultural activities. We will work in partnership with key stakeholders to deliver and support affordable and excellent cultural activities and events; enhance and leave a legacy in the lives of Oxford's individuals and communities; encourage youth attainment; engage our diverse communities; and develop skills and businesses in the city's creative sector.
9. Our three key priorities are to:
 - I. Support the sustainability of Oxford's cultural sector and improve the skills and diversity of the city's current and future creative workforce.
 - II. Improve opportunities for Oxford's diverse range of communities to actively engage with and be inspired by culture.

III. Improve opportunities for young people to access and actively participate in cultural activities.

10. The Culture Strategy (Appendix 1) sets out objectives for each of these priorities. Underpinning each of these priorities is a commitment to work in partnership, explore the barriers to participation faced by different sectors of the community and find ways of removing these barriers to cultural engagement.

Level of risk

11. The Culture Strategy is low risk, although its non-adoption might result in the reduction or loss of funding to arts partners and City Council cultural programmes such as the Museum of Oxford. A summary risk assessment is set out in Appendix 3.

Climate Change/Environmental impact

12. The strategy adheres to the City Council's policy on climate change. In 2013, the Culture team worked with Environmental Development to make Oxford City Council the first council in England to require funded cultural organisations to develop environmental sustainability action plans, measuring and reducing their energy use. This initiative has been nationally recognised and praised by Arts Council England.

Equalities impact

13. An initial Equalities Impact Assessment is provided at Appendix 2. The City Council's overriding concern in formulating its Culture Strategy has been to engage communities currently excluded from participation in the city's cultural life.

Financial implications

14. The Culture Strategy can be delivered through existing financial resources and through partnership agreements.

Legal Implications

15. Issues relating to governance and/or contractual matters may arise where cultural partners assist with delivery of objectives within the strategy. There are no other current legal implications.

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