

**To:** City Executive Board

**Date:** 12 March 2015

**Report of:** Head of Policy, Culture and Communications

**Title of Report:** Culture Strategy 2015-18: Consultation Responses

## Summary and Recommendations

**Purpose of report:** This report provides background to the development of the draft Culture Strategy 2015 – 18, an overview of its vision and priorities and reports on the results of public consultation. It proposes approval of the strategy in the light of consultation.

**Key decision:** No

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

**Policy Framework:** Corporate Plan 2015-2019: Strong, Active Communities and Vibrant, Sustainable Economy.

**Recommendations:** That the City Executive Board considers the draft Culture Strategy 2015 – 2018 as set out at Appendix 1 and recommends it to Council for approval.

## **Appendices to report**

Appendix 1: Draft Culture Strategy 2015-18  
Appendix 2: Consultation process and events  
Appendix 3: Initial Equalities Impact Assessment  
Appendix 4: Risk Assessment

## Background

1. The 2015-2018 Culture Strategy will play 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. Since the publication of the Council's current Culture Strategy there have been 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.
3. It will become increasingly important to identify efficiencies and explore delivery models over the next three to five years. The Council's draft Culture Strategy is ambitious and also realistic in its ability to support and innovate.
4. 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. The Council aims to work through partnerships to create a truly "joined-up" Oxford for our local communities.

## Draft vision and priorities set out in in the draft Culture Strategy 2015 – 2018

5. The Council's vision for culture is:  
*To 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.*
6. The Council's 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.
7. The draft 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.

## **Consultation**

8. The draft strategy was open to public consultation from the end of October to December 2014. The views of the Scrutiny Committee have also contributed to the development of the plan.
9. The priorities and objectives in the draft Culture Strategy 2015-18 derive from the Council's Corporate Plan. Those who responded to the consultation were very supportive of the priorities and objectives set out in the draft Culture Strategy, particularly those relating to young people. The consultation invited organisations and members of the public to contribute their views as to how these priorities and objectives could best be delivered.
10. In the light of consultation, the draft Culture Strategy has been amended to reflect the following issues:
  - Over 2015-18 Arts Council England (ACE) wants to see – and to be part of – highly collaborative approaches to tackling some of the ongoing opportunities/challenges for the culture sector in Oxford. ACE stressed the importance of influencing high level strategic partnerships – e.g. the Oxfordshire LEP – as a means of opening up funding opportunities for culture in Oxford. ACE argued that the Oxford Cultural Partnership should continue to act as the key strategic partnership for culture in Oxfordshire over 2015-18 and become even more focussed on how the sector can work together to seize joint opportunities e.g. shared audience development or cultural tourism initiatives.
  - Most respondents agreed with the need for new kinds of collaboration and digital approaches to achieving strategic aims.
  - Cultural organisations across Oxford each have their own areas of expertise and individuals with specific skill sets. Further integrated workshops such as the HLF workshop held at the Museum of Oxford and training in digital skills would be helpful.
  - University of Oxford is now providing funding for events such as the Cowley Road Carnival and Alice's Day
  - The first draft of the strategy did not adequately reflect the role that the Oxford Preservation Trust plays in the cultural life of the city, particularly through the annual Open Doors event, and the work of Oxford Castle.
11. Full results of the public consultation are set out in Appendix 2.

## **Level of risk**

12. The draft 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**

13. 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**

14. 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**

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

### **Legal Implications**

16. 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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**Background Papers:** None