

Draft Culture Strategy for Oxford – 2012-2015

1. Purpose

Oxford City Council's current Culture Strategy expires this year. The achievements of the current strategy are set out in Annex A to this report.

This paper:

- Provides demographic and other contextual information about Oxford and the role that culture and the arts play in the city
- sets out a draft Culture Strategy 2012-15 containing the City Council's proposed priorities for culture and the arts over the next three years
- is part of a consultation process which will hopefully generate responses from the wide range of cultural bodies, faith groups, and community groups in our city, all of which have a role to play in Oxford's diverse cultural life.

The review of the Culture Strategy is being led by Oxford City Council on behalf of the Cultural Action Group, a partnership involving organisations in Oxford funded by Arts Council England. The group consists of: The Playhouse, Pegasus Theatre, Modern Art Oxford, Oxford Contemporary Music, The University Museums, and Oxford Inspires. In addition, it is anticipated that Arts at the Old Fire Station, Film Oxford and The Arts Council of England will be invited to join the group. The review will enable all cultural sector stakeholders and others to have their say about how we can all contribute to maximising the city's culture offer.

The review process will result in a new Culture Strategy and a Cultural Strategy Action Plan which sets out agreed SMART objectives and a clear monitoring and evaluation process. Delivery will be monitored quarterly by the Cultural Action Group and by the City Executive Board on a six-monthly basis. In this way our aspirations for culture in our city will translate into reality.

2. Our vision for culture and the arts

The City Council's ambition – developed with our partners, including business, community organisations, the health and education sectors and the County Council – is to make Oxford a world-class city for everyone.

The City Council and its partners believe that culture – whether it takes the form of the architecture and buildings that surround us, the museums that reflect our past and present, or the literature and performing and visual arts through which we celebrate our experiences – plays a profound role in shaping people's experiences and attitudes. We believe that access to high quality cultural experiences is the right of all our citizens.

Our shared vision for culture is:

to work in partnership with Oxford's key stakeholders and cultural partners to grow, improve and promote cultural activities and events that enhance and leave a legacy in the lives of individuals and communities, offer affordable, excellent experiences, encourage attainment amongst young people and promote cultural ambition.

Culture and the arts contribute to building strong and active communities. Culture has the potential to bring people together from all areas of life, breaking down barriers and adding to our overall quality of life. It also increases our sense of local identity and belonging. Culture can highlight those things that we care about – through public art for example – as well as providing opportunities for people to come together and form bonds through community events and festivals.

The cultural sector also contributes significantly to building a vibrant and sustainable economy. The city's dazzling architectural heritage, and the rich offerings of the Ashmolean and other museums mean that tourism plays a key part in the local economy. It is estimated that over nine million tourists visit the city, spending £602million annually and supporting around 13,000 jobs. We would like visitors to stay longer in the city and to explore areas beyond the city as well. In order to facilitate this we have worked with partners to set up *Visit Oxfordshire*, an organisation working to improve the management and marketing of our tourism offer in Oxford and throughout Oxfordshire. One of the key aims of *Visit Oxfordshire* is to support culture and the arts by maximising the role that culture can play in Oxford's tourism offer.

Our priorities

The City Council has four key priorities:

- leading a partnership-based approach to sustaining, developing and improving the cultural life of the city
- improving opportunities for young people to access and actively participate in high quality cultural activities
- improving opportunities for the diverse range of communities and faith groups in the city actively to participate in high quality cultural activities that reflect their own identities and can be shared with the whole community
- exploring the barriers to participation in cultural activities confronted by different sectors of the community and finding ways of removing them.

2. Culture in Oxford

Oxford has a long history of cultural innovation including the country's first Botanic Garden, the world's first public museum (the Ashmolean in 1682) and the world's first music room (Holywell). Oxford's contemporary cultural sector is rich and extremely diverse. It includes national museums and world-famous heritage sites, a commercial creative sector including a vibrant contemporary music scene, voluntary arts organisations, events and much more. The combination of prestigious, world-famous institutions alongside a more informal, but still high quality network of smaller venues and organisations is key to Oxford's cultural identity and strength.

Oxford continues to be at the forefront of trends and ideas, with the first open studios programme in England, in 1987. It has a world-class and highly innovative music scene, thriving contemporary art and theatre produced through nationally-recognised organisations such as The Playhouse, Modern Art Oxford, Oxford Contemporary Music, and Oxford Philomusica.

Recent initiatives

The range of achievements over the last twelve months alone is impressive. The Old Fire Station opened in November 2011. The Old Fire Station (OFS) is unique in that it brings together a new Crisis Skylight Centre and Arts at The Old Fire Station. Arts at the Old Fire Station is a new organisation, created by the City Council to support the development of the creative industries and help to regenerate the west end of the city. The OFS offers a unique model of social inclusion by bringing artists, homeless people and the public into the same space. The facility combines a range of flexible

spaces and facilities, a gallery and shop selling local artists' work, as well as providing training and support for employment in the creative and hospitality industries.

Pegasus Theatre, Oxford's youth theatre in East Oxford – consolidated by a £4m rebuild - goes from strength to strength. In 2011, Pegasus initiated *Mesh*, Oxford's first International Youth Arts Festival. *Mesh* was co-planned, run and hosted by and for young people from Oxford, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Croatia, Palestine and Russia. This project complemented the work done through the City Council's own international links programme which offers opportunities for exchange projects involving young people from our twin cities. Modern Art Oxford continues to stage exhibitions of international standing as well as taking contemporary art to estates such as Rose Hill through its strong outreach programme. Our successful annual festival *Dancin' Oxford* continues to receive enthusiastic support from the citizens of Oxford and has just received over £55k in grant support from Arts Council England. *Get Moving!* – a dance project for the over-50's in Oxford has proved to be very popular.

Oxford's Town Hall continues to make its own contribution to the city's cultural offer. This iconic Victorian Grade II* listed building is being successfully remarketed and is now a popular venue for concerts from a diverse range of performers, and events, including the annual Beer Festival. Oxford Philomusica's regular concerts for children have become sell-out events. In 2011, the Town Hall was the main site for Oxford's internationally acclaimed Jazz Festival.

Exciting improvements to the Town Hall are planned over the next twelve months. The City Council is investing in improvements to the Town Hall infrastructure, including an upgrade to the acoustics in the Main Hall. We are planning for the Town Hall to enhance its role as a primary community facility for the city and also to provide facilities for the conference and concert markets. The Town Hall café is being refurbished in the early part of 2012 and will reopen with an upgraded offer in May 2012. The Town Hall's high quality gift shop, focusing on products related to the Museum and Town Hall collection, opened in early November 2011.

We are also upgrading the Museum of Oxford. Our plans for the Museum have attracted over £80k in grant support from external funders, and the Museum will reopen in June 2012. The City Council is working with the University of Oxford and the County Council to secure funding to improve public access to Oxfordshire's museums and to train museum staff. ASPIRE, the University/County/City partnership has received over £4m subsidy from the Arts Council of England (ACE) through Renaissance funding and we are committed to working with them as a major partner in both heritage and culture through our support for ACE's Arts for Everyone policy.

The City Council continues to work in productive partnership with Oxford Inspires, Oxfordshire's cultural development agency. We, along with other cultural organisations in the city are preparing a bid to have Oxford nominated as UNESCO's World Book Capital in 2014. In partnership with the Poetry Centre from Oxford Brookes University, the City Council has appointed Oxford's first City Poet. Kate Clanchy is a widely published and respected poet who will use her term as City Poet to encourage people to write about life in our multi-cultural city. Kate will work with students at Brookes University, and with the help of the charity First Story, she will also have a base at the Oxford Spires Academy. Kate is aiming to visit all schools across the city and to establish partnerships and projects with community groups.

Large scale events play an important role in building cohesion and celebrating life in our city. Around 20,000 people attended this year's successful May Morning celebration, organised for the first time by the City Council. Christmas Light Night – where the City Council, Oxford Inspires and other cultural organisations from across the city work together to organise a celebration of the festive season - has become so popular that last year's main outdoor celebrations were relocated from Broad Street to St. Giles. Around 29,000 people attended events across the city. The Olympic Torch relay event, taking place in July 9th 2012, will give people across the city the opportunity to savour the Olympic spirit. The 2012 Jubilee celebrations will provide an excellent opportunity for people to organise street parties and other neighbourhood events. The Lord Mayor will be hosting a Jubilee street party involving representatives from the city's different faith and ethnic communities to celebrate his inauguration.

Funding

In the past two years, the Government has made changes to the funding system which have been unhelpful to the cultural sector. The ability of the cultural sector to deliver economic and social benefits and the ability of artists to engage and inspire has not been questioned. Indeed, ministers speak enthusiastically about the positive social role that culture and the arts can play (and have played in their own lives). In spite of this, the Government insists that the sector should be largely self-funding and there has been a consequent reduction in public subsidy. As a substitute for subsidy, the Government is promoting philanthropy on the American model, through the introduction of schemes such as the Arts Council's Catalyst growth fund. The major London institutions are enjoying a revival of philanthropic interest through the staging of blockbuster exhibitions such as Da Vinci and David Hockney. However, the amount of private giving for less well-known activity has significantly reduced in the past 12 months.

Oxford City Council believes that it is important to continue to subsidise the cultural sector. Subsidy helps to encourage innovation and new initiatives at the grass-roots level and to ensure that participation in cultural activities is available to everyone, not just the wealthy.

Oxford City Council core-funded 9 organisations in 09/10 and 10/11 at a total cost of of £326,430 each year. As a result, these organisations have attracted leverage of £3.4m (09/10) and £3.6m (10/11) from external Trusts, national funding bodies and other regional funds. 2011/12 results are currently being collated.

Art projects/activities funded through Oxford City Council's open bidding, small grants and area committees in 2009/10 totalled £12,900. In 2010/11 the total was £36,858. Oxford City Council also allocated £10,000 to arts projects in 2009/10 and £5,000 in 10/11 aimed at supporting emerging talent and individual artists.

3. Building a world class culture offer for everyone

For many people who live in and visit our city, Oxford is very obviously a world-class city, a place of global cultural interest. Oxford is one of the most photographed, filmed, and written about cities in the world. The enduring images are of historic Oxford, where much of the city's heritage environment and many of its cultural attractions directly reflect the influence that the University of Oxford's has had on the development of the city. These images are vital to our flourishing tourist industry because it is historic Oxford that over nine million tourists visit every year.

Opulent historic Oxford is, however, only one part of our city's story.

Contemporary Oxford is a densely packed urban space, with a population of around 150,000 living in an area of only 17.6 square miles. There are very high levels of housing density. There are severe pressures on housing stock, with large concentrations of homes in multiple occupation and significant numbers of homeless and other vulnerable groups. Some areas of the city suffer multiple levels of deprivation—low skills, low incomes, and poor housing.

The City Council encourages excellence across all areas of cultural activity in our city. We also believe that culture and the arts can be key drivers of regeneration, with the potential to build community cohesion by encouraging different community groups to enjoy and share their different traditions. Our aim - working with our partners in the cultural sector - is to increase access for all our communities to good quality cultural opportunities and events, at affordable prices, in a range of venues and locations.

4. Improving opportunities for young people

As part of its commitment to building a world class city for everyone, Oxford City Council aims to reduce the extent of inequality and to improve the lives of the most vulnerable members of our society. We particularly want to improve outcomes for young people.

This is important for our young people in Oxford, where there are major inequalities in life chances. Relative to the rest of Oxfordshire, Oxford has high levels of deprivation. The Indices of Deprivation 2010 place Oxford in the top half of most deprived Local Authorities in England. The Index of Multiple Deprivation 2010 ranks Oxford 131st out of 354, placing it in the top half most deprived local authority areas in England. Of 85 areas in Oxford, 12 are among the 20% most deprived areas in England, with one area in Northfield Brook ward among the 10% most deprived. Around 23% of Oxford's under-16s live in low-income households and child poverty is a key concern in eight neighbourhoods which feature among the 10% worst affected in England.

Attainment levels of pupils in Oxford's state schools are much lower than the national average. In 2009/10 only 67% of Oxford pupils gained five or more A* to C grade GCSEs, compared to a 76% national average. This was the fifteenth worst result of any local authority area in England. Pupils living in deprived areas have particularly poor results. In the same year 46% of Oxford children achieved the benchmark of five or more A* to C grades at GCSE. This was below the national average of 55%.

Improving educational attainment and access to cultural education and experiences are integrally related and are key priorities for the City Council.

Engagement with culture from an early age can develop technical skills, discipline, and the confidence necessary for future success. It can offer opportunities for young people to share their experiences with others, helping to build social cohesion. Exposure to a full range of cultural provision can also expand young people's horizons and generate a sense of ambition. In addition the cultural and creative industries represent a significant percentage of the jobs market in the UK and can provide employment for talented young people.

The City Council has allocated £350,000 annually over the next four years so that we can play our role in improving educational attainment in the city, particularly in the more deprived neighbourhoods. Access to quality cultural experiences and exposure

to the practical skills that the arts require play a key role in high performing educational environments and this will also be the case in Oxford.

Working through the new education improvement partnership we will:

- map the provision and uptake of quality assured cultural programmes by 0-19s
- work with schools and the cultural sector to commission activities to fill gaps in provision
- provide the opportunities for young people to engage in cultural planning and delivery in Oxford
- support programmes designed and led by young people
- exploring the barriers to participation in cultural activities confronted by young people and find ways of removing them.
- improve information for young people about where and how to access culture
- encourage take-up of creative apprenticeships.

5. Encouraging diversity and inclusion

In marked contrast to other parts of the county, Oxford is ethnically and culturally diverse, with the third highest minority ethnic population in the south east. In 2009, 19.6% of the population were from black and minority ethnic backgrounds, compared with an England average of 12.5%. The largest non-white ethnic groups represented are Indian, Pakistani and Black African. In Oxford nearly half of births (47%) in 2010 were to non UK-born mothers, compared to a national and county average of 26%.

Oxford's population is constantly changing. People come to Oxford to live, to study and to work, coming from both within the UK and from other countries. There are over 30,000 students studying full-time at the two universities, and there is significant annual turnover in their number. Around 6,000 people arrive from overseas to live in Oxford each year, about half of these being students and a quarter migrant workers. A consequence of this is that one in five of our residents was born outside the UK – the most common countries of birth being Ireland, USA, Germany, Pakistan and India. Around 4,000 international migrants living in Oxford apply for national insurance numbers every year, usually in order to pay tax on their income. These migrant workers most commonly originate from the USA, Poland, India and Italy.

Diversity is one of our city's strengths and social inclusion and community cohesion are key goals for the city and the Council. This diversity is not currently reflected in much of the city's cultural offer. For example, while Christmas Light Night has become a highlight in the annual events calendar, there are no public celebrations of significant events from different faith groups.

We will

- Work with community leaders to explore and remove barriers to participation and enable access to quality arts provision for local communities, particularly amongst people who are currently excluded
- Support activities and events that embrace diversity and celebrate different cultures.
- Work in partnership with the cultural sector to identify gaps in arts provision.
- Support audience development schemes aimed at increasing diverse audiences.

6. Working in partnership

Oxford City Council directly delivers some services, e.g. our museum, Town Hall, and events. We also help develop and sustain our cultural sector through the provision of £250,000 in grant support and by supporting cultural partnerships. The City Council

will continue to continue to invest in culture through grants and match funding for new initiatives that support corporate objectives.

However, partnership and collaboration are essential if we are to reap the full benefit from the cultural opportunities offered by the city and the City Council is committed to retaining a partnership model for delivery of culture. Working together increases opportunities, reduced duplication, and maximises funding potential.

This has been demonstrated through the activities of *Oxford Inspires*. An initiative born out of the European Capital for Culture bid in 2000 Oxford Inspires has provided a unique model of partnership for cultural development, involving the City and County Councils and the two universities'

We work closely with key national agencies such as Arts Council England and we support the strategic arms of Arts for Everyone. The Council is committed to supporting ACE with the new Renaissance funding stream and the National Portfolio Organisations (NPOs). We regard these as major partners in developing culture in Oxford.

Oxford City Council is committed to working in partnership with the city's major stakeholders (the two Universities and the County Council as well as the local Strategic Partnership and LEP) and across the sector, to create a collective vision for Oxford's cultural offer. This will bring the city into line with its competitors as well as helping to deliver our vision of a world-class city for everyone.

We will:

- research new funding models for arts and culture in association with our core partners
- explore new avenues to attract partners who offer high profile branding opportunities through philanthropy and sponsorship and strong interaction with the local community.
- Support and develop collaborative initiatives to improve skills and attainment amongst young people
- encourage volunteer schemes, apprenticeships and paid bursary/internship schemes for our young people and communities.
- Commit to sustaining and growing the creative economy and encouraging more creative industries to move to the city.

Conclusion

Oxford City Council and its partners believe that culture and the arts play a profound role in shaping people's experiences and attitudes. We believe that access to high quality cultural experiences across a wide range of forms is the right of all our citizens. We believe that the proposals in this strategy will contribute to ensuring that these opportunities are open to all our citizens and not just the few.

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