

**Executive**

14 February, 2019

Report of the Assistant Director (Communities & Equalities)

Portfolio of the Executive Member for Culture, Leisure and Tourism

## **Cultural Strategy for York 2019-2025**

### **Summary**

1. This report provides an update on the development of a cultural strategy for York for the period 2019 – 2025. The Executive are asked to note the work to date and to agree, on behalf of the city, the key ideas that have been identified through the strategy-making process so that work may now be undertaken to draw up appropriate delivery plans

### **Recommendation**

2. The Executive is asked to agree the Vision and the Key Ideas set out in paragraphs 13 and 14 respectively on behalf of the city.

Reason - So that:

- York will be internationally recognised for its exceptional heritage and unique arts offer.
- Residents and businesses in York will benefit from York's unique cultural offer, leading to greater investment and participation in the city.
- The cultural offer for York's residents will be expanded beyond the city centre.
- All citizens, irrespective of age or background, will be proud to be engaged with York's arts and heritage offer, which will include a wide range of inclusive opportunities.

### **Background**

3. Following a review of the *Impact of Arts & Culture on the Economy* by the Economy and Place Policy Development Committee, the Executive agreed, in January 2018, that a cultural strategy for the city should be progressed. Under the Council's leadership this

strategy was to be steered by the Cultural Leaders Group, and ultimately adopted by the Council on behalf of the city.

4. The Council provided a sum of £20k to support the process. The contract to undertake the work was let to ArtReach with the work being led by David Hill.
5. A key driver for this strategy is the “to do” set out in the York Economic Strategy 2016-2020 to make a **FRESH LOUD STATEMENT OF CULTURAL AND VISUAL IDENTITY** and the Cultural Strategy will help to achieve this aim. The Economic Strategy notes that this is a particular priority because:
  - Culture and visual identity define perceptions of a city
  - We need to get people to sit up and take notice again
  - York has achieved UNESCO City of Media Arts status and needs to maximise the benefits of this
  - York’s major new development sites create significant opportunities for the future of the city
6. The strategy aims to draw out York’s USP within the Leeds City Region and nationally and to articulate the cultural sector’s contribution to the economy.

### **The Context for the Strategy**

7. A desktop research exercise undertaken at the start of the strategy-making process included a comprehensive analysis of York’s current offer. This showed that York has a strong and diverse cultural sector. As well as a thriving community sector, the city has 62 professional arts and heritage organisations, as well as 412 businesses in the arts, heritage and creative industries field. Amongst these are four Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisations who alone generate a spend in the local economy of more than £5m per annum.
8. The city has a wide range of music and theatre venues as well as 17 museum sites, 11 galleries and 5 other venues for arts and heritage activity. 27 regular festival programmes operate in the area of arts and heritage. The city is also home to around 1,500 students studying arts and heritage related programmes. Finally, it should be noted that York is the only UK city with UNESCO City of Media Arts status.

9. Despite these strengths there is huge untapped potential. Whilst participation in arts and culture amongst York residents at 56.14% is well above the national average we are outside the top 30 local authority areas in terms of this indicator and the best local authority achieves 65.65%. We also know that there is an inequality of engagement across our communities. Furthermore, less than 50% of our visitors engage with arts and heritage and only 4% attend performances. There are gaps in our provision, notably in the early evening offer.
10. Certain barriers to moving forward were also identified at the outset of the consultation exercise notably:
  - Confusing and ineffective sector networking and advocacy arrangements
  - Inadequate collaboration and poor communications
  - Inadequate capacity in cultural leadership
  - Insufficient work space for making and developing

### **Development of the Strategy**

11. The strategy-making began in earnest in June with an ambition-raising workshop attended by representatives of the cultural organisations in the city including the Council. One-to-one meetings with key stakeholders took place in July through focus groups and other events covering:
  - Artists and practitioners
  - Festival organisers
  - Cultural enablers
  - Community arts organisations

Engagement was undertaken with young people, older people, and our diverse communities including rural ones. A list of those involved is included at the Annex.

12. Feedback workshops took place in October to present back the ideas generated in the initial process and the emerging strategy was then further refined.

## **The Vision 2019 – 2025**

13. The vision proposed for the strategy, following the consultation, is that:

*York brings together outstanding, internationally renowned heritage with a cutting-edge contemporary approach to creativity.*

*By 2025 York will be internationally recognised for its unique interface between exceptional heritage and contemporary art.*

### **Key Ideas that inform the Vision**

14. Initially, 15 key ideas were generated through the engagement process. These were discussed by the Children Education and Communities Scrutiny Committee as well as at the October feedback sessions. The common view from these sessions was that, although the key ideas were strong and none should be lost, nonetheless they should be distilled down into a shorter, more cogent set of key priorities. This has now been done and 7 key ideas have emerged that are presented here:

i. **Exceptional Place:**

- Embed culture and heritage in the Local Plan through “cultural wellbeing” plans
- Increasingly use arts and culture as a tool to engage local people in decision-making and in developing York’s new shared vision and narrative
- Ensure that the major development sites, e.g. Castle Gateway, York Central and the Guildhall bring substantial, arts and heritage ingredients and place-making benefits
- Put in place a programme of activity in public realm and in venues between 5pm and 7pm
- Open up access to the Ouse and Foss as an attractive and popular canvas for cultural activity and events

ii. **Every Child in the City is an Artist:**

- Make York the first city to achieve full cultural entitlement for all children and young people
- Introduce a free Cultural Passport for all young people
- Encourage every York school to maintain a broad and balanced curriculum that promotes access to the arts and young people’s take-up of Arts Award

iii. **Retaining and Developing our Talent:**

- Embed the universities in the cultural offer to engage them in developing events and activity in order to aid talent development and progression paths, and to better meet students' needs.
- Deliver a significant increase in making, studio and workshop space in York (including rehearsal and music studio space) so that more creative practitioners can work in York

iv. **A National Pioneer in Culture & Wellbeing:**

- Establish a comprehensive system for social prescribing using arts and heritage engagement
- Place a focus on young people's mental health and the needs of an ageing population through Culture and Wellbeing commissioning

v. **The Most Creatively Collaborative City:**

- Create an effective and engaging network of artists, musicians, designers, makers and practitioners in the city to table ideas, explore possibilities and seek new collaborations
- Create opportunities for take-over and participative events, e.g. Twilight hours animation of the public space and venues
- Establish an open access Culture Forum
- Implement a city-wide Marketing and Communications Strategy for arts and heritage
- Develop enhanced leadership in the city with capacity to drive forward the strategy

vi. **Arts, Culture and Heritage for Everyone:**

- Reach the top 5 in the UK of local authority areas for cultural engagement and score more highly in the EU Cultural and Creative Cities Monitor
- Build on our special international relationships especially where there is a connection to local communities, e.g. China

vii. **World Class Ambition and Profile:**

- Apply for UNESCO World Heritage status (with the aim of achieving two UNESCO designations for the city)
- Highlight York's cultural offer within the new city vision
- Be the city that reinvents the library as the local creative heart of cultural communities
- Build on the international profile of festivals like Aesthetica Film Festival with the addition of Mediale
- Deliver ambitious cultural developments at venues at Castle Gateway and York Central

15. In some of these areas work is already well under way. For example:

- The Council has already set out its ambitious vision for its library service ensuring that it builds further creative and cultural provision into its offer for all York's local communities. The ambition in the cultural strategy will help to give our library service a more central role in developing the cultural offer across the whole city and build on the national recognition that the service has achieved.
- Cultural wellbeing plans are already proposed within the draft local plan and officers are working on appropriate supplementary planning documents.
- The cultural wellbeing work builds on the pilot driven by the existing Cultural Commissioning Partnership (led by York Museums Trust and which includes Converge and Higher York).
- Castle Gateway and Deans Park development proposals include significant cultural consultation and ambition

16. In other cases new workstreams will be required to deliver the required outcomes.

**Options and Analysis**

17. The Executive can accept the 7 ideas outlined or, as part of the city-wide partnership developing the strategy, can suggest amendments to them. Any suggested changes would be referred back to the Cultural Leaders Group for discussion and development on behalf of the city.

18. The strategy comes at an exciting time when the city has just completed its first 4 yearly report back on its UNESCO designation. This highlights the diverse areas of achievement under the designation including:
- York's contribution to the global UNESCO network
  - Creation of the Guild of Media Arts
  - Cultural Education - Digital Adventurers and Explore Labs
  - Major cultural initiatives such as the Aesthetica Film Festival
  - University of York's Digital Creativity Labs
  - Various inter-city international collaborations
  - Designation of York as one of nine creative clusters
  - Mediale: This new festival immediately established itself as part of the national cultural calendar. With 113 artists participating and around 65k visitors the estimated economic impact is £1.5m
19. The various UNESCO cities of media arts around the world have developed a memorandum of cooperation with respect to their various festivals to promote working together. It is proposed the Executive Member for Culture, Leisure and Tourism sign on the city's behalf with regard to Mediale. The memorandum aims to encourage the circulation of digital artists and works of art among member cities, to promote the sharing of expertise, and to facilitate opportunities for exchange visits for artists and practitioners in the areas of research, creation, production and distribution.
20. Whilst this first phase of our UNESCO designation has been about establishing the designation and an appropriate programme of activity, the next phase will be about making a real impact on the lives of York's residents and visitors through a focus on technology, talent development and retention, and well-being.

### **Next Steps**

21. Once the key ideas are agreed the next steps will be for the city to respond to them. This will happen through the Cultural Leaders group who will further develop the work by:
- a) Determining outcomes for each key idea
  - b) Finalising a development timeline for each key idea (including identification of early priorities and "quick wins")
  - c) Developing appropriate work plans

22. The emerging strategy will also be further shaped by the initiative to attract increased investment in York by promoting our strengths and assets through the development of a shared vision for the city. The Cultural Leaders Group will also contribute to this initiative ensuring that the two projects are taken forward in tandem.
23. A draft funding strategy has been produced identifying opportunities to bring in around £3.471m of external funding over the period 2019-2025 in order to fulfil the aspirations of the strategy. This funding strategy will now be further developed.
24. To help progress the strategy work two supporting initiatives will be taken:
  - a) The Culture Forum will be established. This will be open to all arts, heritage, creative and related organisations large and small representing professional, amateur, community and education interests. Participation will ultimately be self-selecting as groups determine the value of engagement. This group will elect an executive on which the Council and Make it York will have ex-officio representatives. Make It York will also provide the secretariat.

The Cultural Leaders Group and York@Large will disband.
  - b) A co-ordinator will be employed by Make It York on a short-term basis to progress the work up to launch of the strategy. The Arts Council England have provided £10k of funding to contribute towards this.
25. It is envisaged that the final cultural strategy will be produced and launched over the summer.

### **Implications**

26. **Finance:** In approving the progression of a cultural strategy the Executive made available a sum of £38k for Make It York, £20k to be used directly on preparation of the strategy and £18k to be used over 3 years to provide support to the Cultural Leaders Group. The strategy work has been delivered on budget. The first year of the support funding will be used as a contribution to the cost of the co-ordinator described in paragraph 24 above.
27. **Equalities:** The strategy-making work has identified a range of significant issues with regard to inequality of access to cultural provision. Some specific ideas to address key areas are set out



above. Further impact assessment will be undertaken as work streams are developed to address the issues in full.

28. There are no Legal, HR, IT, Crime and Disorder or other implications arising directly from this report.

**Council Plan**

29. The proposals in this paper support the Council Plan aim of *A Prosperous City for All* where:

- Local businesses can thrive
- Everyone who lives in the city can enjoy its unique heritage and range of activities.
- Visitors, businesses and residents are impressed with the quality of our city

**Risk Management**

30. In compliance with the Council’s risk management strategy the main risks that have been identified in this report are those which could lead to the inability to meet business objectives and failure to meet stakeholders’ expectations, which could in turn damage the Council’s image and reputation. Measured in terms of impact and likelihood, the risk score has been assessed at “Low”. This means that the risk level is acceptable but that regular monitoring of progress against the strategy will be required.

**Contact Details**

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	<b>Report Approved</b>	✓	<b>Date</b> 31.1.19.
<b>Wards Affected:</b>	<b>All</b>		✓
<b>For further information please contact the author of the report</b>			

**Annex:** Consultees engaged in the process.

**Background Papers:** Strategy-making background documents. Files held by the report author.