
**Decision Session – Executive Member for
Culture, Leisure and Communities**

2 February 2021

Report of the Assistant Director (Communities & Culture)

York’s Creative Future: A Culture Strategy for York, 2020-2025

Summary

1. This report provides an update on the development of York’s culture strategy for the period 2020 – 2025.

Recommendation

2. The Executive Member is asked to commit the council to adopt and enshrine the new York culture strategy (York’s Creative Future).

Reason - So that:

- York will continue to 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 across the city.
- The cultural offer for York’s residents will be further 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. At the outset of developing the new culture strategy, an extensive engagement and consultation exercise with York’s residents, cultural organisations, artists and practitioners took on board what matters most to the people who live, work and study in the city. Following this, in 2019 the council’s Executive adopted a vision and principles, on behalf of the city, as the basis on which to take the strategy forward. Further work has been undertaken since that time to turn the principles into a plan of action to grow and develop York’s creative future. The strategy takes account of the impact of Covid-

19 as well as of the excellent work that the cultural sector has done to develop innovative approaches to delivering cultural products and to place York's cultural offer at the forefront of recovery.

4. *York's Creative Future* launched on 3 December at a virtual event that brought together local and national voices, including creative practitioners, grassroots activists, and cultural leaders, to debate and discuss best-practice in and around culture in the city. Keynote speakers included Dr Darren Henley, Chief Executive of Arts Council England and Jamie Njoku-Goodwin, Chief Executive of UK Music.

The Strategy

5. The culture strategy forms part of the Council Plan, supporting the Economic Strategy and the Tourism Strategy, and underpinning development of York's city narrative. It boosts cultural activity and places culture at the heart of activities from regeneration and major capital developments, to residents' wellbeing and a cultural entitlement for every child.
6. *York's Creative Future* is an ambitious strategy that has inclusion and participation at its core, with a commitment to ensuring culture is relevant and accessible to everybody in York, regardless of age, background or postcode. It aims for York to be recognised as a centre for contemporary creativity with engaged and active participation in culture by its residents.

Priorities

7. The original strategy vision has been distilled into six core priorities:
 - i. **Cultural Engagement, participation and relevance:** Culture is inclusive, relevant and accessible to everybody in York, regardless of age, background or postcode
 - ii. **Placemaking:** Culture is fully embedded into local investment and city planning developments, with the arts and heritage and cultural wellbeing integral to development processes
 - iii. **Children and young people:** York is the first city to achieve cultural entitlement for all children and young people, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds and with special educational needs and/or disabilities
 - iv. **Talent development and retention:** York's creative and cultural sectors thrive and contribute to strengthening and

diversifying York's economy, through universities and colleges providing clear routes to skilled employment and creative workspaces attracting and retaining creative talent in the city

- v. **Culture and wellbeing:** York is recognised nationally for its innovative work in culture for health and wellbeing, including social prescribing, which residents can benefit from throughout their lives
 - vi. **York's national and international profile:** York's outstanding arts, culture and heritage and its status as the UK's first UNESCO Creative City of Media Arts are championed and celebrated, raising the city's profile nationally and internationally
8. The strategy identifies a wide range of intended outcomes all of which will contribute to positioning City of York Council as one of England's top five Local Authorities in terms of levels of cultural engagement by residents.

Taking the strategy forward

9. A great deal of work is already underway to realise the strategy. For example:
- The Council has set out an ambitious vision for its library supported by capital investment in improving local libraries. The culture strategy gives libraries a more central role in developing the cultural offer across the city and Explore is already responding to this through a vibrant and diverse creative and cultural programme for all York's local communities. On top of this, January saw the opening of a new service point at the LNER Community Stadium.
 - Significant cultural ambition is being built into the development of the council's major capital plans notably at the Castle Gateway site.
 - The cultural wellbeing work is forging ahead after the successful pilot led by York Museums Trust. A consortium of partners, led by the council through [Live Well York](#) recently announced a new cultural wellbeing grant scheme for initiatives to ease loneliness and isolation during the winter months, using cultural activities. Successful applicants were announced at the strategy launch. Further funding is now being sought to increase the range and reach of social prescribing community

activities, especially for those people most impacted by COVID-19 and health inequalities.

- Many of York's cultural organisations have found innovative ways to deliver their programmes effectively in the face of Covid-19. Examples include the reworked Mediale festival, the Early Music Festival and the Aesthetica Short Film Festival that took place on line, and the York Theatre Royal travelling pantomime.
 - The young people's cultural entitlement is progressing on a number of fronts including through the 1,000 'Bags of Creativity' created by REACH, the city's cultural education partnership. The bags, which were distributed free to disadvantaged children and young people, including around 700 involved in social care, contained postcards designed by local artists and organisations to enable children and young people to do age appropriate creative activities at home, providing everything they needed in one place.
10. The Culture Strategy will be achieved through the many cultural organisations and practitioners in the city in collaboration with York's residents. REACH will also help to create new audiences and creative pioneers of the future. A new Culture Forum will be established to bring the sector together sitting alongside York Creatives, a collaborative network of practitioners which already supports the creative community through sharing ideas, contacts and resources. Make It York will play a key role in driving the delivery of the strategy. Task and finish groups will focus on specific elements of strategy delivery and ensure that shared interests between organisations and practitioners are aligned to the six key priorities. The Executive Group of the Culture Forum will provide the citywide leadership, advocacy, direction and oversight for the strategy, including pursuing funding opportunities that will assist in realising the strategy's ambitions.

Options and Analysis

11. It is proposed that the council continues to work with and through the culture strategy to ensure its fit with the city's economic strategy and tourism strategy and to maximise the benefits accruing from it. The council will be able to contribute to the ongoing development of the strategy as well as to bringing forward and shaping individual initiatives and developments that have the potential to advance the six key priorities.

Implications

12. **Finance:** There are no immediate financial implications arising from this report.
13. **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. Impact assessment will be undertaken as work streams and projects are developed to address the issues in full.
14. There are no Legal, HR, IT, Crime and Disorder or other implications arising directly from this report.

Council Plan

15. The culture strategy supports a number of aims of the Council Plan including:
 - Good Health and Wellbeing
 - A Better Start for Children and Young People
 - Well-paid jobs and an inclusive economy
 - Creating homes and World-class infrastructure
 - Safe Communities and culture for all

Risk Management

16. 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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	Report Approved	√	Date	22/1/21
Wards Affected:				All ✓
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Annexes:

Annex 1: York's Creative Future.