



To: Executive Councillor for Arts and Recreation
Report by: Debbie Kaye, Head of Arts & Recreation
Relevant scrutiny committee: Community Services Scrutiny Committee 17/03/2011
Wards affected: All Wards

CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL'S ARTS STRATEGY 2011 - 2014

Key Decision

1. Executive summary

1.1 This new Arts Strategy provides a vision for the Council's role within the City's arts activity and indicates priorities for managing its engagement with the arts over the next three years. The strategy clarifies why the Council should support and use the arts as a tool for delivering on its objectives and has identified four key priorities:

- 1) Access for all to art
- 2) Engage & enable local communities
- 3) Enhance the city's reputation & identity
- 4) Protect the environment

1.2 The Strategy outlines how the Council's influence extends beyond its own direct provision through to other strategic partners and stakeholders who are collectively responsible for defining the arts for Cambridge referred to as "the Ripple Effect". It has identified three key methods or "ripples" for working in the arts to achieve its vision:

- 1) Direct Provision
- 2) Partnership Working
- 3) Advocacy & Development

1.3 A Table of Objectives at the base of the report indicates how the Council intends to use these three ripples, or ways of working, to deliver on its four arts priorities.

2. Recommendations

The Executive Councillor is recommended:

- 2.1 To approve the Arts Strategy for immediate adoption.
- 2.2 To agree for work with stakeholders on an action plan to be progressed.

3. Background

3.1 A formal strategic direction for the Council's arts engagement has been absent since 2007 when the former Arts Plan (2002 – 2007) expired and this has been felt by the wider arts community and internal Council staff. This new Strategy provides a revitalised approach to the arts, which confirms the Council's commitment to engaging with the arts within the parameters of a challenging local, economic and social context.

3.2 The Strategy does not seek to provide a direction for the arts for the whole City but to outline and steer the Council's role within that City as a significant and influential stakeholder.

3.3. The Strategy identifies the strengths of the City's arts provision which include a broad range of high quality arts provision, a highly valued programme of open access community activity and significant support to third sector providers through grant aid and advocacy. However, it acknowledges that the Council's engagement with the arts to date has largely been through significant direct provision and partnerships with many historic, rather than strategic, partners and grant recipients. It identifies a need for a clear vision for the arts, a developed approach to partnership working and a better understanding of local need to develop the potential for the arts to deliver on its priorities.

3.3 The Strategy's priorities align directly with the proposed objectives in the Arts & Recreation Portfolio Plan.

3.4 The draft Strategy was presented at Community Services Scrutiny Committee on 13th January 2011 and released for public consultation from 14th January – 11th February 2011 (4 weeks).

3.5 The Arts Strategy consultation was available on the Council website, circulated internally to service heads, and a range of officers & members were engaged. It was presented externally at a meeting of the Cambridge Arts Network (CAN) on 18th January 2011 & via the CAN e-bulletin, a direct email to formally consulted parties, local agencies & Council grant recipients, and a press release distributed locally & featured in the Cambridge News.

3.7 A total of 19 responses were received in addition to comments made at the CAN launch and all comments were logged in a table of responses. Names of respondents consulted have been listed in the Strategy.

3.8 Overall people felt that the document was clear, concise, visionary and provided a refreshing perspective from the City Council. Constructive

feedback mostly requested inclusion of omitted contextual references, requests for greater clarification of meaning, or minor factual corrections. There were no comments to suggest that anyone fundamentally disagreed with the Strategy's approach, priorities or delivery mechanisms proposed.

3.9 Respondents particularly liked:

- Vision & optimism, especially given national and local financial constraints.
- Moving on from historic relationships.
- Ensuring flexible resources to do new things.
- General clarity & overall accessibility of the document.
- Acknowledgement of valued concerns over issues such as creative workspace & the impact of funding cuts across the sector.

3.10 Factual inaccuracies have been amended within the document. No significant changes were required but other notable revisions include:

- Inclusion of references to further strengths e.g. world class organisations; and specific sectors & areas of activity e.g. archives.
- Clarity of what is meant by references to proposed activities.
- A commitment to consultation over proposals to review Leisure Grants.
- Strengthening of references to public art
- Clarity over a commitment to assist proposers in exploring ideas for new performance space and creative workspace in Cambridge without necessarily committing to endorsing any particular projects (such as a purpose built concert hall).

3.11 If approved, internal and external stakeholders will be invited to contribute to developing an Action Plan for the delivery of the Strategy's objectives.

4. Implications

4.1 Financial

The Strategy seeks to identify how the Council's existing resources can be utilised more effectively to achieve its aims but does not propose resources will be increased or reduced by any specific level. Current arts related resources will be required to evidence how they are using used to deliver on the strategy's new priorities.

4.2 Staffing

The Strategy acknowledges structural changes within the Council but is presented through a "one Council" approach to the delivery of its priorities, requiring a commitment from all areas of the Council to support its aims.

4.3 Equal Opportunities

The strategy priorities specifically identify a commitment to ensuring and promoting equality of opportunity in accessing the arts. An EQIA of the strategy was undertaken in February 2011 and suggested that the strategy is unlikely to negatively impact on minority groups. However, it was noted that improvements to consultation with these groups is required and will be progressed within the implementation of the Strategy and development of its Action Plan.

4.4 Environmental Implications

The priorities specifically provide a revitalised commitment to using the arts as a tool for promoting environmental sustainability and outlines ways to minimise the carbon consequences of arts activity.

4.5. Future strategies & policies

The Strategy and its priorities will inform future Council reviews, strategies, policies and plans with regard to delivery of its activities with relevance to the arts, including a proposed review of Leisure Grants in 2011.

5. Background papers

These background papers were used in the preparation of this report:

Full table of consultation responses

(sources used to inform the Strategy's content are indicated within the document)

6. Appendices

Cambridge City Council Arts Strategy 2011-2014

7. Inspection of papers

To inspect the background papers or if you have a query on the report please contact:

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