

Cultural Strategy Cambridge City Council

2024 -
2029



Contents

Introduction

Cultural
Dividends

The Council's
Role

Measuring
Success

References

Case Studies

Graphs and
Statistical
Analysis

Who We Spoke
with and
Summary of
Feedback

Supporting
Information


Introduction

This strategy sets out to:

- Present an invitation to work collectively across the City to draw together the incredible strengths and expertise to provide a cohesive approach to cultural activity
- Outline the Council's commitment and proposed role
- Highlight the contribution of culture in enabling inclusive growth in the City region

Cambridge is in the middle of rapid change, development and growth. The population will continue to grow and change in the next five years, new communities will be developed, and the use of the City Centre is changing. Cultural development will play a key role in how we collectively knit together existing and new communities and places into the strong, historic and global identity of the City.

Success can only be achieved by adopting a cohesive, coordinated and collaborative approach to managing change as the identity of Cambridge City and the region adapts. The City Council has a large role and commitment to help ensure that this happens effectively alongside all other partners in the City.



Cambridge City Council's vision is for 'One Cambridge – Fair for All', where economic dynamism and prosperity are combined with social justice and equality.

Defining the term 'Culture'

Culture is referred to in its broadest sense. It can include a wide range of curated opportunities and services that bring people together and enhance the environment and people's lives. It can include independent businesses, community spaces, markets, mixed sporting occasions, fairs, and arts activities that pull communities into purpose-built locations. It encompasses all the creative industries including museums, outdoor events, venue provision and programmes, festivals, and the visual arts, which includes artist spaces, permanent, temporary, and socially engaged public art.

Cultural activity and cultural assets includes supporting space that allows for the production of culture (creative workspace) and the consumption of culture.



Cultural Dividends

There is an evidence base being developed for the value a Cultural Strategy can deliver for a City Council. Cultural dividends bring benefits and vibrancy to the City and the wider region already, with this Strategy about enhancing these even further. The breadth of value being identified will help the City Council meet its wider corporate objectives as well as addressing current and future challenges the City faces.



Digital Innovation

- Attract skilled workforce
- Share data and evidence
- Increase output
- Decrease costs
- Diversify programme
- Targeted provision

Supporting Creators

- Creative workspace
- Artist networks
- Contribution to local economy
- Role models and members
- Financially sustainable businesses

Health & Wellbeing

- Reducing isolation
- Community pride
- Inclusion engagement (mental health)

Diversity

- Include new communities in wider cultural offers

Skills & Learning

- Reduce inequity
- Confidence
- Employment in sector
- Apprenticeships
- Region of Learning
- CV opportunities
- Vibrant cultural youth scene creating social and economic opportunities

Place & Environment

- Community cohesion
- New builds design
- Infrastructure
- Planning
- Facilities
- Specialised hub creation
- Public art
- Enhance growth
- Regeneration
- Improved economy
- Promote and influence sustainable behaviour
- Enhance public realm

Economy

- Community wealth building
- Employment
- Tourism
- Increase in business investments
- Supports tertiary sector
- Increases footfall
- Economy recovery
- Increases in money circulation
- Attracts skilled workforce
- City centre management

Collaboration

- Increase output
- Decrease costs
- Diversify programme

Community Cohesion

- Increasing confidence
- Inclusion
- Engagement
- Diversionary Activities



Cultural Dividends

Where are we now?

Cambridge is international, as a place where people come to work, live, visit, play, stay, and create.

It is a unique city with a vibrant mix of public, private, community, and university sectors. The University of Cambridge contributes to this through world-class museums and classical music events. Anglia Ruskin University has also ensured Cambridge stays a vibrant centre for the arts and creative industries. The future identity of the City will increasingly embrace the significant growth sectors of biotechnology and digital services.

We know that arts and cultural events, as well as venues and open spaces, have a huge role to play in keeping Cambridge's communities cohesive through significant social and economic change. A clear and strong cultural offering is paramount to the delivery of the wider strategic ambitions for the City. It's also one of arts and culture's roles to help attract and retain talent from around the globe as well as engaging and empowering people who have grown up here.

As one of the civic leaders of the City it is our responsibility with partners to help ensure that growth is culturally, as well as economically, inclusive.



Population Growth

Cambridge is a growing City. The development needs of the Cambridge area are being met through new developments including multiple new neighbourhoods on the edge of the City and new settlements nearby in South Cambridgeshire. Over the last decade (2011-2021) it has grown faster than any other British city, at 17.1%¹. It is also notable that positions 2,3 and 4 are regional to Cambridge, being Peterborough, Milton Keynes, and Northampton respectively. This both presents an opportunity for the city's cultural scene to develop the customer base, but also a challenge to ensure equal access to the arts for all. The demographics of Cambridge do present particular needs, for example around inequality and a large youth population.

Community Cohesion

Culture has been proven to give strong dividends in the development of cohesive communities. 82% of survey respondents report that “artistic engagement (particularly live music events and theatre performances) makes them feel more socially connected”² (Krekel and Mackerron, 2023 in Deakin et al., 2023). Similarly, culture-led developments are often successful in creating communities with a stronger sense of place.

Health and Inequality

A 2020 CfC analysis revealed that Cambridge is the UK's most unequal City in terms of income, with the top 6% of earners accounting for 19% of the total income, while the bottom 20% receive only 2%³. This inequality affects resident's lives in deeply embedded ways; Cambridge has an 11.9 year gap in life expectancy between the wealthiest areas in the City and the poorest (12 years for men, 11.8 for women)⁴.

Cambridge is also one of the most income-segregated amongst its comparators, meaning that wealthy people and poorer people in the city live more separate lives than in similarly unequal cities⁵.

The benefits that culture can deliver to health and wellbeing objectives include a positive impact on mental and physical health that participating in the arts can support. This, combined with reducing isolation and breaking down barriers between communities, suggests that targeted investment in arts and culture can help address Cambridge's inequalities.



Economy

Cambridge's historical assets are internationally renowned and play a vital role in the continued success of the City's economy. There needs to be a balance between growth, preservation, and opportunity. With central rents higher than in neighbouring towns and cities, coupled with the changing use of city centre retail, public, and office space, scholars point towards cultural industries as a future prospect for city centres⁶. Capitalising on Cambridge's uniquely privileged position in cultural offerings may well serve to bolster the city's economic resilience.

Cultural activity provides economic dividends through several mechanisms. Examples of this include through direct cash flow, and through providing transferrable skills.

A diagram displaying these effects, and more, is shown on page 7. These mechanisms will be further expanded upon in sections detailing the three roles that the City Council will focus on.

¹ Centre for Cities – Cities Outlook 2023

² Krekel and Mackerron, 2023 in Deakin et al., 2023

³ Centre for Cities – Inequality 2020

⁴ Cambridge City Council – State of the City 2023

⁵ Cauvain et al., 2022

⁶ White et al., 2023

The Council's role

The Cultural Strategy is directly aligned to the Council's overall Community Wealth Building approach⁷.

1. As an anchor: Using the Council's assets, resources, and powers
2. Working collaboratively to empower communities
3. Contributing to an inclusive and sustainable local economy

This is complimented by wider considerations in the 'The Cultural Cities Enquiry'⁸, setting out the case for Councils to develop cultural strategies and their use in their approaches to place, economy and society

We aspire to engage in conversations that develop a collective narrative that could lead to new opportunities, new investment, and a more cohesive cultural offer.

"Cultural strategies have proved worthy investments, catalysing new types of partnership, engaging diverse communities into a wider civic conversation and leveraging additional public and private investment... and increases the likelihood of securing larger amounts of funding."

LGA Cultural Strategy in a Box



1 To be an Anchor

Use of assets

- The City Council own, manage and are a landlord to a wide range of assets across the City. This includes parks and open space, cultural venues, community centres and the wider public realm that are used for cultural activity including permanent and temporary public art commissions. Our wider services have a direct impact on how the City functions and facilitates a cultural programme from maintenance, licensing, parking, space management, health and safety and compliance.
- We will look to ensure that how we provide these services will positively contribute to a vibrant night-time economy, a coordinated range of events, imaginative use of meanwhile space to encourage innovation, the development of public arts commissions, the development of creative workspace and the use of space in neighbourhoods. The Council will continue to support the accessibility of these sites for community groups and commercial promoters.
- The Council will play an integral part in an effective place-making agenda that will seek to include cultural considerations in the master planning of new growth areas, redevelopment sites in the City, and the development of Civic 'hubs/quarters' in the City Centre around the Guildhall, and also in the southern part of the City. Culture-led (re)developments are often successful, encouraging further commercial and residential development⁹.



Audit of infrastructure

The City Council will produce a Cultural Infrastructure Strategy in partnership with South Cambridgeshire District Council. The Infrastructure Strategy will enable the City to have a coordinated and long-term plan for cultural infrastructure, both to allow for better placemaking, but to enable the wider economy to consider culture as an integral part of planning and design that increases the long-term success of new developments.

- Studies have demonstrated the core role cultural activity plays in establishing new communities, and helping create a strong sense of pride, place and community¹⁰.

Public Art

- The City Council has taken a national lead in its approach to the commissioning of public arts and has achieved an impressive legacy with demonstrated benefits to the city and people across all the cultural dividends outlined. The Cambridge Perspective – A Manifesto (Art Artists Community Place Change) contains key strategic objectives that will inform public art delivery. The review of public art and the public art Manifesto will support the role of culture in the development process, and will also contribute to the new strategic approach, with planning services and other partners becoming increasingly involved in shaping our public spaces through art.

7 Cambridge City Council, Forthcoming

8 CoreCities, 2019

9 CounterCulture LLP, 2021; Hatch Regeneris 2020

10 Mohammad et al., 2013



Facilitator and Enabler

Funding

The Council plays a critical role both as a direct funder, as well as a facilitator of external funding to enable wider organisations to contribute and deliver.

- We will work with stakeholders through the development of our infrastructure strategies to identify the needs and opportunities of new developments and require appropriate delivery and funding from developers through S106.
- Through coordinated grants provision we will look to support cultural organisations and creators, enhance the identity of the whole City, and have a broad and diverse range of outputs with a wide reach and aim to target people in most need.
- We will work to attract collaborative funding for large scale investment into the City, for example, Combined Authority, Central Government, the Arts Council and commercial business partnerships.

Advocacy and regional and civic leadership

Cambridge City Council plays a role in advocating for the arts and the cultural industries locally regionally and nationally. We have a responsibility to inform and promote our City's needs and successes to the wider local authority network, national governing bodies, CLOA, Events Industry Forum, HSE, Arts Council, local and national business.

Civic role and ability and skill to respond to national events and initiatives

We will continue to respond to national initiatives/events and opportunities where the Council is the right anchor organisation, and coordinate a multi-agency approach to large scale initiatives such as Tour de France, Baton Raley, National Civil Ceremonies, and national festivals.

Networks, Advice, Support and Compliance

- The Council plays a role in creating and supporting links and networks for arts organisations and other businesses and individuals to thrive in the city's cultural scene, this is for the purpose of identifying shared issues and identifying collective opportunities. The issues are wide and can range from programming opportunities, health and safety, funding and sponsorship, the health and well-being agenda, skills and learning, digital, City Centre recovery etc. (Safety advisory group, Festival and Events Liaison Group, Cambridge Arts Network Conference, My Cambridge, facilitator and convenor within Arts Development). We also support initiatives that help to market and promote the City's cultural offer to local residents, the local region, and visitors.
- Supporting artists in a wide variety of ways is essential, through advocacy and protection through clear rules of engagement, and involving artists in consultation and being key to central processes.



Commitments



To support a varied outdoor events programme

Through a variety of funding arrangements enable the development cultural sector

Co-ordinate and develop a body of evidence and data on the value of the cultural sector

Advocate for Cultural development and civic quarters within the city

Deliver a Cultural Infrastructure Strategy that provides a diversity of resources to the City for the future

2. Working collaboratively to empower communities

The Council can challenge inequality and contribute to community wealth building by involving local people in decision-making using cultural activity and the arts to shape their neighbourhoods and the broader city, to build prosperity.

Culturally inclusive growth and creating stable senses of pride in place, will assist in encouraging businesses into areas of new development and regeneration, minimising the risk of isolated communities. We aim to plan to involve everyone in the cultural life of the city, so reducing inequalities. Culture must not stay confined to the city centre, but instead be available to all.



‘SOCIAL CAPITAL IS
THE GLUE THAT BINDS
COMMUNITIES
TOGETHER’

ANDY HALDARE

Access and Diversity

With a vision and civic role to ensure broad access and representation, we are uniquely placed to help ensure the identity of the City reflects all communities and cultural provision reaches across everyone, with a particular focus where we know inequalities exist. In the context of culture this is considered in a number of ways. Examples of continued support is through our delivery of a free and diverse City Events Programme, revised public art policy, partnership projects with City cultural organisations, the use of cultural activity in neighbourhood and community centre projects, promoting programming that is wide, diverse and appealing to different communities.

Project Example: Holiday lunches at The Meadows

During the school holidays the City Council and other partners run a series of holiday lunches across the city aimed at low-income families. These families would normally access free lunches in term time. To attract the families who are most in need whilst reducing any sense of stigma, we needed to turn these meals into holiday events, with other activities attached to provide a wider cultural focus. Holiday lunch organisers drew on the City Council's long relationship with the University's Museum service to bring cultural activities to these sessions and they help across the city throughout the year.

The City Council will also encourage all authorities and partners to consider the challenges in making events accessible that include transport, price and cultural relevance.

Case Study: Out of the Ordinary Festival and City Events Programme

The Council can support new communities, and cultural organisations and bring together wider data to support the sector.

OOTO and the City Events Programme adopts a multi-agency approach through:

- Utilising different funding streams
- Gathering data from the City Council Community Development team to target specific neighbourhoods
- Involving Community Groups and businesses in the programming
- Using central/neighbourhood and new development space for a range of experiences
- Ensuring accessible and diverse pricing (free), programmes, and using physically accessible sites, for example, Music in the Parks, Mayor's Day Out, Out of the Ordinary Festival
- Supporting a wide range of local and independent acts
- Contributing to a thriving City Centre economy
- Supporting local residents and businesses to feel engaged and have ownership of their own neighbourhood and the City Centre

"I enjoyed the shows. Can there be more of them?"

"Amazing! Me and my children loved it."

"I just wanted to send a very personal and heartfelt thank you for Saturday in Cambridge I took a friend who has been having a tough time, but she was struggling a bit with the crowds and the noise level However, watching you and Gladys was the first time I've seen her really, genuinely, laugh in a long time!" – Sent directly to an artist

"The smile the artists brought to everyone's face"



Skills, Learning and Employability

In education, structured arts activity increases uptake of key transferrable skills by up to 17%¹¹, which in turn improves employability and longer-term job market outcomes. The arts are also recognised as a valuable pathway for learning, with mathematical attainment being significantly increased amongst creatively engaged pupils¹². Artistic competence is economically valued in its own right as well; the cultural sector contributed over £40 billion to the UK economy in 2022¹³, and directly employing over 700,000 people as of 2022¹⁴ with these careers being often highly valued by young people. The Council recognises, supports, and advocates for opportunities for people to acquire creative and cultural skills in the city, to not only develop within creative and cultural sector jobs, but to also develop transferrable skills to support other sectors and contribute to a growing economy. Examples of support include the My Cambridge project and Region of Learning.

Children and Young People

As an urban area with 16.1% of people under the age of 15, and over 30% under 25, we can help enable the potential of the city's children and young people to flourish by providing cultural opportunities that give them connection with the City and inspire them to engage in ways that inform their skills, confidence, identity, and aspirations. These aims will also align with a wider City Council Youth Strategy and the support of the development of a 'Youth Voice' initiative.

Project examples: Community centres across the city offer a wide range of participatory cultural activities for all ages groups but particularly for young people. For example, at the Meadows, youth charity Romsey Mill offer free technology based music sessions in the recording studio as part of their free to attend youth sessions. The Meadows also hosts regular dance lessons for children, and Bedazzle, a disability youth arts charity. Cambridge Junction are supported to provide youth engagement projects through the Community Grant fund.

Enabling and enhancing the voluntary infrastructure

The council plays an important role in supporting voluntary groups who contribute to the cultural life of the city, and would like to develop volunteering and mentoring opportunities across all sectors.

Health and Well Being

By increasing access to cultural activities, "arts interventions [can show] equivalent or greater cost effectiveness to possible health interventions"¹⁵. A UCL analysis has shown that cultural participation is socio-economically stratified across the country¹⁶ and recommends active interventions to address this disparity. A culturally engaged city is a healthy and thus prosperous city. Cultural activities were rated higher than virtually all other engagements on LSE's Happiness factor¹⁷. We can contribute by supporting arts organisations that engage the local communities, support creative mental health initiatives, provide a varied and accessible Cultural Services events programme, and support external cultural event promoters and public art providers.

¹¹ CLA, 2017

¹² Leikin and Pitta-Pantazi, 2012

¹³ Deakin et al., 2023

¹⁴ Statista, 2023

¹⁵ WHO, 2019: 53

¹⁶ Mak et al., 2020

¹⁷ Krekel and Mackerron, 2023

Commitments

HEALTH AND WELL BEING

'THE MOST SOCIALLY ISOLATED ARE MORE THAN TWICE AS LIKELY TO DIE FROM CORONARY HEART DISEASE THAN THE MOST SOCIALLY INTEGRATED'

Bennett Institute for Public Policy, Cambridge



3. An inclusive economy: enhancing the City's reputation, economy and identity

The Council and partners can focus on innovation & excellence in the arts to re-invigorate the public realm, support an innovative and creative economy & create a sense of pride in place. This is a critical contributor in attracting and retaining the workforce required for the wider City region.

Culture drives economies, and culture-lead places are often amongst the most economically successful. McKinsey estimates that the sector as a whole contributed roughly £49 billion to the UK economy over 2022.

Pride

Culture can foster local pride. “Nearly 90% of Edinburgh residents felt that its annual festivals improved their pride in the city”. With the establishment of Heritage Action Zones, aiming to increase people's pride in their local high streets. Landmark events can be extremely effective and leave lasting legacies. Yet smaller consistently held cultural activities that build can be equally as meaningful. Cambridge has a strong tradition of local arts-lead events which can act as a cornerstone to creating strong identities and reputations. Mill Road Winter Fair, Strawberry Fair, Fireworks Night, CAMRA beer festival, and Christmas lights are some of the local events amongst many as well as public art projects.



Making places inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable

'For every £1 in turnover which the arts and culture industry generates directly, a further £1.24 in output is generated in the wider economy.'

(Centre for Economics and Business Research 2019)



Cultural activity acts as an important multiplier for the economy in Cambridge. It generates high turnovers that financially circulates throughout the economy, generates employment, generates business for the supporting tertiary sector especially hospitality, pulls in visitors and tourists to the region, and has a primary role in the development of the night-time economy.

Cultural activity acts as a draw and economic stabiliser in the changing nature of the city and its public realm spaces.

Cultural activity also acts as an attraction and benefit to businesses relocating to the city and supports their staff recruitment and retention rates in the region.

“A thriving arts sector plays an important role in [place-making], creating more attractive communities where people want to live, work and do business” – McKinsey

The Council will continue to support projects that contribute to the animation of the public realm and support venues and businesses that contribute to the cultural life of the City. The medium-term strategy for city centre vitality will involve an increased reliance on cultural industries.

Tourism

Cambridge is a popular tourist destination, with visitors drawn in by the historic architecture and culture. We will prioritise supporting Cambridge's night-time economy, aiming to improve longer overnight stays and encouraging return visits. These initiatives will be outlined in the Visitor Management Plan.

Reflecting the Cities Strengths

The Council will champion digital development, strengthen links with the technology and biotech industries, and encourage the sharing and gathering of data by us and partners for more targeted and effective delivery.

Business Engagement

We will strategically engage with businesses in the City, increasing our awareness of the breadth of events happening in the City. This will allow us to co-ordinate our own events with activities held in the City by a wide range of other organisations. It will also allow us to act as a central point of contact between these organisations, across the public, private and third sector. When doing so, we will be able to communicate the City Council's strategic priorities with regards to cultural provision.

This engagement will allow us to pursue collaborative funding streams, including engaging with the development of the 'Social Impact Fund'. This in turn will allow us to facilitate effective business networks, creating opportunities for cultural development.

As of 2023, 84% of Corn Exchange bookers were from outside Cambridge City. 55% were from outside Cambridge (CB) postcodes, with many bookers giving addresses in Peterborough, Stevenage and Ipswich.

Commitments

‘FOR EVERY ONE JOB CREATED BY THE ARTS AND CULTURE SECTOR, 1.65 JOBS ARE SUPPORTED IN THE WIDER ECONOMY’

Bennett Institute for Public Policy, Cambridge



Measuring Success

Key to measuring success will be having effective ways of both benchmarking where we are currently, and capturing data to know we have made a difference. This strategy and future action plans will guide the formation of a set of measurable indicators of success. It will consider for example social impact measurements, increased sense of pride by local people in arts and culture, growth in sector employment opportunities and increased diversity of audiences.

Over the period of the strategy, we will work to develop a set of indicators looking at the monitoring of individual activity and how we assess the wider impact of cultural activity in Cambridge. The initial phase of the strategy will look to build a baseline for much of this data in the first three years to ensure that strong benchmark data is in place to evidence impact and change in the future.

This framework will be a central point for data sharing, to help tell the story of our success and to be able to target, and incorporate data into future strategic decision making. The framework will also monitor where we are delivering on the priorities and where the gaps are – keeping us all on track so the strategy remains a live and purposeful document.

Our approach will include:

- Commissioning of Economic Impact Assessments for particular projects
- Commissioning of focus groups with non-users / attendees
- Consultation with stakeholders in the Cambridge Arts Network
- Collection of data at specific ward events
- Analysis of City Centre footfall measures
- Analysis of attendance data based on age and postcode
- Collection of event specific data
- Collection of demographic data from users and non-users

[See appendix for more detailed outline of the framework](#)



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