



Subject:	Cultural Framework for Belfast – Draft Action Plan 2016-2020
Date:	9 December 2015
Reporting Officer:	Donal Durkan, Director of Development
Contact Officer:	Eimear Henry, Assistant Tourism, Culture and Arts Manager

Is this report restricted?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report
1.1	The purpose of this report is to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">– Update Members on the development of a new Action Plan 2016-2020 to support the Cultural Framework for Belfast– Seek approval to proceed to public consultation on the draft Action Plan.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	Members are asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">– Note and agree the contents of the Cultural Framework for Belfast – Draft Action Plan 2016-2020 as a basis for public consultation– Agree to consider the revised version of the Action Plan after the conclusion of the consultation exercise in April 2016.
3.0	Main report
3.1	Members will be aware that, at a meeting of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee in August 2015, approval was given to commence the process of developing a new action plan for the period 2016-2020 to support the Cultural Framework for Belfast.
3.2	The Cultural Framework for Belfast was developed in 2012 and has a vision for 2020 that:

“Everyone in Belfast experiences and is inspired by our city’s diverse and distinctive culture and arts. Arts and heritage are valued for enriching quality of life and creating wealth, and the city’s culture and creativity is renowned throughout the world”.

- 3.3 This vision supports the Belfast Agenda in particular contributing to key actions to improve the city living experience and attract tourists to Belfast helping to achieve:
- Happy and healthy people and communities
 - More jobs and a strong economy

- 3.4 The Cultural Framework is arranged under 4 key themes:
- *Distinctly Belfast*: It is widely recognised that a thriving and vibrant city is a diverse city that celebrates its uniqueness and takes pride in its difference. Under this theme, we support programmes that help connect people to the city, prioritising our local artists and our unique stories. This helps to build a positive image of Belfast by positioning the city internationally which in turn attracts tourists and boosts the economy.
 - *Inspiring Communities*: Engaging communities across the city is an ongoing priority. It is vital that everyone in the city can have access to high-quality cultural services and can participate in arts and heritage activities. This improves quality of life and builds confidence at an individual, community and whole-city level.
 - *Attracting Audiences*: One of the most critical challenges for the cultural sector continues to be the capacity to engage with, retain and develop audiences locally, nationally and internationally. There is a need to support collaborative marketing and communications that help build audiences to ensure the sustainability of the arts and heritage sectors in the city.
 - *Strengthening the Sector*: In a time of economic constraint there is a need to support the development of the sector beyond direct funding. This theme therefore focuses on providing skills development and opportunities to diversify income streams. This includes connecting the arts and heritage sectors to tourism and the creative industries as well as introducing new business models and investment opportunities.

3.5	<p>A number of cross-cutting actions were arranged under each of the four themes and agreed for the period 2012-15 to support the initial phase of the Cultural Framework. Following a significant programme of sector engagement, a new draft Action Plan for 2016-2020 has been developed.</p>
3.6	<p>Since August 2015 the following work has been undertaken to inform the draft Action Plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – A series of sector workshops focused on: Heritage, Inspiring Communities, Attracting Audiences, Developing People and International Connections; – Meetings with a number of key stakeholders including the Arts Council of Northern Ireland, Tourism NI and Visit Belfast; – Commissioning reports to review and make key recommendations to support the Attracting Audiences and International Development strands of the Framework; – State of the sector survey carried out to establish the current position of the cultural sector in Belfast.
3.7	<p>This work has highlighted a number of challenges for the culture, arts and heritage sectors in the city. During the 2012 engagement process, a significant issue for the cultural sector was the level of public funding compared to other parts of the UK and Ireland. In recent years this has continued to decline and ongoing concerns include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Public sector funding cuts including significant budget cuts to the Arts Council of Northern Ireland; – The Council’s funding for arts and heritage organisations has remained standstill since 2013 and projected budgets for the core funding programme are set to not increase between 2016 and 2020; – The need to protect the existing cultural infrastructure that has been developed in recent years; – The need to develop new programmes and work that resonates locally and internationally positioning Belfast as a contemporary, modern, vibrant and creative city; – Lack of capacity to secure external investment to realise business development opportunities; – Lack of capacity among some groups to deliver quality cultural programmes; – Lack of capacity among some groups to effectively market and communicate activity.
3.8	<p>The pressures on arts organisations due to the major cuts to arts funding is likely to</p>

increase the requests made to Council for support however there is no additional budget available for grant funding. In response to this situation Council officers will continue to provide support and deliver development programmes to help organisations diversify their income streams and secure funding from other sources. This is outlined in the Strengthening the Sector theme of the Action Plan.

3.9

The draft Action Plan has responded to these challenges and sets out a number of commitments. These include:

- Carrying out a cultural mapping of the city to establish current activity and gaps in provision;
- Developing a series of new heritage initiatives including:
 - Encouraging conservation of the city's built heritage through establishing character and style guidelines;
 - Delivering a citywide programme Bringing Belfast's Heritage to Life;
- Reviewing the current small grants programme to ensure effectiveness of funding in supporting the priorities of the Framework including:
 - Access to culture, arts and heritage for priority groups, in particular, children, young people, older people and hard-to-reach communities, including minority ethnic communities and disabled people;
 - Support for innovation and new work;
- Scoping potential for development funding for organisations transitioning from project to core funding;
- Delivering a programme to build capacity across Belfast for community-led quality arts activities and festivals;
- Developing a strategic approach to marketing culture, arts and heritage in the city;
- Investing in people through new tailored skills development programmes including apprenticeships, mid-career progression and leadership opportunities.

3.10

The full draft Action Plan is included at Appendix 1. It is proposed that this plan proceeds to a 12 week public consultation period to commence in January 2016. This consultation will be proactively managed by officers to provide opportunities for individuals and groups across the city to feedback. A revised plan will be presented to Committee in April 2016 for consideration.

3.11

Financial & Resource Implications

The implementation of this Action Plan is included in the draft budget estimates for

3.12	<p>2016/17.</p> <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications</u></p> <p>A full Equality Impact Assessment on the Cultural Framework was carried out in 2012. This updated Action Plan supports the existing Framework.</p>
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
4.1	Appendix 1 - Cultural Framework for Belfast – Draft Action Plan 2016-2020