



Subject:	Cultural Strategy Update
Date:	28 August 2019
Reporting Officer:	Alistair Reid, Strategic Director of Place and Economy
Contact Officer:	Eimear Henry, Cultural Regeneration Manager, Ext 3582

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Some time in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

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

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	The purpose of this report is to update Members on the proposed ten year cultural strategy for Belfast, <i>A City Imagining</i> , including: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- The findings from the public consultation- The emerging investment model including plans for a new multi-annual grant- Draft implementation plans
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	It is recommended that Members:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Note the findings of the public consultation and approve the updated strategy document as the final version for publication. - Approve the final Equality Impact Assessment and Rural Needs Assessment. - Approve the opening of a new cultural multi-annual grant scheme in October 2019 to enable that funding awards are in place for April 2020. Officer recommendations will be brought back to Committee in February 2020 for ratification by Council in March 2020. - Note the contents of the draft implementation plans and the full investment model and agree to receive a further report in October 2019 with the final plan and budget approved in advance of April 2020.
3.0	Main report
3.1	<p><u>Background</u></p> <p>In December 2018 Members of City Growth and Regeneration Committee agreed for officers to develop a 10 year cultural strategy for Belfast to drive transformation in the city. For the first time the scope of this strategy would bring together under one compelling vision a number of areas including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support Belfast to become a recognised cultural destination through a coherent approach to events and festivals. This would include a range of approaches from bidding for major events to supporting local festivals and importantly creating a portfolio of Signature homegrown Belfast Events. - Support sustainability and growth of the cultural sector across the city. - Build on the work undertaken during European Capital of Culture to make the approach to cultural development more people centred and support cultural expression, identity and diversity. - Support significant strategic projects that celebrate Belfast’s unique culture and positions the city internationally. - Build local capacity and skill development through specific initiatives such as neighbourhood tourism.
3.2	<p>Members will be aware that in March 2019 the City Growth and Regeneration Committee approved that the draft ten-year cultural strategy for Belfast, <i>A City Imagining</i>, be subject to a 12-week public consultation exercise.</p>

3.3	<p>The draft strategy was the culmination of an extensive research, engagement and development programme including a co-design process with citizens and city partners that amounted to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">– Holding 62 civic conversations– Engaging with 5361 citizens– Supporting 625 creators– Working with 106 artists– Across 85 places– Through 137 events
3.4	<p>The strategy was also informed by a review of existing programmes and frameworks including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">– Review of Tourism Strategy 2015-2020– Review of Cultural Framework for Belfast 2016-2020– Events and Festivals Review 2017/18– Review of core multi-annual funding for arts and heritage organisations 2016-2020– Review of project funding for arts and heritage organisations– Review of Community Festivals Funding
3.5	<p>The draft strategy was shaped by two external bodies of work. The first is Agenda 21 for Culture – an international methodology that supports cultural development in cities and regions. The focus of Culture 21 is to embed culture as the fourth dimension of sustainable cities alongside existing economic, social and ecological pillars. Belfast’s participation in the Culture 21 pilot cities programme has already been approved and this programme will support the implementation of the strategy.</p>
3.6	<p>The second set of recommendations that have helped inform this strategy is the recently published Cultural Enquiry by the Core Cities network of which Belfast is a partner member. This enquiry presents a number of practical recommendations on investment and governance of culture in cities. This presents an opportunity for a collaborative model to be taken forward that complements the community planning process and sets shared priorities for culture along with a more effective approach to investment to maximise the overall return. This involves working closely to leverage new sources of finance including public-private models.</p>

3.7	<p><u>The draft strategy</u></p> <p>The draft strategy, <i>A City Imagining</i>, opens with a cultural statement for the city shaped by the thousands of conversations that have taken place since 2017 as part of the ongoing public engagement programme. This is then taken forward through an overall cross-cutting thematic approach to the strategy with each theme having a particular area of focus as follows.</p>
3.8	<p>Theme 1: A City Belonging – focuses on supporting active citizenship and participation in cultural life.</p> <p>Theme 2: A City Challenging – focuses on diversity through use of public and cultural spaces.</p> <p>Theme 3: A City Creating – focuses on supporting innovation and creativity across the cultural sectors.</p> <p>Theme 4: A City Exploring – focuses on Belfast’s relationship to the rest of the world both inward and outward including support for cultural tourism.</p>
3.9	<p>Four strategic priorities are set out for each theme. The result is a strategic framework consisting of 16 key priorities to be delivered by 2030. Each of these priorities have been further developed in the detailed draft implementation plans.</p>
3.10	<p>The document also sets out a number of key strategic milestones throughout the ten-year period. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Launching a new approach to events and festivals in the city – Producing an international year of culture <i>At Home in 2023</i> – Bidding for UNESCO <i>City of Music</i> in 2021 – Delivering a new visitor attraction in the city centre – Developing a long-term local neighbourhood tourism programme
3.11	<p>These specific initiatives are considered to be central to delivering on the city’s overall targets for the period and to attract new forms of investment into the city with significant cultural, social and economic impacts. Critically the strategy considers the governance and investment model required to deliver this type of long-term transformation clearly positioning Belfast as a regional driver.</p>

3.12	<p>The purpose of the strategy document is to present the overall approach and commitments with the intention of developing detailed implementation and actions plans to support the delivery of the strategy over the ten-year period.</p>
3.13	<p><u>The public consultation</u></p> <p>The draft cultural strategy, <i>A City Imagining</i>, was open for public consultation between 17 April and 10 July 2019. In keeping with this ethos of citizen-led design and engagement, Council committed to an in-depth consultation process for this new strategy. This involved various engagement strands from the traditional online platform, <i>Citizen Space</i>, to opening a consultation hub in the city centre.</p>
3.14	<p>Other methods included citywide exhibitions and one to one meetings led by officers. The results of the overall process have been extensive reaching over 3000 residents and visitors, in one to one engagement through 80 events taking place in Belfast. A further 134 responses were received online or in writing. Additional awareness raising was achieved through the distribution of the full strategy document, a citizen summary and a short film.</p>
3.13	<p>There has been overwhelming support for the vision set out in <i>A City Imagining</i> from citizens and the cultural, creative and tourism sectors. However with this support has come a recognition that for this strategy to be successful it will need resources, investment and new levels of partnership working both within Belfast City Council and externally.</p>
3.14	<p>The public consultation aimed to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Test whether the strategy effectively represented the long-term engagement process that had taken place – Identify clear areas for reconsideration or revision – Inform the development of the implementation plans including the investment model.
3.15	<p>In order to ensure the aims of the consultation were realised all feedback was assigned an action as follows:</p> <p><i>Supports Strategy</i>: the comment specifically supports/agrees with an aspect of the strategy</p> <p><i>Do nothing/ Commentary</i>: the comment doesn't need action and is general commentary</p>

Consider Revising: consider taking on board the feedback and revising the strategy accordingly

Implementation Plans: the issue raised will be dealt with in the Implementation Plans

Equality Impact: a specific equality issue has been highlighted and will be addressed.

3.16 Through this process the following changes have been made:

- Revisions in language to the Cultural Statement and Tourism Narrative to ensure that the vision for inclusivity and diversity is explicitly articulated.
- The 16 priorities are valid and however, some revisions have been made to a number of them in order to increase clarity or extend focus. Such examples include:
 - Ensure that cultural rights includes the principle of respect for other people's rights.
 - Increase references to heritage.

3.17 A number of recommendations in relation to the strategic projects have helped to shape the proposed approach and actions to be taken forward in the implementation plans.

- Further detail on the proposed governance model has been included with emphasis on the need for cross-sector partnerships in line with feedback received.
- Feedback on the investment model has been considered as part of the design of new funding programmes. Specific feedback taken on board is that the open definition of culture within the strategy while positive must then be supported by robust investment criteria. Each funding stream will have very clearly defined eligibility criteria and quality assessment.

3.18 Full details of the public consultation are included at Appendix 1 with the revised strategy included at Appendix 2.

3.19 **Draft implementation plans**

A significant amount of feedback received during the engagement and public consultation process has helped to inform the draft implementation plans. From the outset, whilst there was a recognised need for a long-term commitment through a ten-year strategy, this approach required shorter implementation phases that could both support the overall vision and be responsive to constantly changing local and global environments. The first implementation phase will be 2020 -2023. Appendix 3 sets out full details, however it is

important to note that this is a draft document and Committee are asked only to note the work to date and agree to receive future updates in advance of agreeing the final plan. Between September 2019 and March 2020 further consideration will be given to these plans including internal and external engagement and the setting of baselines and key performance indicators. Annual service plans will also be developed.

3.20

The following areas are covered in the draft Implementation plans:

- Actions to support the 16 strategic priorities set out in *A City Imagining*
- Actions to support specific strategic projects or areas of focus such as UNESCO City of Music and At Home in 2023
- Priority areas and actions for tourism development
- Overview of the proposed investment model
- Details of the proposed governance model
- Proposed approach to Communications and Evaluation

3.21

Subsequent reports will be taken to the City Growth and Regeneration Committee with final approval due following rate setting in early 2020. Final plans will become operational from April 2020.

3.22

The investment model

To support the delivery of the cultural strategy consideration has been given to a fit for purpose investment model. Full details of this draft model is included at Appendix 4 however this is subject to further consideration and budget allocation. The recommendation is that this model is introduced in phases with the first phase being approval for a new multi-annual grant to replace the existing core multi-annual funding for arts and heritage (due to end in March 2020) and previous one-off funding agreements to events and festivals awarded via Committee on either a year to year or adhoc basis. Members are asked to approve the opening of the multi-annual scheme in October 2019 in line with the criteria outlined below and on pages 7-11 of Appendix 4: DRAFT Approach to investing in culture.

3.23

Core multi-annual grants

In April 2013, Council introduced core multi-annual funding for arts and heritage organisations. In April 2016 this scheme was repeated with 56 organisations receiving funding.

3.24	<p>The purpose of the core multi-annual funding was to support core costs and associated programme costs, offering longer term sustainability for Belfast based arts or heritage organisations that have full time staff and ongoing annual costs, and that produce work which substantially benefits the city.</p>
3.25	<p>Assessments were made only on the basis of information supplied by the applicant within their submission. This included the application form, programme of activities and supporting documentation such as business plans and strategies. Assessors considered the strategic fit of the proposed programme against the agreed Cultural Framework. Contracts associated with this programme are due to come to an end in March 2020.</p>
3.26	<p>The extensive monitoring and evaluation of core multi annual funding indicates the success of a multi-annual approach, however, revisions were necessary such as the introduction of a tiered approach including a 4 year and 2 year option as this would offer greater equality of opportunity especially for developing or newer organisation. It is therefore recommended that a new multi-annual funding programme is opened in October 2019 to support organisations from April 2020 onwards in line with the priorities set out in the new cultural strategy, <i>A City Imagining</i>.</p>
3.27	<p><i>Events and Festivals</i></p> <p>In 2017/18 an independent review of events and festivals was carried out by Festivals and Events International (FEI). This review recommended that in line with the established approach for arts and heritage that a multi-annual funding programme with published criteria was also introduced for festivals and events in the city. This was considered critical to ensuring greater accountability and transparency of funding and to increase the impact and return on investment.</p>
3.28	<p><u><i>The proposed approach</i></u></p> <p>The recommendation is that a new cultural multi-annual grant (MAG) is introduced with two strands of multi-annual grants (MAGs) available, that is grants for:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Festivals and events with an audience of more than 10,000 2. Arts and heritage organisations with a year-round programme of activity <p>There are also two tiers of investment available: two- and four-year.</p>

3.29	<p><i>Arts and heritage MAGs</i></p> <p>Arts and heritage MAGs are designed to help sustain our existing cultural offer. They are open to organisations that have a recurrent, year-round programme of work and ongoing costs. It is expected that organisations sustain their programme over the period making a significant contribution to the cultural life of the city. It is not intended for short- or fixed-term projects or single or one-off events.</p>						
3.30	<p><i>Festivals and events MAGs</i></p> <p>A festival or event is an activity or a series of activities with a common theme that occurs on one day or over a period of several successive days.</p>						
3.31	<p>Festivals and events MAGs are designed to develop large events and festivals that will help Belfast become an events destination. Applicants will have to demonstrate how they will grow their audience by the end of the contract period. This means that new festivals and events, and festivals with audiences less than 10,000 people, can still apply.</p>						
3.32	<p><u>Eligibility and Criteria</u></p> <p>The eligibility criteria has been drawn up in relation to the potential scale and impact of the organisation and programme and takes into consideration areas such as turnover, audience and staffing. An online eligibility quiz will guide organisations through this stage of the process.</p>						
3.33	<p><i>Quality criteria</i></p> <p>The quality criteria for all strands and tiers are directly related to the priorities of the new cultural strategy. If an application is deemed eligible, it will be scored against the following criteria.</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="272 1464 1426 1977"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="272 1464 1193 1514">Criteria</th> <th data-bbox="1193 1464 1426 1514">Weighting %</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="272 1514 1193 1778"> <p><i>Quality of programme</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vision • Quality of content • Quality of audience experience • Marketing </td> <td data-bbox="1193 1514 1426 1778">30</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="272 1778 1193 1977"> <p><i>Impact of activity</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targets • Contribution to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>A City Belonging</i> (impact on people) </td> <td data-bbox="1193 1778 1426 1977">40 Note: applicants must score 75</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Criteria	Weighting %	<p><i>Quality of programme</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vision • Quality of content • Quality of audience experience • Marketing 	30	<p><i>Impact of activity</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targets • Contribution to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>A City Belonging</i> (impact on people) 	40 Note: applicants must score 75
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>A City Challenging</i> (impact on place) ○ <i>A City Creating</i> (impact on sector) ○ <i>A City Exploring</i> (impact on worldview/our place in the world) ● Monitoring and evaluating impact 	per cent or over (that is, 30 marks or more) in this section to be eligible for a MAG
	<p><i>Readiness for investment</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Planning ● Financial management ● Governance ● Skills ● Environmental impact 	30
3.34	<p>Applications must score at least 65 per cent overall to be considered for investment. Even if an application scores 65 or over, this is not a guarantee of funding as this scheme is expected to be very competitive, and the funding threshold will depend on demand, quality of applications and resources available.</p>	
3.35	<p><u>Principles of the Assessment Process</u> Applications received will be eligibility checked by the Central Grants Unit before being passed to Tourism, Culture, Heritage and Arts or City Events officers for scoring.</p>	
3.36	<p>A five day rule is implemented by the Central Grants Unit at the eligibility check stage for missing information such as accounts. This only applies to information that is not scored. Thereafter, officers do not return to applicants to request any additional details in relation to their applications.</p>	
3.37	<p>Officers undertake a thorough assessment of all eligible applications. Assessments and applications are discussed and agreed at an internal moderation panel.</p>	
3.38	<p>An independent assessment panel co-ordinated by Central Grants Unit and made up of Head of Service and Unit managers is also convened. The role of this assessment panel is 'to ensure that the scoring of applications has been undertaken in an appropriate fashion and to provide verification or validation of sampled applications and the overall process'.</p>	

3.39	It is recommended that for applications to 4 year funding for large festivals (Imagine) that the assessment and moderation stages include input from an external independent expert to be appointed via quotation.
3.40	Officer recommendations will be brought back to Committee in February 2020 for consideration and approval. Letters of offer will be issued following Council ratification in March 2020. In order to mitigate against any impact of the new multi-annual scheme project funding for arts, heritage, festivals and events will remain unchanged in 2020/21.
3.41	<p data-bbox="272 607 533 636"><u>Promotion of grants</u></p> <p data-bbox="272 658 1426 792">In recognition that this core funding programme is an open and competitive process the necessary measures will be taken to ensure that all eligible organisations have an equal opportunity to apply. This will include:</p> <ul data-bbox="320 815 1426 1055" style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="320 815 1050 844">– Public advertisements via newspapers and websites<li data-bbox="320 866 608 896">– Email notifications<li data-bbox="320 918 1118 947">– General Information Sessions in locations across the city<li data-bbox="320 969 1426 1055">– An offer of one to one advice session to any potential applicant with a Tourism, Culture, Arts & Heritage officer or a City Events officer
3.42	Full details of the multi-annual grant are available in the relevant section of the Investment Model included at Appendix 4.
3.43	<p data-bbox="272 1272 746 1301"><i>Other considerations for City Events</i></p> <p data-bbox="272 1323 1394 1458">It is important to note that the proposed multi-annual grant for events and festivals will not be the only investment available. Project funding including support for neighbourhood festivals will continue through the Community Festivals Fund.</p>
3.44	Council will also continue to directly deliver a number of city events including the Maritime Festival and St Patrick’s. However these events will be reviewed with an increased focus on partnership working and delivery.
3.45	Finally, Council will continue to work in partnership with other stakeholders to bid for and secure major events for the city. A report will be taken back to Committee in October with an update on proposals for the period 2020-2025.

3.46	<p><u>Financial & Resource Implications</u></p> <p>There are no direct financial resource implications at this time. The recommendations for funding will be presented to Committee for approval in February 2020 and will be subject to agreed budgets for subsequent years.</p>
3.47	<p>The full delivery of the strategy will be considered as part of the rate setting and final implementation plans will be agreed pending the outcome of this process. A further detailed report setting out operational and financial implications will be taken to City Growth and Regeneration Committee in October 2019.</p>
3.48	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/ Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>The cultural strategy has been subject to an Equality Impact Assessment (EAIQ) included at Appendix 5 and a Rural Needs Assessment (RNS) at Appendix 6. Where any issues were raised during the public consultation these have been addressed in the strategy, implementation plans and investment model and the EQIA and RNIA have been updated accordingly. The multi-annual grant has also been equality screened and rural needs assessed. All subsequent strands of the investment model will be equality screened and rural needs assessed.</p>
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
4.1	<p>Appendix 1: <i>A City Imagining</i> Public Consultation Report</p> <p>Appendix 2: <i>A City Imagining</i> Final Cultural Strategy for Belfast 2020 – 2030</p> <p>Appendix 3: <i>A City Imagining</i> Draft Implementation Plan 2020 – 2023</p> <p>Appendix 4: <i>A City Imagining</i> Draft Approach to investing in culture</p> <p>Appendix 5: <i>A City Imagining</i> Final Equality Impact Assessment</p> <p>Appendix 6: <i>A City Imagining</i> Final Rural Needs Impact Assessment</p>