

Meeting:	Cabinet	Date:	9 December 2020
Subject:	Cultural Strategy Six Monthly Update		
Report Of:	Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure		
Wards Affected:	All		
Key Decision:	No	Budget/Policy Framework:	No
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Appendices:	1. Gloucester Cultural Strategy Progress Report April-Sept 2020		
	2. Plan to update Cultural Strategy Actions 2021 - 2026		
	3. Public Art Principles		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To provide an update on progress made against the Cultural Strategy for the period April 2020 to September 2020.
- 1.2 To present the plan to update the actions in Gloucester's Cultural Vision & Strategy for the period 2021-2026.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 Cabinet is asked to **RESOLVE** that:

- (1) the report be accepted and progress against the objectives noted
- (2) the plan to update the Cultural Strategy for the next five years be accepted.

3.0 Background and Key Issues

3.1 Much has been achieved to progress the actions in the cultural strategy between April and September 2020, however this period has also delivered unprecedented challenges to Gloucester's cultural sector owing to the COVID-19 pandemic. The city council (GCC) has continued to work closely with Gloucester Culture Trust (GCT) to ensure that the strategic delivery of the cultural strategy is achieved, recognising the role of culture not only as a critical aspect for supporting people's health and well-being but also as an important economic driver for the city. With the majority of venues including the city's own cultural venues being closed, new ways of presenting and experiencing culture in and across the city have emerged. Some of this work has been achieved through shared resources across GCC and GCT, as well as links with community and wellbeing partners.

- 3.2 Art Packs** – these were developed as an immediate response to the challenge of lockdown. With funding from Arts Council England and GCC 14 local artists were commissioned by GCT, to design 22 different creative ‘art packs’ which were distributed to 850 local residents via 13 community partners, including the Community Builders. As well as art packs aimed at children and teenagers, 60 group activity packs reached 480 care home residents. These resources ensured that people in communities with limited resources were able to engage with cultural activity from the safety of their own homes.
- 3.3 The Creation Fund** administered by GCT awarded small grants to 8 artists to help them make new work and connect with their communities; the work will be exhibited as part of the Museum of Gloucester’s exhibition A Life in Lockdown.
- 3.4 Festivals and Events** - The period from mid-March – September 2020 saw the majority of Festivals and Events being either cancelled or postponed. The revised Festival & Events team was successfully embedded into the city council’s Cultural Services team and worked alongside GCT to support independent event organisers to adapt their plans in light of the COVID restrictions. The team worked closely with GCT to deliver the successful project **Of Earth and Sky** – the UK’s first post-lockdown socially-distanced artwork by internationally acclaimed artist Luke Jerram. The artist worked with poetry submissions from people from across Gloucester’s communities and 30 poems were selected to be represented in this artwork. This attracted visitors to the city, encouraged residents to explore their city and provided much-needed positive media coverage for Gloucester during August – October 2020.
- 3.5** A city-wide partnership of heritage organisations were awarded funding for the *Looking Up* programme as part of the **10th Gloucester History Festival** resulting in a multi-venue heritage trail being developed and content from Gloucester’s diverse communities being made available. This year the festival pioneered the Blackfriars talks streamed through on-line delivery and continued to attract audiences from across the world, including well after the festival ended as people downloaded the talks.
- 3.6 Civic Events - Gloucester Day** went ahead with social-distancing measures whilst sadly other civic events such as VE Day 75 and VJ Day were cancelled and others such as the Mayor-making ceremony were scaled back.
- 3.7 Culture and Visitor Economy Recovery Group (CVERG)** - In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, thematic recovery groups were established by the city council in April 2020. The CVERG is a city-wide group which was formed from the Strategic Events Programming Group. The CVERG met initially on a fortnightly basis and then monthly. The group identified key actions required to support the sector through the period of lockdown. A separate report on the activity of this group is being produced for Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- 3.8 Cultural Venues** - All city-council run venues closed from mid-March and re-opened by 1 Oct. A significant loss of income was experienced as a result of closure and a slow return of audiences has continued to impact on earned income.

- 3.9 Museum of Gloucester and the TIC** - The Museum of Gloucester returned to operating on Thurs – Sat 10am – 4pm with the Tourist Information Centre (TIC) opening on 6 days per week. Without a charged-for summer exhibition, the only income at TIC and Museum has been from retail and small amounts of donations. Key appointments to the roles of Collections Officer and Engagement Officer have been made so the museum team can focus on the creation of a Museum Development Plan and to continue to progress the collections works at the Folk of Gloucester Museum. Work to conclude the transfer of ownership from the city to the Civic Trust of the Folk of Gloucester Museum building is nearing a conclusion. The decant of the Wheelwrights collection (excepting those items that the Folk of Gloucester Museum wishes to retain on loan) has been completed successfully and other areas are being decanted and documented as planned.
- 3.10 Guildhall and Blackfriars** Restrictions upon the numbers of attendees led to cancellations or postponement of all live gigs and events for the period in the Guildhall. Room hire, weddings and other income-generating activity across sites also ceased and continues to be slow to return. Instead, the team presented socially-distanced live events at Blackfriars as part of the summer social series. The cinema at Guildhall reopened on 1 October with a maximum seated capacity of 22 per screening and a limited choice of cinema releases to drive audiences.
- 3.11 Cultural Recovery Funding** – administered by Arts Council England on behalf of the Department of Digital, Culture, Media & Sport – offered a lifeline to some. Several organisations in the city were successful in being awarded funding included Gloucester Cathedral, Llanthony Secunda Priory, Three Choirs Festival and Gloucester History Festival. The city council applied for funds and was awarded £100,000 to support the activity at Guildhall and the Museum of Gloucester (MOG). A successful bid was also made to SW Museum Development recovery fund and the Museum of Gloucester was awarded £7,000 to help create an audience development plan. A further application to the Art Fund has been submitted and a decision is awaited.
- 3.12 Destination Marketing** - The city council has taken on the responsibility for marketing and promoting the city and has run a successful campaign, Gloucester Good to Go and is in the process of procuring a new website for the city, part-funded through Great Place programme. Progress has been made against the recommendations from the Future Marketing of Gloucester report written by Steve Brown. A Tourism and Destination Marketing manager has been appointed to lead this area of activity. An updated website to replace the outdated city tourism website has been procured and is in development, with the ability to deliver the type of content and quality of experience that Gloucester needs to attract visitors and business. The city has also been part of a successful national programme of US Connections. The successful city-wide campaign Gloucester Good to Go! has resulted in a strong reach and engagement across Gloucester and beyond to promote Gloucester as a safe and open city to support the return of culture and the visitor economy. A Marketing Steering Board is in the process of being established to ensure that the city council continues to support and represent the needs of the city's visitor economy.
- 3.13 Kings House** – To support the delivery of Strand 7 of Great Place, Gloucester Culture Trust (GCT) has been offered a 20-year peppercorn lease of the first floor of Kings House from the city council. With offices and shared facilities for tenants, this

has now been transformed into **Jolt** creative studios and incubator which comprises different-sized spaces for the purposes of supporting and developing creative and cultural start-ups. The creative environment at Jolt will lead to new partnerships and businesses being formed – as well as ensuring a healthy and vibrant cultural sector that is supported, through peer-to-peer networks, both formal and informal. Studio spaces are being let and the demand for these is high. In 2019/20 around 100 people took part in business development and skills training connected to GCT/Jolt. The upper floor is to be occupied by **The Music Works**, who will create fully accessible, exemplar music studios, teaching rooms and performance spaces and have attracted £400,000 capital investment from the Arts Council to be able to create a fully accessible, multi-sensory environment for young people. They also have a 20-year peppercorn rent from GCC to support this development. The Music Works is an organisation that are specialists in working with young people in challenging circumstances to help them reach their full potential in music, in learning, and in life. The plans for this move are being supported by the Roundhouse, who themselves run a suite of studios at their base in Camden.

3.14 Kings Square – Once complete Kings Square will be a high-quality city centre site that will be able to be used for concerts, events, festivals and other mixed uses. Work to develop a programme of cultural events has stalled, owing to the delay to the timeline for completion of the square. Budget allocated from the city council Festivals and Events budget in 2020-21 will be rolled forward to 2021-22 to commission activity to mark the completion and launch the future cultural programme. External funds necessary to support the Square's cultural programme will be sought to augment the city council's investment.

3.15 Paul Hamlyn Foundation (PHF) – is an organisation that supports innovation and creativity with a particular focus on developing young people and the arts. PHF has now supported Gloucester with grant-funding of £500,000 (£450,000 of planned grants, plus £50,000 in emergency funding) towards a collaborative approach to participation, talent development, leadership and audience development. This is a significant investment and is a further endorsement of the work of the Culture Trust and the impact that the city's cultural strategy is having in attracting inward investment from national funders. Due to COVID, many planned audience development activities have been postponed (live events, etc) but the delivery partners, Your Next Move, Strike a Light and The Music Works, have entrepreneurially pivoted to online delivery for the children and young people they serve. The Future Producers' scheme has been delivered online, with 20 participants learning vocational skills in event management and creative producing.

3.16 Great Place Gloucester was the recipient of funding via the UK-wide Great Place scheme in 2017–2020, which has benefitted the city in a number of ways. The scheme's evaluation report (yet to be published) will demonstrate the significant progress Gloucester has made over and above other cities that benefitted from the scheme. This independent evaluation will highlight that Gloucester residents value arts and heritage and perceive an increase in activity over the past three years; residents' pride in Gloucester has increased; Great Place strengthened partnership and collaborative working in the city and enabled young people to help shape the city's culture.

3.17 Gloucester's Cultural Vision and Strategy – was developed in 2015 and is a 10-year strategy that describes the period 2016-2026. It identified 20 Actions to deliver

against the 6 key Objectives. For current progress against these objectives see *Appendix 1* of this report. As we reach the half-way point of the strategy, changes arising from some actions have created new opportunities and challenge, and a number of the initial actions have either been completed or are no longer relevant as circumstances have changed. In addition, the changing political, social, environmental and economic situation since the writing of the current strategy has highlighted omissions. One example of this is that it does not reference the climate emergency nor the city's aim to be carbon neutral by 2030. Over the coming six months, GCT working with GCC will update the actions to create a refreshed Cultural Strategy for 2021-26. This will be 'sense-checked' by cultural partners in the city – including the Heritage Forum, Festivals & Events Forum, GCT's Youth Advisory Board and Arts Council England. An indicative timeline is shown in *Appendix B*.

Whilst the responsibility for the delivery of the majority of the actions within the strategy sits with GCT, the city council has a critical role to play in supporting this strategic devolvement, ensuring the right level of support is provided and the conditions are created for culture to thrive.

3.18 Previous year – summary - in 2019/20 (so, pre-COVID), GCT estimates that Great Place and Paul Hamlyn Foundation funding has provided direct grants to 30 arts, heritage and creative organisations and paid commissions to 28 individual artists, who have created high quality, new work for the city via public performance, community activities and public exhibitions. Around 1,400 opportunities to take part in arts activity have been delivered for children and young people and 350 sessions of training and skills development have been run.

4.0 Social Value Considerations

4.1 Social value is integral to the delivery of the Cultural Strategy and this will continue to be a focus for the strategy in future. Culture and cultural activity in the city can provide far-reaching benefits to citizens' health, well-being, skills and help develop social cohesion and a sense of place. Cultural participation in activities such as Events and Festivals can bring disparate communities together to celebrate and collaborate.

5.0 Environmental Implications

5.1 The existing Cultural Strategy does not reference environment nor climate change. The updated version will include actions linked to climate change and the environment.

6.0 Alternative Options Considered

6.1 The original cultural strategy (2016-26) is still a functioning strategy and could be left unchanged for the remainder of the 10-year period, however, it will become increasingly out of date. There is a small risk of reputational damage with this approach. The larger risk is that an up to date strategy will be required in order to field successful bids for the government funding schemes such as the Cultural Development Fund (CDF) and other Cultural Recovery Funding schemes the city may wish to apply for.

7.0 Reasons for Recommendations

- 7.1 The current Cultural Strategy (2016-2026) is nearly half-way through the 10-year period. Significant progress has been made, but changes have occurred that require the Strategy to be updated and refreshed.
- 7.2 There is no reference to the environment and climate change in the current strategy, and other city strategies have been published since 2016, so these also need to be taken into account. These omissions will be addressed in the updated version.

8.0 Future Work and Conclusions

- 8.1 Produce the actions for the updated Gloucester's Cultural Vision and Strategy 2016-26 with updates to include relevant 2021-26 actions.
- 8.2 Publish a revised and updated Cultural Vision and Strategy action plan for 2021 – 2026 by end March 2021.

9.0 Financial Implications

- 9.1 An updated strategy will require a small budget to complete – source to be identified from GCC and GCT.

10.0 Legal Implications

- 10.1 The delivery of the objectives of the Cultural Strategy 2016-2026 are the responsibility of the Council and its partners. Any collaboration or new delivery models with outside bodies will need to ensure compliance with relevant legislative requirements and the Council's Contract Rules.

(One Legal have been consulted in the preparation of this report.)

11.0 Risk & Opportunity Management Implications

- 11.1 Risks of not renewing the Strategy – Low-Medium in terms of operations. The strategy is still operable, but there is a low-level reputational risk of not renewing this. GCT has strong governance and leadership and has a good and growing reputation with stakeholders nationally and regionally, as well as within the city.
- 11.2 Risk of not renewing the Strategy – Medium to High in terms of attracting additional funding. There is a medium-to-high risk that the city will fail in attempts to draw external funding and will be at a disadvantage if it does not update its cultural strategy to ensure ongoing relevance and for the city to continue to demonstrate progress, ambition and commitment.

12.0 People Impact Assessment (PIA) and Safeguarding:

12.1 The PIA Screening Stage was completed and did not identify any potential or actual negative impact, therefore a full PIA was not required.

13.0 Community Safety Implications

13.1 None

14.0 Staffing & Trade Union Implications

14.1 None

Background Documents: Gloucester's Cultural Vision and Strategy 2016 – 2026
<https://www.gloucester.gov.uk/media/1372/cultural-strategy.pdf>