

REPORT TO SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting: 9 June 2016

Report of: Museums Manager & Cultural Lead

Title: Update on Exeter Cultural Action Plan

Is this a Key Decision?

No

* One that affects finances over £1m or significantly affects two or more wards. If this is a key decision then the item must be on the appropriate forward plan of key decisions.

Is this an Executive or Council Function?

1. What is the report about?

This report provides a progress update on the Exeter Cultural Action Plan

2. Recommendations:

Members recognise the progress made in taking forward the Cultural Action Plan, endorse the approach adopted by Exeter Cultural Partnership and its ongoing collaboration with the City Council.

3. Reasons for the recommendation:

This report is for information and provides a scheduled progress update on delivery of Exeter Cultural Action Plan. The plan is a shared document jointly owned by Exeter City Council and Exeter Cultural Partnership. The community involvement and collaboration central to this approach is intended to maximise the positive impacts of culture on the city's life through for instance, its contribution to place making; quality of life, community engagement and cohesion.

The intervening period since the last update report (June 2015) has seen significant advances in Exeter Cultural Partnership's own development and delivery against the Action Plan. These are outlined as part of this report.

4. What are the resource implications including non financial resources.

There will be some ongoing administrative and financial support required from RAMM to support management of Exeter Cultural Partnership's (ECP) Grants for the Arts Award from the Arts Council, England for 'Exeter Cultural Connections'.

RAMM (acting on behalf of ECP) is host organisation for the seconded post of ECP Culture Director. Liaising with the University entails some financial and management duties but these are not expected to be great.

Some of RAMM's revenue or Major Partner Museum funded activities can be aligned with the Cultural Action Plan but these do not have additional resource or financial implications. Similar observations also apply to the City Council's arts funding.

5. Section 151 Officer comments:

The Grants for the Arts Award and partner funding will be held as a separately identified cost code within RAMM's cost centre. There are no additional requests for funding in the report.

6. What are the legal aspects?

As part of its collaborative relationship with Exeter Cultural Partnership, Exeter City Council is acting as grant recipient for ECP's Arts Council, England (ACE) award. This is made on the basis of standard ACE terms and conditions applied across England, copies of which have been made available to Legal Department.

A legal agreement has been made between the City Council as RAMM, on behalf of ECP, is acting as secondment host for the ECP Culture Director, an employee of the University of Exeter.

7. Monitoring Officer's comments:

This report raises no issues for the Monitoring Officer.

8. Report details:

The Cultural Action Plan was presented to Economy Committee on 14 November 2014 and adopted as a shared document jointly owned by the City Council and Exeter Cultural Partnership (ECP).

Exeter Cultural Partnership represents the city's cultural organisations including libraries, museums, sport, arts, health, education, food and retail. As an umbrella organisation it now has over 390 members (individuals and organisations) across the city and its hinterland. It draws together the efforts and interests of an extremely diverse sector which includes public, commercial, charity and independent representation. It is led by a Steering Group which includes City Council members. Its mission is to contribute to a city where a vibrant cultural life enriches the experience of everyone living in, working in and visiting Exeter.

The City Council also recognises culture's quality of life contribution to the city's offer in regard to visitor destination, national profile and draw for inward investment. This creates strong connections to the city's Tourism; City Centre and Knowledge Economy strategies. Acknowledging the developing nature of these areas the 2013 presentation described the Action Plan as a 'living and growing' document which would emphasise different and new priorities over time.

The Action Plan (<http://exeterculturalpartnership.co.uk/action-plan>) has four key goals

1. To develop a vibrant cultural economy – Exeter as a cultural destination.
2. To develop cultural opportunities and experience
3. To enable wide and diverse engagement with the cultural sector
4. To build a stronger, more confident sector

The priorities of the Cultural Action Plan have informed ECP's subsequent work including a successful application to the Arts Council, England (March 2015) for a programme of work titled 'Exeter Cultural Connections'. The application to the Arts Council, England was written and submitted by RAMM on behalf of ECP. The successful bid is for an award of £95,000 and is offered under standard Arts Council England terms and conditions which have been

made available for review by Legal Services. The award was 'unlocked' with local financial support from the University, City Council and Cathedral.

Exeter Cultural connections is based on a detailed work programme and budget described in the Scrutiny Report of 18 June 2015 'update on Exeter Cultural Action Plan'. Key to the programme was the appointment of ECP's first Culture Director, a role which would create much needed officer capacity within the otherwise volunteer resourced ECP. Working with in the Steering Group the Culture Director would pursue and support collaborations that deliver ECP's objectives.

The June 2015 report went on to describe a setback. The role of Culture Director had recently been advertised nationally but following interviews (May 2015) the panel (which included ECC, ACE and ECP Steering Group representation) had been unable to make an appointment. This report explained that it was ECP's intention to explore the option of making the Culture Director an employed part time role, rather than a freelance/contracted one as previously advertised.

This update report picks up from that point. As an un-constituted body, ECP was not itself in a position to employ a part time Culture Director and with this agreed goal subsequent conversations were with ECP's larger institutional partners including the University of Exeter.

The University's recognition of culture's wider significance to its own and its shared priorities with the City Council led it to offer to employ the ECP Culture Director role, seconding the new staff member to ECP. For the purpose of the secondment RAMM (acting on behalf of ECP) is the host and an appropriate legal agreement was drawn up between the University and City Council's legal teams to support the arrangement.

The University's decision was instrumental in moving forward the Exeter Cultural Connections project and this report notes with gratitude their support and practical assistance in enabling this progress.

The Culture Director role was advertised through the University's recruitment portal as well as a number of other networks and sites. This second recruitment exercise produced a larger and stronger field of candidates for short listing. Interviews were held at the end of October and the appointee was able to take up his post at the beginning of December. The delayed appointment of the Culture Director has had implications for delivery of the remaining parts of the Exeter Cultural Connections programme. As holder of ECP's ACE Grants for the Arts Award, RAMM has provided an update to the Arts Council, England and negotiated a time extension to ECP's delivery schedule.

As Exeter Cultural Partnership's first Culture Director, Martin Thomas brings to the role extensive experience of the South West and arts and heritage sectors having previously worked for related strategic roles for government agencies, as well as directly for cultural organisations as a freelance consultant.

In his first five months in post he has represented ECP in discussions with Business Improvement District (BID) and strengthened University links to the city's cultural offer. He has also taken a lead on some work in progress as well as shaping a series of new initiatives. The breadth of activity is summarised in appendix1 a Review of Delivery for the period November 2013 to April 2016. The review which is based on the four goals and actions described in the original plan, will inform ECP's revision of the plan which will take place during 2016. The City Council will act as a partner in this process through its membership of the ECP Steering Group.

The plan's development will need to take into account opportunities that may arise from the Government's Culture White Paper published in March 2016. Its emphasis is on opportunity for all to enjoy culture; culture's role in creating stronger and healthier communities; boosting economic growth and place making are all reflected in Exeter's Cultural Action Plan and ECP's and ECC shared thinking.

Reviews of the museum sector, Arts Council, England and Heritage Lottery Fund were announced as well as a number of new national initiatives designed to promote tourism and young people's cultural citizenship.

9. How does the decision contribute to the Council's Corporate Plan?

Strategic collaborations such as the one that exists between Exeter City Council and Exeter Cultural Partnership contribute to building a stronger sustainable city by encouraging community participation and 'joined up' working around shared priorities. The aspirations of ECP and Exeter Cultural Connections feed into several corporate purposes, the most obvious being 'Provide great things for me to see and do'. However there are also strong links between culture and economic development by, for instance, supporting the local and visitor economies. Contributions to place making and community engagement; health and well being, education, means this work also delivers outcomes around 'Help me run a successful business', and 'Keep me/ my environment safe and healthy'.

The appointment of ECP's Culture Director as an employee of the University seconded to RAMM is a good example of this important strategic partnership enabling and extending wider benefits to the city and the community as a whole.

10. What risks are there and how can they be reduced?

This report is a progress update on Exeter Cultural Action Plan which is being led by Exeter Cultural Partnership, an independent organisation. The report focuses on the Exeter Cultural Connections work programme which has received financial support from the Arts Council, England. Delays to the delivery of the programme caused by the late appointment of the Culture Director have been flagged with the Arts Council, England and time extension agreed. ECP is responsible for delivering the work programme. Appropriate arrangements have been put in place for governance. ECP's Steering Group includes ECC representatives (officer and Portfolio Holder for Economy & Culture). There is a detailed budget associated with the work programme.

ECC (RAMM) 'holds' the ACE grant on behalf of ECP and will oversee draw downs from the ACE. Expenditure will be monitored by an ECP sub group to ensure it is in line with approved expenditure and cash flow. RAMM budget monitoring means there is also a secondary check within the system.

RAMM is familiar with the Arts Council, England Grants for the Arts programme having received and handled previous awards in its own right.

An appropriate legal agreement has been put in place between the University of Exeter and City Council covering the secondment of the Culture Director to RAMM (acting on behalf of ECP).

11. What is the impact of the decision on equality and diversity; health and wellbeing; safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults, community safety and the environment?

This report concerns progress being made by Exeter Cultural Partnership and its member organisations, many of which are actively engaged in addressing these issues.

12. Are there any other options?

This is a report for information only and does not require decision.

Museums Manager & Cultural Lead

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1972 (as amended)

Background papers used in compiling this report:-

None

Contact for enquires:
Democratic Services (Committees)
Room 2.3
01392 265275