

EXETER CITY COUNCIL**SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – ECONOMY
30 MAY 2013****EXETER CULTURAL STRATEGY 2013 – 2018
A PROGRESS REPORT****1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 To update Members on progress with development of the new Cultural Strategy.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Exeter Vision Group on 7 November 2012 and the Scrutiny Committee – Economy meeting on 8 November 2012 approved the draft framework for the proposed Exeter Cultural Strategy 2013 – 2018. The framework set out strategic goals and ways forward to achieve a new cultural strategy for the city.
- 2.2 A vibrant cultural life plays a vital role in driving economic growth by creating attractive places to live and enhancing quality of life. It also produces economically valuable 'spin offs' such as business relocation and supports a distinctive sense of place differentiating a town or city from its competitors. Most importantly, culture helps create great destinations, which enables their visitor economy to flourish. The visitor economy is the UK's fifth biggest industry and one of the few sectors experiencing growth - it grew at over five times the rate of the UK economy as a whole in 2011 and contributes over £115 billion to Gross Domestic Product. Lively cultural activity ensures visitors stay longer and spend more as a result. This is borne out by monitoring of two city centre events in Exeter, where retailers sampled the impact on footfall and shopping patterns. These showed visitor numbers increased between 8% and 22% and shopper hours increased between 13% and 19%.
- 2.3 In March 2013 LGA and Arts Council of England (ACE) published "Driving Growth through local government investment in the Arts", (the paper looks at a broad picture and includes Museums and Libraries working in partnership with the arts as drivers of cultural tourism, and participation in arts and culture. This reflects the new funding responsibilities of ACE which now includes Museum and Libraries). This national 'best practice' report outlines a four step approach 'to ensure arts are well placed as part of the Council's overall drive to increase economic growth'. This includes the strategic engagement of the arts sector in the local economic landscape.
- 2.4 Locally the key to the implementation and 'reach' of the Cultural Strategy is the active engagement of the city's cultural sector. Accordingly, development of the strategy has been led by Exeter Cultural Partnership (ECP) with a Strategy Steering Group drawn from the wider partnership. ECP is a voluntary partnership made up of representatives from the city's leading cultural sector organisations representing sports, arts, heritage, lifelong learning and tourism. Exeter City Council is a key partner.

- 2.5 Having recently completed the Phase 2 consultation of the cultural sector in the city development of the strategy has reached a significant milestone making a progress update appropriate.

3.0 THE CONSULTATION PROCESS AND RESULTS

- 3.1 A successful application to the Arts Council of England's Grants for the Arts Scheme was made in November 2012 for assistance to support strategy development. The award of £9000 was made to enable the employment of a consultant to develop the Phase 2 sector consultation through survey work, engage the wider membership of ECP through the facilitation of additional meetings and help shape follow up actions that might arise from this work. The funding also included an allocation to develop ECP's web presence as currently this is ECP's main communication channel to the wider cultural grouping in the city.
- 3.2 ECP set up a strategy steering group, a sub group of the main steering group to oversee and manage the consultation process. The strategy steering group comprises the following members: Dom Jinks (University of Exeter Arts and Culture Manager, Chair of ECP; Jay Milling, Exeter City Football Club, Vice Chair of ECP; Seth Honnor, Kaleider; Patrick Cunningham, Director Exeter Phoenix; Ciara Eastell, DCC Head of Libraries; Camilla Hampshire RAMM Museum Manager ECC; Victoria Hatfield Tourism Manager, ECC; Val Wilson, Arts and Events Manager, ECC. Simon Timms former DCC Libraries and Countryside now retired and currently on the Heritage Lottery SW Board agreed to deputise for Ciara Eastell when necessary.
- 3.3 In late January 2013 ECP's strategy steering group appointed consultants to lead on the Phase 2 sector consultation process. The timetable for completion of this stage was mid April 2013.
- 3.4 A survey was designed which set out to:
- gain an understanding of culture in the city based on the proposed strategic goals set out in the draft framework for a cultural strategy for Exeter
 - enable involvement from the widest range of cultural sector
 - create a strong set of data to draw conclusions
 - explore opportunities for growth and development in the cultural sector
- 3.5 ECP members contributed some 1000 names across the cultural sector to whom the survey was emailed. A total of 212 valid replies were received with the largest single grouping of respondents coming from the Arts Sector.
- 3.6 In addition to the survey, five sector-specific discussion groups were held to facilitate the groupings of sub-sectors to meet and work together, as follows:
- Sports and Open Spaces
 - Lifelong Learning
 - Museums and Heritage
 - Arts
 - Enterprise (Tourism and Retail)
- 3.7 The strategy steering group met every Tuesday afternoon throughout

February to receive weekly reports from the consultant, a presentation of the survey findings, written summary of the discussion group findings and to support the consultation process. The consultant attended the ECP steering group meeting at the end of the research period to report back on the findings and their implications in context of the draft strategic plan.

3.8 The consultant's findings provide a sound basis on which to build:-

- the city is home to a wide, diverse range of quality cultural activity and organisations
- there has been recent investment in buildings and resources
- a high level of volunteering and engagement
- no lack of audiences
- tourism and retail markets are buoyant
- high levels of civic pride
- clear acknowledgement of high quality of life

However, although there are many positive factors there are also challenges. The findings showed that as a broad grouping of individuals and organisations, the cultural sector placed significant value on its independence. At the same time its constituent strands did not necessarily recognise themselves as a single entity, with a resulting lack of co-ordination and poor communications across the whole. This issue will need addressing for the city to promote itself as a cultural destination

3.9 The work to date has initiated conversations and networking which critically requires follow up in order to grow and build on the sector's positive views of the city as well as to achieve the real 'buy in' from the sector which can help differentiate Exeter through the quality of its cultural 'offer'. Ahead of a formalised strategy the Phase 2 consultation findings identify a set of key actions which will be necessary foundations for an effective strategy with the potential of a longer term impact.

Three areas of work are proposed to form Phase 3 of the strategy development with the document itself being produced in Phase 4.

- Communication: the need to improve internal communication within the sector and external communication to promote Exeter as a cultural destination
- Nurturing talent: developing grass roots talent progression routes in the creative industries including volunteering progression routes in heritage and sports
- Leadership – how ECP can grow its own capacity to lead and take the findings forward

4.0 KEY FINDINGS AND ACTIONS

Communication

4.1 The findings identified a need for a dual approach to improve communications both internally within the cultural sector and also externally to develop a marketing plan to promote Exeter as a cultural destination.

4.2 Internal communication – it is clear from the consultation that the cultural sector does not recognise itself as a coherent group. The different strands

making up the sector are not agreed on a definition of culture and while they accept that culture enhances quality of life they do not have clear sense of the role it plays in building a strong local economy. The benefits of collaboration are currently under exploited and the resulting fragmentation of effort inhibits everyone's efforts to raise the city's cultural profile externally.

- 4.3 There is, therefore, a clear role for ECP in building on the positive perceptions within the sector as identified in item 2.8, to develop the confidence and understanding of the sector and engagement from all its component groups. Working together the sector can maximise and harness the benefits of collaboration to enhance the quality of life in the city; its cultural brand, its distinctiveness and through this, its economic competitiveness and 'edge'. Developing this as a shared understanding within the city, founded on strong internal messaging adopted across the sector, is a critical first step to support our presentation of Exeter as a cultural city to external audiences.
- 4.4 External Communication – culture is a fundamental driver of the city's economy. The city's successful business sector provides an excellent model of development based on, leadership and branding. Exeter's Chamber of Commerce, the Heart of Devon Tourism Partnership and the Exeter and Heart of Devon Growth Board bring the business sector together, promoting the alignment of objectives, providing a clear focus for the sector and a series of consistent communication messages. The cultural sector needs to emulate this and the work proposed in Phase 3 sets out to achieve this.
- 4.5 It is proposed to step up the external visibility of the sector in a number of ways. These include:

Cultural Networking – ECP will lead on a series of network meetings with key note, high profile speakers from across the cultural sector, hosted by individual sectors and open to different cultural organisations but also business and members of the public

Visit England and Arts Council have announced a new partnership fund with a key priority to encourage and support destinations that have real potential to grow and improve cultural tourism. The details of the funding are expected to be released in July; ECP will liaise with Arts Council England and Visit England to discuss a potential application from Exeter to further our work in this area.

Nurturing Talent

- 4.6 The online survey and sector groups showed high levels of volunteering engagement within the cultural sector especially in areas of sport and heritage. The potential of such participation needs to be grown by supporting and sharing a volunteering infrastructure across the city's cultural organisations. This will deliver more benefits to the institutions, audiences and volunteers themselves and provide a pathway of opportunity for volunteers to move across sectors.
- 4.7 The research also identified that the cultural offer needs to have a developed focus that begins to nurture the talent and skills of young people within the city. The city has two educational establishments in the University and College that were both respectively voted University and College of the year in 2012 by The Times Newspaper. However a very small percentage

of creative graduates remain in the city, because there is not the environment or programme of work to support their transition into the cultural sector. There is clearly an opportunity for Exeter to exploit this talent.

- 4.8 One way in which the city can begin to nurture this latent talent is by developing a structured programme of progression in partnership with Exeter College and University of Exeter. There are a number of ad hoc projects currently that include internships, mentoring and apprenticeships but this needs to be joined up and communicated clearly. A structured programme should include:

- Volunteering
- Internships
- Mentoring
- Apprenticeships
- Entrepreneurs programme
- Surgeries
- Industry events such as talks, conferences and showcases

Leadership

- 4.9 Leadership has emerged in Phase 2 as a critical issue. Findings from both the discussion groups and the survey identified the need for effective leadership and strategic thinking in order to enable the cultural sector to grow and develop its potential. The issues raised included:
- the need for alignment with political and public planning frameworks so as to identify the infrastructure for cultural sector planning
 - the importance of the Exeter Cultural Partnership as a leading organisation
 - the value of challenging existing ways of working.
- 4.10 Other examples of cultural leadership include cities such as Plymouth and Bristol that have developed models of practice where there is an individual or small team that takes on the role of developing the cultural offer of the city. In Plymouth this has reaped dividends in recent years with the successful hosting of The British Arts Show and its intention to go for Capital of Culture for 2017.
- 4.11 ECP recommend that the creation of a part time post (0.5, 2 years minimum) with administrative support is needed to make this a success. This post could be funded in a number of ways likely to involve contributions from several funding streams. The administrative support could come from a Graduate Business Partnership student from the University. ECP recognises the levels of input and amount of work that is needed in terms of leadership, given the significant time spent to date in 2013 by ECP towards developing the Cultural Strategy. This has been achieved through the voluntary time contributed by members of the ECP steering group (8 people) and the organisations they represent.

5.0 PHASE 3 TIMESCALE

- 5.1 To deliver Phase 3 of developing the strategy ECP will:
- Use its remaining consultancy advice to produce an action plan to take forward the three areas outlined as Phase 3 (by end of May 2013).
 - Collaborate with City Council and other partners to deliver plans (deadlines as set in action plan above)
 - Produce a short report summarising consultancy findings to feedback to participants and the sector more generally. It will include an outline of planned next steps. (by end of May 2013).
 - Further investigate and develop a funding plan to enable this role of leadership to drive the strategy forward. This role would implement some of the immediate areas such as the communications plan, networking opportunities and the nurturing talent programme.
 - Using its Phase 3 proposals ECP plans to approach the Arts Council of England for a further Grants for the Arts application to support delivery of Phases 3 & 4 (by end of July 2013)
 - Organise workshops and meetings around themes to raise awareness and an understanding of the role culture plays in the city alongside its economic contribution to the life of Exeter (during 2013/14)
 - Investigate the potential of the Visit England /Arts Council funding programme when launched (July 2013) for growing Exeter's cultural tourism opportunities
 - Hold regular meetings with key council officers and Members to track progress on planning and delivery of Phase 3 (throughout 2013/14)
 - Work with cultural organisations, University of Exeter and Exeter College to develop a structured programme to nurture talent of individuals (programme to be developed during 2013/14)

6.0 RECOMMENDATION that:

- 6.1 Members note this report and support the direction being taken as summarised in the report to develop the Cultural Strategy.

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Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended)
Background papers used in compiling this report:

None
22 May 2013