

## **REPORT TO SCRUTINY COMMITTEE ECONOMY**

**Date of Meeting: 18 June 2015**

**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?**

Executive

#### **1. What is the report about?**

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

#### **2. Recommendations:**

2.1 Members recognise the progress made in taking forward the Cultural Action Plan and endorse the approach adopted by Exeter Cultural Partnership.

#### **3. Reasons for the recommendation:**

3.1 This report is for information and provides a scheduled progress update on delivery of the Exeter Cultural Action Plan. The plan is a shared document jointly owned by Exeter City Council and Exeter Cultural Partnership.

3.2 Formed in 2010 Exeter Cultural Partnership represents the city's cultural organisations including libraries, museums, sport, arts, health, education, business and tourism organisations. It now has over 250 members across the city and sub region, representative of the city's diverse cultural landscape. The collaborative approach represented by the Action Plan is intended to maximise the impact and economic, social and educational benefits of culture to the city's life, in terms of differentiating Exeter's special character; enhancing the quality of life offered by the city and creating a sense of belonging with the community.

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

4.1 There will be some 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'.

4.2 The funding has been made available to undertake a defined programme of work which takes forward some of the priorities outlined in the Cultural Action Plan. These include developing and implementing a communication strategy which is externally focussed but also addresses internal sector needs. This will help with the membership act and work together as a more cohesive whole.

4.3 The plan covers ECP's own further development as an organisation, as well as the creation of a 'cultural city' brand for Exeter. Importantly the plan includes appointment of a Culture Director to help lead ECP and to shape and manage its work. The role will provide ECP with the dedicated capacity it currently lacks. Progress to date has been

achieved through the voluntary efforts of ECP members including the local authority. Inevitably this has been limited by constraints around time and competing work pressures.

- 4.4 This new role will provide resource within ECP, acting as a focus for enabling and delivering its priorities and initiatives.

## **5. Section 151 Officer comments:**

- 5.1 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?**

- 6.1 The Council will be subject to the Arts Council, England ACE terms and conditions.

## **7. Monitoring Officer's comments:**

Whilst the monitoring officer generally has no issues to raise on the principle of this report, the ACE standard terms and conditions have not been considered by Legal services. As a result, the MO is not in a position to comment on the contractual implications of accepting the grant funding.

## **8. Report details:**

- 8.1 The Cultural Action Plan was presented to the Scrutiny Economy Committee on 14 November 2013. Authored by Exeter Cultural Partnership with support from the City Council, it was informed by an extensive independent consultation exercise conducted with the city's cultural sector. This examined their views and explored the sector's own sense of identity; role within the city, identification of issues and opportunities and aspirations. The consultation was funded through a previous Arts Council England, Grants for the Arts award. The importance of the Action Plan as a shared document jointly 'owned' by the City Council and ECP was highlighted in the committee presentation. Culture's quality of life contribution to the city's offer as a visitor destination, national profile and draw for inward investment, created strong connections to the city's Tourism; City Centre and Knowledge Economy strategies. The presentation also emphasised the Action Plan as a 'living and growing' document which would need to develop alongside the city's sector.
- 8.2 The launch of the Action Plan was held on 9 May 2014. The Chair and Vice Chair of ECP introduced the Action Plan to over 100 attendees at a sector forum. The networking event was used to profile key forthcoming cultural events in the city (i.e. Rugby World Cup 2015; reopening the Central Library; Cloisters Plus Programme) and included a key note address from Charles Landry, author of 'The Creative City'. Networking meetings and the opportunity to understand the city's cultural aspirations in a broader context had been identified as communication needs in the consultation.
- 8.3 The priorities of the Cultural Action Plan have informed ECP's further planning and a successful second application to the Arts Council, England Grants for the Arts scheme 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.

8.4 Local financial support was key to unlocking this award and came from the University, City Council and Cathedral as partners. Exeter City Council committed the revenue sum of £10,000 (14/15) as partnership funding to Exeter Cultural Connections.

8.5 Exeter Cultural Connections is based on a detailed work strand, programme and budget. The appointment of a Culture Director forms part of this programme of work which is funded until 28-02-2017. Planning for the sustainability of our activity beyond this date will form part of the Cultural Director's task. Delivery of eleven work strands form the defined work programme of Exeter Cultural Connections:

8.5.1 Project Governance

'Exeter Cultural Connections' is a significant programme of work. A governance structure will be put in place to support and monitor its delivery and also to communicate progress to the wider membership. Additionally an Advisory Board of stakeholders is planned to ensure the project is well integrated within the wider life of the city.

8.5.2 Culture Director

The Culture Director's schedule of work will be shaped by the eleven work strand headings of the programme. The Culture Director appointment is a key component of the Exeter Cultural Connections programme. The post will create much needed capacity within ECP. To date ECP's progress has been made on the basis of volunteered commitment from individuals and organisations. This will continue to be critical to ECP, but the paid role of Culture Director will enable ECP to operate at a new level, contributing to the leadership and direction for ECP, taking responsibility for guiding policy, representing the sector, leading priorities and overseeing major initiatives.

8.5.3 Communications Strategy

The Communications Strategy covers the internal communications needs of the city's cultural sector (including organisation of conferences and events); networking with other sectors and agencies and external messaging beyond Exeter.

8.5.4 Development of City Cultural Brand

This will be linked to the Communications Strategy. Brand development and its visual expression will assert the city's cultural identity and aspirations for the future.

8.5.5 Digital communications

Digital communication channels will be used to support the growth of audiences for culture and their engagement, plus connectivity/information sharing by the city's cultural organisations.

8.5.6 Social Media Strategy

Formulation and implementation of a social media strategy will support audience development, marketing, communications and networking by the city's cultural sector.

8.5.7 Coordinating cross city activity

The Rugby World Cup and WWI Centenary are examples of international and national events driving a broader local response. The work plan includes forward

planning for similar events and coordinating a city response to facilitate joint working and profile.

8.5.8 Learning from best practice

Research and understanding of best practice from comparative cities will be used to inform ECP's future planning.

8.5.9 ECP organisational development

As part of the programme, ECP will make plans and undertake activity to support its own further development.

8.5.10 Identification and pursuit of funding opportunities

The Culture Director will take responsibility for identifying and pursuing emerging funding opportunities that support ECP's objectives and its sustainability beyond the end of this funding award.

8.5.11 Facilitating collaboration

The Culture Director working with ECP's Steering Group will pursue and support collaborations that support ECP's objectives. Potentially these might operate at a range of levels, from local, through to international partnerships.

8.6 The ambitions of ECP remain for the sector to play a full part in the city becoming a cultural destination of regional, national and international significance.

8.7 The role of Cultural Director was advertised nationally and interviews held on May 20<sup>th</sup>. The panel included the Portfolio Holder for Economy & Culture. Others on the interview panel included Arts Council England and representatives from ECP's Steering Group. The panel was unable to make an appointment on the basis of the shortlist and has decided to re-advertise having explored the option of making the Culture Director an employed part time role (rather than a freelance/contracted one as previously advertised).

8.8 Once a successful appointment is made the Culture Director is expected to commence work by meeting with key partners and stakeholders. This is likely to include the Business Improvement District which has been going through its own appointment process.

8.9 There are already strong crossover links between the BID and ECP and their plan includes some similar priorities such as city promotion, which ECP will instruct the new Culture Director to explore.

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

9.1 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 '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'.

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

- 10.1 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. 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.
- 10.2 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.
- 10.3 RAMM is familiar with the Arts Council, England Grants for the Arts programme having received and handled previous awards in its own right.

**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?**

- 11.1 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?**

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

**Assistant Director, Economy  
Museums Manager & Cultural Lead**

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

**Background papers used in compiling this report:-**

None

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