

## REPORT TO EXECUTIVE

Date of Meeting: 4 October 2022

## REPORT TO COUNCIL

Date of Meeting: 18 October 2022

Report of: Director of Culture, Leisure and Tourism

Title: A Public Art Strategy for Exeter

### Is this a Key Decision?

No

### Is this an Executive or Council Function?

Council

### 1. What is the report about?

- 1.1. The Public Art Strategy for Exeter sets out new ways of thinking about Public Art in Exeter, recognising the need for greater coherence and transparency around current practices across the city.
- 1.2. The Strategy has been drafted by Art Work Exeter and commissioned by Exeter City Council, in partnership with the University of Exeter and Exeter Culture.
- 1.3. Investment (£12K) from Research England's Strategic Policy Fund was secured through the University of Exeter to develop the Strategy. This money is specifically for initiatives where new policy is developed within a given area and in partnership with a local authority.
- 1.4. The focus of this investment was to look to develop new Public Art/realm policy and strategy to bring ambition and coherence and make the most of future public art opportunities in a growing city. Some of the funding will be used to animate the strategy with an active commission(s).
- 1.5. The report recognises that Public Art includes myriad practices in the **visual arts** (such as murals and street art, sculpture, video, sonic and digital media), as well as performance, music and theatre. It can be a soundscape, a light work, a landscape intervention or an interactive installation. It can be street furniture or an architectural statement. It can be permanent or temporary, be that years, months, weeks or days; it can be a full scale festival or a low key encounter. It can be an activity, process or even a functioning business emerging from an artist's interaction with a community of people, termed Social Practice.  
In essence, it is creative work sited in the public realm, in places and spaces that are freely accessible to everyone.

1.6. By adopting the *Place-based Cultural Strategy for Exeter* in 2019, Exeter City Council and Liveable Exeter have embraced the ambition that Exeter will innovate and lead in the area of the environment, wellbeing, cultural literacy, creative making and heritage innovation, acknowledging the importance of arts and culture in place-making. There is a recognition in the Strategy that Public Art can make a meaningful contribution towards a vibrant city with community engagement and participation at the heart of it.

1.7. In the creation of the Public Art Strategy, Art Work Exeter consulted with artists and makers, curators and commissioners, consultants and specialists, community groups and individuals from across the city and beyond.

1.8. The Strategy also includes examples of exemplary work from within the UK as well as internationally.

1.9. The Strategy proposes that all art for the city, including Public Art, should meet the key criteria of quality, inclusion and sustainability and that a shared set of values be adopted by all partners to foster positive collaborations and partnership working.

1.10. The Strategy has been produced for those with responsibility for commissioning, funding, reviewing, maintaining and developing Public Art. It is for city planners, for developers, for private landlords and anyone who has any responsibility for activity and culture that takes place in the public realm. This Strategy also advocates for adding more voices to that arena.

1.11. The Strategy proposes a series of Recommendations based on the following Priorities:

**1.11.1. Transparent & Inclusive Commissioning Practices**

- Establish a Public Art Advisory Group (PAAG) comprising stakeholders from across the arts, culture and heritage sector, community, business, civic and realm.
- Emphasise to developers that proactive, early engagement of artists through PAAG is integral to the planning application process.

**1.11.2. Place-making**

- Embed this Strategy into the Local Plan and the Liveable Plan, so that relevant expertise and community involvement are integral to local planning and decision-making processes.
- Engage commerce more actively to create sustainable funding and investment opportunities.

**1.11.3. Engagement & Participation**

- Establish an Urban Room in the city centre, where creative processes and activities can be conducted as a part of democratic consultation about the built environment.
- Celebrate what's here: as a part of modelling what could be here, look at what has been.

**1.11.4. Developing the Creative Landscape**

- Foster a more vibrant, inclusive cultural ecology that encourages and supports artists and Creative Industry Practitioners to engage in public realm working.
- Encourage Creative Arts education 'in its broadest sense' through partnership.

#### **1.11.5. Quality & Impact**

- Map all the existing examples of Public Art, and conduct a Review / Repair/ Replace audit (see p29 of the strategy). Create trails and creative resources for people to engage with the city's Public Art.
- Prioritise high-quality, impactful projects – for wellbeing, for value, for engagement, for communities, for civic pride, for raising Exeter's profile as a culturally relevant city. The focus should be on the temporary and transitional, unless big budgets are involved.

#### **1.11.6. Environmental Sustainability**

- Position sustainability, reuse/recycling and bio diverse outputs as core themes across the arts.
- Have a decommissioning process and budget in place for all new Public Art Works.

**1.11.7. A Toolkit** that sets out a suggested structure and methodology for PAAG; commissioning guidelines, writing an artists' brief; budgets; and a maintenance checklist.

1.12 The Strategy proposes a series of suggestions. Some will fall in the remit of ECC but many would take a more collaborative approach. It is recommended that Exeter City Council implement the things that are in its remit and also support the work of the Liveable Place Board, Exeter Culture, the cultural sector, local businesses and key stakeholders in delivering it.

## **2. Recommendations**

2.1 That Executive recommend to Council to approve the Public Art Strategy for Exeter, to implement it where feasible and support the work of the Liveable Place Board, Exeter Culture, the cultural sector, local businesses and key stakeholders in delivering it.

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

3.1 Exeter City Council has an aspiration to be a City of Culture. As set out in Exeter's Corporate Plan 2022—2026, Exeter will innovate and lead in the area of environment, wellbeing, cultural literacy, creative making and heritage innovation to build a living city where everyone thrives.

3.2 The Public Art Strategy for Exeter highlights the importance of the above recommendations in order to realise its cultural ambitions.

3.3 Public Art has been recognised as an opportunity and a platform for artists, and this is crucial to a city's arts ecology, which Exeter is committed to developing and supporting (see '*City of Creative Making*' in the Cultural Strategy). It is fundamental to effective place-making; it plays a key role in setting out a city's intentions and its identity.

3.4 Exeter is growing, both as an economy, and in size; Liveable Exeter's plan for the development of 12,000 new homes in eight sites across the city is a potential growth

of the city's current population of nearly 40%. It is often the case that Public Art interventions – particularly those associated with housing developments – are treated as 'add-ons' too late in the process. The recommendations set out in the Public Art Strategy recognises the value that artists bring enabling creativity to be a fundamental part of the whole processes.

3.5 The Strategy also recognises that early stage collaboration makes it more likely that the artwork will be more connected to place and also enables opportunities for creative engagement with the relevant community in the project's design and development, which is crucial as Exeter embarks on an ambitious plan for the city.

3.6 By adopting a shared set of values this articulates what we stand for as a city and what we expect from those with whom we collaborate.

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

4.1 The Strategy was funded through the University of Exeter.

4.2 Officer time will continue to be spent supporting the work of Cultural Partners from existing resource.

4.3 A small budget of £3,825 remains from the fund to deliver a small impactful active commission in partnership with Exeter Culture and key stakeholders in the city to put into practice the recommendations as set out in the Public Art Strategy.

4.4 There are no other resource or financial implications attached to the Public Art Strategy.

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

5.1 There are no additional financial implications for Council to consider arising from this report.

#### **6. What are the legal aspects?**

None identified

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

This report raises no issues for the Monitoring Officer.

#### **8. Report details:**

8.1 Please see Appendix A for a copy of the Draft Public Art Strategy for Exeter.

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

9.1 As outlined above, arts and culture can be a mechanism to work alongside partners and communities to continue to make Exeter a happy and healthy place to live for everyone.

9.2 The purpose of the Public Art Strategy for Exeter is to set out new ways of thinking about Public Art in Exeter, focusing on how it can contribute to enhancing the city's

unique heritage, culture and natural assets supporting the Council's Priority to 'Let Culture Thrive.'

9.3 The University of Exeter has signed a Civic University Agreement, and there are new models of collaboration underway between Exeter City Council (ECC), the Royal Albert Memorial Museum (RAMM) and the University as part of the Creative Arc programme. The potential is there for Public Art – incorporating static visual, digital, sonic and interactive to make a meaningful contribution alongside these new collaborations and developments towards a vibrant city and ecology for artists and organisations.

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

10.1 Exeter City Council has worked with leading Exeter partners to support the development of the Public Art Strategy for Exeter.

10.2 The Public Art Strategy for Exeter sets the direction for the city's cultural ambition. Failing to support it would have significant consequences for both the confidence in Exeter Culture and associated cultural partners.

## **11. Equality Act 2010 (The Act)**

11.1 Under the Act's Public Sector Equalities Duty, decision makers are required to consider the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other prohibited conduct;
- advance equality by encouraging participation, removing disadvantage, taking account of disabilities and meeting people's needs; and
- foster good relations between people by tackling prejudice and promoting understanding

11.2 In recommending this proposal potential impact has been identified on people with protected characteristics as determined by the Act and an Equalities Impact Assessment has been included in the background papers for Member's attention.

## **12. Carbon Footprint (Environmental) Implications:**

12.1 Whilst the Public Art Strategy for Exeter has no direct carbon-environmental impacts arising from the recommendations, it does recognise that New Public Art Work and the activity around it should acknowledge the climate emergency and the necessity to reflect environmentally sensitive approaches at all stages, which would be an achievable aim for Partners in the city.

12.2 83% respondents surveyed about *what is important to them, their family and neighbourhood* said 'The Environment.'

12.3 There is a recommendation that the materials and processed proposed should reflect a harmony with the carbon-neutral agenda. Scoping the impact of manufacturing, travel and installation should be fundamental factors of any new construction.

12.4 The recommendation would also be to partner with nature and climate-focussed groups and organisations to support the city's ambitions.

### **13. Are there any other options?**

13.1 The City Council could choose to do nothing and not approve the Public Art Strategy for Exeter.

13.2 However, Exeter is set to grow considerably, with 8 new areas of the city over the next 20 years bringing 12,000 new homes. The Public Art Strategy sets out key recommendations and guidance where high quality design is required and the ways in which Public Art can contribute to the built environment.

13.3 As part of these developments, Exeter City Council has now confirmed Culture as one of the priority areas for the Community Infrastructure Levy and this will lead to future investment into arts in the public realm therefore a key set of recommendations are needed.

13.4 The Strategy also demonstrates the City Council's commitment to Culture as set in the Corporate Plan.

#### **Director of Culture, Leisure and Tourism, Jon-Paul Hedge**

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

Background papers used in compiling this report:- None

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