

NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME ARTS STRATEGY

Submitted by: Executive Director, Operational Services – Dave Adams/ Head of Leisure and Cultural Services – Robert Foster

Portfolio: Culture and Leisure

Ward(s) affected: All

Purpose of the Report

To seek approval from Cabinet to develop an Arts Strategy to harness the support of the culture and arts sector to support the desired outcomes of the Council Plan, particularly in relation to town centre regeneration.

Recommendations

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- (a) Note the formation of the culture and arts partnership.**
- (b) Approve the objectives for the group, definition of arts activities and the development of the arts strategy.**
- (c) Agree the timetable for the production of the arts strategy and agree to receive a further report on the strategy in the spring of 2013.**
- (d) Agree the establishment of a project group to investigate the opportunity to develop a Newcastle town centre outdoor performance space.**
- (e) Agree to undertake the feasibility work to develop proposals to improve visitor circulation, displays and the general lay out and zoning of the museum.**

Reasons

The Arts Strategy will set out a clear vision and direction for developing the arts in Newcastle-under-Lyme to support community and Council priorities.

1. Background

1.1 In May 2012 the Chief Executive invited those organisations involved in the arts to a meeting at the civic offices to explore how we might develop some joint working. The following eight objectives were agreed from the discussions:

- For organisations with an interest in arts and culture to seek to maximise opportunities for partnership working in order to ensure that the community benefits to the fullest extent from these activities.
- To ensure that arts and cultural activities support economic development, notably through the development of skills, employment generation and tourism opportunities.
- To ensure that arts and cultural activities promote personal aspiration and achievement and support the social development and enrichment of communities.

- By greater collaboration to ensure that the reach and impact of arts and cultural activities is maximised, notably by growing and developing audiences and increasing participation.
- To ensure that the benefits from the range of arts and cultural assets is maximised, particularly to ensure that all assets are utilised to the maximum degree possible.
- To develop a comprehensive programme of arts and cultural events and to provide opportunities for commissioning new works, particularly from local artists.
- To provide opportunities for local arts to show their work and to raise awareness in local communities of the talents of artist living and working in their locality.
- To ensure that through outreach activity the benefits of arts and cultural programmes are spread across the widest possible geographical area.

1.2 By the second meeting of the group in July good progress had been made in mapping activity across the following headings, which the group have adopted as a definition of arts and culture.

- Performing arts, visual arts, craft, design and fashion
- Media, film, television, digital media and language
- Museums, artefacts and archives
- Libraries, literature, writing and publishing
- The built heritage and architecture
- Festivals and Attractions
- The creative business sector

1.3 It was felt that a strategy was required to ensure arts and cultural activity was properly coordinated, contributed towards objectives for the Borough, particularly in relation to attracting people and funding into the town centre. Consequently at a meeting of the group in September a framework was agreed for developing an arts strategy for this purpose

1.4 The Newcastle Arts and Culture Group now has representation from the Arts Council, County and Borough Councils. Newcastle-under-Lyme College, Keele University, Staffordshire University, The New Vic Theatre, B Arts and the Civic Society.

2. **Issues**

2.1 In terms of an overview the Arts does not start with a blank sheet: It already has a significant economic impact, The New Vic for example contributes £11.6m to the local economy and the Borough Museum a further £1.6m. The Arts also contribute to local distinctiveness. The two organisations already mentioned are significant features in the town's conservation area and Brampton Park. The Arts have also raised standards of design, for example the window design at Jubilee2 was an artist's commission. Other Arts organisations, for example B Arts have done a lot of work to help shape communities and between us we have all worked to develop audiences. For example, the success of the joint 'No Fit State Circus' promotion in May of year, illustrates that we have a large local audience that will support outdoor events.

2.2 Just as importantly the group recognise that the primary responsibility for arts and cultural activity itself lies with the agencies on this group.

2.3 In developing the arts strategy the following challenges will be addressed by those involved:

- Grow support for culture and the arts in Newcastle
- Building on existing strengths and developing them to meet community priorities
- Increased participation in the arts
- Supporting the growth and spread of cultural and creative activity

- Strengthening leadership and resources dedicated to these tasks.
- Measurement of improved effectiveness in tackling community issues

2.4 The framework for the arts strategy document itself, will cover:

- Introduction
- Executive Summary
- Regional and local policy context for culture and the arts
- Stock take of existing arts and cultural facilities
- Building on existing cultural and artistic strengths
- Building cultural and artistic capacity
- Encouraging prosperity through the growth of the cultural and creative enterprise sector
- Strengthening leadership
- Putting policies and mechanisms in place

2.5 Work is underway researching the evidence and identifying the gaps in each section of the strategy. An early issue here is the limited activity in the creative industries locally. Nationally the creative industries employ some 800,000 people, yet when it comes to retail and the creative industries the Barracks is the only existing offer. If the towns' retail provision affects and reflects its desirability, then the development of creative industries will directly enhance the town centre.

2.6 An important aspect of the strategy is to align the work programme to available funding. The two major national bodies offering culture and arts funding are the Arts Council and the Heritage Lottery Fund. Meeting, in Newcastle have taken place with both organisations, and both are currently looking to support our arts strategy through their programmes.

2.7 In order to complete the production of the Strategy in a timely fashion, the following work programme has been adopted by the group:

1.	Take forward work on local policy context	October 2012
2.	Capture future aspirations of existing providers	November 2012
3.	Identify Newcastle priorities and capacity building issues	October 2012 to December 2012
4.	Develop ideas to encourage the creative business sector and cultural leadership	Up to April 2013
5.	Confirm strategic priorities: Town centre regeneration First World War	February 2013
6.	Develop Action Plan	March 2013
7.	Publish (draft)	April 2013

2.8 The Arts Strategy seeks to achieve the following outcomes:

- Improved capacity and access to external funding.

- A balanced leisure economy to develop a flourishing day time and evening economy.
- culture and arts expertise making a significant contribution in developing the town centres.

2.9 Outcomes specifically for the for the town centre are:

- build a distinctive retail provision, including local businesses.
- seek both a diversity of ownership, and an investor with enduring capital committed to the long term success of the area.
- incorporate a wide variety of active cultural and social uses.
- develop criteria to measure the success of the town centre.
- promote street markets as centres of community cohesion, to help increase retail diversity and avoid a “clone town” label.

3. **Options Considered**

3.1 The proposed arts strategy is not a strategy about art for arts sake. It seeks to contribute to Council objectives and priorities by harnessing the creative talent in the sector for the benefit of everyone.

4. **Proposal**

4.1 An essential part of the strategy is to capture the future aspirations of our communities and to link these to the development of the local cultural offer. It is proposed therefore that the strategy be developed around the following themes:

- Town centre regeneration
- The First World War Centenary
- Active Ageing
- The development of a town centre outdoor performance space.

4.2 The case for supporting town centre regeneration has been articulated earlier in this report.

4.3 2014 to 2018 will see the centenary of the First World War; much planning has already started to mark this historic occasion, which has strong links to our local history and the Council recently purchased the First World War Medal collection of the Tivey brothers of Newcastle-under-Lyme.

4.4 The active ageing theme fits in well with our health objective to keep people in good health for longer.

4.5 A town centre performance space would contribute to the desirability of Newcastle town centre (along with the right retail provision). Although there are a number of venues around the town centre, there is a growing interest for testing the case for an outdoor performance space. A space of this scale will need to be built upon sustained local investment in music, education etc and participation, as well as retaining local talent. As a practical step a small project group is proposed to champion the project.

4.6 In relation to improving the local cultural offer, all agencies have been asked to consider their future development plans. In the case of the Council this involves the museum, where there is a need to improve visitor circulation and update/improve the displays. Officers are preparing a feasibility study design to reach a stage where we a reasonably detailed scheme and 3D model based on an improved general layout and zoning of areas of the museum's operation will be available.

5. **Reasons for Preferred Solution**

- 5.1 The Arts Strategy will set out a clear vision and direction in developing the arts in the Newcastle-under-Lyme to support community and Council priorities.

6. **Outcomes Linked to Sustainable Community Strategy and Corporate Priorities**

- 6.1 The development of the arts strategy is cross cutting to community and corporate priorities and is being developed specifically so that the sector contributes significantly in these areas.

7. **Legal and Statutory Implications**

There are no implications.

8. **Equality Impact Assessment**

- 8.1 Arts events, participatory projects and other arts activities are open to all sectors of the community, who are encouraged to visit and to become actively involved in attending and participating in artistic activity.

9. **Financial and Resource Implications**

- 9.1 Financial support for the development of the strategy will be drawn from existing budgets and where possible from external grants.

10. **Major Risks**

- 10.1 Without an agreed strategy it would be likely to prove more difficult to secure external funding and other contributions for the arts and towards regeneration and public realm improvements.

11. **Sustainability and Climate Change Implications**

None

12. **Key Decision Information**

12. 1 This is a key decision and appears on the Council's Forward Plan

13. **Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions**

None

14. **List of Appendices**

None

15. **Background Papers**

None