

CULTURAL STRATEGY

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CITY SERVICES

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 Members of the Scrutiny Committee agreed in their work plan to consider the current Cultural Strategy. This report is to initiate discussion around the strategy and agree the way forward.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The City Council launched the current Cultural Strategy in 2003. It was based on an extensive consultation that had taken place across the city using the theme 'Culture – what's yours?' The research was based on finding out what people in Sunderland did in their spare time and what they would like to see more of. The consultation involved interviews, questionnaires and workshops led by an external company. A draft strategy was produced and consulted on before the final version was agreed.
- 2.2 At the time DCMS (Department of Culture, Media and Sport) requested that Local Authorities produced a Local Cultural Strategy so that Culture was embedded in future planning and also so that culture could illustrate its contribution to the personal, community and economic well-being of the city. The local strategies were intended to complement the regional strategies produced by the regional cultural consortium – Culture North East.
- 2.3 Identifying the culture of the city illustrates what is unique to Sunderland – it shows our way of life, as individuals, as communities and as a whole. Not surprisingly the research found that what people in Sunderland were most proud of was our coastline, our heritage, our history, our riverside and the Stadium of Light.
- 2.4 Two key themes emerged from the research:-
- Identity, pride and positioning
 - Access, aspiration and equality

3.0 KEY AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Following on from the research and consultation the key aims and objectives of the cultural strategy were agreed as follows:-

3.1 To ensure that Sunderland is well known as a distinct city in the north east

Objectives:

- determine an effective image for Sunderland and promote it
- improve the promotion of our existing facilities and activities
- identify opportunities to use the river, the coast and other special places as cultural resources
- identify opportunities to develop additional relevant and dynamic visitor attractions

3.2 To celebrate the city of Sunderland, its traditions, its people and its places

Objectives:

- enable communities to understand and promote their individual cultural identities
- increase opportunities for celebrating Sunderland and our heritage
- create a focus for local history and heritage

3.3 To ensure that the city of Sunderland has a good range of quality cultural facilities

Objectives:

- ensure the provision of key cultural facilities where there are gaps
- enhance and develop existing cultural facilities to improve their impact at international, national, regional, sub regional and at community levels

3.4. To ensure that we establish and sustain a healthy and balanced cultural economy

Objectives:

- ensure that we have a balance of cultural providers and facilities across all sectors and at all levels
- encourage and support the independent sector including graduates, artists and small businesses
- develop a cultural quarter in the city centre
- develop a glass cluster
- Support the promotion of street theatre activities throughout the city
- extend opening hours of city centre cultural provision to contribute to the development of the evening economy
- retain creative sectors graduates in the city

3.5. To create an equality of access to culture throughout the city of Sunderland

Objectives:

- ensure that residents have access to a range of appropriate cultural facilities within their neighbourhood
- ensure that residents have good access to information about cultural facilities, activities and opportunities
- ensure that educational programmes take place within cultural provision and the community to provide experiences, raise aspirations and expectations
- play our part in developing and supporting community capacity to engage in cultural activities
- make it easier for people to participate in cultural activities
- ensure that the needs of young people and vulnerable groups are particularly recognised
- ensure that individuals and voluntary groups are supported and linked to relevant resource opportunities in order to promote cultural activities

3.6 To increase levels of participation in cultural activities

Objectives:

- provide quality facilities which meet the needs of residents
- offer quality cultural activities that attract, inspire and enthuse
- promote and market cultural facilities, activities and opportunities
- remove the barriers to participation

3.7 To ensure that culture plays its full part in improving life for people in Sunderland

Objectives:

- ensure that culture is represented at all levels and in all appropriate settings; these settings include structures and groupings established to develop and deliver strategies for, for example, health improvements, neighbourhood renewal, community learning and young people
- ensure that the cultural portfolio for the city is led cohesively and championed through appropriate partnership working arrangements
- ensure that cultural activities are used as a tool to open up experiences of a range of cultures and places, to expand horizons and overcome insularity

3.8 To ensure that Sunderland as a cultural resource makes a full contribution to the region

Objectives:

- ensure that Sunderland plays a full part in all cultural forums
- advocate Sunderland as a regional resource

- ensure that Sunderland develops a reasonable level of regional facilities
- support and undertake a proactive role in regional marketing activities
- investigate opportunities to develop an international centre of street theatre

All of the aims and objectives were supported by actions, outcomes, and outputs and targets which were regularly reported on. Obviously since 2003 there have been significant developments, e.g. 50 metre swimming pool at the Aquatic Centre; developed and enhanced libraries and Customer Service Centres; series of forums established for key cultural areas including Music, Art & Creativity; Theatre and Heritage; new cinema/bowling complex and a significantly extended Events programme including Heritage Festivals and live music which have all impacted on the cultural offer of the city, as well as social and technological changes which have affected what people do in their spare time.

4.0 CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

4.1 Members may wish to consider the following in deciding whether the cultural strategy needs updating or refreshing.

- Is a Cultural Strategy needed?
- If so, which of the current aims and objectives are considered to still be relevant?
- How much has the Culture of the city changed in the last 8 years?
- What is the likely impact of the Culture, Leisure and Sport review on a revised Cultural Strategy? This review is looking at all cultural services and facilities and future business models.

5.0 RECOMMENDATION

5.1 The recommendation is for members to consider the above, discuss and agree next steps/way forward.

6.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

6.1 Cultural Strategy 2003

7.0 GLOSSARY

- DCMS (Department of Culture, Media and Sport)

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