



Subject:	Culture Update – 2023/24 Work Programme
Date:	5 April 2023
Reporting Officer:	John Greer, Director of Economic Development
Contact Officer:	Chris McCreery, Culture Development Manager

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Some time in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	The purpose of this report is to update Members on the current status of the ten-year cultural strategy, <i>A City Imagining</i> and seek approval for key actions in 2023/24 aligned to the implementation of year 4 of the strategy.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Note the contents of this report and progress against the delivery of the cultural strategy priorities.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Agree the actions for 2023/24 as set out in the report and in appendix 1 including the budget implications at 3.19 to be met from existing departmental budgets.
3.0	Main report
3.1	<p>Members will be aware that at a meeting of City Growth and Regeneration Committee in August 2019 the final ten-year cultural strategy for Belfast <i>A City Imagining</i> was agreed. This included draft implementation plans for a three-year period to be reviewed and finalised on an annual basis.</p>
3.2	<p>Despite the challenges of Covid-19, significant progress has been made in delivery against strategic targets in the first three years of the strategy. In 2022/23 this work included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - £3.08m funding through 117 awards via the following schemes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Cultural multi-annual funding including support for Arts/ Heritage organisations and Festivals/Events – 51 organisations supported o Four Pathfinder awards for organisations not in receipt of core public sector support o 21 Community Festivals Fund in partnership with DfC o 22 organisations supported through Arts and Heritage small grants o Five Access and Inclusion grants in partnership with DfC o 8 organisations supported through Artist Studios and Maker Spaces Organisational Grants o 19 individual artists supported through the Micro-Grant Programme for Creative Practitioners o Creative Bursaries for 10 individuals o 6 partnerships with key sectoral organisations o A partnership with Theatre and Dance NI, including funding for 7 recipients, across various disciplines of the theatre and dance sector, as part of the first ever INVEST programme o Partnership with Craft NI to develop Craft NI Gallery including a programme of 8 craft exhibitions and 19 Belfast events for Craft Month o A partnership with Thrive NI to continue the Audience Panel, representing 200 members, and provide tailored advice to embedding people-led approaches within cultural organisations o A partnership with Ulster Architectural Heritage Society to deliver Open Heritage Belfast and other events, advocacy, advice & support. o Investment and delivery against the Creative Communities programme as part of Peace IV.

- Delivery against the Extended Cultural Programme including creative commissions to four organisations
- Strategic Delivery Body for Festival 2022 including delivery of Our Place in Space and support for four additional projects
- Development, consultation and publication of the music strategy
- Delivery of the Belfast Canvass Project and city animation projects across 30 sites across the city
- Continue with support to increase participation and representation at cultural events by disabled people through initiatives such as the Gig Buddies programme and a new partnership with the University of Atypical

Year 4 of the strategy will seek to combine cultural recovery with renewal in line with the commitments and priorities set out in *A City Imagining*.

3.3 **Investing in the cultural sector**

At a meeting of City Growth and Regeneration in February 2022 recommendations for core-multi annual funding were agreed providing support to 42 organisations for two years as well as continuation of four-year scheme that supports a further 13 organisations. This funding amounts to £2,430,010. A further £79,768 was agreed in relation to *Pathfinder* development funding for four organisations.

The Culture Team also runs a series of small grants (project funding) including the community festivals fund, including £133,244 for Arts and Heritage Projects and £69,000 (plus, DfC match funding) for Community Festivals.

3.4 Review of CMAG

Cultural multi-annual grants (CMAG) are now in the fourth and final year of its first cycle. During this time, the council administered two rounds of two-year funding (2019/20–20/21 and 2021/22–22/23) and one round of four-year funding (2019/20–22/23). As part of the evaluation framework for CMAG, it was agreed there should be a summative evaluation of both the monitoring and evaluation process and programme impact carried out by an independent evaluator. The first cycle of CMAG coincided with a period of unprecedented change in the operating environment, including the Covid-19 pandemic, which seriously limited the ability of festivals, events and cultural sectors to deliver activities and outcomes that would contribute to the overall impact of CMAG and the Investment Programme.

3.5	<p>Due to the challenges of the past four years, it is recommended that the evaluation focuses primarily on a process review, exploring what worked well and what could be improved. This review will be completed by May 2023, with a report and recommendations on the future of CMAG presented to Committee in June 2023.</p>
3.6	<p><u>Artist Studio and Creative Workspaces</u></p> <p>In addition to these established funding schemes, the cultural strategy committed to a broader investment model that considered the diversity of the city’s cultural landscape. In response to detailed consultation with the sector, Committee agreed in February 2022 to bring forward a specific funding programme for studios and artist-led organisations. Following an extensive grants process, 8 organisations received combined support of £100,000 through the Artist Studios and Maker Spaces Organisational Grants 2022/23. This support contributed to a range of organisational needs, including research work to locate/secure long-term accessible accommodation, infrastructural improvements, the development of new organisational strategies, development training and audience development. To respond to the continued need within the sector, it is proposed to continue this funding in 23/24 through a similar grant process starting in April, with final allocations presented to members in June 2023.</p>
3.7	<p>In addition to the funding for artist studios, members agreed a strategic review of artist studios and maker-spaces in Belfast. This research study, which will explore the current and future requirements of artist workspaces in Belfast, is led by Turley Communications and will involve extensive consultation with the sector, benchmarking and policy recommendations. To ensure alignment with other statutory partners, council officials have been working closely with the Arts Council NI in the development of this review. It is envisaged that the scope of this work will inform a set of robust action focused recommendations that could be implemented on a phased basis. The final report and recommendations will be brought to Committee in June 2023.</p>
3.8	<p>Sectoral Development and Partnerships</p> <p>In addition to funding, Belfast City Council fulfils an important role in leading and supporting sectoral development initiatives. In 2022/23, this included a range of strategic partnerships with Arts and Business, Craft NI, Theatre and Dance NI, Thrive NI, the Ulster Architectural and Heritage Society and the University of Atypical.</p>

3.9	<p>Through the partnership with Arts and Business, Belfast City Council supports Blueprint for the Future – a financial resilience programme which supports a network of arts and cultural organisations to encourage income growth and long-term financial stability. Belfast City Council has engaged with partners throughout the development phase and significant progress has been made in securing additional resource to grow the programme. In March 23, it was announced that 17 Northern Ireland arts organisations will receive over £765,000 over the next two years from both public and private funders. Council support is £30,000 per year amounting to 10% of total project costs and it is recommended that this level of funding is maintained in year three of the programme.</p>
3.10	<p>In response to the needs of the theatre and dance sector, Council developed a partnership with Theatre and Dance NI to launch the first ever Invest Programme throughout 2022. This programme included bursaries for seven recipients across various disciplines of the theatre and dance sector and is designed to support, upskill and help create the next generation of inclusive artists to lead Northern Ireland’s theatre and dance sectors. It is proposed to continue this programme for a second year.</p>
3.11	<p>Through its partnership with Craft NI, support from Belfast City Council resulted in 20 events as part of August Craft Month. Craft NI have continued to expand their Craft Gallery based in Royal Avenue, with council support including a programme of 8 craft exhibitions and 52 makers. It is proposed to continue this work to develop the Gallery to enable more Belfast makers to sell their products in Belfast city centre.</p>
3.12	<p>Through a partnership with Ulster Architectural and Heritage Society, support resulted in the delivery of Open Heritage Belfast and other advice & support to the heritage sector. It is proposed to continue this work. With a view to developing a heritage plan, officials conducted a quotation process to commission a Heritage Audit and Roadmap for Development in January 2023. However, no suppliers reached the required threshold to begin this work and a new enhanced quotation will be issued in April 2023. A report and recommendations presented to the Committee in Autumn 2023.</p>
3.13	<p>Further wraparound support programmes</p> <p>In addition to these bespoke programmes, Council officers will continue to engage with the sector and respond to challenges and opportunities throughout the year. This wraparound support will be provided to all organisations in receipt of funding. In addition, leadership mentoring will be offered working with external specialists. Advice, training and capacity</p>

	<p>building will also be provided to organisations who have been unsuccessful in securing Council funding.</p>
3.14	<p>Through its sector support programme, Council operates a number of sectoral Forums, namely Belfast Festivals Forum and Belfast Visual Arts Forum. Priority 15 of <i>A City Imagining</i> has an emphasis on encouraging environmental responsibility and the role of culture in changing behaviours. To help build towards this goal, foster greater collaboration and encourage best practice in the sector, its proposed to establish a Green Arts Forum, in partnership with other statutory and community stakeholders, to promote and develop sustainability practice in the cultural sector.</p>
3.15	<p><u>Cultural Participation and Engagement</u></p> <p>The cultural strategy made a commitment to publishing an annual report in order to demonstrate the impact of cultural development on the city's wider agenda. Officials are engaging with the culture department within Queen's University, Belfast to explore partnership working in evaluating the 10-year cultural strategy including investment programmes and impact. Officials are also currently reviewing best practice from other cities to assess the impact of appropriate measurements and data. An update and recommendations will be presented to members in Autumn 2023.</p>
3.16	<p>As well as sectoral support for culture, arts, heritage and events, Council also delivers initiatives designed to increase accessibility and cultural participation. Members will be aware the Council has commissioned a report regarding LGBTQIA+ visibility and representation in Belfast's Culture, Arts and Heritage. Officials have received a draft copy of the report and recommendations and the proposed action plan will be presented to members in June 2023. A similar report on minority ethnic representation has been issued to market, with a report and recommendations to be presented to Committee in Autumn 2023.</p>
3.17	<p>The Cultural Strategy also contained a commitment to complete an accessibility audit of cultural venues to publish accurate access information on an online platform. Through its partnership with the University of Atypical, social narrative videos have been produced for seven key venues in the city to provide key information for audiences with a disability. In addition, University of Atypical delivered training for twenty disability champions and supported organisations to enhance their Equality, Access and Inclusion offer to d/Deaf, disabled and neurodiverse audience members. It is recommended to continue this</p>

	<p>partnership, supporting eight new venues, creating an additional 20 disability champions and increase the number of organisations who can access this support.</p>
3.18	<p>In addition, it is proposed to progress the development of an equality, access and inclusion 'kitemark' accreditation for arts events taking place during Belfast 2024. This accreditation could apply to events taking place in non-arts venues and would demonstrate that the events have been independently assessed as achieving a good standard of equality, access and inclusion. UofA plan to develop the 'EASIMark' accreditation process starting from March 2023, field test this in from August 2023 onwards, and with the scheme being fully operational from January 2024 to coincide with the launch of Belfast 2024.</p>
3.19	<p><u>Financial & Resource Implications</u></p> <p>There are no new financial implications. The activities outlined in this report will be resourced from the 2023/24 budget for the Culture and Tourism section of the Economic Development division of the Place and Economy Departmental budget in line with existing approvals. A breakdown of specific areas of spend are included in Appendix 1.</p>
3.20	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>The cultural strategy, <i>A City Imagining</i> has been subject to an Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) and a Rural Needs Assessment (RNA). Specific initiatives as required will be subject to a further equality screening.</p>
4.0	<p>Appendices – Documents attached</p>
	<p>Appendix 1: Cultural Strategy 2023/24 Priority Actions</p>