



Subject:	<i>A City Imagining</i> - Cultural Strategy workplan – mid-year update
Date:	6 December 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"/>
Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.	
Insert number <input type="checkbox"/>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Information relating to any individual2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information)4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime	
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>
Call-in	
	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	
1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues
1.1	The purpose of this report is to advise members of a range of activity undertaken in since April 2023 to deliver on objectives of the ten-year cultural strategy, <i>A City Imagining</i> .
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Note the work undertaken in the financial year to date • Approve the allocation of £28,000 towards the Output Conference • Agree to participate in Culture Commons, an open policy development programme that will run in partnership with UK based partners. • Agree to the pilot micro-grant programme in collaboration with the Cathedral Quarter Arts Festival (CQAF).
3.0	Main Report
3.1	In April 2023, members agreed the key actions in 2023/24 aligned to the implementation of year 4 of the Cultural strategy. Year 4 of the strategy has sought to combine cultural recovery with renewal in line with the commitments and priorities set out in <i>A City Imagining</i> .
3.2	<p>Investing in the cultural sector</p> <p>Similar to the Belfast Agenda, the investment model for culture includes a partnership approach to supporting the cultural sector, with the aim of sustaining and developing accessible cultural activity and infrastructure across Belfast. This investment is central to creating positive cultural, social and economic impacts for the city, delivering on our overall targets for the period, positioning Belfast as a regional driver, and creating the conditions for long-term transformation. The aims of the cultural investment model are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • support the cultural life of the city by enabling citizens to be active, dynamic and creative agents of change. • invest in the cultural and creative sectors skills development and capacity for production and innovation. • position Belfast as an international testing ground for new approaches to cultural engagement, development and placemaking. • establish Belfast as a cultural destination.
3.3	The Culture Team manages a range of grant programmes and investment schemes for organisations and artists, totalling £3.04m funding through 117 awards. These schemes include:

Programme	Value	Number of awards/organisations supported	Status
Cultural Multi-Annual Grant (CMAG)	£2.43million	36 Arts/ Heritage organisations 20 Festivals and Events organisations	Scoring and Moderation for 2024-28
Pathfinder Awards	£79,000	Four organisations	Scored, awarded and contracts issued
Community Festivals Fund	69,000 + match funding from DFC	20 Community Festivals	Scored, awarded and contracts issued
Arts and Heritage Grant	£133,244	17 Arts and Heritage Projects	Scored, awarded and contracts issued
Access and Inclusion grants	Funding provided by Department for Communities	Two organisations supported	Scored, awarded and contracts issued
Artist Studios and Maker Spaces Organisational Grants	£100,000	10 Artist Studios	Scored, awarded and contracts issued
Creative Bursary Scheme for Individual Artists	£160,000	16 artists	Scored, awarded and contracts issued
Music Heritage Programme	£80,000	4-5 organisations	Launched October 2023

3.4

At the mid-way point in the year, work is complete with applications scored, moderated awarded and contracts issued to all core grant and investment schemes for 2023/24. The Music Heritage scheme will launch in October 2023. The next round of Cultural Multi-Annual Grants (CMAG), which will run from 2024 to 2028, received a total of 80 applications and officers are currently working to score and moderate this extensive programme. A report on recommendations for funding will be presented to members in January 2024.

3.5	<p>Strategic Partnerships</p> <p>In addition to funding, Belfast City Council fulfils an important role in leading and supporting sectoral development initiatives. In 2023/24, this has included a range of strategic partnerships including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arts and Business to support 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. • 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. • Partnership with Craft NI to develop Craft NI Gallery including a programme of 8 craft exhibitions and 19 Belfast events for Craft Month. • 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. • A partnership with Ulster Architectural Heritage Society to deliver Open Heritage Belfast and other events, advocacy, advice & support. • Funding for the Black Box to continue the Gig Buddies scheme which aims to increase participation and representation at cultural events by disabled people. • A partnership with University of Atypical to promote accessibility in cultural spaces and support training for disability champions within the cultural sector.
3.6	<p>Culture Commons</p> <p>Belfast City Council has been invited to participate in Culture Commons, an open policy development programme that will run in partnership with UK based partners. This 12-month project will see a coalition of organisations from across local government, sector representative bodies, universities, arm's length bodies, and grant giving organisations coming together in a first-of-its-kind research and policy development programme. A collaborative, structured dialogue will explore how increased local decision making might affect the creative, cultural and heritage ecosystem and shape a suite of policy positions that could support a more equitable and sustainable cultural sector.</p>
3.7	<p>To ensure that the programme is drawing on the widest possible body of evidence, Culture Commons has invited Belfast City Council to contribute to the programme in partnership with the Department for Communities. Council officials will communicate good practice and involve other arts managers across NI (using established existing and new contacts and</p>

	<p>networks) in discussions related to the Culture Commons participation. This would ensure regional benefit and voice of other local councils across the province in this important new movement which promotes co-design, civic participation, and inclusive growth.</p>
3.8	<p>The cost for participation and benefits is £15,000 for one year (October 2023 – September 2024), with the Department for Communities contributing £10,000 and Belfast City Council (as lead) contributing £5,000. These costs will be met from the Belfast 2024 evaluation fund. This investment from BCC would be to build towards the legacy of the Belfast 2024 programme and support a more sustainable sector as we emerge from Belfast 2024.</p>
3.9	<p>Heritage</p> <p>As part of investment in heritage, officials continued its partnership with Ulster Architectural and Heritage Society on the delivery of Open Heritage Belfast. Taking place on 9th September, events included the Doorways Tell Stories project which explored the history and architecture that lies with the doorways of Belfast.</p>
3.10	<p>With a view to developing a heritage plan, members agreed to conduct a Heritage Audit and Roadmap for Development. The requirement of this contract will be to deliver part one of what is currently anticipated as a two-part project. Part one is defined as an audit of the heritage sector in Belfast and the design of a roadmap for development. The purpose of the development programme will be to set out a roadmap for Council to bring forward a more sustainable approach to supporting heritage in the city and the different strands of a work programme that should be taken forward including opportunities for co-design. Following delivery of these outputs it is envisaged that Council will progress with part two of the project which will be the development and delivery of the roadmap including designing action plans through a co-design process. This work is underway and is scheduled to be completed by March 2024.</p>
3.11	<p>Belfast Canvass and City Animation</p> <p>Now in its fourth phase, officials are working on the delivery of the City Animation “<i>Belfast Canvas</i>” project. This phase will continue to expand into arterial routes across the city. The delivery of this phase is currently underway, and artists have been commission to transform over 20 spaces featuring local and international artists and many emerging artists. The public response to the finished boxes has been overwhelmingly positive. Work is due to be completed by November 2023.</p>

Artist Studio and Creative Workspaces

3.12 In August 2023, members received an update on the completion of the “Artist Studios and Maker Spaces Organisational Grants 2023/24” programme. Through this scheme, 10 organisations received financial support to develop and sustain their respective studio spaces.

3.13 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 explores the current and future requirements of artist workspaces in Belfast, is led by Turley Communications and has involved 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. Officials are in receipt of the draft report and are currently working with the authors to refine the recommendations and actions arising from the data collected. The final report and recommendations will be brought to Committee in early 2024.

3.14 **Sectoral Forums**

Through its sector support programme, Council operates a number of sectoral Forums, namely Belfast Festivals Forum and Belfast Visual Arts Forum. The Festivals Forum is a proactive and voluntary collective of festival organisers and agencies. It is developing a coordinated approach to festivals by sharing ideas, skills training, marketing incentives and grants, and coordinating a festival events calendar. Meeting 8 times a year, the forum has welcomed peers and experts from international festivals.

The Belfast Visual Arts Forum promotes and celebrates Belfast as "a city where visual arts can be embraced and enjoyed by all". There are currently over 60 members and key stakeholders. The forum has been going through significant transformation, welcoming two new Co-Chairs and renewing its aims and objectives whilst creating opportunities for those within the sector to contribute.

Priority 15 of *A City Imagining* 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, a Green Arts Forum was established in August 2023 in partnership with other statutory and community stakeholders. This forum will meet on bi-monthly basis to promote and develop sustainability practice in the cultural sector.

3.15

Music Strategy

At a meeting of City Growth and Regeneration Committee in December 2022, members agreed the music strategy, “Music Matters: A Roadmap for Belfast” including its corresponding priorities.

Members received updates and approved allocations of spend against various initiatives in April, June, August and September 2023. Their commitments are now progressing at pace and include:

<u>Programme/Action</u>	<u>Status</u>
Recruitment and selection of the Belfast Region Music Board	Completed in April 2023
Expansion of the Output Conference, Ireland’s biggest one-day music conference and live music showcase	Completed in June 2023
Continuation of Gradam Ceoil bursaries	Launched in March 2023 and continuing to March 2024
The Pipeline Investment Fund for music venues through a partnership with Music Venue Trust	Completed in September 2023 with 5 Grassroots Music Venues in receipt of funding to upgrade equipment
Belfast Music marketing channels	New supplier appointed July 2023
Implementation of Access Riders to improve disability access	November to March 2023
The NI Music Prize	Taking place 15 th November 2023
Creation of a digital music support service developed in collaboration with Music Connections	Launching in January 2024
Music Industry Mentoring Programme for 2023/24	Launching in January 2024

Programme to develop the production skills of women, female-identifying and non-binary music creators in a safe and trusted studio environment.	Launching in January 2024 until May 2024
Health and Wellbeing sessions for musicians and the industry	Launching in February 2023
“Go Green” toolkit with tangible recommendations and measures for implementation	Launching March 2023

3.16

Internship Programme

In August 2023, Members agreed to allocate £45,000 to the Music Matters Internship Programme, supporting 7 internships across the music industry in collaboration with CC Skills. This programme was developed and due to launch in November 2023. However, officials have been made aware that due to the loss of Arts Council England funding, CC Skills is winding down as an organisation across the UK. Officials are now exploring alternative routes and partners to deliver this important element of the music strategy.

3.17

International collaborations

As part of Belfast’s application and status as a City of Music, member cities are committed to “*work internationally with the UNESCO Cities Network to deliver shared music, skills and learning opportunities.*”. Officials have focused on collaboration with two cities, namely Hannover in Germany (UNESCO City of Music since 2014) and London, Ontario (UNESCO City of Music since 2021).

3.18

In July 2023, the first stage of our UNESCO City of Music partnership with fellow UCoM city London, Ontario, took place. Belfast artists Ciara O’Neill and Niall McDowell, selected by London Music Office and festival lead Darin Addison, travelled to Canada for a week of experiences that will have a lasting impact upon their career and has cemented a strong relationship between our cities. In October 2023, artists from London, Ontario performed in the theatre at The Mac for Country Roads : An Evening of New Country Music at newly commissioned BCC UNESCO event with the Belfast International Arts Festival. This collaboration and event was featured on a range of media broadcasts including BBC Radio 4.

3.19

As part of the exchange with Hannover, Germany, Belfast based jazz artists Steve Davis and Scott Flanigan will travelled to Hannover to perform at Jazzwoche Festival on Saturday 14th

October, facilitated by Moving On Music and Belfast City Council. Both musicians collaborated with musicians from the experimental orchestra, Tonhallenorchester, in advance of their performance.

3.20

City of Music Industry Sessions

Theme one of the Music Strategy focuses on the development of musicians, including action point 2.4 which seeks to “provide opportunities via events and programmes to provide regular access to professional associations in music to deepen existing relationships and create new ones”.

To build towards this wider goal of increasing networking and knowledge of the local sector, officials have developed the City of Music Industry Sessions, a series of free monthly information sessions for the local music community. Hosted in 2 Royal Avenue, this series features panel discussions and advice from experts across a range of disciplines, preceded by networking opportunities and advice clinics hosted by the Culture Team. Each event offers learning opportunities for both the music creators and music industry personnel to ensure development of both in tandem. Events have included:

- Getting Tracks Played on the Radio - Rory McConnell (Senior Content Producer at BBC), Gemma Bradley (Host of Radio 1's BBC Introducing Show) Siobhan Brown (Former host of the Siobhan Brown Soul Show on Radio Ulster, Founder of Soultrane Festival)
- Content Creation and Audience Building with Fiona McAuley (Head of Audience at Atlantic Records) and Saul Duffin (Founder of Yeo Magazine)
- Can Live Music Pay The Bills?’ Featuring Matt Hanner (Runway Artists) Alexandra Ampofo (Metropolis Music & Women Connect) Ciaran Lavery (Artist / Songwriter) Paula McColl (Moving on Music)
- Learning from Hannover, UNESCO City of Music
- Paul Charles - Music industry expert, booking agent (Tom Waits & more)
- Amazon Global #1 Bestseller Emily White on How to Build a Sustainable Music Career (And Collect All Revenue Streams. This event is featured as part of the Sound of Belfast programme.

3.21

Micro Grants

In April 2023, members agreed an allocation of £20,000 towards a micro-grant programme, available to individual musicians, to assist with costs incurred within their artform. In a similar

manner to the partnership with Music Venue Trust, where Council has collaborated with an industry expert to augment a pre-existing support scheme, it is proposed to pilot this first micro-grant programme in collaboration with the Cathedral Quarter Arts Festival (CQAF).

3.22 The CQAF Bursary scheme is a hugely popular initiative which supports and encourages new work by visual artists, comedians, musicians and theatre practitioners. It is often dominated by applications from musicians, and it is proposed to add an extra music specific micro-grant to enhance this programme. It is proposed to launch this pilot in December 2023 with musicians receiving up to £1000 towards elements such as:

- Session musician fees
- Recording (studio hire, engineering, mixing, mastering)
- Content creation (video, audio, promotional photography, artwork, design, etc)
- Manufacture and distribution
- Merchandise (design and production)
- PR & Marketing

3.23 **Output Conference Update**

Established in 2016, Output Belfast has earned its reputation over the last 7 years as Ireland's biggest one-day music conference and live music showcase. Delivered as a key event within the City of Music programme, the conference features a full programme of panels, workshops and conferences, followed by an evening showcase of live music for free to the public. Activity includes music and creative digital showcasing and networking events, business development panels and workshops and meetings and networking with key international creative digital companies,

As part of our commitment to priority 2.5 within the music strategy, which reads "Develop regular music business touchpoints throughout the year using existing conferences to offer more regular but bitesize opportunities for micro learning". In line with previous years, it is proposed to allocate £28,000 to Score Draw Music to continue the delivery of the Output Conference in April 2024. This investment will be enhanced through support from Arts Council NI and is met with existing budgets allocated to music development.

3.24 **Finance and Resource Implications**

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.

3.25	<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	Appendices
	None