



Report to: Development Department

Subject: Cultural Framework: Attracting Audiences

Date: 4 December 2012

Reporting Officer: John McGrillen, Director of Development, ext 3470

Contact Officers: Shirley McCay, Head of Economic Initiatives, ext 3459

1	Relevant Background Information
1.1	Members will be aware that one of the four key themes within the Cultural Framework for Belfast 2012–2015 is Attracting Audiences.
1.2	Engaging, retaining and developing audiences locally, nationally and internationally is one of the most critical challenges facing the cultural sector today. The Framework recognised that we have invested heavily in the cultural infrastructure, and now we must attract larger audiences to ensure the sustainability of the arts and the city, and ensure there is a demand to sustain the supply.
1.3	Culture and arts is part of the experience economy. Audiences buy tickets and refreshments, increasing organisations' earned income and making them less reliant on public subsidy. Surrounding restaurants, hotels and businesses also benefit from increased footfall, supporting the wider service economy. Visitors to the city in particular bring additional spending power and attract yet more visitors by broadcasting the Belfast story around the world. Increased income can help organisations grow, but engaged audiences also sustain the cultural scene as a whole, increasing the demand for high-quality, culturally relevant programming.
1.4	Attracting audiences is especially difficult in the current economic climate. Few organisations have dedicated marketing staff, while the decline of culture and arts coverage in the media has led to less exposure and profile. And there is no dedicated, coherent marketing resource for culture and arts. Increasingly, the only platform to market activity is social media.
1.5	The Framework stated that much more must be done to improve access to culture and arts across Belfast, including working closely with stakeholders, agencies and media to encourage enjoyment of what the city has to offer. Consideration was also given to establishing a dedicated marketing resource to promote Belfast's culture and arts.

2	Key Issues
2.1	<p>Approval is sought from Committee to go out to quotation for a three year 'Attracting Audiences' scoping exercise and action plan. The aim of the plan is to increase the number of residents and visitors taking part in culture, arts and heritage and to achieve the following targets by 2015:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Increase audiences figures by 10 per cent b) The number of residents attending ticketed events will increase from 1 in every 5 households to 1 in every 3 c) The number of visitors to the city attending cultural activity will increase from 15 per cent to 25 per cent d) Invest in and deliver three cultural product development initiatives per year e) Generate the equivalent of £10m in positive media coverage f) Establish audience satisfaction levels and increase year on year
2.2	<p>The brief would include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A review of marketing roles and responsibilities in the city to maximize opportunities and identify/address gaps - The commissioning and dissemination of research to increase our understanding of Belfast audiences (including the services provided by Audience NI) - The development of targeted initiatives, such as a 'Five-a-year' campaign - Working with Tourism Ireland, the Northern Ireland Tourist, Board and Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau to develop initiatives to attract 'culture seekers' from the Republic of Ireland, Great Britain and Europe - A review and enhancement of communications, including on-street opportunities, digital media and co-promotion across the city and city venues - Identification of collaborative marketing and cross-selling initiatives across the cultural sector - Establish a baseline, targets and actions to increase the level of national and international media coverage and develop closer relations with the media in order to position Belfast as a creative and cultural city - Develop a cultural diary for the city and identify key collaborative PR stories for the sector.
2.3	<p>An internal working group including Corporate Communications, the Events Unit and the Tourism, Culture and Arts Unit will be established to work with the organisation awarded the contract.</p>

3	Resource Implications
3.1	£25,000 to be provided from within the existing 2012/13 Tourism, Culture and Arts budget.

4	Equality and Good Relations Considerations
4.1	There are no Equality and Good Relations Considerations attached to this report.

5	Recommendations
5.1	It is recommended that Members approve the sum of £25,000 (to be provided from within the existing 2012/13 Tourism, Culture and Arts budget) in order to deliver an Attracting Audiences baseline, scoping exercise and action plan.

6	Decision Tracking
Following appointment, an action plan will be brought to Committee in Spring 2013 for approval.	
Timeframe: Spring 2013	Reporting Officer: Shirley McCay