

City Growth and Regeneration Committee

Wednesday, 27th March, 2019

SPECIAL MEETING OF CITY GROWTH AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Graham (Deputy Chairperson) (in the Chair);
Aldermen Kingston and McGimpsey; and
Councillors Beattie, Black, Dorrian, Dudgeon,
Hussey, Kyle, Magee, Murphy, O'Hara and Walsh.

In attendance: Mrs. S. Wylie, Chief Executive;
Mr. A. Reid, Strategic Director of Place and Economy;
Mr. J. Greer, Director of Economic Development;
Mrs. E. Henry, Cultural Regeneration Manager; and
Mr. H. Downey, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported on behalf of Alderman Haire and Councillors McAllister, Mullan and O'Donnell.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were reported.

Draft Cultural Strategy 2020-2030

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to present a draft of the Cultural Strategy 2020-2030 and seek approval to begin a formal twelve-week public consultation.**

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Committee approve the draft strategy and agree to commence a twelve-week public consultation.**

3.0 Main Report

3.1 Background

Members will be aware that, in December 2018, the City Growth and Regeneration Committee agreed that officers proceed with the development of a new ten-year cultural strategy for the city.

3.2 The timing of this work was in response to a number of important developments and milestones including:

- end of participation in the European Capital of Culture bidding process.
- initial recommendations from a draft Festival and Events strategy.
- current Cultural Framework due to end in March 2020.
- current Tourism Strategy due to end in March 2020.
- core multi-annual funding programme for arts and heritage organisations in the city due to end in March 2020.
- tourism as a key strand in the Belfast Region City Deal including proposals for a new visitor attraction, the Destination Hub.

3.3 It was agreed that the strategy would build on the extensive public engagement carried out during the bid to become European Capital of Culture. Furthermore it would present an integrated approach to long-term cultural development in the city including:

- a citizen focussed approach
- consideration of the long-term sustainability of the cultural sector
- a new approach to Events and Festivals
- strengthening the tourism proposition in the city through greater understanding of the city's cultural narrative and international appeal and
- integration of planned major developments such as the Destination Hub into citywide tourism.

Key Issues

The Context

3.4 The global context for this strategy is the increasing recognition that cities of culture can drive transformation. Culture has a critical role in shaping great places through:

- increasing cohesion and permeability
- building identity and confidence
- attracting investment
- retaining talent and attracting talent back

3.5 The Belfast Agenda sets out a vision for 2035 that imagines a culturally vibrant city. The purpose of the cultural strategy is to present a series of priorities that have the potential to contribute significantly to all five outcomes of the Belfast Agenda:

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- everyone in Belfast benefits from a thriving and prosperous economy
- Belfast is a welcoming, safe, fair and inclusive city for all
- everyone in Belfast fulfils their potential
- everyone in Belfast experiences good health and wellbeing
- Belfast is a vibrant, attractive, connected and environmentally sustainable city

3.6 As well as supporting the Belfast Agenda, the strategy also responds to and helps to define the role of culture across other priority areas, including:

- Local Development Plan
- City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy
- Good Relations Strategy
- Open Spaces Strategy

3.7 This work has also taken into consideration Council's involvement in 100 Resilient Cities. In addition, the strategy has considered the wider context including ongoing public funding cuts and the need for a long-term approach to support the sustainability and resilience of the cultural sector whilst setting ambitious growth targets. Belfast City Council will also be making a submission to the public consultation on the Arts Council of Northern Ireland's draft 5 year Framework to reflect the ambitions set out in this draft strategy.

The Process

3.8 The approach to developing this strategy has strongly focussed on engagement with citizens and with city partners. This has included:

- Holding 62 civic conversations
- Engaging with 5361 citizens
- Supporting 625 creators
- Working with 106 artists
- Across 85 places
- Through 137 events

3.9 The approach has been shaped by two external bodies of work. The first is Agenda 21 for Culture – an international methodology that supports cultural development in cities and regions. The focus of Culture 21 is to embed culture as the fourth dimension of sustainable cities alongside existing economic, social and ecological pillars. Belfast's participation

in the Culture 21 pilot cities programme has already been approved and this programme will support the implementation of this strategy.

- 3.10 The second set of recommendations that have helped inform this strategy is the recently published Cultural Enquiry by the Core Cities network of which Belfast is a partner member. This enquiry presents a number of practical recommendations on investment and governance of culture in cities. This presents an opportunity for a collaborative model to be taken forward that complements the community planning process and sets shared priorities for culture along with a more effective approach to investment to maximise the overall return. This involves working closely to leverage new sources of finance including public-private models.

The Strategy

- 3.11 The strategy, *A City Imagining*, opens with a cultural statement for the city shaped by the thousands of conversations that have taken place since 2017 as part of the ongoing public engagement programme. This is then taken forward through an overall cross-cutting thematic approach to the strategy with each theme having a particular area of focus as follows.

- 3.12 Theme 1: A City Belonging – focuses on supporting active citizenship and participation in cultural life.

Theme 2: A City Challenging – focuses on diversity through use of public and cultural spaces.

Theme 3: A City Creating – focuses on supporting innovation and creativity across the cultural sectors.

Theme 4: A City Exploring – focuses on Belfast’s relationship to the rest of the world both inward and outward including support for cultural tourism.

- 3.13 Four strategic priorities are set out for each theme. The result is a strategic framework consisting of 16 key priorities to be delivered by 2030. Each of these priorities will be further developed in the next phase of the programme through detailed implementation plans.

- 3.14 The document also sets out a number of key strategic milestones throughout the ten-year period. These include:

- launching a new approach to events and festivals in the city
- producing an international year of culture in 2023

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- bidding for UNESCO City of Music in 2021
- delivering a new visitor attraction in the city centre and local neighbourhood tourism programme to open in 2024

3.15 These specific initiatives are considered to be central to delivering on the city’s overall targets for the period and to attract new forms of investment into the city with significant cultural, social and economic impacts.

3.16 Critically, the Strategy considers the governance and investment model required to deliver this type of long-term transformation clearly positioning Belfast as a regional driver.

3.17 The purpose of the strategy document is to present the overall approach and commitments over a ten year period. The next phase of work will give detailed consideration to how this will be delivered in line with the timeframe detailed below. This will include the development of initial three year implementation plans that as well as being cross-cutting will specifically address:

- Arts and Heritage
- Events and Festivals
- Tourism product development including neighbourhood tourism
- Major strategic initiatives

3.18 These will be supported by a proposed investment model, communications strategy and evaluation framework.

3.19 Next Steps

The proposed timeline is as follows:

April – July 2019	Public Consultation on Strategy document
April – August 2019	Development of implementation plans and new funding model
September 2019	Committee approval for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Final strategy - Draft funding model - Draft implementation plans
October 2019	Opening of new competitive funding programmes
Oct 2019 – Jan 2020	Public consultation on implementation plans
March 2020	Approval of funding recommendations and final implementation plans and finance strategy.
April 2020	Funding contracts

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.20** There are currently no immediate financial implications to this report. The final strategy will be supported by implementation plans and a detailed finance and resource plan will be presented to Committee in September 2019, as part of the next phase of work.

**Equality or Good Relations Implications/
Rural Needs Assessment**

- 3.2** Equality and good relations have been central to the development of the Cultural Strategy to date and will continue to be considered as the investment model and implementation programmes are developed.
- 3.22** Input has been sought from the Council's Equality and Diversity Officers to inform the strategic level assessment in terms of equality, good relations and rural needs. With a vision of cultural inclusivity and diversity in the Strategy and through the significant programme of engagement, the Cultural Strategy is likely to have a positive impact in terms of promoting equality and good relations in the city. There may be opportunities to increase levels of participation and engagement in cultural life in the city for certain groups such as older people, disabled people and those from minority ethnic backgrounds.
- 3.23** In line with the guidance from the Equality Commission and the commitment to engagement that has informed the Cultural Strategy; the strategic level equality impact assessment report will be subject to a 12 week public consultation period. This will accompany the formal consultation on the draft Cultural Strategy. The equality impact assessment will be updated as a result of this feedback. The information will be used to inform the final Cultural Strategy and the development of the investment model and implementation programmes.”

The Cultural Regeneration Manager provided a detailed overview of the draft Cultural Strategy, following which the Committee agreed to seek the views of those representatives of the cultural sector who were in attendance.

Accordingly, Ms. P. Larkin, Arts Development Officer, University of Atypical, and Mr. C. Mitchell, a local musical entrepreneur, were nominated to speak on behalf of that sector.

Ms. Larkin explained that the University of Atypical was a disabled-led arts organisation based in the City and welcomed the fact that its views had been sought during the initial engagement process. She commended the Council on the production of the draft Strategy and stated that it would add to the overall cultural vibrancy of the City.

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Mr. Mitchell informed the Members that he specialised in writing music for theatrical presentations and had returned to Belfast ten years ago, having worked in other cities. He highlighted the fact that, whilst the quality of facilities and artists in Belfast were, in his view unsurpassed, there were difficulties, particularly in terms of connectivity and acquiring funding. He referred to the significant benefits which a well-defined cultural strategy had delivered, for example, for the city of Hull, following its designation as UK Capital of Culture 2018, and welcomed the fact that the Council's draft Strategy would address the current gaps in cultural provision in Belfast.

After discussion, during which the Members raised a number of points which the Cultural Regeneration Manager confirmed would be fed into the consultation process, the Committee approved the draft strategy and agreed to commence a twelve-week public consultation process.

Pilot Public Art Project

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

1.1 Members will recall that, at the Committee meeting on 12th September, 2018, it was agreed that a report be submitted to a future meeting outlining options for Belfast to take forward a public art project involving utility boxes similar to the Dublin Canvas project.

1.2 The purpose of this report is to set out a proposal for a pilot project including details of approach and required budget.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is requested to:

- i. note the contents of this report and agree to progress a pilot project in the city centre and agree budget allocation; and**
- ii. agree to receive a future update and consider options for extending the project to include Belfast Rapid Transport route.**

3.0 Main Report

3.1 Background

An initial request had been made for officers to investigate the potential for Belfast to deliver a public art project involving painting the utility boxes along the current BRT route. In parallel Council had also been in discussion about a similar project in the city centre working with the Destination CQ and

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Belfast One Business Improvement Districts. The BIDs had also had preliminary discussions with the utility providers.

- 3.2 Following assessment of various options and evaluation of schemes elsewhere it is proposed that the project is piloted in two phases:**

Phase 1: City Centre – retail core

Phase 2: Existing Belfast Rapid Transport route

- 3.3 The rationale for this is threefold:**

- the first phase of the pilot should focus on a smaller concentrated area in line with how other cities have successfully delivered similar projects**
- the secured support of the BIDs as project partners**
- alignment to ongoing City Centre Revitalisation programme**

- 3.4 The aims of the project would be to:**

- create opportunities to animate the city**
- improve the look and feel of locations**
- celebrate Belfast's street art culture**
- decrease incidences of graffiti/tagging, fly posting, and other anti-social behaviours associated with utility boxes**
- engage citizens in a creative programme, encouraging a sense of ownership over the city centre and their local area and**
- provide professional development opportunities for emerging/student artists.**

Key Issues

- 3.5 Initial contact has been made with utility providers, BT, Virgin Media, and the Department for Infrastructure. BT and Virgin Media are supportive of the project, and permission has been given in principle to progress. The Department for Infrastructure are yet to grant their permission. However, there are sufficient private utility boxes in the main retail core of the city centre to deliver an effective project. It is hoped that a Council led and curated approach to the project would in turn convince DfI to consider involvement in a phase 2.**

- 3.6 During April, May, and June, Belfast City Council will be in the Public Consultation phase of the new Cultural Strategy for 2020 – 2030. It is hoped that this project could fit within the Public Consultation process, as a creative element of public engagement, in a similar format to the pre-consultation (Y)Our Home civic engagement projects. With this in mind, artists,**

students, and community organisations involved in the restyling of utility boxes will be asked to respond creatively to the theme of *A City Imagining*. This concept provides an interesting stimulus with scope for a multitude of creative responses, while also giving the project a sense of coherency across sites.

3.7 *Considerations*

- full permission must be secured from the owners of the utility boxes.
 - At present BT and Virgin Media are on board, with the Department for Infrastructure still to confirm.
- based on research from 2008, the preferred medium is paint, rather than vinyl application. Designs installed on vinyl tend to peel, and are more difficult to maintain than a painted design.
- particular care must be taken by artists not to block ventilation systems / grates on utility boxes. These areas can be painted over, though must maintain a paint thickness of less than 5.5mm.
- all designs must be approved by BCC or commissioning partner before implementation can take place.
- an initial assessment of sites has been made however a full mapping exercise of all utility boxes in proposed areas will need to be completed.

3.8 *Learning from Belfast City Centre Management and Chamber of Commerce (2007/08)*

This proposed approach also takes into consideration the learning and outcomes of a similar project delivered in Belfast in 2008.

3.9 From October 2007 – May 2008, Belfast City Centre Management and Chamber of Commerce trialled the *Utility Box Initiative Pilot Scheme*. Nine utility boxes on Royal Avenue were decorated using either paint or vinyl application. Learnings from the close of project monitoring report include:

- success in the reduction of fly-posting while boxes were in good condition
- boxes should be continuously reviewed and maintained - damaged or peeling boxes were more likely to attract fly-posting or graffiti.
- boxes should be coated in an anti-graffiti sealant, so graffiti can be easily removed without damaging the design.
- vinyl designs were subject to deliberate tearing, and in general, vinyl was not considered a viable method for decorating utility boxes

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- designs should be free of large areas of blank space, that may attract graffiti

3.10 Programme Plan

The proposed approach is focussed around three main strands.

Phase 1: City Centre

- **Strand 1, May 2019: Commissioning artists**
 - Delivered by professional (street) artists
 - Number of locations TBC – between 10 and 15 within BT1 and CQ to achieve impact.
 - Professional work in place to inspire and stimulate civic engagement project
- **Strand 2, May - June 2019: Community engagement**
 - Series of four civic engagement workshops per community group with professional street artists involved in commissioning project.
 - Working collaboratively with 6 community groups
 - Delivered in partnership with Council's Cleansing Services
 - Citizens take Street-art tour of commissioned boxes and Belfast Street art.
 - Use learning and experience to work with artist to create a further series of designs for a city centre utility boxes.
 - Artist implements design based on community input
- **Strand 3, May - June 2019: Student engagement**
 - Artists host professional development sessions for UU final year students – similar to a mini graduate scheme for those completing their degrees.
 - Exploring street art culture in Belfast
 - Guidance on use of medium, working to limitations, working to a brief – artists providing mentoring and support throughout student design process.
 - By end of June, students have the opportunity to design their own box (with BCC approval of concept)

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- 3.11 After this structured approach to delivery, and depending on the level of success and public engagement, there is the potential to launch a fourth strand to the project, in which an open call for submissions is launched to the general public.**
- 3.12 Public submissions would respond to a brief, and should include a conceptual sketch, and would be subject to approval by the Council. This would also provide a good opportunity for a wider campaign.**

Phase 2: BRT route

- 3.13 Following an evaluation of phase 1, a more detailed proposal would be brought back to Committee for phase 2 to be delivered along the BRT route. Based on the effective and high quality delivery of phase 1 in the city centre support from DfI would also be sought. Given that proof of concept would have been established as part of phase 1 this next phase would commence with the community engagement and co-design approach. The timescale for this would be August 2019.**

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.14 The initial resource required for the delivery of phase one is £13,905 made up of:**

**Artist costs and materials: £4,000
Community engagement and workshops: £6,680
Student engagement: £1,025
Preparation and maintenance: £2,200
A contribution of £8,000 is to be allocated from existing departmental budgets with the remaining contribution to be made by the partners.**

**Equality or Good Relations Implications/
Rural Needs Assessment**

- 3.15 Equality and good relations will be taken into consideration in the selection of the community participants.”**

After discussion, the Committee adopted the recommendations.

Standing Order 14

In accordance with Standing Order 14, the Committee agreed, as the meeting had been held later than seven clear days before the meeting of the Council, that the minutes of the meeting be submitted to the Council on 1st April for ratification.

Chairperson