

Report to:

LEVELLING-UP SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Relevant Officer:

Carolyn Primett, Head of Arts and Peter Legg, Head of Economic and Cultural Services

Date of meeting:

24 January 2024

DEVELOPING A CULTURAL STRATEGY FOR BLACKPOOL

1.0 Purpose of the report

1.1 To provide the Committee with an update on progress in developing a new Cultural Strategy for Blackpool.

2.0 Recommendation(s)

2.1 To note the progress report and to invite feedback from the Council's Scrutiny Committee on the emerging draft vision, mission and priorities.

3.0 Reason for recommendation(s)

3.1 The Blackpool Cultural Strategy is not Council led or owned, it is a shared strategy which has been shaped by a wide range of local stakeholders and influenced by public consultation.

3.2 The Council has helped facilitate the establishment of an independent Steering Group including the commissioning of consultants to support the work of the group.

3.3 The Council is a key stakeholder in terms of the delivery of the Strategy through an emerging Action Plan, and through its ability to leverage other strategies, services and funding opportunities.

3.4 Is the recommendation contrary to a plan or strategy approved by the Council? No

3.5 Is the recommendation in accordance with the Council's approved budget? Yes

4.0 Other alternative options to be considered

4.1 No Cultural Strategy for Blackpool. This would be detrimental to cultural life of local people and visitors, and will discourage joint work and collaboration to grow a strong cultural sector and offer for locals and visitors in the town. It risks lack of further investment in arts and culture at a time when Blackpool has the opportunity to

maximise its status as an Arts Council 'Priority Place'.

5.0 Council priority

5.1 The relevant Council priority is:

- 'The economy: Maximising growth and opportunity across Blackpool'
- 'Communities: Creating stronger communities and increasing resilience'

6.0 Background and key information

6.1 Blackpool Council convened a number of key stakeholders in August 2022, to develop the methodology for the strategy, including how to involve creative freelancers and how to utilise consultancy support. The Council secured a grant of £15,000 from the Arts Council for developing the Strategy with match of £5,000 from the Council's Arts Service and £5,000 secured from the Town Centre Business Improvement District.

6.2 CTConsults was engaged via a competitive bidding process to help support the Steering Group with their contract beginning in January 2023. CTConsults' role was mentoring and coaching the Cultural Strategy Framework Steering Group (CSFSG), who had varying experience of policy development and implementation. The whole process has been a collaborative one with the key cultural leaders of the town coming together to work on the Strategy. A list of the CSFSG members is included in Appendix 6a.

6.3 CTConsults worked with the CSFSG to lay the foundations for the strategy by exploring Blackpool's cultural realities and ambitions. Once a strategy framework was agreed, members of the CSFSG volunteered to become a Writing Team. The consultants facilitated a Writers' Away Day, building the strategy spine and mapping out content for the core themes, with each writer leading on one section. Once a full draft was ready, the CSFSG met to feedback and an Editing Team was identified to provide a coherent, singular voice.

6.4. Following this, CTConsults facilitated a series of public stakeholder workshops in which the strategy themes were tested by a wider cohort and their feedback incorporated into the next draft. A sample of the public feedback and issues raised is attached as Appendix 6b and features a long list of issues and suggestions for further focus.

6.5 A final draft strategy document is now being finessed and an action plan is being developed, alongside a new delivery model. Consensus decision making has been essential throughout the process. The approach has been to build a more democratic and level cultural leadership for the town and this has taken time. National bodies such as Arts Council England have supported the process and are interested in creating a 'Blackpool Model' for collaborative cultural strategy development which can be replicated elsewhere.

- 6.6 Next steps include:-
- The CSFSG to complete the strategy, which is a more comprehensive document.
 - To complete an accompanying Action Plan and consult widely on its contents.
 - The full Strategy and Action Plan to be published and launched by the Steering Group in spring 2024.
 - Key priorities from the action plan to inform an Expression of Interest (EOI) funding bid to the Arts Council for up to £1M place funding for implementing key areas of work.
 - If the EOI is approved, a full bid will be submitted to ACE for the end of March 2024 with the outcome known by July 2024. Match funding will be required from a range of partners.

6.7 Does the information submitted include any exempt information? No

7.0 List of appendices

- 7.1 Appendix 6a - Terms of Reference for the CSFSC, Membership and the Draft Vision, Mission and Priorities for the Blackpool Cultural Strategy 2024-2030.
Appendix 6b - A sample of the feedback and comments received from the public consultation sessions in September 2023.

8.0 Financial considerations

- 8.1 There are no direct financial implications in terms of developing or agreeing a Cultural Strategy and action plan. The Council will be required to act as accountable body for any ACE Place bid and grant administration if successful.

9.0 Legal considerations

- 9.1 None.

10.0 Risk management considerations

- 10.1 None.

11.0 Equalities considerations and the impact of this decision for our children and young people

- 11.1 Equality and diversity is one of the key values in the Strategy and underpins all the priorities.

12.0 Sustainability, climate change and environmental considerations

- 12.1 Sustainability is one of the key values in the Strategy.

13.0 Internal/external consultation undertaken

13.1 Extensive consultation has been undertaken to date with a wide range of stakeholders including 3 public consultation events with 75 attendees from across Blackpool; in person one to one consultation meetings with 30 key stakeholders both local and regional. Further consultation will take place over the draft Action Plan that will accompany the Strategy and will influence future funding bids and investment plans.

14.0 Background papers

14.1 None.