

**Report of: Leeds City Council Culture & Sport**

**Report to: Community Committee**

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**Leeds' Bid to become European Capital of Culture 2023**

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### **Purpose of report**

To provide Members of the Committee with an update on European Capital of Culture 2023.

To seek support from the committee in engaging with local community groups and cultural providers to develop the bid for European Capital of Culture 2023.

### **Background information**

A year ago Executive Board approved the recommendation for Leeds to bid to become European Capital of Culture 2023, following an intensive year of city-wide consultation and debate.

Over the next two years the city of Leeds will work with partners and stakeholders to develop the bid document, the objectives are:

- To win Leeds the title of European Capital of Culture 2023
- To deliver a bid that is reflective and inclusive of the whole city

### **Main Issues**

#### **What is European Capital of Culture?**

The European Capital of Culture is a prestigious competition run since 1985 to celebrate the cultural offer of cities within Europe. Two cities are chosen each year from two eligible countries. The eligible countries are rotated through European countries, which means there are only 5 times in the next 100 years that the UK can hold a European Capital of Culture year; 2023 is the first of these. The title acts as a spotlight, highlighting and raising the profile of the city and its culture.

#### **Benefits for Leeds**

- Increased economic benefit and return on investment from the increase of tourism before, during and after the host year.
- Sustainable economic growth and job creation across the creative and cultural industries which is already the fastest growing sector of the economy.

- Raising the international and national profile of Leeds
- The actual process of bidding, irrespective of outcome, is recognised as having significant benefits. Newcastle Gateshead who bid and lost went on to develop new capital assets: The Sage, Angel of the North and the Baltic.
- The bid itself is transformative; the sheer process of asking 'should we bid' has already seen a significant increase in self-confidence in the Leeds

## **EU Referendum**

Leeds is still part of the European continent and the benefits of bidding for European Capital of Culture still apply.

We are in discussions with the organisers of the European Capital of Culture competition to determine if there is to be any impact of the referendum on those cities in the UK wishing to bid for the title.

Previously countries including Norway and Iceland, both of whom are not part of the European Union, have hosted the title, and our sources have indicated that there are a number of exit strategies from the EU which could see the UK still eligible to host the title in 2023.

We continue to work with organisations from across Europe and beyond, both exporting our own cultural product and hosting new businesses and concepts here in Leeds.

## **Previous UK Cities**

### **Liverpool**

The last UK title holder, Liverpool, benefitted enormously from hosting the 2008 European Capital of Culture. The city saw:

- 9.7 million visitors (a 34% increase);
- £753.8 million boost to the economy;
- 85% of residents said the city was a better place to live than before; and massive amounts of positive media coverage that helped change perceptions.

### **Glasgow**

- 30,000 people now worked in the city's cultural and creative industries, one of the largest concentrations of the creative economy outside London.
- The number of live performances - whether music, theatre or dance - had risen by 82% since 1992
- 1990 truly changed the image of Glasgow – it was a milestone event, helping both to transform the city's reputation in the UK and abroad, and to restore self-confidence and pride

## **Conclusion**

### **Why are we bidding?**

The European Capital of Culture competition offers an opportunity to reposition Leeds in Europe and raise our profile internationally; address issues; overcome challenges, and generate a substantial amount of investment in culture, arts, education and regeneration.

## **Recommendations**

Inner North West Community Committee is requested to:

- consider and debate the contents of this report;
- suggest other groups, networks, organisations and individuals who could contribute to the new Culture Strategy and the bid for European Capital of Culture 2023.