

Report of: Chief Officer for Culture & Sport

Report to: Inner North East Community Committee – Chapel Allerton, Moortown, Roundhay Wards

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to note

Leeds Culture Strategy and 2023 Capital of Culture Update

Purpose of report

1. The report provides an update on the development of the Leeds Culture Strategy and the 2023 European Capital of Culture bid.

Background

2. Leeds started a conversation about bidding for European Capital of Culture back in 2013. It came out of a sense that Leeds as the UK's 3rd largest city needed to raise its ambition and be more visible as an international city. Leeds is hugely proud of its cultural strengths but it had never shouted about them until now. All of this was before we knew there would be a referendum, Brexit Vote or a change of the UK's position in European Capital of Culture.
3. As the conversation started some other compelling issues emerged:
 - That Leeds needed to reconnect – to itself as a city, its people across the city and to partners in Europe.
 - That there were major inequalities in access to culture
 - That our diversity and links with Europe were real strengths
4. The city started to work on a bid. The EU encouraged the UK government to launch the competition and they finally did in December 2016. We developed a vision for Leeds to explore the physical and mental health of a diverse modern city in Europe. We found the theme **Fabric** rooted in our origins as a textile town and a metaphor for how we can weave the city together and stay connected to Europe. We looked at the issues of identity; **fear**

and belonging in cities and looked at how we created a **voice** for young people in the city.

5. Over the last 5 years we have conducted a variety of engagement work:
 - Focus groups with young people, and development of the THINK Leeds 2023
 - Research on external perceptions about our city
 - A 12 month visitor profile study interviewing 1500 visitors
 - An analysis of over half a million audience records in the city
 - Consultation with over 3,000 people across Leeds' communities and the creation of 2023's engagement group
 - Consultation on a new cultural strategy

Culture Strategy

6. On 17th July 2017 Leeds City Council's Executive Board formally adopted the new Culture Strategy for Leeds 2017-2030. The Culture Strategy is the first of its kind in Leeds having been co-produced with the residents, artists and businesses of the city. The strategy includes six guiding values and principles, five aims and seven objectives. A copy of the new Culture Strategy for Leeds 2017-2030 and associated appendices can be downloaded at www.leedsculturestrategy.co.uk.
7. Since its adoption the Culture Strategy has received national and international recognition as a best practice example and model for co-producing the future cultural policies of a city. Interest has come from as far as Scotland, Italy and Iceland.
8. A key action of the Culture Strategy was for Leeds to bid for the title of European Capital of Culture 2023. On the 23rd November 2017 the European Commission wrote to UK Government confirming its decision that, as a result of Brexit negotiations, the UK would no longer be eligible to participate in the European Capital of Culture competition, with immediate effect.
9. The bid had started to get a whole city lined up to change its future through culture. Our achievements to date have contributed to the following:
 - Our bid has already positioned Leeds in UK, Europe and Internationally
 - Our work has started connecting communities – weaving the city together -
 - Our European connections have been enhanced from Lille to Hungary, Dresden to Estonia
 - Our cultural sector is stronger. £1 million a year growth in ACE funding from 2019
 - Our Cultural strategy is laying foundations for growth and development;
 - Our research is helping us to understand audiences, tourism and cultural economy
 - Our programme ideas gave a voice to people, artists and the city
 - Our business sector is enthused by the city's ambition; infrastructure development; policy development
 - Our research has helped the Business Improvement District show how safe the city is
 - Our bid has attracted new funds to support school links in Europe

Looking Forwards

10. Following a White Paper approved by Full Council on 10th January 2018, which gained cross party support, Leeds will move forward with plans to host a year-long celebration of its diverse cultures in 2023. Although not European Capital of Culture, the year will continue to have a strong international focus and will be rooted in the values, aims and objectives of the new Culture Strategy for Leeds 2017-2030. There will now follow a period of ongoing dialogue, planning and development with a view to sharing more detailed plans later in 2018.
11. Given the implications of decision taken by the European Commission and the time needed to recast the plans for Leeds 2023, the need has also arisen to review the scope and timeframe of the Culture Strategy Delivery Plan.
12. The Delivery Plan will continue the co-produced approach pioneered by the development of the strategy, seeking to share ideas, energy and resources and empower people to create and enjoy the cultures that are relevant to them, as opposed to creating a top-down, predictive and restrictive plan for our city's future.
13. With this in mind, the proposed Culture Strategy Delivery Plan will not be an uninspiring spreadsheet on a computer, seen only by council officers and officials. Instead we will seek to create an open-source online platform that anyone can contribute to, crowd sourcing our cultural identity, placing culture at the heart of our daily lives, connecting all corners of the city, sharing experiences and creating the conditions for every person living in the city to have the capacity to create and play an active role in the cultural life of Leeds, should they choose it.

Recommendations

Members are asked to:

14. Note the contents of the report and consider how local communities in the Inner North East area can contribute to the Leeds Culture Strategy Delivery Plan and the year-long celebration of culture in 2023.