

**Lancaster City Council
Arts and Cultural Policy
March 2019**

Introduction

This Cultural Policy is designed to create a framework for the Council's overall support for arts and culture in the district and as part of the North West cultural agenda. It is intended that this will ensure that the Council's engagement in arts and culture (including heritage) is purposeful, has a clear rationale, delivers value for money and outcomes that are positive for the district and reflect relevant priorities.

This policy framework does not seek to directly steer the development of arts and culture in the district, as this is creative, innovative and, at times, has strong local ownership. However, it will provide clear guiding principles and criteria that reflect the Council's priorities and underpin its investment and use of resources.

It is recognised that this policy framework sits alongside, but is distinct from, other strategies including the Lancaster District Arts Framework, the Cultural Heritage Strategy and the strategic plans of a range of cultural organisations in the district, the North West and nationally, all of which the Council may consider separately.

The Council has a strong role supporting, developing, investing, promoting and delivering arts and culture in the district. A clear policy framework will provide the means by which the Council can prioritise how it can deliver successfully against its priorities and achieve the best possible outcomes.

Background

The cultural landscape of the Lancaster district is rich and varied and has shaped a unique identity and reputation in the North West. Arts and Culture in Lancaster district are recognised as important in terms of the economy, health and wellbeing and quality of life. "Connecting and Celebrating Culture and Heritage" has emerged as a key theme in the Lancaster Story, setting the district apart for its unique cultural offer.

Lancaster Arts Partners Economic Impact Assessment in 2011 showed that the Arts and Creative Industries sector is established as an economic sector in its own right in Lancaster district, supporting over 600 businesses and up to 2430 jobs at that time. Recently this sector has become more visible, developing alongside the digital sector in an area where 87% of businesses are small and micro enterprises.

The sector is also a major contributor to Lancaster district's growing visitor economy worth £476m, recording 7.5m tourism visits in 2017 (STEAM Data).

The importance of Arts and Culture can be linked with key priorities in the Council Plan, the Local Development Framework Core Strategy and the (currently draft) Economic Growth Plan 2019 - 2029. In more detail, the importance of supporting and developing the district's arts and cultural offer is articulated in the Council's adopted Cultural Heritage Strategy and the Lancaster District Arts Framework, developed by the Lancaster Arts Partnership.

Lancaster district's cultural offer is distinctive. It comprises outstanding producing and community theatre, a thriving music scene, innovative dance provision, award winning festivals, acclaimed literature, creative arts, galleries, museums and the spoken word. There is a strong partnership of imaginative cultural leaders and providers with ambitions to develop the current offer and to do new and different things. A range of outstanding venues, spaces and places set the scene for culture in the community but also as an important part of the district's visitor offer.

The district's cultural development is very much enhanced by a strong strategic and delivery role played by Lancaster University as part of the Lancaster Institute of Contemporary Arts and the Faculty of Arts and Social Science. A number of other partners play an important role in delivering a distinctive and ambitious programme across the district.

The Arts and Cultural sector is currently affected by a wide range of external factors that are creating both positive and negative challenges. Overall, there is a growing recognition of the importance of the arts and culture as a driver for economic and social value but, following a number of years of economic pressure, this is taking place in the context of reduced public funding and an increased need for business resilience and adaptability. There is clearer recognition that some cultural activities can pay their way whilst other activities that may have a high value in terms of the economy and communities, will always need support and funding if they are to continue. These factors create both threats and opportunities, of course, but it is certainly true that the Arts sector in the district is facing considerable change.

Arts Council England research (*The Value of Arts and Culture to People and Society*) identifies the difference culture makes in the following ways:

Economy – jobs, skills and developing talent, attracting and retaining visitors, revitalising places,

Health and Wellbeing – increase in levels of good health and subjective wellbeing, cognitive abilities of children and young people, positive impact on specific health conditions including dementia and depression

Society – community cohesion, safer and stronger communities, social inclusion, employability, levels of volunteering

Education – literacy, early language acquisition, maths, cognitive abilities, educational attainment

Outcomes for the district

Within the district, the Council Plan for 2018 – 2022 broadly reflects a similar position to the Arts Council although this is articulated in a different way. The Council Plan refers to arts and culture in respect of economic and social outcomes but also has a focus on Place to which arts and culture make an important contribution. The following outcomes provide a clear focus on what the Council will seek to achieve as a result of a strong and distinctive arts and cultural offer:

Economic outcomes

Jobs created and safeguarded, skills and educational attainment, number of visitors and visitor spend, local spend and businesses benefitting, contribution to Place and to the attractiveness of the district and wider region to businesses and those who live and work here.

Social outcomes

Quality of life, skills and prospects for local people, health and well-being, inclusive and engaged communities, satisfaction with the area as a place to live, reduced reliance on public support services.

Place outcomes

Quality and distinctiveness of the Lancaster district cultural offer, excellent profile and reputation of arts and culture in the economic region, protected and enhanced heritage, local, national and international audiences.

Council support for arts and culture

The Council states in its Council Plan that it will *“Develop and promote an exceptional arts and cultural offer at the national and international level, as a distinctive part of our offer to residents and visitors”*.

Reflecting its priorities relating to the economy, for communities and stewardship of place, the Council plays a key role supporting arts and culture in a number of different ways. **Partnership** underpins most arrangements and often the Council adopts a **leadership and enabling** role. As the Local Authority, the council can bring a **democratic mandate** to the table when this is required, formalising support for an approach to culture. The Council owns and has access to **land and buildings** that provide the basis of the infrastructure required for some organisations, activities and events. **Arts investments** by the Council have supported a number of key organisations for some years and allowed for longer term planning for core delivery. The Council plays a strong role in **promotion and marketing** of the district’s cultural activities to wide audiences within and beyond the district. As a **delivery partner** the Council plays an important role in relation to **museums, heritage developments, major festivals and events, live entertainment and arts programming**.

Policy principles

The Council’s current approach to arts and culture in the district has developed over a number of years. In various ways, there has been considerable reference to the kind of outcomes the Council wants to support and this is generally consistent. In terms of its strategic support, delivery and investment, the Council has clearly contributed, along with the considerable work of partners, to some significant achievements and a growing reputation for arts and culture.

Currently, recognition has increased of the importance of arts and culture as a particular strength of this area and its economic and social impact. The Council is firmly embedded in the cultural agenda in many ways and, given the existing strategic policy framework, it seems likely that this will continue to be the case. Recognising this, it is an appropriate time to establish a clear policy framework for the Council’s support for arts and culture that reflects its priorities and aspirations but ensures a strategic, transparent and robust approach that maximises outcomes and provides value for money.

This policy details the Impact the Council will seek to achieve and the Criteria it will use to appraise and evaluate the projects, programmes and delivery by cultural organisations that the Council may wish to support.

Impact

In determining its use of financial or other resources, the Council will consider overall impact and the outcomes to be achieved. These will include:

Economic impact and contribution to local wealth in a range of ways such as jobs created and safeguarded, number of visitors and visitor spend, local spend and businesses benefitting, contribution to Place and to the attractiveness of the district and the wider region to businesses and to those who live, work, study and visit the area.

Impact on local communities and social value, including quality of life, skills and prospects for local people, health and well-being, inclusive and engaged communities, satisfaction with the area as a place to live, reduced reliance on public support services, impact on priority groups or areas.

Contribution to Place outcomes, including improving the reputation and profile of the area for a quality and distinctive cultural offer, protecting and enhancing heritage, increased local, national and international audiences.

Appraisal and evaluation criteria

The Council will also consider a range of specific criteria to appraise and evaluate individual and ongoing opportunities or requirements for financial or other support. These will include:

Contribution to Council's agreed corporate priorities and outcomes

The Council will expect that use of resources would reflect priorities at any given point in time. The Council Plan is the key reference document but other policy documents including the Economic Growth Plan are also relevant.

Contribution to the agreed outcomes of cultural funding partners

The Council works in partnership with strategic, funding and delivery partners and will endeavour to support delivery of shared priorities where possible and where the Council's own objectives are not compromised.

Established need or opportunity for the service

Evidence of need or opportunity for the service is expected and can be provided in a number of ways including using published data but should also include, where possible and feasible, other qualitative information such as audience analysis, consultation and engagement feedback and service delivery information.

Added value and additionality

The Council aims to use its resources to deliver that which is over and above what would otherwise be delivered. The intention is to complement and add to existing services rather than to displace or compete. A broad awareness of other relevant cultural services is necessary to ensure that new and developing proposals add value in the right way.

Value for Money

The Council provides services from public funding and therefore must ensure that all expenditure achieves value for money requirements, which may include consideration of opportunities for income or efficiencies for the Council, availability of match funding, voluntary contributions as well as other financial and resource information.

Sustainable and deliverable business model / plan

The Council will consider sustainability, deliverability and risks associated with any investment or resource requirements and proposals with the objective of ensuring strong outcomes and safeguarding its investment.

Quality, innovation and distinctiveness

The Council wishes to support delivery of quality services but also set the scene for innovation, taking a positive approach to new ideas and developments and new ways of working. Entrepreneurialism and creativity are valued as well as developing adaptable and flexible services with the potential for new solutions. Distinctiveness in arts and culture is also valued and helps to set the district apart as well as increase the potential to draw in major funding. The Council will encourage digital developments and skills to support digital creativity, arts and engagement.

Governance, leadership, management and skills

Appropriate governance, leadership, management and skills are important in term of successful delivery for cultural activities, particularly when delivery is at scale. The Council will seek to ensure that good arrangements are in place for cultural delivery supported by its investments and resources as a means of protecting its investment but also to achieve the best possible results.

Impact on environment and sustainability

The Council will endeavour to reduce or minimise negative impact on the environment and in terms of climate change, as a result of any cultural activities it supports, whether delivered by the Council itself or by cultural partners the Council supports. Achieving a positive environmental impact will be encouraged.

Accessibility, equality and diversity

Accessibility should be at the heart of arts and culture and a guiding principle for cultural organisations. The Council will seek to ensure that the arts and culture it supports will be accessible to all and that equality of opportunity and diversity are reflected in line with the Council's policies.

Statutory requirements, including health and safety

To protect the public and cultural deliverers, the Council will expect that all health and safety and any other statutory requirements will be met in full.