

Report to:	TOURISM, ECONOMY AND COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Relevant Officer:	Alan Cavill, Director of Communications and Regeneration
Date of Meeting	28 September 2022

DEVELOPING A CULTURAL PLAN FOR BLACKPOOL

1.0 Purpose of the report:

- 1.1 To inform members about the work taking place in setting up a Blackpool Cultural Framework Steering Group that will lead on developing a new five year Cultural Plan for Blackpool.
- 1.2 The Plan will set out the town's cultural development priorities, the support required for the local cultural sector to ensure it can recover and thrive after the Covid pandemic, and set out the benefits of a strong cultural sector in supporting the well-being of local communities and the growth of cultural tourism.

2.0 Recommendation(s):

- 2.1 That the Scrutiny Committee note the report and request a presentation on a draft of the Blackpool Cultural Plan at the appropriate time in its preparation.

3.0 Reasons for recommendation(s):

- 3.1 The process in developing a Blackpool Cultural Plan that allows for a wide range of contributions and ideas, and is owned and supported by the independent cultural sector in the town is going to be of equal importance to the final document that is published.
- 3.2 Is the recommendation contrary to a plan or strategy adopted or approved by the Council? No
- 3.3 Is the recommendation in accordance with the Council's approved budget? Yes

4.0 Other alternative options to be considered:

- 4.1 The Council could decide not to support this development and the work of the Cultural Framework Steering Group but this would be detrimental to the growth and sustainability of the cultural sector and hinder the important contribution it can make to the successful transformation of the town,

the well-being of its communities and in providing opportunities for young people to achieve their aspirations to be employed in the creative industries sector. Supporting the establishment of a Cultural Partnership for Blackpool and production of a Cultural Plan will enable the Council to fulfil its key role as a strategic body to take informed action, decisions on investment, or use the information for bidding for strategic funding that may come available to support cultural development and regeneration of the town.

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 information

6.1 The Arts Council England has designated Blackpool as one of its 54 ‘priority places’ across England where they want to develop new opportunities for investment, as part of the publication of its ‘Let’s Create’ strategy and its three-year Delivery Plan for 2021 - 2024. Blackpool is also one of the ‘Levelling Up for Culture Places’ designated by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport.

6.2 ACE have committed to all their ‘Priority Places’ to work with local stakeholders to set bespoke objectives, hold themselves accountable for increasing staff time and investment across a range of funds, and track the impact of their investment. In their National Portfolio 2023-26 investment programme, ‘Levelling Up for Culture Places’ will be added to their balancing criteria. This means for their funding decisions they will take account of applications that are for uplifts for existing National Portfolio Organisations in ‘Levelling Up for Culture Places’ and from new Portfolio Organisations in ‘Levelling Up for Culture Places’, and for new activity in ‘Levelling Up for Culture Places’ delivered by organisations outside of those Places but designed in partnership with them. There’s no guarantee however that every place on the list will receive additional investment.”

6.3 It is therefore timely for Blackpool to have a Cultural Plan to make the most of the new opportunities that will come from this new relationship with ACE and DCMS designation.

6.4 Post Covid the most immediate threat to the continued recovery of the cultural sector is the impact of the energy and cost of living crisis. On Tuesday 13 September, Blackpool Grand Theatre attended a meeting with the Shadow Minister for Arts and Civil Society, Barbara Keeley MP, convened by the Royal Shakespeare Company on behalf of partner theatres including Blackpool, Canterbury, Hull, Newcastle, Norwich, Nottingham, Stoke on Trent, Truro. Attendees outlined the existential threat posed by 400% increases in energy costs combined with the cost-of-living crisis. The consequential effect of reduced ticket sales was discussed in context of the cultural, hospitality and leisure sector’s fragile post-Covid recovery. In all cases, the increase in electricity and gas bills outweighed the combined total

of annual Arts Council England and Local Authority funding venues received. Across the country, and without intervention, the impact will result in increased ticket prices, cuts to workforce and reduction in programme delivery particularly in relation to community engagement work. Of significant concern across the UK is the impact on the theatres' ability to deliver on priorities for some of the most vulnerable children, young people, and families.

6.5 Many theatres work hand in hand with local authorities, social services and social justice organisations delivering significant positive interventions within the community. Schools have announced that budget pressures are resulting in cuts to all but essentials, meaning visits to theatres, museums and galleries will be the first to go. Theatres are important in supporting cultural education and participation outcomes, particularly with increased focus on STEM and a general reduction of arts teaching within the curriculum. Attendees discussed actions with the Shadow Minister that would help including: cultural businesses being included within the definition of vulnerable sectors that will receiving continuing financial support after 6 months to offset the rise in energy bills; a revision of the scope of charitable activities of arts organisations to benefit from tax relief on retail sales and food and beverage income, gift aid on ticket sales and allied business rates relief; reductions in VAT on tickets and retail income; increased central government settlements for local authorities; continuation of Theatre Production Tax Relief for those that produce their own work. The group advocated an overhaul of the way that culture and arts are funded within the UK to ensure that core costs are covered, noting that the pandemic emergency funding had highlighted the vast number of outcomes that cultural organisations deliver on health and well-being priorities in addition to their core public facing programmes, the continuation of which is once again at risk due to the current crisis.

6.6 See Appendix 9(a) for report presents the requirements from the Arts Council in terms of their investment in the Cultural Strategy development process and further background information.

6.7 Does the information submitted include any exempt information? No

7.0 List of Appendices:

7.1 Appendix 9(a) - Blackpool Cultural Framework Steering Group terms of reference and membership

8.0 Financial considerations:

8.1 A financial commitment of £5,000 has been made from the Council towards the work of the Blackpool Cultural Framework Steering Group to match a grant of £15,000 secured from Arts Council England and £5,000 committed from the Blackpool's Tourism and Town Centre Business Improvement District. The ACE grant has been formally awarded to the Council and the Arts Service will oversee the formal reporting and management of the income and expenditure for the work programme delivered through the Blackpool Cultural Framework Steering Group.

9.0 Legal considerations:

- 9.1 None; the most appropriate governance set up for establishing a new Blackpool Cultural Partnership will be investigated as part of the work of the Blackpool Cultural Framework Steering Group.

10.0 Risk management considerations:

- 10.1 Blackpool Council is recognised regionally and nationally by strategic partners such as the Arts Council for its commitment to a thriving cultural sector in the town and the importance of local communities, in particular young people, accessing quality cultural experiences and career opportunities. The Council can play a strategic role in supporting the work of a Blackpool Cultural Framework Steering Group. The Council has a leadership and advocacy role within the town in supporting the development of the cultural sector and working with national partners such as Arts Council England.

11.0 Equalities considerations:

- 11.1 Equalities will be considered carefully as part of the work on a cultural plan and in how consultation is undertaken with different groups.

12.0 Sustainability, climate change and environmental considerations:

- 12.1 Sustainability and climate change will be a key theme explored and discussed as part of the consultation process in developing a cultural plan. It is anticipated that a series of key actions under this theme will be part of the final Action Plan produced.

13.0 Internal/external consultation undertaken:

- 13.1 Internal and external consultation will be fundamental to the success of producing a Blackpool Cultural Plan that is relevant and owned by the cultural sector and other key stakeholders that will play an essential role in delivering the actions.

14.0 Background papers:

- 14.1 See Appendix 9(a).