IMAGINATION, CREATIVITY AND ENTERPRISE
Birmingham Cultural Strategy 2016-19

Birmingham is a non-stop city of culture[1] with local roots and international reach - a capital of imagination, creativity and enterprise.

THEMES

The strategy has five themes through which the vision will be delivered:

1. **Culture on Our Doorstep**
   Becoming a leader in cultural democracy where people come together to co-create, commission, lead and participate in a wide range of locally relevant, pluralistic and community driven cultural ventures.

2. **Next Generation**
   Ensuring that all children and young people have opportunities to engage with a diverse range of high quality arts and cultural experiences at every stage of their development and which they value as worth it.

3. **A Creative City**
   Supporting and enabling the growth of creative and cultural SMEs and micro-businesses and individuals through business support, skills and talent development and access to finance.

4. **Our Cultural Capital**
   Cementing Birmingham's role and reputation as a centre of imagination, innovation and enterprise, with local roots and international reach.

5. **Our Cultural Future**
   Adapting our business models to ensure they are capable of sustaining and growing the sector into the future through collaboration, diversification, rebalancing and devolution.

Each chapter sets out what we want to achieve in terms of our intended outcomes (sustainable positive changes) for the themes, and the actions that we plan to take collectively across the city to make these changes a reality.

PARTNERSHIP FOR CULTURE

This strategy has been developed and is owned by a wide group of stakeholders from across the city. Its implementation will be overseen by the Birmingham Partnership for Culture, a new partnership body which will bring together the public and private sector stakeholders with an interest in delivering the vision. The Partnership for Culture will seek to co-ordinate contributions

[1] For the purposes of this strategy, "culture" means performing arts, visual art, craft, film, media (including digital media), combined arts, museums, heritage, libraries, public art, creative industries and tourism related activity.

from across the city towards the objectives of the strategy, and will commission activities to support the delivery of the actions.

Chapter 1: **Culture on Our Doorstep**[2]

Becoming a leader in cultural democracy where people come together to co-create, commission, lead and participate in a wide range of locally relevant, pluralistic and community driven cultural ventures.

Culture crosses all types of boundaries and has the power to change our lives – collectively and individually - for the better. Culture improves everyone's sense of well-being. It enables us to articulate pride in who we are whilst simultaneously encouraging us to interact with each other: a vehicle for generating mutual understanding. The belief that culture is a force for good and owned by all of us in differing ways underpins the concept of 'Culture on Our Doorstep'

Birmingham has the potential to become a leader in cultural democracy where people come together to commission, lead, participate in, and create not only arts activities but also a wider range of cultural ventures: a place where people live life to the full.

Many of us lead rich cultural lives and enjoy not only those activities facilitated by publicly funded venues, commercial independent promoters and faith based organisations but also those generated by ourselves amongst communities of interest, place and faith, individuals, families and friends, in voluntary groups and through active participation in cultural organisations as creators, managers, co-producers, arts activists or entrepreneurs and as audiences.

Research shows that for many more of us there are real barriers to participation including disposable income, available child-care, transport, ready access to information as well as the socio-political perceptions that 'culture' is either generically the domain of others or something specific to ourselves. However, recent action research across the city shows that these barriers can be surmounted by activities that are collaboratively devised and locally undertaken. This provides a starting point for re-thinking a strategy for Culture on Our Doorstep.

Each Birmingham district in terms of population is equivalent to a small town, and especially when taken in the context of a future West Midlands forms a rich, multifarious and highly varied mosaic of diverse communities characterised by their plurality, own interests, circumstances and loyalties.

Whilst benefiting from centralised arts, culture and heritage programmes, emanating from arts, cultural and heritage providers of national and international standing including large scale cultural festivals, these diverse communities of interest place high value on activities that are socially and geographically localised in their specific contexts.

[2] Note that the term "resident" also includes young people. The Next Generation theme provides further, specific, actions in relation to 0-25s.

Throughout the last decade, Birmingham City Council has steadily paved the way for a structurally and conceptually democratic citywide approach to culture and the arts through introducing a range of seminal initiatives. For example, an Arts Champion scheme paired each of the major cultural institutions with a specific District. Arts Forums have generated effective infra-structures appropriate to each District. An open access grant programme supports cultural activities in community facilities, social and commercial centres, and in parks and streets. Taken together, these form a unique platform for strategic development that can be owned and shared by a wide range of cultural facilitators, voluntary groups and arts and heritage agencies across the region.

This platform can be envisaged as a localised cultural ecology characterised by the organic interaction of three sectors of interest:

Home Grown Culture

Whilst this sector can be taken literally as domestically based, it also covers all forms of localised voluntary arts engagement and creativity through amateur groups as well as individual DIY culture often involving interactions with new technology and social media. It represents the closest point of contact between cultural interests and the general population and thus epitomises the concept of 'Culture on Our Doorstep'. Significantly, it also conceptualises quality as 'fitness for purpose', extends the 'arts' way beyond institutionally defined categories, and links the learning and social values of culture. Agents in this sector typically include Local Arts Forums, national or regional organisations with focused cultural interests, faith based organisations, amateur producers and promoters and groups involved in amateur theatre/performance, music, multi-media, dance, singing, art and craft.

Publicly Funded Culture

This sector covers all those localised activities that, whilst undertaken by various agencies, depend directly or indirectly on public funding. It includes research and development, and activities that break new ground, take risks or challenge conventions. These activities are often devised to mesh with wider concerns such as social cohesion, health and well-being, quality of life, and local regeneration. Agents in this sector typically include, amongst others, educational institutions including universities, arts champions, organisations and foundations, museum trusts, health authorities, and collaborative commissions from Birmingham City and Borough Councils in the West Midlands.

Commercial and Independent Culture

Neither publicly funded nor voluntary (though some intersect), cultural activities in this sector are designed to make a profit and use a variety of spaces. Though this condition might exclude some localised cultural activities, many people are prepared and able to – at least in part - pay for what they value. With regard to culture, the commercial sphere includes attending any form of indoor or outdoor festival, music gig, performance or display/exhibition, paying membership or subscription fees, or simply buying created artifacts. In addition, profit-making arts often undertake commissions or projects that require them to provide wider socio-cultural benefits. Thus, typical agents in this sector are independent promoters/producers, publicly accessible commercial galleries, theatres and other performance venues (eg pubs and community/religious centres) and arts centres.

Within each of these sectors of interest, the agents concerned demonstrate, articulate and shape the arts and culture according to their partial perspectives. However, the radical economic and political unpredictability of the next five years predicates that strategic development in 'Culture on Our Doorstep' must be a matter, less of rigid centralisation and homogenised policies, and more one of organic, dynamic and self-directed interaction within this rich mosaic. This is particularly pertinent in a city where ethnic plurality is becoming the norm and there is a significant demographic population shift. By 2024 Birmingham is predicted to become a 'super-diverse' city having no single ethnic group in a majority. In order to establish and sustain a democratic ecology of culture across Birmingham and the West Midlands, all agents, though operating within their sectors of interests and specific remits, will need to engage more systematically in collaborative activities that:

- Enable us (people who live and/or work in the city) to become more active in creating and shaping cultural events, especially through co-designing.
- Create cultural activities that are high quality in being fit for purpose and focused on 'place-making' in being more relevant to our local needs, circumstances and perspectives.
- Encourage us all to become active contributors to the communities of interest in which we live, work, learn, worship, relax or play, thereby increasing socio-cultural confidence and transferable skills.
- Make imaginative use of and inhabit a wide range and type of spaces – outdoor, indoor and digital, creating sustainable hubs of creativity.
- Generate individual as well as collective financial or in-kind resources from a diverse range of sources including local businesses through corporate social responsibility.
- Enable practitioners, facilitators, managers, project organisers and communicators within arts communities to become active and influential within other communities of which they are also members.
- Conversely, enable members of other communities of interest to become active and influential within arts communities.
- Open up progression routes, signpost further opportunities, lever new resources, and encourage new initiatives within and between differing types of community.
- Seek to connect agents that too often operate separately within arts and culture, such as those categorised as amateur or professional, those that operate locally or internationally, and those with a specific focus point or a far ranging scope.
- Seek to connect arts and culture agents with those in other spheres of local interest such as health and well-being, housing, regeneration, faith and other socio-cultural networks, thereby extending instrumental functions of the arts.
- Explore the use of technologies, old as well as new digital ones, in sharing and producing localised activities, celebrating localised and/or thematic cultural identities, forging our sense of belonging, encouraging our willingness to tolerate difference, and shaping our socio-cultural identities in future

The evolution of Culture on Our Doorstep in Birmingham and the region requires a wide range of agents, including regional councils, to buy into the shared vision of a cultural ecology. Correspondingly, measures for the extent to which this vision is realised need to be process rather than product orientated, with the above bullet points as measures for the individual and collective effectiveness of agents in creating a shared ecology of culture for our region. Nevertheless, the councils, especially that of Birmingham City or a combined authority, would have additional

functions. In a cultural ecology, they would need to shift from control and centralised provision to devolution and co-production by becoming connectors, enablers, co-coordinators, and facilitators – of a regional cultural ecology.

Outcomes

- The cultural voice of residents is valued, enabled, developed and shared.
- More people are involved in cultural activities in the city.
- The profile of artists, audiences, participants and cultural leaders in the city better reflects our population.
- Residents have the confidence, agency and skills to create, facilitate, commission, attend or host a variety of cultural opportunities that are relevant and accessible to them.
- Local arts fora are sustainable and effective vehicles for initiating, coordinating and delivering culture at a local level.
- Increased range and type of space/s are imaginatively used as hubs for cultural activity.
- A better sense of place, local identity, better quality of life, health & wellbeing and social cohesion for all

Actions

1. Residents will co-design their own cultural provision in a wide range of places and spaces, increasing its relevance and immediacy to local communities.
2. We will work with the Local Arts Fora to devise mechanisms which enable them to collaborate, thrive, flourish and become sustainable as principle vehicles and hubs for facilitating and resourcing local cultural activities.
3. We will improve co-ordination and signposting of opportunities and encourage volunteering to help residents develop skills and to deepen their engagement as creators, producers, artists, audiences, participants and leaders.
4. We will promote culture as a driver and vehicle for positive change and work with public sector agencies for health, skills, housing etc to develop mechanisms for commissioning cultural activities to deliver our shared outcomes.
5. We will improve use of, and access to, technology to enable residents to utilise open source tools, promote local activities and celebrate local cultural identity, and to support innovation in production.
6. We will encourage and support the recording of local heritage.[3]

[3] Action from Heritage strategy.

7. Through the local arts forum network we will support activities to increase participation and engagement and overcome barriers of transport, isolation and cultural difference.

8. We will work with local businesses to increase support for locally produced culture through their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) agenda, in-kind contribution and/or sponsorship of local events and festivals.

Chapter 2**: Next Generation**

Ensuring that all children and young people have opportunities to engage with a diverse range of high quality arts and cultural experiences at every stage of their development and which they value. These experiences are created for, with and by children and young people and engage their imagination and interest and inspire them then to take part in arts and cultural activities during and beyond their childhood.

This statement of intent reflects the best current thinking of around 30 artists, creatives, teachers and academics from across the creative & cultural and education sectors of Birmingham. It is not finished but it is different. It needs to be. Darren Henley, CEO of Arts Council England, recently launched the Cultural Education Partnership initiative. He talked about persistent inequality of access:

"We know that there is startling evidence that those from the most educationally deprived backgrounds are least likely to engage with cultural activities, perpetuating the cycle of exclusion."

According to statistics from Arts Council England Birmingham remains an area of low engagement with culture.

Subsidised arts & cultural organisations are working out how to maintain the learning offers with a lot less money and in a competitive market place that works against collaboration. Arts subjects in schools are under pressure from the cumulative effect of education reforms Ebaccs, STEMs, SATs and a host of other demands within and beyond the curriculum. Artists who have decades of experience of working with children in schools are seeing huge gaps in calendars that only a few years ago had few empty spaces.

So it might seem perverse that where we've got to calls for more provision, greater equity, better quality and louder acclamation of arts and cultural education for all children, young people and young adults in our city. It's because we deem it unacceptable that the level of inequality of access, opportunity and progression still exists – and this is a view backed by Government at all levels.

But we're the legacy of arts education pioneers such as Dorothy Heathcote, Gavin Bolton, Brian Way, Oozells Street Board School….

It is now our responsibility to pioneer again. There are fantastic things happening in our city. The Birmingham bounce is well underway. But not yet for everyone. For all of us with a connection to supporting the arts and cultural education of children, young people and young adults we are going to need to find ways of working together more effectively. We're only going to do more, better and greater if we contribute whatever we to do towards that aspiration.

2016 is a great year to start this. The High Sherriff Jonnie Turpie MBE has made the focus of his tenure in office the arts and young people, the Birmingham Rep are hosting ON THE EDGE, the World Festival of Theatre for Young Audiences in July 2016, DanceXchange lead the International Dance Festival, Open Theatre Company are organising a conference called 'Is That All There Is' and a Festival called 'Can Can Can' in March 2016 to promote and celebrate the cultural work of young people with learning disabilities in the city and beyond. 2016 has also been declared the Year of Arts and Young People and arts organisations from across the city are working alongside Birmingham City Council to co-ordinate and communicate a cultural offer to the city's young people that takes in theatres, galleries, concert halls, arts organisations, independent companies, creative industries, schools, colleges, universities and community groups.

That's a great start, but to achieve our aspiration each and every one of is going to need to do at least one thing differently this year so we can start to build towards fulfilling the pledges of the strategy and work towards meeting the ambitious outcomes we have set ourselves.

This means we're going to have to organise ourselves in completely different ways: it can't rely on Local Authorities and national agencies. Those of us with a commitment to making things happen will have to step up and work out how we work with those we know – and those we don't. New relationships with other agencies and people will need to be formed:

- people from the business community who need us to develop the talent they want to employ;
- people from the Higher Education Sector who need our young people to compete for places on their prestigious courses;
- people across the public sector involved with health, policing, social services and the third sector who are often working with young people with the least access to cultural education.

This is what some members of the advisory group who started this strategy have committed to do: http://birminghamculture.org/arts-young-people/2016-the-year-of-arts-young-people we invite you to add yours.

Creative Alliance - create twice as many apprenticeship opportunties for talented young people within the creative and cultural sector in Birmingham so at least 80 young people in Birmingham are moving into employment by the end of the year

Open Theatre Company - have set up and will mentor throughout 2016 a company called 'Because We Can Can Can' which will be run by 12 emerging young artists with learning disabilities: they will develop their skills to professional standards through a range of practical projects, including theatre, film, visual arts and solo performance in stand-up comedy and rapping

Birmingham REP - provide at least 35,000 drama participation opportunities for children and young people across the city and produce the World Festival of Theatre for Young Audiences bringing the best children's theatre from around the world to the city in July 2016

Friction Arts - will make art with children and young people in the places where they live, learn and play to ensure they learn that art is part of life, not separate from it, no matter what their background.

Birmingham City University - Junior Conservatoire and BA Applied Performance productions, both reaching hundreds of children in the region and Junior Art, recently launched and bringing school groups in to the School of Art.

Outcomes

- Greater equity of access to diverse high quality cultural activity for 0-25s: the city's cultural provision reflects and serves the needs, interests and aspirations of young people of all backgrounds and abilities.

- The cultural voice of young people is valued, enabled, developed and shared and their contribution to the city's cultural life is recognised and more young people have a meaningful voice in cultural planning and provision.

- Young people are confident and feel informed about the creative and cultural opportunities that exist within Birmingham and beyond and understand how to broaden and deepen their engagement with arts and culture.

- All professionals working with young people are better informed about the benefits of arts activity for young people and feel confident about integrating cultural activity into their work.

- More young people, including those with identified talent, are supported to develop their full potential as creators, performers, technicians or producers and more young people are provided with high quality careers education so they can make the transition from engagement to employment within the city's creative and cultural sector.

- More young people from diverse backgrounds and abilities are engaged in arts and cultural opportunities as creators, participants, audiences and leaders, are supported to develop their talents and leadership capability and are employed within the creative and cultural sector.

Actions

We

- the arts and cultural organisations, creative businesses, artists and creative practitioners;
- the schools, colleges and universities;
- the public, private and third sector organisations that work with children and young people;

Will

9. Develop activities for children and young people as creators, participants/practitioners, informed audiences, and leaders, and encourage them to develop their cultural lives

from a range of first time experiences, through a choice of organised activities and into independent engagement.

10. Prioritise the allocation of resources and activities to ensure greater equity of access.

11. Showcase the creative output of young people across Birmingham through the creation and promotion of opportunities aimed at children and young people.

12. Ensure the voices of young people are heard in cultural planning and delivery and throughout 2016 and beyond we will engage more widely with young people to develop plans for future action.

13. Link cultural education with high quality creative careers advice, guidance & support for accessing employment opportunities within the creative industries and ensure this is embedded within wider strategies for children and young people.

14. Support the professional development of non-arts professionals, alongside cultural educators, to promote peer learning and professional development.

15. Change volunteering, recruitment and employment approaches to ensure young people of more diverse backgrounds and abilities are employed within the sector.

16. Promote the citywide delivery of the young people's Arts Award qualification alongside other accreditation opportunities.

17. Develop collaborative research projects which map and measure the impact of cultural engagement for young people across Birmingham and the wider region.

18. Develop partnership links relating to communication, funding, sharing resources and information and best practice to support growth & sustainability in the sector underpinned by encouraging us all to sign up to the Creative Futures Pledges.

Measures of Success

By 2019 there will be more arts and cultural activity developed with, for and by children and young people, that is regarded as better quality by young people, parents, educators and arts professionals and which means that more young people of diverse backgrounds and abilities are taking part in arts and culture.

1. There are more opportunities and experiences for children and young people provided by arts and cultural organisations and by schools, colleges and universities as reported by a sample selection of 10% of these bodies in 2016 and 2019. This is particularly in areas or with communities where there is little current provision.

2. More children and young people are taking part in arts and cultural activities as creators, participants, audiences and leaders as reported by the membership of Birmingham Arts Partnership in 2019 compared to 2016.

3. Children and young people are taking part in more arts and cultural activity within the school curriculum and in out of school activities and more young people are following arts courses as reported by a sample selection of 10% of Birmingham schools and colleges. This is reflected in a 25% increase in Arts Awards achievements between 2016 and 2019.

4. More children and young people from diverse backgrounds are working within the arts and cultural sector as reported by the employment surveys submitted by members of Birmingham Arts Partnership.

5. 75% of the city's arts and cultural organisations, schools, colleges and universities and public, private and third sector organisations have signed up the Creative Future pledges and incorporate them into the policies and strategies.

This can only be achieved by greater collaboration and cohesion among arts and cultural organisations, including the city's creative industries. By 2019 artists, producers and practitioners are reporting closer working relationships resulting in more opportunities and experiences for children and young people.

Chapter 3**: A Creative City**

Supporting and enabling the growth of creative and cultural SMEs and micro-businesses and individuals through business support, skills and talent development and access to finance.

The Cultural Strategy provides a welcome opportunity to consider the breadth of the creative and cultural sector, its strengths and opportunities, its stakeholders and leading lights and define a sense of ambition in real and deliverable terms. It allows us to further and reset arrangements with key national partners based on strong regional ideas and leadership drawn from the region's public, private and academic sectors

We know that the sector is underpinned by a spectrum of creative enterprise from the arts and cultural sector through to the more commercially focussed creative industries working with and alongside significant, and increasingly well-resourced, partners in Higher Education. The sector employs nearly 55,000 people, including 17,000 freelancers in the Greater Birmingham areas in more than 6,000 organisations.

To move up a gear, we need to develop *sector specific business support* to address shrinkage in those businesses with medium and high growth potential, enabling them to break through the glass ceiling. Our SMEs will target new markets. They will achieve greater confidence and success in

developing resilient business models, accessing finance, and tapping into national grant schemes and programmes.

Working with our universities and adventurous businesses we will contribute to the Midlands Engine; using the potential of research into *cross–innovation* our SMEs will develop spill-over practices which stimulate new product in other sectors. As a partnership, we will seek new spaces where businesses can work with new partners to understand their needs and prototype new practice, products and services for these new and less familiar markets.

We will release the potential of our film and digital media sector, by supporting a three-legged stool of production, audience development and skills. We will exploit opportunities in the ongoing redevelopment and master planning of key areas of the city to ensure that new development integrates cultural planning, whether in housing or office/mixed use projects, and helps meet the cultural needs of residents as well as stimulating growth in the creative economy.

We will position our arts and cultural organisations and festivals as the drivers of our *visitor economy* and will work with colleagues to encourage developments in transportation which support mobility and connect visitors and local audiences with the cultural offer more effectively.

We will build a comprehensive *skills partnership* drawing in schools, FE, HE and businesses will underpin improved career pathways in the region, better reflecting the nature of opportunities in the region, and determinedly plug the gap in specialist skills for the new cultural and creative economy.

Outcomes

- Creative and cultural businesses diversify their markets through cross-innovation and spill-over, leading to business growth.
- Creative and cultural businesses are more entrepreneurial with more resilient and sustainable business models.
- Spaces for creative and cultural businesses promote and enable clustering, creative networking, knowledge transfer and spillover innovation to support growth.
- The city's young and diverse population develops skills necessary to enable creative and cultural businesses to grow.
- Residents have more and better opportunities in direct and indirect creative and cultural sector jobs.

Actions

19. We will promote network events and introduce themed business support, training and mentoring to support growth through product and service innovation and collaboration to reach new local, national and international markets.

20. We will deliver campaigns, events and activities to communicate best practice in the use of finance and availability of grants.[4]

21. We will broker relationships with HE, key national agencies, business support to improve take up of finance & more ambitious approaches to key national funding programmes

22. We will explore policy measures which organisations and partnerships can pursue to create better conditions for SME growth.

23. We will work with Higher Education, and the advanced Manufacturing and Health sectors to improve knowledge transfer and develop effective spill-over innovation.

24. We will convene an effective partnership to support the growth of a critical mass in the Film & TV production sectors and we will explore the potential for creation of space for production of film and television.

25. With industry bodies, we will develop plans to expand the advertising, design and marketing sectors.

26. We will tackle identified sector-specific skills gaps in the broadcast, film and digital media sectors; business leadership, high level design/IT skills for digital media, line production and writing skills for film & TV, skills modernisation and business skills for the jewellery sector, uptake of creative courses at NVQ3. [5]

27. We will initiate a variety of programmes to develop core skills and establish the creative and cultural sector as a career option.

28. We will develop low cost workspace for creative businesses and to support cross innovation.

29. We will create an integrated online skills hub for employers.

30. Develop a citywide programme to support business start-ups in the creative and cultural sector.

Chapter 4**: Our Cultural Capital**

Cementing Birmingham's role and reputation as a centre of imagination, innovation and enterprise, with local roots and international reach

Birmingham is our cultural capital – a growing city of the arts. We want the people of Birmingham and the world to use our cultural capital in as many different ways as possible.

[4] Actions 17-19 arise from recommendations of the GBSLEP's Creative City Access to Finance research

Birmingham's proud history as 'the city of a thousand trades' still informs our cultural vision of many forms of art, connecting, supporting and enriching the communities, places and events that make up our industrious city.

Over the last decade Birmingham's arts, heritage, culture and creative industries have flourished and this city has become a better place for people of all walks of life to experience the arts, live, work, study and forge new careers.

We are a city that attracts the best in the world, where creative people are nurtured, and artists and makers want to make their home – a city that inspires imagination, innovation and enterprise. A place where distinctive work is made and people come to seek it out.

We are a non-stop city of the arts, of heritage and production, of visual art, digital art, music, film, craft and jewellery, of dance, theatre, food and street art, of literature, photography and public art. We are admired for our collections and libraries, the quality of our venues, productions, festivals, events, exhibitions, talent and collaborative spirit.

We are committed to making the most of this cultural capital and making more of its potential to enrich the city. We want our arts and culture to be recognised as a source of pride for the people of Birmingham, a motivation for young people, an inspiration for artists, an attraction for visitors, an asset to our businesses and universities, and a driver for creativity, research and innovation.

Through our cultural capital, we will strive to cement Birmingham's role as a centre of imagination, innovation and enterprise, with local roots and international reach.

Outcomes

- More artists, creators, makers, producers, performers and curators attracted to train, live and work here and contribute to Birmingham.
- Birmingham has a compelling, consistent and clear story about the quality, range and depth of its cultural ecology locally, citywide and internationally.
- Birmingham's status and reputation as a cultural capital leads to improved opportunities for international partnerships and inward investment.
- Local confidence, identity and awareness of the cultural offer are improved with added "feel-good" factor.
- Birmingham's accessibility as a destination, and the attractiveness and depth of the cultural offer, drives more overnight stays from visitors, growing the visitor economy and providing more and better opportunities in direct and indirect jobs for local people.

Actions

31. We will identify and lead on the key cultural messages and actively promote our achievements as part of a confident and coherent city story.

32. We will improve our physical and promotional signposting about the city's cultural assets and centres, in and out of the city centre.

33. We will promote the Jewellery Quarter as both a significant heritage site and visitor destination, and as a centre for contemporary making.

34. We will develop Digbeth and Eastside as both cultural destinations and homes for digital and creative businesses; a combined centre of innovation.

35. We will support development of capital projects in the cultural sector with clear links to our strategic ambitions and outcomes including places for artist development and production, and for artists to live and work.

36. We will improve the practice and funding base for commissioning and developing Public Art.[6]

37. We will support, develop and promote a range of arts and cultural festivals, established, growing and new that contribute to achieving economic, social and cultural impact for the city.[7]

38. We will encourage the city's key property developments actively to enhance and support our cultural ambitions.

39. We will ensure heritage is properly considered in planning and development processes.[8]

40. We will influence transport policy and capitalise on developments in transport links to connect the local offer and create a more effective visitor offer.

41. We will explore the potential for a "Birmingham Prize" – a major international prize in a culturally related discipline.

Chapter 5: Our Cultural Future

Culture in Birmingham has been, and continues to be, one of the city's great success stories, contributing not only to the quality of life for residents, but to the city's £5bn visitor economy, to the growth of creative industries, to the city's reputation as a place to invest or to study, and to its role as a thriving centre for the West Midlands region. Sustained public investment over a prolonged period of over thirty years has established the most developed cultural infrastructure in the country outside London. The fourteen largest cultural organisations in the city have a combined turnover of £85million, 66% of which is generated through commercial activity.

[6] Headline from Public Art strategy, underpinned by sub-actions
[7] Headline from the Birmingham Festivals Strategy, underpinned by sub-actions

[8] Headline from Heritage strategy, underpinned by sub-actions

This thriving cultural sector brings benefits to the region's businesses, universities, schools and colleges and helps deliver other important public sector agendas such as health and wellbeing, community cohesion and the environment. Traditionally, however, the overwhelming majority of investment into the cultural sector has come from Birmingham City Council and Arts Council England. The city council is now finding it increasingly difficult to protect its relatively generous level of investment in culture and the Arts Council's investment levels are likely to be at standstill at best.

As public spending levels continue to decline and other claims on the public purse grow, the amount allocated to arts and culture is likely to be squeezed. For the city's cultural sector to thrive in response to these external competitive pressures our arts organisations and leaders will need to hone further their entrepreneurial skills, seeking new markets and opportunities to exploit without losing sight of their individual artistic visions.

The building blocks of our planned approach to securing the stability of the city's cultural life and identifying opportunities for growth and development over the next three years can be summed up in three words – collaborate, devolve and re-balance.

Collaborate –
The city's cultural organisations have a strong record of collaboration, regularly working with each other on a wide range of projects that cross artform and size boundaries. Birmingham Arts Partnership (BAP) has already delivered two large-scale city-wide free festivals (Four Squares in 2013 and the Birmingham Weekender in 2015), and runs Arts Connect in partnership with Wolverhampton University – the collaboratively-managed "bridge" organisation funded by Arts Council England to connect the worlds of culture and education in the region.

The city's larger arts organisations work regularly with smaller companies and/or artists in the city in a variety of artistic and organisational partnerships, production and promotion. From April 2016 onwards this collaborative work will be further strengthened and expanded through BAP transforming itself into Culture Central, a new membership-based organisation open to all not-for-profit companies and individuals working in the cultural sector. This new organisation will open up new funding streams and develop and enable delivery of a range of new collaborations across marketing, date-sharing, production, training, production and learning and participation.

Similarly, the current forum in which the city's wide range of arts festivals regularly meet to discuss matters of common concern and the emerging collaboration between the ten local arts forums in the city will both offer strong and supportive foundations for future collaboration. Together, and with the myriad individual artists, companies and partnerships active in Birmingham, these arrangements will deliver the city's cultural offer more effectively. Building on existing collaborations and creating new collaborative initiatives will be vital to our efforts to ensure the sustainability of the city's cultural life over the next three years and beyond.

Devolve -
The city council has traditionally played a leading role in shaping Birmingham's cultural offer and that, together with the significant financial investment that has accompanied it, has been enormously successful in producing the impressive cultural infrastructure we now enjoy. The council's inability to continue to invest at past levels will, however, necessitate a related review of its ability to play such a direct role. As the city's culture budget and internal resources shrink over the

life of this plan, there will be an increasing need for cultural planning, events programming, project management and funding streams to be led by the appropriate collaborative network in the city.

One of the keys to retaining and, we hope, growing the quality and quantity of cultural activity in the city over this challenging period will be in the way that the city council enables, supports and works actively in partnership with the emerging clusters of artists, producers and cultural organisations in the city. While it will still be an important partner in "place-shaping", this will be in partnership with other interested parties through the Partnership for Culture commissioning arrangements. The sector itself, which has led the development of this strategy, will play a greater part in steering debate and in leading the delivery of the actions, and will be an active voice in the partnership.

Re-balance –
While local government resources for culture look set to reduce, funding from DCMS and other national bodies is relatively secure. However, this funding is skewed disproportionately across the country, including through Arts Council England, Creative England, Creative & Cultural Skills, Creative Skillset and the BBC.

Work undertaken by the GBSLEP's Access to Finance programme has found that this problem is compounded by Birmingham's relatively poor performance in accessing national funding streams and work to support applicants to make more effective applications to funds that are available is referenced in the Creative City section above.

Funding from philanthropy, sponsorship and commercial activity is growing in the cultural sector in the city, but not as quickly as the decline in local government funds; and there is still less availability of funding from these sources, and from residents' disposable income, in Birmingham than in the South East.

To achieve our aims over the next three years, it is vital that we find ways to re-balance the finances of the cultural sector, replacing what is likely to be lost as public funding from the city council and other public bodies with income from as wide a range of different sources as possible. Most of the cultural organisations in the city already receive funding and/or earn income from a plurality of sources, but an increased emphasis on further diversification will be necessary.

We will work to secure greater local influence over national funding through the devolution deal, so that culture is placed at the very heart of the plans for the Midlands to become the "engine of growth" and delivers the greatest impact for the local economy. We will use our cultural resources to support WMCA's positioning in national and international markets. We will take the opportunities presented by the flexibilities of the devolution arrangements to identify and secure new funds to ensure that cultural activity continues to play an active part in regional growth, through its proven ability to create jobs, attract inward investment, develop tourism and contribute to cross-sector innovation.

We will make the strongest case possible that culture is placed at the very heart of the plans for the Midlands to become the "engine of growth". We will identify and secure new funds through the combined authority to ensure that cultural activity continues to play an active part in regenerating the region through its proven ability to create jobs, attract inward investment and develop tourism. The cultural sector's unique ability to promote health and wellbeing, social cohesion and environmental awareness will be a key factor in attracting new sources of public funding and we need to ensure that the cultural voice is heard in the appropriate forums.

We will work to develop an integrated strategy for the WMCA which links the cultural, creative and tourism agenda clearly to the emerging Strategic Economic Plan in the areas of transportation (to connect the offer), skills (to support education and employment) and marketing (to attract investment and visitors). We will seek to join up programmes and funding through a single approach to central government with our local WMCA partners.
The Arts Council is committed to increasing its investment of Lottery revenue outside of London and we must continue to work closely with them to ensure that we have the quality of proposals to attract significant investment to our region.

The strength of the current and emerging collaborative cultural partnerships in the city will be a key factor in identifying and bringing other new sources of funding and investment into the city's cultural life. Major trusts and foundations, commerce, the education sector, philanthropists and investors will each be important sources for new income, and a strong network of independent cultural clusters actively supported by the city council will give us the best possible chance of securing it.

Whilst attracting new sources of income will be key to our ability to thrive, continuing to improve the efficiency of the cultural sector will also play a part. Culture Central, a strengthened partnership between the city's festivals and the new collaboration between the arts forums will each offer opportunities to identify and implement new ways of working and sharing to ensure that resources are exploited to their full.

Outcomes

- The business model for cultural delivery makes best use of available resources, and provides more opportunities for artists' employment and audience participation.
- A wider range of partners contribute to resourcing culture in the city, drawing in those who benefit directly or indirectly from Birmingham's cultural capital to meet (and exceed) the gap resulting from the decline in public funding.
- An increased and fairer share of national resources is used to deliver the cultural strategy, enabling greater impact.
- Planning and delivery of the city's key agendas of skills and employment, health and wellbeing and the cultural, creative and visitor and economy are better integrated, leading to improved health, skills and social cohesion and enabling greater impact.

Actions

We

the arts and cultural organisations, creative businesses, artists and creative practitioners;
the schools, colleges and universities;
the public, private and third sector organisations

Will

42. encourage collaboration between cultural organisations, in the city and beyond, as a means to optimise the business model through driving out unnecessary cost and opening up opportunities for artists, audiences and income generation.
43. encourage all stakeholders in the city with an interest in the outcomes of a flourishing cultural sector to contribute to its resourcing.

44. support organisations to develop the knowledge, contacts and products to diversify their income base, including exploring new markets.
45. explore innovation in our funding models, including reviewing potential for the use of capital, equity and earn-back approaches.
46. work with the West Midlands Combined Authority to advocate for national resources for culture to be rebalanced at pace, and to provide resources to sustain and grow our offer.
47. work with the West Midlands Combined Authority to develop a model which integrates cultural investment with local planning and seek to secure greater freedom over national resources available to deliver our strategic aims.

Measures of Success

6. By 2019 there will be a greater range of high quality arts and cultural activity happening in the city.
7. Birmingham City Council's investment level in cultural activity by the not-for-profit sector is stabilised at a realistic and sustainable level.
8. Regular and sustainable investment in cultural activity by the not-for-profit sector in the city is being secured from a variety of sources within the public, commercial and education sectors.
9. The majority of not-for-profit cultural organisation and individual artists based in the city are members of Culture Central and working collaboratively to secure new investment, produce great art and grow and diversify audiences.
10. Arts Council England's investment in the cultural life of the city is a higher %age of its total UK investment than it is in 2016.
11. A single integrated approach to cultural and creative development and a commitment to investment in cultural activity are fully embedded in the West Midlands Combined Authority plans.

Version 7 March 2016