

**Manchester City Council  
Report for Information**

**Report to:** Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committee – 12 October 2017

**Subject:** Cultural Ambition

**Report of:** Deputy Chief Executive (Growth and Neighbourhoods)

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**Summary**

This report provides an overview of work undertaken to develop and deliver the Cultural Ambition. The Cultural Ambition sets out a series of aspirations for art and culture over the next ten years and demonstrates how the cultural sector can contribute to the delivery of the Our Manchester Strategy. The Cultural Ambition articulates some of the ways in which cultural organisations can work to ensure that opportunities for access and participation are as wide as possible and inclusive of all Manchester residents.

**Recommendations**

The Committee is invited to note the report.

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**Wards Affected:** All

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**Background documents (available for public inspection):** None

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 This report provides an overview of work undertaken to develop and deliver the Cultural Ambition 2016 - 2026.
- 1.2 The Cultural Ambition sets out a series of aspirations for art and culture over the next ten years and demonstrates how the cultural sector can contribute to the delivery of the Our Manchester Strategy.
- 1.3 The Cultural Ambition articulates some of the ways in which cultural organisations can work to ensure that opportunities for access and participation are as wide as possible and inclusive of all Manchester residents. Wider work on Widening Access and Participation in Leisure, Libraries, Galleries and Culture is discussed elsewhere on the agenda for this meeting.
- 1.4 Dave Moutrey, Director of HOME and Interim Co-Chair of the Cultural Leaders Group, will attend the meeting to speak about the Cultural Ambition.

## **2. Background**

- 2.1 The Council has a longstanding commitment to working in partnership with the cultural sector, recognising the role which arts and culture play in benefitting the city's residents and contributing to economic growth, and maintaining a commitment to invest both in major cultural institutions and small to medium arts organisations.
- 2.2 The strength and vibrancy of Manchester's arts sector and the city's cultural ambitions are recognised in the levels of external investment which continue to flow into the city. A particular success this year has been Arts Council England's announcement of the National Portfolio for 2018-22. The new National Portfolio will increase the Arts Council's annual investment into the Manchester's cultural organisations from £11.4million per year to £23.6million per year from April 2018. Within the city there are eight organisations joining the portfolio, and an uplift of £9million per year as revenue funding for Factory.
- 2.3 For many years the Council has worked with the sector through a Cultural Partnership model, engaging with organisations that represent a range of sizes, artforms and approaches through an ongoing dialogue about shared priorities. By way of example, the Cultural Partnership Conference in 2016 explored the role of culture in the Northern Powerhouse and considered the sector's response to the recently launched Our Manchester Strategy.
- 2.4 Over the last year, the Council has initiated work on Widening Access and Participation in Leisure, Libraries, Galleries and Culture, to ensure that opportunities to be involved are as wide as possible and inclusive of all Manchester residents. The priorities in the Cultural Ambition demonstrate ways in which the cultural sector can contribute towards this work.

### **3. The development of the Cultural Ambition**

- 3.1 The Cultural Ambition is a set of aspirations for arts and culture in the city from 2016 to 2026. It represents the cultural sector's response to the Our Manchester Strategy, demonstrating how arts and culture can help to realise the Our Manchester vision of a thriving, creative and equitable city. The Ambition is also closely linked to the Our Manchester approach - in working with and for the people of Manchester, and seeing people and their talents and ideas as the city's greatest assets.
- 3.2 In preparation for a refresh of the Cultural Ambition (which was last published in 2010) the Council organised a Manchester Cultural Partnership Conference in March 2016. Entitled a 'Vision for a Northern Cultural Powerhouse' the event was attended by 120 delegates with a further 30 speakers and facilitators. Delegates represented 87 different organisations, 63 from the city's cultural sector with partners including the public and voluntary and community sector as well as universities.
- 3.3 The conference took place a few days following the launch of the Our Manchester Strategy, which framed the discussions and the agenda. The cultural sector were challenged to respond to Our Manchester and to consider the city's changing demographics, employment and skills gaps, health and wellbeing and engaging diverse resident communities. The organisations at the conference were invited to be ambitious and to look to creating a new kind of cultural infrastructure with unparalleled levels of collaboration and access for residents.
- 3.4 Following the Cultural Partnership Conference, work began on developing the Cultural Ambition. The work was led by a small group of Cultural Leaders, chaired by the Strategic Director for Culture, and facilitated by an independent consultant. The development of the Ambition included the thoughts and inputs of cultural organisations from a range of artforms across the city, both through collective discussions at the Cultural Partnership Conference and ongoing consultation with organisations throughout the process.
- 3.5 The Cultural Ambition is in many ways a call to action for the cultural sector to work together to achieve a set of ambitions and priorities. In this way it provides a flexible narrative that can be adopted by partners in the sector to support their work and which can be applied both in terms of strategic priorities for the Manchester and Greater Manchester more broadly. The focus of this report is on the Cultural Ambition priorities as they relate to Manchester.

### **4. The Cultural Ambition priorities 2016 - 2026**

- 4.1 The Cultural Ambition has three priorities for the next decade.

- 1. Manchester will be known for distinctive work that could only have been made in this place.**

Manchester's distinctiveness is in producing great art and culture, which is enjoyed by the widest possible audiences. Cultural partners will develop new collaborative ways of working, where appropriate linked to Factory, and make more work that is internationally recognised for its quality and impact.

Progress will be measured through;

- a benchmarked improvement in the quality and distinctiveness of the work and the cultural offer, using Quality Metrics – piloted in this city – and other quality measures;
- the development of coordinated city-region-wide programming
- tracking how much Manchester work is shown across the UK and the world through a world-wide map of Manchester's cultural influence

**2. Manchester will be the UK's most culturally democratic city, engaging with a much greater number and diversity of people across Manchester.**

Cultural organisations will work together to transform the demographic of audiences and participants, to ensure that greater cultural impact for under-represented groups becomes a reality. This will involve prioritising the needs of particular places or neighbourhoods and exploring the unique qualities of place. This will necessitate forging new relationships and different conversations, taking an Our Manchester approach to widening and deepening engagement.

Progress will be measured by developing a more accurate baseline for the percentage of the population being reached by cultural work. The target is to reach 20% of the population by 2022 and to double this to 40% by 2026.

A series of pathfinder projects will be established to help to realise the key priorities in the Our Manchester Strategy that focus on creating a highly skilled city, a progressive and equitable city and a connected city. The pathfinder projects will focus on Ageing, Cultural Education, Health and Transport.

**3. Manchester will be regarded as the city which values and nurtures creative talent, skills, diversity, and expression more inclusively and successfully than any other.**

This priority supports Manchester's aspirations as a highly skilled, progressive and equitable and liveable city. The Ambition is for Manchester to attract and nurture the next generation of creative producers and technicians and to be a national exemplar for training, production and engagement. The Factory will work with a coalition of other cultural partners to lead work on creative skills and training, creating new opportunities. Cultural organisations will work with the city to explore how the conditions necessary for thriving small and specialist arts businesses can be maintained and grown in order to support and create employment opportunities.

Progress will be measured through;

- an increase in the number and variety of creative training and employment opportunities in the next 5-year funding cycle, and the diversity of the people taking them up
- becoming a 'net importer of artists, and a net exporter of art'
- successfully attracting more artists to live and work in Manchester, supported by more coordinated talent development strategies, and more art-making places and showcasing opportunities
- piloting new models of how artists live and work across the city-region in a connected, supported, sustainable way
- strengthening the whole cultural ecology by finding ways of ensuring that the small and specialist thrives alongside the core anchor institutions.

## 5. Delivering the Cultural Ambition

5.1 A summary of work being undertaken to deliver the Ambition is outlined below.

### **Priority 1 - Manchester will be known for distinctive work that could only have been made in this place.**

5.2 One example of distinctive work which could only have been made in Manchester is the Royal Exchange Theatre's current production of *Our Town*. In the wake of the Manchester Arena attack, the space outside the theatre became a site of public mourning, filled with flowers and other tributes. The theatre felt that the play 'Our Town' by Thornton Wilder about small town life at the turn of the century was reminiscent of this atmosphere. The production combines a professional cast with a community chorus of local residents – young people, parents and older people portraying the city as 'Our Town'. The theatre has put together a diverse cast which includes a number of non-professional performers, including participants from the theatre's Young Company and Company of Elders (people over 60).

5.3 In terms of sector-wide delivery of this priority, work is underway to develop a new approach to benchmarking the quality and distinctiveness of artistic work produced in Manchester. This involves peer and stakeholder review, with nominated sector experts asked to comment on the quality and distinctiveness of Manchester's cultural programme. Arts Council England have agreed in principle that National Artform Directors will provide annual comment on the quality and distinctiveness of funded clients, appraising the national and international standing of work produced in the city, and providing recommendations for development and improvement. This analysis will be included in an annual report, highlighting the breadth and quality of work delivered across the city – which will be shared with national and local stakeholders. A full proposal for this work will be developed by November 2017.

### **Priority 2 - Manchester will be the UK's most culturally democratic city, engaging with a much greater number and diversity of people across Manchester.**

5.4 One example of work among cultural organisations to engage with a greater number and diversity of people can be seen at Contact Theatre. Contact has recently secured £600,000 in grant funding from the Wellcome Trust as part of the building's redevelopment. The funding will support a new ground floor venue that focuses on exploring health and wellbeing issues relating to young people and local communities. This will inform how future theatre productions are created, as well as arts and wellbeing projects. A dedicated Health and Science Producer will be recruited to manage this work, developing new ways to engage between young people, scientists, health researchers and artists to create new shows, public debates, discussions and training.

5.5 In terms of wider progress towards this priority, the Cultural Leaders have set up a series of working groups to focus on the delivery of pathfinder projects. These include;

- Arts and Health

This group is investigating the potential collective impact that cultural organisations in Manchester can have on the health of residents. The group has met once as a whole, but several members have had meetings within public health partners as well as the Greater Manchester Health and Social Care Partnership. An initial focus will be to collect the strongest evidence of arts and culture having a positive impact on health outcomes and to promote this evidence within the health and social care sector.

- Cultural democracy

The work of this group is closely aligned with the Council's priorities around Widening Access and Participation. The group has met once and has begun work on mapping and analysing all known data about audience behaviour in Manchester. A series of actions, designed to better serve communities and wards under-represented in audience profiles, will be identified and shared with the Widening Access and Participation Group to ensure alignment of work before undertaking targeted activity in 2018.

- Transport

The work of this group is closely aligned with the Greater Manchester Great Places project, exploring some of the practical and physical barriers to cultural engagement and developing ways of improving resident access to culture. An initial mapping exercise of cultural venues has been carried out and will be brought together with community consultations to develop an action plan in partnership with Transport for Greater Manchester. The delivery of targeted activity, designed to improve resident access to culture, will begin in 2018.

**Priority 3 - Manchester will be regarded as the city which values and nurtures creative talent, skills, diversity, and expression more inclusively and successfully than any other.**

- 5.6 One example of work to support talent, skills, diversity and expression is the relocation of Rogue Artists' Studios. The timing of the development of the revised Cultural Ambition coincided with an unprecedented time of uncertainty for artists working in the city. Rogue Artists' Studios, the city's largest, most established and nationally renowned studio group, needed to move from city premises it had occupied for the last 15 years. The success of the growth and development of the city has made it harder for artists to find affordable premises and the Cultural Ambition came to articulate a vision for a city that welcomes, attracts and retains cultural talent. With the support of the Council, Rogue Studios secured a former school site in the Bradford ward - the Victorian, Grade II listed Varna Street School – which the artists moved into in July.
- 5.7 Rogue Artists' Studios is home to artists at every stage of their career - from recent graduates to emerging, mid-career and established artists and collectives. It has also acted as a magnet for artists from as far afield as Spain, China and Poland - attracting diverse and exciting creative talent to live and work in the city. The new site for the studios therefore provides a sustainable base to continue to support these artists, as well as creating a new cultural space in one of the city's neighbourhoods where local residents can access cultural activities.
- 5.8 In terms of wider progress towards this priority, the Cultural Leaders have set up a working group on cultural education, talent development, skills and keeping the city artist-friendly. A recent analysis of skills supply and demand identifies Cultural, Creative and Digital Skills as one of the three clear growth sectors for the city in terms of GVA until 2025. This group is working to establish the skills required to drive this growth, with a particular focus on placing Manchester residents at the heart of this development and diversifying the cultural workforce in the city. Initial mapping of jobs in the Creative and Cultural sector over the past three year is being undertaken to establish the skills required to deliver predicted growth. The group will develop a city-wide approach to skills development closely linked to Factory, with packages ranging from pre-employment support to high-level apprenticeships. This work sits alongside work undertaken by colleagues across the city to understand the changing landscape of artist talent development, ensuring Manchester remains attractive to practicing artists from all disciplines.
- 5.9 In addition to emerging work to deliver the three priorities specifically, the Cultural Ambition has also been used in a number of ways to support partnership working. These include the following;
- Providing the basis for the Council's new round of Cultural Partnership Agreement grant funding

The Council has a Cultural Partnership Agreement grant funding programme which has been running since 2011 (succeeding a previous grant programme). The programme provides core funding of £10,000 to £40,000 per year to arts organisations which are based in the city or that have a track record of delivering activity for the benefit of the people who live in or visit the

city, or that benefit the local economy. Over the last six months a new funding programme has been developed which will run from April 2018 to March 2022. The aim, principles and priorities of the new programme were co-designed with cultural partners, working with the Our Manchester Strategy and Cultural Ambition. Following a consultation in the summer, the grant programme was finalised and launched for applications on 11 September. The three funding priorities are built around the priorities within the Cultural Ambition.

- Arts Council England National Portfolio applications

Arts Council England recently announced the new National Portfolio for 2018-22. The National Portfolio Organisations will receive core funding and support from the Arts Council over a period of four years and were selected on the basis of their contribution to national priorities. A number of applicants to the National Portfolio round referenced their contribution to Manchester's Cultural Ambition to support their application.

- Providing the narrative for the Great Places project bid

Early in 2017 Greater Manchester successfully bid for funding from the Great Places Scheme (a joint funding programme between Arts Council England, Historic England and the Heritage Lottery Fund). The scheme is designed to put arts, culture and heritage at the heart of communities. The Greater Manchester project has been awarded £1.5million to develop a culturally democratic region without borders – ensuring a greater parity of provision across the ten districts, improving engagement and access, developing and diversifying the cultural workforce, facilitating travel between the ten districts and improving health outcomes for residents.

## **6. Conclusion**

6.1 The articulation of the city's cultural ambitions in a strategy play an important role in enabling cultural partners to work collectively on new and innovative ways of working, and make a clear signal to external partners, including funding bodies, about the city's commitment to arts and culture. The Cultural Ambition 2016 – 2026 shows a clear connection between the ambitions of cultural organisations and the Council's own priorities on Widening Access and Participation, and demonstrates how the sector can support the delivery of the Our Manchester Strategy over the next ten years.

6.2 Recommendations can be found at the front of the report.