

**Manchester City Council
Report for Information**

Report to: Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committee - 10 October 2019

Subject: Manchester UNESCO City of Literature

Report of: The Strategic Director of Neighbourhoods

Summary

This report provides an overview of Manchester's UNESCO City of Literature designation and the work to establish a governance model that will enable the city to live up to its commitments to UNESCO and maximise the opportunities that the designation will bring.

Recommendations

The Committee is invited to consider and comment on the information in the report.

Wards Affected: All

Alignment to the Our Manchester Strategy Outcomes (if applicable)

Manchester Strategy outcomes	Summary of how this report aligns to the OMS
A thriving and sustainable city: supporting a diverse and distinctive economy that creates jobs and opportunities	Manchester City of Literature (MCOL) will help to raise the profile of the city's publishing sector and related creative industries, attracting new businesses and inward investment and providing new job opportunities.
A highly skilled city: world class and home grown talent sustaining the city's economic success	MCOL will raise the profile of the city's world-class literary education (particularly through partnership with the universities) and help to offer more, better coordinated, development and networking opportunities for emerging and established writers.
A progressive and equitable city: making a positive contribution by unlocking the potential of our communities	MCOL aims to be a truly inclusive organisation in both its governance and actions, and will celebrate the linguistic and cultural diversity of our city as well as freedom of speech and expression. There will be more, better coordinated, and more easily navigable opportunities for local residents to engage with literary activities and to be part of the realisation of the City of Literature.

A liveable and low carbon city: a destination of choice to live, visit, work	MCOL will raise the profile of the city and its cultural offer regionally, nationally and internationally, boosting tourism. Through more coordinated activities, partnership funding applications, and a raised profile, Manchester's portfolio of high quality cultural events will be enhanced for the benefit of visitors and residents alike.
A connected city: world class infrastructure and connectivity to drive growth	As part of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network, MCOL will build connections with Creative Cities around the world, through partnership working, exchanges and development opportunities.

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Background documents (available for public inspection):

None

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Manchester was designated as a UNESCO City of Literature in 2017. A new independent organisation is being established to coordinate the designation with support from Manchester City Council, The University of Manchester and Manchester Metropolitan University.
- 1.2 The City Council retains a key role in the realisation of the UNESCO designation, including a commitment to UNESCO to strengthen participation in cultural life and integrate culture into sustainable urban development.
- 1.3 Read Manchester is a campaign delivered in partnership by Manchester City Council and the National Literacy Trust (NLT) to promote reading and boost literacy. It is closely aligned with the values of Manchester City of Literature (MCOL), was involved in the development of the application to UNESCO, and will help to deliver MCOL's ambitions for community engagement and literacy development.

2.0 Background to Manchester City of Literature

- 2.1 Manchester's successful application to become a UNESCO City of Literature was led by Manchester City Council, The University of Manchester and Manchester Metropolitan University (the 'Commissioning Partners'), working with a range of literature sector partners from across the city.
- 2.2 The designation, which is awarded to Manchester City Council and partners in perpetuity, brought Manchester into a global network of 180 UNESCO Creative Cities across seven creative fields: literature, design, crafts and folk arts, media arts, film, music and gastronomy. Member cities of this UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN) recognise the value (economically, socially and environmentally) of placing creativity and culture at the heart of their sustainable development.
- 2.3 Manchester's application highlighted the city's literary and cultural strengths, its strong history of literary expression and free speech, its linguistic diversity, its world-class literary education, its vibrant creative industries sector, its innovative spirit and its ambition to ensure more people engage with culture than ever before.
- 2.4 Since the designation was awarded, the Commissioning Partners have been working closely together, in consultation with the wider literary sector, to develop a vision and governance model that will enable the city to effectively deliver on its commitments to UNESCO whilst maximising the benefits that the designation can bring to Manchester.

3.0 Anticipated Benefits of the UNESCO City of Literature Designation

- 3.1 Whilst there is no funding attached from UNESCO, the designation and active participation in the UCCN have the potential to bring a range of benefits to the city including:

- Raised profile of the city and its cultural offer regionally, nationally and internationally, boosting tourism;
- Raised profile of the city's publishing sector and related creative industries, attracting new businesses and inward investment;
- Increased potential to lever new funding into the city for cultural activity, including work that promotes literacy;
- A stronger voice in policy development on the international stage, and opportunities for sharing best practice, with regards to culture and sustainable development;
- Development opportunities for local residents and cultural organisations such as international artist exchanges and residencies;
- International partnership opportunities to take festivals and projects to the next level;
- Increased momentum, focus and interest, to help inspire and strengthen local partnerships, to deliver more, better-coordinated literary activities to more residents;
- Enhanced, more easily navigable and more inclusive portfolio of high-quality cultural events and cultural organisations in the city.

4.0 Commitments to UNESCO

4.1 In submitting the application to UNESCO to become a City of Literature, the City Council and Commissioning Partners committed to do the following:

- Deliver activities that share best practice, develop partnerships promoting creativity, strengthen participation in cultural life and integrate culture into sustainable urban development;
- Participate as active members of the UCCN, including building international relationships with other Creative Cities and attending two UCCN international conferences per year;
- Create and support a structure with sufficient resources to enable the delivery of the tasks above;
- Support the realisation of the United Nations *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* and *New Urban Agenda* by reflecting these in city-level local development strategies and policies.

4.2 The *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*¹ is a plan of action adopted in 2015 by the international community. It outlines a vision for a sustainable future that is equitable, inclusive, peaceful and environmentally friendly, where no one is left behind; a vision which shares many features with Our Manchester and policies such as the Council's Family Poverty Strategy and Our Manchester Industrial Strategy.

¹ The *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* and more information on the Sustainable Development Goals can be found at <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/>

² More information about the New Urban Agenda can be found at <https://habitat3.org/the-new-urban-agenda/>

- 4.3 The *New Urban Agenda*ⁱ reaffirms this global commitment to sustainable urban development and particularly acknowledges the contribution played by culture and cultural diversity in making cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. The New Urban Agenda is seen as a roadmap for building prosperous cities that are centres of cultural and social wellbeing while protecting the environment.

5.0 Vision and Governance Model for Manchester City of Literature

- 5.1 In preparation for the UNESCO application, engagement work was undertaken with over one hundred people working in Manchester's literature sector, to investigate the literary activities taking place and to listen to stakeholders about what they would like to result from a potential City of Literature designation.
- 5.2 This research captured a wealth of activity already happening in the city; an estimated 800 literary events take place each year, with an audience of around 48,000 people. Stakeholders were keen to see this existing offer strengthened, by better connecting and coordinating activity, by providing clearer progression routes and by giving the literary sector a stronger collective voice.
- 5.3 Since the designation was awarded, the Council and universities have carried out a further engagement strategy, linking with local cultural and literary organisations, learning institutions and writers, to develop a shared vision for Manchester City of Literature and a sustainable governance model that reflects local strengths and ambitions.
- 5.4 The shared vision that has been agreed is for:
An innovative, distinctive, equitable, globally connected city of reading and writing, where diverse voices are celebrated, creative talent and industries are nurtured and where literary activity changes lives.
- 5.5 A clear message heard throughout the engagement process was that any new governance model should not just be tasked with supporting a diverse and inclusive programme but that the organisation itself should be inclusive and truly reflect the diverse range of voices in the city. There is an opportunity to do something different in Manchester, to drive a more inclusive approach to cultural engagement than other UNESCO Creative cities, utilising the Our Manchester approach and creating a beacon of inclusivity for other Creative Cities to follow.
- 5.6 The engagement process enabled the refinement of the following set of core values which will underpin MCOL:
- **Distinctive** – creating distinctive cultural experiences inspired by Manchester's unique, radical character and rich cultural heritage whilst looking to the future;

- **Inclusive** – celebrating the rich diversity of voices in the city, building on the strengths of Manchester’s people and widening participation in literary activity;
- **Transformative** – developing skills, nurturing creative talent and transforming lives;
- **Connected** – linking and supporting literary activity and enabling collective advocacy for Manchester’s literary community and international collaborations;
- **World-leading** – a beacon for high quality, culturally democratic, truly diverse literary activity.

5.7 In discussion with stakeholders, this was taken a step further through the collective agreement of a set of high level ambitions, which are to:

- **Ensure diversity is at the heart of the City of Literature** – truly reflecting the richness of Manchester’s voices in both governance and actions;
- **Encourage reading, boost literacy and promote cultural expression** – celebrating the enjoyment of reading and writing as strong foundations for future success and well-being;
- **Celebrate literature in its broadest sense** – including but not limited to written, spoken word, dramatic and digital work;
- **Widen access to, and engagement in, literary activity** – including to groups and areas of the city where people may be least engaged in arts and culture;
- **Nurture emerging talent and develop existing success** – by strengthening networks, opportunities and progression routes for writers at all stages of their careers;
- **Enhance support and infrastructure for creative industries around literature** – building on the strengths of existing activity and networks and enabling fundraising and commissioning work;
- **Raise the profile of literature based cultural activity, businesses and heritage** – attracting visitors to the city and promoting Manchester as a strong, literature-friendly business location for publishing-based industries;
- **Strengthen international connectivity** – through engagement in the UNESCO Creative Cities Network, collaborating on joint projects with other Creative Cities and sharing best practice

5.8 The Commissioning Partners are establishing a new independent charitable organisation which will lead on the delivery of this vision. The organisation will be overseen by a Board of Trustees, with operations managed by an Executive Office headed by an Executive Director. The Executive Office will be based in the Town Hall Extension for the first three years of operation.

5.9 There will be a partnership network, to enable wider involvement of both the literary sector and local communities, and a range of working groups focused on particular areas of activity such as marketing and fundraising. The idea of community agents or ambassadors with grassroots connections is also being considered, as well as celebrity patrons.

- 5.10 The ambition is for MCOL to be owned by the whole city, with literary organisations empowered to develop and promote Manchester's literary and cultural offer through a consistent but diverse collective voice and shared branding. The new MCOL organisation is intended to: help support, connect and add value to existing activity; encourage partnership working and joint fundraising; raise the profile of the sector; ensure the city's active participation as a member of the UCCN; and enable Manchester's diverse range of voices to be represented and celebrated, with everyone in the city benefiting from the designation.
- 5.11 Following an open recruitment process, Manchester writer Zahid Hussain was appointed as the first Chair of the Board. Each of the Commissioning Partners have also nominated a trustee for the Board: Cllr Emma Taylor (Deputy Executive Member for Skills, Culture and Leisure at that time) for Manchester City Council; Professor Sharon Handley for Manchester Metropolitan University; and Professor Alessandro Schiesaro for the University of Manchester.
- 5.12 A further 3-7 Community Trustees will be openly recruited to the Board over the next twelve months. To ensure the independence of the organisation and satisfy Charity Commission requirements, these Community Trustees, like the Chair, will be unaffiliated with the three Commissioning Partners.
- 5.13 Ivan Wadeson, formerly of Dance Consortium North West, has been appointed as MCOL's first Executive Director, starting work in October. A further two part time staff members will be recruited over the next twelve months to support Ivan and the developing MCOL programme of work.

6.0 City Council Involvement in Manchester City of Literature

- 6.1 The Council was the lead applicant to UNESCO for the designation in 2017 and will retain responsibility as the official holder of the designation in perpetuity.
- 6.2 The Council has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the two Manchester universities to demonstrate the shared commitment to support the formation of the new organisation and work together to help deliver the MCOL vision.
- 6.3 Council officers from the City Policy and Libraries teams have led the process of setting up the new organisation, with support from other Council departments, working with a panel of representatives from the Commissioning Partners.
- 6.4 Council funding for the first three years of the new organisation's operation has been agreed and this has been matched by contributions from the two universities. The funding will support the core operational and set-up costs for the organisation.

- 6.5 As the new organisation becomes established, officer level involvement will change from a leadership role towards: grant monitoring to safeguard our investment; partnership working on shared priorities and initiatives; and support for the Council's representative on the Board.
- 6.6 Cllr Luthfur Rahman was closely involved in the submission of the UNESCO application and has attended the two annual UNESCO Creative Cities conferences that have taken place since our designation was awarded; participation is expected by a political representative from our city at each conference.
- 6.7 The UNESCO designation has the potential to link with a range of other strategic priority areas and Executive Member portfolios, including but not limited to: international; skills development; children and families; economic development; social inclusion; and community cohesion.

7.0 Manchester City of Literature Project Activity

- 7.1 A range of initiatives will be developed by partners over the coming years under the MCOL banner, working closely with the MCOL organisation and co-designed with local communities, cultural organisations and interest groups.
- 7.2 Activity to date has largely focused on establishing the new organisation on an inclusive and sustainable footing. However three key projects are already either underway or in development:

- International Mother Language Day (IMLD)
IMLD is an annual celebration of cultural and linguistic diversity. Two IMLD programmes have been delivered so far (in Feb 2018 and Feb 2019) increasing in scale each year. Events have been promoted collectively and delivered by a range of partners including Manchester Libraries, Manchester Metropolitan University, University of Manchester (by both the Centre for New Writing and Multilingual Manchester) and Comma Press. A third programme is in development for February 2020. The ambition is to involve other Creative Cities in future years' IMLD programmes through co-designing projects and the potential for artist exchanges.
- Libraries Festival
Scoping work is underway to develop plans for a Libraries Festival that will celebrate libraries across Greater Manchester and the role that they play in city life. Consultation with stakeholders has indicated support for a festival that engages local people and focuses on those who run and use Manchester's libraries, whilst having an international profile that links with other Creative Cities.
- Publishing Hub
Our UNESCO application highlighted a wish to develop a network of 'Writing Spaces' across the city with a central hub providing spaces both for resident engagement and for professional writers, publishers and translators to develop their practice. Since the designation was awarded,

the profile of Manchester as a location for publishing based industries has grown and interest has been shown by local stakeholders in creating a central publishing hub.

- 7.3 A Marketing and Communications Working Group has been established, drawing together marketing professionals and cultural partners to refine a shared marketing message for the City of Literature. A suite of logos and branding guidelines have been developed by the Council and these are being used to promote literary activity across the city. The University of Manchester has created, and is hosting, an interim website and has been managing MCOL's Twitter presence whilst the new organisation is established.
- 7.4 Manchester's resident writers are already benefiting from the opportunities offered by membership of the UCCN, with several writers successfully securing paid international residencies only available to Creative Cities.
- 7.5 Scoping is underway for a development / launch year for MCOL in 2020, beginning with IMLD in February. A range of literary events are expected to be branded as Manchester City of Literature throughout the year, and further resident engagement will be undertaken to find out what local people want their City of Literature to be.

8.0 Conclusion

This report provides an overview of Manchester's UNESCO City of Literature designation and the work to establish a governance model that will enable the city to live up to its commitments to UNESCO and maximise the opportunities that the designation will bring
