



**Report to: Place and Economic Development Committee, 6 June 2022**

**Report of: Deputy Director, Economic Development**

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**Subject: ARTS AND CULTURE STRATEGY UPDATE**

**1. Recommendation**

**1. That Members note the contents of the report updating on progress with the Worcester Arts and Culture Strategy.**

**2. Background**

2.1 The arts and cultural offer in Worcester is wide-ranging, vibrant, and exciting, delivered by a sector that continues to develop and innovate. High-profile festivals dedicated to Elgar, literature, and music sit in the calendar alongside the oldest music festival in the world, The Three Choirs Festival, which we co-host with our neighbours in Hereford and Gloucester. Live performance venues including Huntingdon Hall, The MARRS Bar, The Swan Theatre, and Paradiddles host grassroots and big-name artists, as well as comedy and experimental work. We have a fantastic provision for youth music and arts with several youth theatres providing opportunities for the development of young people from toddlers to teens.

2.2 Members agreed to commission an arts and culture strategy to acknowledge and champion the Worcester arts scene as well as identify opportunities for growth and development.

2.3 Consultancy firm Festivals and Events International (FEI) were commissioned in August 2021 to coordinate the development of the strategy. A total of 445 people were engaged in the consultation process for the strategy through surveys, workshops, interviews, and discussion groups.

2.4 This report seeks to update on progress in the creation of the strategy and sets out next steps ahead of adoption.

**3. Summary of Strategy**

3.1 The draft strategy sets out four key aims and 12 objectives, as follows:

**To provide arts and cultural leadership for the city**

- Increase Worcester's influence within the wider region as a dynamic, innovative, and distinctive place
- Encourage and empower the sector to deliver ambitious creative projects in and around the city
- Develop and nurture creative networks in the city and wider region, bringing together partners to facilitate ideas and developing a community of engaged and active collaborators

## **To develop our capacity**

- Assist the sector in securing funding to support a strong and sustainable infrastructure
- Provide advice and advocacy to encourage business ambitions and employment opportunities for the future
- Acknowledge the importance of our fantastic arts volunteers, without whom it would not be possible to deliver Worcester's cultural programme

## **To improve the lives of our communities and widen participation**

- Provide a range of opportunities so that more people, of all ages, can take part in the artistic and cultural offer of the city
- Create the conditions for the arts and creativity to flourish, enriching the lives of our residents and visitors and celebrating Worcester's unique creative offer
- Bring economic and social benefits, to create quality employment opportunities by supporting a strong and vibrant infrastructure

## **To grow our audiences**

- Promote creative and cultural activities to residents and visitors, to be recognised as a destination of choice for the arts by a greater number of people, through strong and wide-ranging marketing
- Encourage and celebrate attendance at creative and artistic endeavours in the city
- Develop a regional reputation for provision of quality arts and cultural activity, attracting visitors from outside the city to attend events and performances

3.2 The Strategy will be supported by a delivery plan which will be developed throughout the consultation process and will set out short, medium, and long-term plans for delivery of the objectives of the strategy.

## **4. Next Steps**

4.1 The draft strategy will now undergo a period of consultation with comments invited from anyone interested. Officers are keen to ensure that the strategy is representative of the wide range of cultural activity in the city so views will be proactively sought from the following groups:

- Members
- Residents
- Venues
- Arts and cultural practitioners
- Arts and cultural audiences

4.2 The consultation period will run from June 2022 – September 2022 with an updated report to the October PED committee meeting.

**Ward(s):** All  
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**Background Papers:** None