

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT & NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

TO:	HOUSING, NEIGHBOURHOODS AND LEISURE COMMITTEE		
DATE:	19 NOVEMBER 2014	AGENDA ITEM:	9
TITLE:	CULTURE & HERITAGE STRATEGY CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT: RESULTS AND FEEDBACK / YEAR OF CULTURE 2016		
LEAD COUNCILLOR:	COUNCILLOR PAUL GITTINGS	PORTFOLIO:	CULTURE, SPORT & CONSUMER SERVICES
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1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The report outlines key results and feedback from 'Your Say: Arts, Heritage and Sport' consultation and a community engagement programme, which will help to shape Reading's new Culture and Heritage strategy, being developed by Reading Borough Council with a wide range of stakeholders and local groups. The report also sets out the proposal for a Reading Year of Culture in 2016, linked to the developing Culture and Heritage strategy.
- 1.2 Over 600 responses were received to the online and hard copy survey. The full consultation report for 'Your Say: Arts, Heritage and Sport' is attached at appendix one.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 That the results of the 'Your Say: Arts, Heritage and Sport' consultation are noted.
- 2.2 That the next steps for developing the strategy are noted.
- 2.3 That the committee endorses the proposal for the development of a 'Year of Culture' for Reading in 2016.

3. POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 Readings Cultural Strategy 2010/13 was endorsed by Cabinet in 2010 as a continuation of the previous strategy 'A Life worth Living - The next Chapter 2009 -2012 Reading's Cultural Strategy'. The key priorities of the strategy were aligned to the previous Sustainable Communities Strategy.
- 3.2 The Cultural Partnership was established in 2010 as a strategic delivery network for Culture, Leisure and Sport, with stakeholders from across sectors to support the delivery of the Cultural Strategy for Reading. This multi-agency board has agreed the development and implementation of Readings next Cultural Strategy as a key objective in its revised Terms of Reference.
- 3.3 A Heritage Strategy for Reading has already been developed. Early development of this strategy was undertaken in part as a necessary requirement to progress the bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for the restoration of the Abbey Ruins and Gateway. The HLF Bid has been successful at Stage 1 and detailed implementation plans are now being developed for approval at Stage 2. The existing Heritage Strategy will be reflected in the wider Cultural and Heritage Strategy.
- 3.4 There is no statutory requirement for Councils to provide a Cultural Strategy however, it is accepted good practice to adopt such strategies and many local authorities have adopted a Cultural Strategy that sets out their long term aspirations and shorter term work streams to help deliver these.
- 3.5 There are many benefits of developing a strategy. A Local Government Association (LGA) paper, March 2013, reports the arts provide nearly 1 million jobs and 67,000 cultural businesses contribute £28 billion every year to the UK economy. Tourism contributes £115 billion to the English economy and as well as attracting visitors to places, the arts encourage visitors to stay longer and spend more. Businesses choose to invest in places with a vibrant arts offer because they offer their employees a high quality of life.

4. THE PROPOSAL

4.1 Current Position

Your Say Arts, Heritage & Sport

Residents, visitors and businesses were asked for their views on sport and culture in Reading as part of the 'Your Say: Arts, Heritage and Sport' consultation. This took place from 9th June until 30th September. The feedback from the consultation will help to shape Reading's new culture and heritage strategy, being developed by Reading Borough Council with commitment and engagement from the Cultural Partnership and its associated network of community groups and delivery partners. There is strong support for the development of the strategy and for the generation ideas on how culture can play an even bigger role in promoting wellbeing and be an integral part of an even more vibrant and economically successful town.

As a result of and linked to the early discussions on the development of the Culture and Heritage strategy there was a recognition that whilst there is a vibrant and successful cultural offer in Reading this is perhaps not widely acknowledged. The town is therefore not recognised more widely as a cultural destination in the same way as its renown as a successful economic powerhouse and retail hub. Acknowledging that this was of strategic significance to Reading's success the Local

Strategic Partnership (LSP) became involved and Cultural Life was adopted as one of the partnerships three priority areas for further work in 2014/15.

Year of Culture

What the consultation discussions have generated are a huge amount of energy and enthusiasm around all that is going on and the possibilities for the future, reflecting the fact that different aspects of cultural life impact on us all and are a key ingredient in quality of life and well-being. Emerging from this enthusiasm and the acknowledged need to raise the profile of cultural activity in the town is the concept of a 'Year of Culture' for Reading, owned and delivered by local people and organisations under the umbrella of the Cultural Partnership and championed by the LSP. To help take this forward a joint LSP/Cultural Partnership workshop on Cultural Life was held in June, where input was gathered for developing a proposed "Year of Culture 2016", linked to the aspirations of the developing Culture and Heritage Strategy.

The Year of Culture 2016 is a means of showcasing, enhancing, promoting and increasing engagement with the wide range of activities, events, networks that exist in the many fields of arts and heritage, all linked to promoting the wider attractiveness and prosperity of the Reading area.

4.2 Options Proposed

The strategy will identify the authority's priorities and objectives for culture and heritage. Refreshing the strategy for Reading will give a sense of priorities and direction for the sector over the medium term.

The proposed period of the strategy is 2014 - 2030 with a review in 2020.

In addition to the wider consultation, existing groups have contributed to the visioning and development of the strategy, including the Creative Arts Network, Sports Development and Arts forums along with the opportunity for members of the public to contribute, via 'Your Say: Arts, Heritage and Sport'. A further session is planned in January 2015 for a wide-range of local Arts Organisations to inform the strategy and the plans for 2016.

A core working group has been established from members of the LSP and Cultural Partnership board. This will focus on the integrated development and delivery of the Cultural and Heritage Strategy for Reading and a year of Culture 2016. The following aims of the group were agreed:

- To recognise and showcase the existing numerous and diverse arts and culture accomplishments, provision and events that already exist in Reading;
- To recognise arts, culture and creative industries as an important component of a vibrant city;
- To promote the idea that arts and culture can play a leading role in the future success of Reading;
- To promote the message that creative people, organisations and approaches are welcome in Reading;
- To utilise the arts and culture message to promote Reading as a destination for tourists and to increase visitor numbers;
- To increase participation and engagement for all in Arts and Culture.

Consultation and engagement programme

A series of events / programmes were delivered to raise awareness of Reading's arts, sport and heritage and used to engage local residents and gather feedback to inform the Culture and Heritage Strategy. The table below provides a summary of the programme aims and activities which was led by Jelly, the creative arts charity.

Event	Summary
Working with children and young people creative activities	Working with pupils on buildings and townscapes, schools were keen to develop this as a way of capturing children's views on how Reading's unique identity would emerge in future years, in terms of the physical and cultural landscape. 162 children participated.
Sports Challenge	Hosted by Rivermead on 31 May 2014, 'Olympiad' to engage with visitors to the event, encourage participation and create aspirations for sporting achievement.
Residents and visitors to deliver Oracle and shop mobility project	Members of the public joined jelly artists to create a collaborative piece of art. Postcards were then displayed as part of the Open for Art Weekend in The Oracle space. The 112 postcards created were collected and textile designer Emma Bradbury created an abstract rag rug pattern, which reflected key cultural and heritage themes. Over 80 people spent over 200 hours helping complete a rag rug.
Heritage and Arts Trail	4 July -6 July 2014 to bring arts, culture and heritage back into the public view, from master classes to pop up exhibitions, classes, activities and trails bringing Reading Town Centre Arts and Culture Programme alive <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • work with Reading Museum to identify a family based heritage/ treasure trail • work with Reading CIC, local business and Reading College to create an Arts trail. 2500 maps were printed and given out and 89 artists and performers took part over the weekend.
Equalities programme	To reach out to particular audiences in innovative ways to capture their views, using existing arts and sports events and locations, 74 people engaged in the programme. Shadow jelly project curated one pop up shop exhibition of young people's work, started its own writers group and has begun a sensory garden project with the young special needs group.

'Your Say: Arts, Heritage and Sport' summary results and feedback

The consultation was available on the Council website and also a shorter version in via a hard copy in the form of a postcard. Respondents were asked to give their views in the following, a summary of the most popular responses and numbers are included overleaf. The full consultation report is attached at appendix one.

It was clear from the responses to the consultation that peoples focus is on arts, performance and music. Sport is under represented in the responses. The Culture and Heritage strategy will therefore focus on these publicly held perceptions of culture. Proposals for a more formalised Sports Partnership and Forum, which will include a broader focus on physical activity, well-being and health, will be brought forward separately in order to provide a more focused strategic approach to this area of work.

Question	Views
As a local resident or visitor what does culture mean to you?	<p>The performing and visual Arts (454) Museums and artefacts (415) Built Heritage (385) History, music and people were key words used to describe culture</p>
How do you take part in the Arts?	<p>Enjoy Live Music- Lots of people shared the ways which they enjoy live music these included: concerts, gigs, festivals, recitals, local/community bands, national acts. Some people mentioned Reading Festival and the Forbury Bandstand as places they enjoy music. Some of the genres people enjoy were folk, classical, opera, choirs, jazz, pop, indie. (292)</p> <p>Galleries and Exhibitions - Lots of respondents told us how you visit galleries, exhibitions and art trails. People also enjoy, enjoy arts and sculptures indoors and in open spaces, temporary arts installations, art studio trails, visit art shows, art fairs. (277)</p> <p>Watching Performing Arts- Many respondents enjoyed watching performing arts, the following were specifically mentioned: theatre, dance, stage shows, musicals, ballet and opera at both local and national theatres and venues and at amateur and professional level. Many people mentioned local theatre groups such as Reading Rep Theatre and Reading Progress Theatre. (151)</p>
How do you take part in Heritage?	<p>Museums- Lots of respondents told us that they visit museums according to interest, with family and friends, while on holiday nationally/locally to learn about places they visit, they also visit for special exhibitions. (301)</p> <p>Historical Attractions- A lot of people told us they take part in heritage by visiting a range historical attractions these included National Trust properties, archaeological sites, historical monuments historic gardens and landscapes, castles, houses, architectural sites, Open House Weekends, churches, digs and excavations. (270)</p> <p>Reading Museum- Many people told us that they visited Reading Museum whether occasionally or regularly, they also attended events, activities and exhibitions, have visited themselves and with children. (86)</p>
How do you take part / enjoy sports?	<p>Actively Participate- Lots of people told us a variety of ways in which they actively participated in sport or exercise; this could be formal and informal, on their own or as part of a team of group, with family and friends. (354)</p> <p>Lots of respondents told us how they took part in sport individually, though individual exercise and training or individuals sports. (201)</p> <p>Watch/ Support Sport- Many people watch a variety of sports either on TV or live, some those specifically mentioned are football, rugby, tennis. Some people also mentioned specific sporting events such as Wimbledon, the Olympics and the Commonwealth Games. (122)</p>
Why do you take part in cultural activities?	<p>The top three reasons for participating from respondents are: Interest / Social (575) Learning (444) Health & Wellbeing (325)</p>

<p>What do you like about cultural life in Reading?</p>	<p>Variety & diversity - Many people commented on the good variety in the cultural programme, variety in types of event, and culture from all over the world, vibrant, range of musical events, racial and social diversity, something for everyone, good quality, international to community events, experimental work, lively and contemporary work, council events complemented by voluntary sector events, show cases the diversity of communities, clubs and societies, multicultural (151)</p> <p>Good venues and arts centres - Many responded that there are a number of venues and arts centres that host good events, shows, performances and music. Some commented on a good live music scene, with gigs and concerts. Some people specifically mentioned South Street, the Town Hall and Concert Hall. Some said that there were different music venues to suit all types which provide variety venues for music, comedy, film and theatre (61)</p> <p>Good museums and libraries- Many liked the good local museums such as MERL and Reading Museum which have a range of exhibitions and good provision of activities for children. Many thought that they were relevant and useful for visitors and residents to get to know their local history. Others commented on good libraries in Reading. (51)</p>
<p>What would you like to see more of?</p>	<p>More music, theatre events- more opportunities and live music, more plays, musicals and theatre shows, more music events, more open air music and theatre, more theatre both professional and amateur, more signed bands and acts, comedy nights, world music (74)</p> <p>Renovation of arts spaces/new venues- and arts venue to attract high profile performers, a mixed use venues, more venues, purpose built venues for professional and amateur groups, better theatre facilities, community, performance space for groups of all sizes and audiences, more opportunity for people to use council run arts venues(66)</p> <p>Better publicity- reading arts website- Better publicity, many people highlighted that they didn't know what is going on and often find out too late due to a lack of publicity, some discussed having a central place either physical such as events boards, or virtual such as a website to advertise everything that Reading has to offer. Listing in newspapers, promotions of events via the RBC twitter feed, a higher profile for arts and culture, university museums, better integrated advertising, highlight and celebrate cultural side of Reading (52)</p>

Next Steps

It is proposed the summary of the consultation feedback is available on the Councils website. Work will continue on developing the strategy, informed by the consultation response, over the next few months. It is the intention that a draft strategy for consultation will be reported to this committee for consideration in March prior to publication on the Councils website.

In parallel the working group established under the auspices of the Cultural partnership and LSP will continue to develop proposals for the successful delivery of a Year of Culture for Reading in 2016.

5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

5.1 The Strategy for Reading, will contribute to: Reading in 2030: at the heart of the region

PEOPLE: From respect to generosity
A culturally rich family of communities
We look after each other

PLACE: From town to city
Thriving, vibrant and sustainable
We cherish our environment

PROSPERITY: From benefiting some to benefiting all
Driving a world-class economy
We are ambitious

6. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

6.1 The local 2012 residents survey asked what people think is important in making somewhere a good place to live the results showed that culture and sport considerations rank highly¹

- Parks and Open Spaces 25%
- Culture (Libraries, Museums and Arts Venues) 15%
- Sports and Leisure facilities 12%

6.2 There has been input from existing interest groups and residents, visitors and businesses through a series of workshops in addition to the wider 'Your Say: Arts, Heritage & Sport' consultation with residents, visitors and businesses. This was in the form of an online and hard copy survey.

6.3 A community engagement programme has also been undertaken by Jelly, the creative Arts charity. A series of events were undertaken to raise awareness of Reading's arts, sport and heritage that will be used as a series of platforms to engage local residents and gather feedback to inform the Strategy and a summary of the outputs are included in the report.

6.4 The consultation report is attached at appendix one.

7. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

7.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to—

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

7.2 The Equality duty is relevant to the development of the strategy and an Equality Impact Assessment will be completed for the draft strategy.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 None

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 This will be managed from within the existing resources. The Cultural Partnership including the Council, in its role as facilitator, will work together with arts organisations and stakeholders to maximise the benefits of external investment into Reading to support the delivery of the Year of Culture and Reading and Heritage Cultural Strategy.

9.2 The future cultural offer in Reading must be set in the context of the requirement to make significant savings in the medium term.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

10.1 'A Life worth Living - The next Chapter 2009 -2012 Readings Cultural Strategy

10.2 Delivering growth through Local Government Investment in the Arts, LGA, March 2013

10.3 Annual Community Feedback Report 2012

10.4 Reading Sustainable Community Strategy

10.5 Community engagement feedback report