

## **1. Introduction**

This strategy, developed with the support and engagement of the cultural sector and community groups in our city, explicitly links the City Council's vision for culture and the arts to the needs of the city's communities. There are significant levels of disadvantage in the city and the City Council believes that access to high quality cultural experiences - creating more quality cultural experiences for more people, more often - can play a vital role in regenerating communities and sustaining the city's economy.

The City Council develops and invests in cultural experiences that enrich people's lives. We deliver and support a range of arts and heritage activities in Oxford, including dance, music, theatre, literature, film, digital art, the Museum of Oxford and the city's archives.

In 2013/14, the City Council invested a budget of £389,000 to develop and sustain these cultural experiences for as many residents as possible. This investment helped leverage in an additional £6.6million to the city's economy from grants, donations and earned income. In the same year, the cultural organisations and activities supported by the Council engaged audiences of more than 700,000 people, including 114,000 for cultural events organised by the City Council's Culture Team and 85,000 visitors to the Museum of Oxford.<sup>1</sup>

This strategy:

- Provides demographic and other contextual information about Oxford
- Details the contribution of culture and the arts to the delivery of the City Council's Corporate Priorities, in particular Vibrant, Sustainable Economy and Strong, Active Communities
- Outlines the City Council's priorities for culture and the arts over the next three years
- Sets out objectives for each of the priorities and information about how progress will be monitored.

The City Council has three key priorities for culture:

1. Support the sustainability of Oxford's cultural sector and improve the skills and diversity of the city's current and future creative workforce.
2. Improve opportunities for Oxford's diverse range of communities to be inspired by culture and to engage actively in a range of creative activities.

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<sup>1</sup> In 2013/14, commissioned organisations reached an audience of 483,847, received total of £274,262 grants and leveraged in an additional £6,114,276. Culture Fund Round 1 projects reached an audience of 7130, were awarded total £5,820 grants and leveraged in an additional £125,887. Culture Fund Round 2 projects were awarded total £5,163 grants. Round 2 data on leveraged income and audiences will be received by October 2014. Programming Grants projects reached an audience of 4,086, were awarded total £5,600 and leveraged in an additional £4,570. The Museum of Oxford reached an audience of 85,421, cost the Council £35,014 and leveraged in an additional £131,078 towards delivery. Cultural City Events reached an audience of 114,000, cost the Council £56,223 and leveraged in an additional £150,943 towards delivery. Dancin' Oxford's 2013 programme reached an audience of 6955, cost the Council £7,095 and leveraged in an additional £67,421 towards delivery. 2013/14 Totals (excluding Culture Fund Round 2 leveraged income and audience data): Audiences 701,018, Council investment (grants and project delivery) £389,177, Leveraged income £6,594,175.

3. Improve opportunities for young people to access and actively participate in cultural activities.

The strategy's time-span reflects national funding arrangements. The funding for Arts Council England's National Portfolio Organisations (NPOs) ends in March 2018 and their delivery programmes and 3-year targets also run to this timetable. As this will mark a time of change for cultural funding at a national level, we will update Oxford's Culture Strategy in 2018.

## **2. Our vision for culture and the arts**

Our shared vision for culture is:

*To work in partnership with key stakeholders to deliver and support affordable and excellent cultural activities and events; enhance and leave a legacy in the lives of Oxford's individuals and communities; encourage youth attainment; engage our diverse communities; and develop skills and businesses in the city's creative sector.*

This vision will be delivered through partnership working, high quality cultural experiences and a commitment to accessibility.

### **Partnership**

The City Council is committed to retaining a partnership model for delivery of culture and the arts. Oxford City Council directly delivers some cultural services, for example the Museum of Oxford, city events and culture forums for skills development. We also help develop and sustain the city's cultural sector through the provision of core and project funding and by supporting cultural partnerships. Partnership working with the city's major stakeholders (the two Universities, County Council, the Oxford Strategic Partnership and the LEP) will enable us to create a collective vision of Oxford's cultural offer for its residents, artists, businesses and tourists. Working together already has and will continue to create more and better cultural opportunities, reduce duplication, and maximise funding potential.

This has been demonstrated through the activities of the Cultural Partnership Group, which fulfils a key strategic leadership role for culture in the city. This group comprises the various Oxford-based organisations core funded by Arts Council England (ACE) and the City Council, as well as the city's other cultural funders; Oxford University, Oxford ASPIRE Museums Consortium and Oxfordshire County Council. Current members are: Oxford Playhouse, Pegasus Theatre, Modern Art Oxford, Oxford Contemporary Music, Film Oxford, OVADA, Arts at the Old Fire Station, Ark T, Fusion, Cowley Road Works, the Story Museum and Experience Oxfordshire. See Appendix 1 for full details of members. The City Council is working with the Cultural Partnership Group and Arts Council England to share best practice and develop sustainable projects with arts and cultural organisations. Working in partnership enables organisations to make the most of public funding and ensures arts and culture in the city can be world-class and available to all.

In 2013, the Culture Team worked with the City Council's Environmental Development team, Julie's Bicycle and Arts Council England to become the first UK Council to require funded arts organisations to develop environmental sustainability plans to reduce energy use in the sector. We will continue to co-ordinate with other City Council departments to enhance sustainability, overcome practical barriers to delivering cultural activity and to embed the arts in future Council infrastructure development.

As part of a pilot scheme - negotiated between the University of Oxford and Oxford City Council - local cultural organisations will, from April 2015, be able to request space free of charge in various colleges for rehearsals, performances, and meetings. Local organisations will benefit from facilities in St Peter's College, Pembroke College, Lincoln College, St Antony's College, St Hugh's College, Hertford College, Wolfson College, the Radcliffe Humanities building, and the Careers Service at the University of Oxford.

This scheme puts in place a formal system to encourage community arts groups to do their valuable work in rooms provided by Oxford's colleges. This practical offer of space will hopefully lead to more creative collaborations between colleges and arts groups and the development of long-lasting and mutually beneficial relationships in the future.

## **Quality**

The City Council and its partners believe that cultural provision – whether it takes the form of museums that reflect our past and present, or the arts through which we share and celebrate our experiences – plays a profound role in shaping people's attitudes and aspirations. As such, the quality of cultural provision can benefit our communities and economy as well as providing opportunities for creative work. Excellent cultural provision reflects the talent, ambition and skill of our cultural sector and the diversity of our communities.

National funders such as Arts Council England make evidence of quality a prerequisite for their grants; an approach which also underpins funding decisions made by the Council's Culture Team. We will continue to work closely with key national agencies such as Arts Council England and we support their strategic aims.

*“The importance of the relationship between excellence and engagement cannot be understated. For example, the value of museums is generated not only by the excellence of their collections, but by how these collections are interpreted, how they inspire, and how they change the people that visit or encounter them. Arts organisations also achieve excellence when their work fully engages with, challenges or connects with an audience.”*

Great Art and Culture for Everyone, Arts Council England

## **Accessibility**

We believe that access to high quality cultural experiences is the right of all our citizens. We are committed to providing and supporting opportunities for all of Oxford's residents to engage with arts and cultural events and activities, with a particular focus on work which reaches and represents our young people and diverse communities. We want to ensure that more people of all ages, ethnicities and locations within Oxford have the opportunity to engage in great cultural experiences, particularly those people who are currently least engaged with arts and heritage.

The City Council and its partners believe that access to excellent cultural experiences can be a significant driver of regeneration and economic sustainability and community cohesion by encouraging different groups to enjoy and share their different traditions. Our aim - working with our partners in the cultural sector - is to increase access from all our communities to good quality cultural opportunities and events, at affordable prices, in a range of venues and locations.

The City Council will continue to work closely with other regional funders and authorities to identify collaborative opportunities to enhance and ensure access to culture. In particular, we will work with Arts Council England and Oxfordshire County Council through the Cultural Partnership Group, Oxfordshire Arts Partnership, Oxford Strategic Partnership and the Oxfordshire LEP.

### **3. Building a world class cultural offer for everyone**

Oxford has a long history of cultural innovation. The country's first Botanic Garden, the world's first public museum (the Ashmolean in 1682) and the world's first music room (Holywell) are part of the city's cultural heritage.

Oxford is one of the most photographed, filmed, and written about cities in the world. The enduring images are of historic Oxford, where much of the city's heritage environment and many of its cultural attractions directly reflect the University of Oxford's influence on the development of the city. These images are central to our flourishing tourist industry because it is the historic heart of Oxford that millions of tourists visit every year.

Oxford's contemporary cultural sector is also innovative, rich and diverse. It includes national museums and world-famous heritage sites, a commercial creative sector, a myriad of voluntary arts organisations, literary, folk and dance festivals, and vibrant community events such as the Christmas Light Festival, May Morning, Alice's Day and the Cowley Road Carnival. It has a world-class and highly innovative music scene and thriving contemporary art and theatre produced and showcased by nationally-recognised organisations such as Oxford Playhouse, Modern Art Oxford, Oxford Contemporary Music, and Pegasus. It also has a strong reputation as a source of innovative rock music, including Radiohead and Foals.

The combination of prestigious, world-famous institutions alongside a more informal, but still high quality, network of smaller venues and organisations is central to Oxford's cultural identity and strength. Appendix 1 includes details of the organisations we fund which contribute to the city's vibrant cultural scene.

Historic Oxford is only one part of our city's story. Contemporary Oxford is a densely packed urban space, with a population of around 152,000 living in an area of only 17.6 square miles. Oxford's population grew by 12% over the decade 2001–2011, making it the sixth fastest growing English city. The population is projected to continue to grow, reaching 161,000 by 2019. There are very high levels of housing density. There are severe pressures on housing stock, with large concentrations of homes in multiple occupation and significant numbers of homeless and other vulnerable groups.

There are major inequalities in life chances and life expectancy in our city. Relative to the rest of Oxfordshire, Oxford has high levels of deprivation. The Index of Multiple Deprivation 2010 ranks Oxford 131 out of 354, placing it in the top half of the most deprived local authority areas in England. Of 85 areas in Oxford, 12 are among the 20% most deprived areas in England, with one area in Northfield Brook ward among the 10% most deprived. Around 22% of Oxford's children live in low-income households, and child poverty is a key concern in eight neighbourhoods which feature among the 10% worst affected in England. In some areas, half of all adults have no qualifications and this is linked to lower incomes, poor health and child poverty. Oxford has over 9,000 working-age residents claiming benefits –the

highest percentage in the county. Life expectancy in the most deprived areas is up to ten years less than in the wealthiest areas.

### **Our diverse communities**

We are committed to engaging Oxford's diverse communities with the city's cultural opportunities and consider diversity not only in terms of ethnicity, but also age, disability, and economic circumstances.

The 2011 Census showed that 16,000 Oxford residents were retired, 21,000 were self-employed or working part time, 43,000 worked full time, 33,000 were full time students over the age of 16, and 25,000 were children up to the age of 15. According to the 2011 Census, 12% of Oxford's population (18,850 people) said they suffered from a limiting long-term illness or disability; 3,100 people aged 16-74 years said they were permanently sick or disabled and therefore not working or looking for work (3% of this population); and 11,700 people said that they had caring responsibilities.

According to the Office of National Statistics 2012 mid-year estimate, 24% of Oxford residents (36,507) were over the age of 50. A Needs Assessment for Older People in Oxford undertaken in October 2013 included feedback from older people which confirmed that they have a huge variety of interests and social preferences. The report also highlighted a strong sense that mental health issues among the older population are often directly linked to isolation and loneliness. Research in the report demonstrates that tackling isolation is fundamental to fully addressing all other need relating to income, employment, health, safety, security and access to information.

In marked contrast to the surrounding county, Oxford is an ethnically and internationally diverse city. 22% of residents were from a black or minority ethnic group in 2011, compared to 13% in England. An additional 14% of residents are from a white but non-British ethnic background. Ethnic diversity increased markedly between 2001 and 2011; the number of people from all ethnic groups increased, with the exception of people in the White British and White Irish ethnic groups. The largest non-white ethnic groups represented in Oxford are Pakistani, Indian, Black African, 'other Asian' and Chinese ethnic groups. The child population is considerably more ethnically diverse than the older population, which is one reason why the population is expected to become more ethnically diverse in the future.

Oxford has long been a destination for international migrants, be it for work or study. There are over 30,000 students studying full-time at the two universities, and there is significant annual turnover in their number. The 2011 Census showed that 28% of Oxford's population was born outside the UK. The most common countries of birth were Poland, USA, Germany, India and Pakistan. In 2011, 6,800 people - 4% of the city's population - said they had moved to Oxford from outside the UK in the last 15 months.

### **Our young people**

As part of its commitment to building a world class city for everyone, Oxford City Council aims to reduce the extent of inequality and to improve the lives of the most vulnerable members of our society. We particularly want to improve outcomes for young people.

This is particularly important for our young people in Oxford, where there are major inequalities in life opportunities. For a long time, attainment levels of pupils in Oxford's state

schools have been significantly lower than the national average. Although they have been improving in recent years, in 2012/13 56% of Oxford pupils gained five or more A\* to C grade GCSEs including English & Maths, still below the 61% national average. Pupils living in economically deprived areas have particularly poor results. Improving educational attainment and access to cultural education and experiences are integrally related and are key priorities for the City Council.

The City Council has invested in improving educational attainment in the city, particularly in the more deprived neighbourhoods. Access to quality cultural experiences and exposure to the practical skills that the arts require play a key role in high performing educational environments and this will also be the case in Oxford.

#### **4. Public Attitudes to Cultural Facilities and Services**

According to Arts Council England Stakeholder Focus Research from April 2014, the majority of the general public support public funding of the arts, with levels of support at their highest level since records began. When asked what public funding of the arts should achieve, the three objectives considered to be most important are;

- Giving every child the opportunity to access arts and culture
- Enabling access to arts and culture for people who would not normally have that opportunity
- Encouraging more ordinary people to engage with arts and culture.

This increase in support for public funding is mirrored by an increase in levels of arts engagement. According to national Taking Part Survey results, in 2012/13, 9 in 10 children aged 5-15 had engaged with the arts in the last week, marking a significant increase since 2008/09. Levels of adult engagement with the arts are also increasing year on year. Cultural events such as the Christmas Light Festival received almost three times as many visitors in 2013 compared to 2012, while the majority of Oxford's adult residents have attended a theatre performance in the previous year. Adults from black and minority ethnic communities, however, continue to have lower levels of engagement with museums, galleries, or the arts than white adults.

According to the City Council's Living in Oxford Talkback Survey in Spring 2014, an increasing proportion of Oxford residents consider cultural facilities to be among the most important attributes in making the city a good place to live, and satisfaction with these facilities is improving. Satisfaction with Museums and Galleries is amongst the highest of all City Council services.

Nationally, Museum and Gallery attendance rates are also at their highest since surveys began, with the majority of adults having visited a museum or gallery in the last 12 months. The Museum of Oxford has experienced this increase in visitor numbers, with a 20% increase in attendance in 2013/14.

With increasing levels of demand and interest in arts and heritage activities, along with recognition of the educational, health and wellbeing benefits of cultural engagement, there has never been a stronger need to deliver and support high quality cultural activity in order to make it accessible for all.

#### **5. Culture and community benefit**

Corporate Priority: Strong, Active Communities  
Our ambition: Communities that are socially cohesive and safe, and citizens who are actively engaged in pursuing their own well-being and that of their communities.

Culture has the potential to bring people together from all areas of life, break down barriers, and build strong communities by increasing the sense of local identity and belonging. Oxford City Council works with its cultural partners to co-ordinate and strengthen cultural provision, working particularly with the more deprived communities of the city.

The success of the Christmas Light Festival, which received 100,000 visitors in 2013, and the Cowley Road Carnival, which was attended by 45,000 people in 2014, strongly illustrate the value and popularity of opportunities for people to come together through community events and festivals. It is particularly positive to note that 68% of respondents to the Talkback Survey in Spring 2014 agree that Oxford is a place where different nationalities and ethnicities get on well together.

Many of the city's cultural organisations already offer successful and well resourced outreach services. The Museum of Oxford received 85,000 visitors in 2013/14 and runs formal and informal learning programmes which reach almost 4,000 residents each year. Funded organisations including Film Oxford, Modern Art Oxford, Pegasus and Oxford Playhouse provide free cultural activities in leisure centres as part of the council's Youth Ambition programme. The City Council's Christmas Light Festival in 2013 worked with almost 800 young people from 27 city schools and community groups to create a spectacular lantern parade inspired by Oxford's industrial and cultural heritage, from William Morris' cars to CS Lewis' Narnia characters.

#### **CASE STUDY: Health and Wellbeing / Dance for Parkinson's**

The City Council's Dance for Parkinson's Project is run in partnership with English National Ballet, engaging with 21-25 participants on a weekly basis. ENB commissioned a Roehampton University research study into the effects of dancing with Parkinson's, and the results were compiled into a BUPA award-winning study. That study concluded that dancing positively affects people with Parkinson's, enabling them to achieve more physically and helping them to rise above some of the limitations of their neurological condition. Participants relish the social interaction and, in some, it encourages a more positive outlook on their lives. One of the most noticeable aspects of the project was how it engenders confidence, as well as body awareness and relative physical dexterity. The study argues that faced with an unpredictable disease, a project that encourages confidence, greater awareness of one's own movement potential, social interaction and communal bonding is vitally important to those who live with Parkinson's.

#### **CASE STUDY: New models for social inclusion / Arts at the Old Fire Station**

The Old Fire Station is a flagship project for the City Council. One of the most innovative projects in the country, it brings together the Crisis Skylight Centre – a training centre for homeless people - and Arts at The Old Fire Station – a professional arts centre for the public. The centre combines a theatre, dance and artists' studios, a cafe, a gallery and a shop selling hand-made contemporary craft and design. It also provides training and support to help homeless people into further training or work. This is a unique model of social inclusion bringing artists, homeless people and the public into the same space. Over the coming years, the Old Fire Station will extend its offer to the public, support more emerging artists and find

more ways to include vulnerable adults in making, presenting and supporting high quality work. They will also be evaluating impact and the significance of including marginalised people in a high quality, highly valued public arts centre.

#### **CASE STUDY: International connections / Pegasus**

Pegasus, Oxford's theatre for young people in East Oxford – consolidated by a £4m rebuild – continues to go from strength to strength. Since 2011, Pegasus has led Mesh, Oxford's first International Youth Arts Festival. Mesh is co-planned, run and hosted by and for young people from Oxford, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Croatia, Lithuania and Russia. Mesh 2014 was made possible by the support of many individuals and organisations including British Council Youth in Action Programme, Oxford City Council, Oxfordshire County Council and Oxford Bus Company. This project complements the work done through the City Council's own international links programme and offers opportunities for exchange projects involving young people from our twin cities.

#### **6. Culture and economic benefit**

Corporate Priority: Vibrant, Sustainable Economy  
Our ambition: A strong local economy, supported by effective education and training.

The cultural sector benefits Oxford's economy through direct job creation and skills development, attracting other businesses and their employees to locate in a world-class cultural environment, and using City Council support to leverage income from other funders and visitors.

#### **Every £1 of City Council investment in cultural organisations in 2013/14 equated to more than £22 of extra funding and benefit.<sup>2</sup>**

With high levels of economic as well as social return on investment, the City Council is committed to supporting Oxford's creative and cultural industries. The UK's Creative Industries are the most successful in Europe. They contribute more than £8m per hour to the UK economy, generate more than £70bn a year, and are outperforming all other sectors of the UK economy. Jobs in the creative and cultural sector are expected to increase up to a third by 2020, while volunteering in the sector continues to provide skills development opportunities and enhance community engagement.

In keeping with this national trend, Oxford's cultural sector contributes significantly to building a vibrant and sustainable local economy. Culture has a strongly positive economic impact on Oxford, with cultural events attracting secondary spend up of more than £1million over a single weekend, tourists to the city spending £721million in 2012, and arts organisations funded by the City Council leveraging more than £6million of additional funding from grants, donations, sponsorship and earned income with our support.<sup>3</sup>

#### **CASE STUDY: Creative Economy jobs**

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<sup>2</sup> Commissioned cultural organisations received total of £274,262 grants and leveraged in an additional £6,114,276 in 2013/14. Every £1 of grants awarded enabled organisations to leverage £22.29 from other sources.

<sup>3</sup> The total gross expenditure generated by the 2013 Christmas Light Festival was estimated at £1.8million.

Total Creative Economy employment across the UK increased by 8.8% from 2.4 million jobs in 2011 to 2.6 million jobs in 2013. This increase compares with a 2.4 per cent increase in the total number of jobs in the wider UK economy over the same period. By 2013, one in every 10 jobs in the South East was in the Creative Economy, with 50,000 of these jobs in Music, Performing and Visual Arts, 40,000 jobs in Publishing and 16,000 jobs in Museums, Galleries and Libraries. Oxford is recognised internationally for its cultural sector which provides employment for thousands of the city's talented workers. The challenge over the next three years will be in supporting the resilience of cultural sector organisations and ensuring our current and future workforce is appropriately skilled to sustain and grow the sector.

#### **CASE STUDY: Cultural Events**

The Christmas Light Festival in November 2013 attracted an audience of more than 100,000 people over three days, making it the largest annual cultural event in the city and generating a total gross expenditure of £1.8million. The festival weekend also resulted in an increase in footfall of 20,750 people in Cornmarket compared to the previous, non-festival weekend. Audience data revealed an average spend of £17 per person, with an estimated transport spend of £102,000 by festival audiences. The event secured funding from Arts Council England, MINI Plant Oxford, British Gas, Westgate and the University of Oxford, as well as a range of local businesses. With events such as the Light Festival, Cowley Road Carnival and OxfordOxford attracting large audiences, the city's economy will continue to benefit from cultural events as long as we work with partners to enable them to happen.

#### **CASE STUDY: Cultural Tourism**

Oxford's dazzling architectural heritage, and the rich offerings of the Ashmolean and other museums, means that tourism plays a key part in the local economy. In 2013, Oxford was the seventh most visited city in the UK and is the tourism gateway to the rest of Oxfordshire. We attract approximately 9.5 million visitors per year, generating £770 million of income for local Oxford businesses. We would like visitors to stay longer in the city and to explore areas beyond the city as well. In order to facilitate this we worked with partners to set up Experience Oxfordshire, an organisation working to improve the management and marketing of tourism in Oxford and throughout Oxfordshire. Oxford led the way in formalising the link between culture and tourism, acknowledging that culture is an attraction for visitors and that tourism can be an audience development tool for the cultural community. Currently, cultural tourism tends to focus on historic Oxford. While Oxford's heritage will always be the primary attraction, Oxford also has a thriving contemporary cultural scene which is under-represented in the tourist offer.<sup>4</sup> We are working with Experience Oxfordshire and cultural partners to maximise the role that culture can play in Oxford's tourism offer. This has the potential to bring further benefit to the local economy.

### **7. Funding**

Since 2010, the Government - while acknowledging the ability of the cultural sector to deliver economic, social and wellbeing benefits - has cut funding to arts and heritage and is promoting philanthropy and increased earned income as the solution to this funding gap. In reality, many cultural organisations lack the capacity and connections to make philanthropy work for them, despite the fact that their work can have a transformative effect on the communities they engage. Even regional organisations with the skill and time to secure corporate and donor support struggle with 68% of all business investment and 90% of individual giving in the arts going to London. Continuing reductions to local government funding are also impacting on the ability to fund culture (and other services). Cultural

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<sup>4</sup> See Appendix 1 for examples.

organisations find themselves competing locally and externally for ever-decreasing pots of money.

Despite the current context of reduced national funding for culture, the City Council remains committed to funding arts and cultural organisations in Oxford, as well as supporting them to diversify their income streams and enhance their sustainability. Core funding from public sources helps to encourage innovation and new initiatives at the grass-roots level and to ensure that engagement with and participation in cultural activities is available to everyone, not just the wealthy.

Oxford City Council core-funded 10 cultural organisations in 2013/14 at a total cost of £274,000. With this support, these organisations leveraged in more than £6million of additional funding from other sources, including sponsors, national funding bodies and earned income. In 2014/15, the City Council added 2 organisations to the core funded group and increased the total awarded to £278,000.

Art projects and activities funded through Oxford City Council's open bidding, small grants and ward member budgets in 2013/14 totalled £17,761.20, providing support for activities including dance sessions for older people, free film screenings in parks and a women's music project in Cowley. In 2012/13, the City Council piloted the Culture Fund, awarding £6,000 to 6 projects that contributed to the delivery of the Culture Strategy. This support enabled these projects to leverage in an additional £85,188 from other sources, equating to more than £14 of extra funding and benefit for every £1 of Council investment. Results for 2013/14 Culture Fund grants are currently being collated. Since 2013, Oxford City Council has also allocated between £21,000 and £25,000 per year to Culture Fund grants and cultural development projects, supporting skills development and training for artists and funding projects which contribute to delivering Culture Strategy priorities. The City Council will build on these successful initiatives over the next three years.

#### **CASE STUDY: Arts Council England investment in Oxford**

Between 2015 and 2018, Arts Council England will invest £5.4m in its Oxford NPOs and a further £4.4m in the Oxford ASPIRE museum consortium. This investment will make a significant contribution to Oxford's economy and is dependent on the City Council's support for many of these organisations. Arts Council England explicitly state that they will not enter a position where they become the sole public funder in a local authority area. It is extremely positive to see City Council funding enabling Oxford's cultural organisations to leverage in such significant investment, providing jobs as well as high quality cultural activity for our residents and visitors.

#### **CASE STUDY: Investing in High Speed Broadband**

The City Council's Super Connected Oxford team have worked with cultural partners to raise awareness of the opportunities afforded by this DCMS funding to boost wireless infrastructure and broadband speeds, with museums and galleries in the city looking set to benefit from approximately £300,000 of support by the time the project is complete in 2015. Making wireless broadband freely available to the public in the city's cultural venues is expected to enable new types of audience engagement from internet of things installations to bespoke app tours.

#### **CASE STUDY: Investing in Oxford's cultural infrastructure**

Four members of the Cultural Partnership Group - The Museum of Oxford, the Story Museum, Oxford Playhouse and Modern Art Oxford - will be undertaking capital

developments over the next three years, which will further enhance Oxford's cultural infrastructure and provide more opportunities to engage with the city's arts and heritage offer. It has already been confirmed that three of these developments - Modern Art Oxford, Oxford Playhouse and the Story Museum - will benefit from a total of more than £4.6m in Arts Council England Capital Grants. This funding will enable these organisations to develop inspirational spaces and programmes. City Council support contributed to the ability of these organisations to leverage this additional funding, which will in turn contribute to their future sustainability. The planned Westgate development also looks set to further strengthen and connect cultural organisations and heritage sites including Oxford Castle with the city's retail centre.

## **8. Our priorities for culture**

The City Council has three key priorities for culture:

1. Support the sustainability of Oxford's cultural organisations and improve the skills and diversity of the city's current and future creative workforce.
2. Improve opportunities for Oxford's diverse range of communities to be inspired by culture and to engage actively in a range of creative activities.
3. Improve opportunities for young people to access and actively participate in cultural activities.

Underpinning each of these priorities is a commitment to work in partnership to explore the barriers to participation in cultural activities confronted by different sectors of the community and find ways of removing them.

### **1. Support the sustainability of Oxford's cultural organisations and improve the skills and diversity of the city's current and future creative workforce.**

Oxford's vibrant cultural sector makes a valuable contribution to the city's economy, providing local employment and attracting tourism income as well as creating world-class arts and heritage experiences for our residents. While national funding for arts and museums is under pressure, opportunities are growing for cultural organisations to diversify their audiences and incomes through digital engagement. The City Council is committed to supporting initiatives which embed resilience and enhance sustainability in our cultural organisations, develop a skilled workforce and provide diverse entry routes into cultural careers.

#### **Objectives:**

- I. Invest in cultural organisations and projects that contribute to the sustainability, resilience and growth of the city's creative economy
- II. Support the cultural sector to develop expertise and share best practice in areas of shared interest, for example, securing additional funding through philanthropy, developing a wider offer for cultural tourism, enhancing environmental sustainability.
- III. Support the growth of a diverse cultural workforce through initiatives such as creative and digital skills training, mentoring, professional development, volunteer schemes, creative apprenticeships and paid bursary/internship schemes.
- IV. Identify and broker opportunities for cultural organisations to deliver projects that contribute to City Council and County Council objectives or collaborate with Oxford's two universities, particularly in regards to education and libraries, health and social care, and strong and active communities.

## **2. Improve opportunities for Oxford's diverse range of communities to be inspired by culture and to engage actively in a range of creative activities.**

The City Council is committed to supporting cultural representation and engagement opportunities for all of Oxford's communities, whatever their age, physical ability, economic circumstances and ethnicity. Audience development and engagement is therefore central to the work of the City Council's Culture team and the city's cultural organisations. We support and create cultural activities which celebrate the diversity of our audiences and contribute to social inclusion and community cohesion.

### **Objectives:**

- I. Support and deliver high quality cultural activities and events that engage and celebrate Oxford's diverse communities, with a focus on increasing the number of people experiencing culture.
- II. Increase the amount of cultural activity that is captured, created, produced, shared and archived through digital technologies and platforms, and support partnerships which will enable more people to access this activity.
- III. Invest in projects and organisations which encourage diverse communities to shape and create their own arts and cultural activities.

## **3. Improve opportunities for young people to access and actively participate in cultural activities.**

Engagement with culture offers opportunities for young people to share their experiences with others, and can help to build social cohesion. Participation in arts and heritage activities can develop creative and technical skills, ambition, discipline, and the confidence necessary for future success. With the growth of cultural and creative industries providing exciting opportunities for youth employment, the City Council is committed to supporting Oxford's young people to be culturally engaged and creatively skilled. In order to maximise opportunities for Oxford's young people, the delivery of the Culture strategy will align with complementary Council programmes, for example the Youth Ambition strategy.

### **Objectives:**

- I. Support and deliver cultural activities for young people to increase levels of youth engagement with culture and enhance youth ambition.
- II. Invest in projects and organisations which provide opportunities for young people to create cultural programmes and participate in cultural planning.
- III. Encourage the take-up of Arts Award (both primary and secondary) by young people in the city and support schools wishing to become Artsmark accredited.

## **9. Monitoring and Evaluation**

The Culture Team's Service Plan, including milestones and performance indicators to measure success linked to the objectives of City Council staff and the Service Level Agreements of commissioned organisations, will underpin the Strategy. Delivery will be monitored monthly through CorVu targets, through 6-monthly reporting from funded organisations and quarterly updates from members of the Cultural Partnership Group. The Cultural Development Manager will undertake an Annual Review of activity to evaluate performance against the Culture Strategy objectives.

## **10. Conclusion**

Oxford City Council and its partners believe that culture and the arts play a profound role in shaping people's experiences and attitudes. We believe that access to high quality cultural experiences across a wide range of forms is the right of all our citizens. We believe that the proposals in this strategy will contribute to ensuring that these opportunities are open to all our citizens and not just the few.

## **Appendix 1**

### **Cultural Partnership Group members**

#### **Oxford City Council Culture Team**

##### *Cultural Development*

We provide core and project funding to cultural organisations and numerous arts and heritage activities each year through our Commissioning and Culture Fund grants. We introduced our CREATE crowdfunding events in March 2013, which have awarded more than £4,000 to winning pitches for cultural projects in Oxford, leveraging in audience donations and sponsorship from host venues. The team run Culture Forums to provide free skills development and training for the cultural sector in areas of shared interest such as fundraising. Working with Arts at the Old Fire Station, we also introduced the Arts Marketing Group in early 2014, which is a networking event designed for the sharing of best practice and identification of joint promotional campaigns.

##### *Cultural outdoor events*

Large scale outdoor and site specific events play an important role in building cohesion and celebrating life in our city. The Christmas Light Festival grew in 2013 to be the largest free event in the city. The City Council worked with more than 25 cultural organisations to engage 100,000 people over three days with hundreds of free arts and heritage activities across the city. Up to 20,000 people attend the city's May Morning celebrations each year, which are co-ordinated by the City Council with key partners. We also deliver the Lord Mayor's Celebrations in Gloucester Green, which has become a popular summer event for families, attracting more than 5,000 people each year.

##### *Dancin' Oxford*

Dancin' Oxford festival continues to receive enthusiastic support from partners including Oxford Playhouse, Pegasus and Oxford Castle, and has secured a £129k Arts Council England grant for 2014-16. The festival's year-round programme of work includes a Spring Festival, Summer outdoor programme and Autumn Family Dance Week. Baby Boogie, a fun and informal disco dance event for under-5's and their families, is a key feature of the festival's year-round programme. It has grown in popularity to become a bi-monthly event at Pegasus, alongside a growing outreach programme in Family Centres in Blackbird Leys, Barton, Donnington and Northway. In the first half of 2014, 85% of audiences for these events were first-time engagers in dance activity. Other dance development projects include Get Moving! (a project for over-50's which improves health and reduces isolation), Oxford Dance Forum's professional development programme and Dance for Parkinson's classes (in partnership with English National Ballet). The dance programme engages more than 7,000 people annually.

##### *Museum of Oxford*

The only museum dedicated to telling the story of the city and its people, the Museum of Oxford is undertaking a major capital development in order to meet increased demand for its services, represent the heritage of our diverse communities and enable public engagement with the City's Archives. Thanks to support from the Heritage Lottery Fund and Arts Council England, the Museum will celebrate its 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in 2015 with a year-long season of high quality arts events. The Old Museum space, which launched in January 2014, will showcase events to drive capital fundraising for the new museum during this anniversary season. Our plans for the Museum have attracted more than £85k in grant support from external funders to date. Cultural Development Manager Ceri Gorton, who will

be leading on the museum's development, has been awarded the Arts Council England Museums Fellowship for the 2014/15 Clore Leadership programme. The Museum is a development partner in the Oxford University Museums consortium.

### **The Oxford University Museums Partnership**

The University of Oxford is home to the Ashmolean Museum, Museum of the History of Science, Museum of Natural History and Pitt Rivers Museum. Free to enter, these museums welcome 2 million visitors through their doors each year and are the public face of the university. Custodians of vast and varied collections representing the natural world and the majority of world cultures, Oxford University Museums bring internationally significant cultural experiences to the city of Oxford. The museums recently secured renewed funding from Arts Council England as a Major Partner Museum service, with a mandate to facilitate broad access and play a leadership role within the cultural sector.

As part of their Major Partner Museum programme, Oxford University Museums work in a delivery partnership with the Museum of Oxford. The museums work collaboratively to engage Oxford's diverse community and realise the city's ambitious cultural aspirations. Having worked directly with every primary and secondary state school in Oxford in the last year, the partnership will actively reach into schools and communities, raising aspirations and supporting educational attainment across the curriculum and across all ages.

### **Oxford's Universities**

The University of Oxford has continued to make a strong contribution to the cultural life of the city and the region, working in collaboration with cultural organisations in the city including Pegasus Theatre and Modern Art Oxford. The Bodleian and University libraries receive over 100,000 visitors annually and take part in events such as World Book Day. Oxford University Press has partnered with the National Literacy Trust to develop innovative schools programmes aimed at raising boys' literacy levels and improving behaviour and engagement. Oxford Brookes University's Poetry Centre hosts an annual programme of events including exhibitions and community projects in the areas of poetry and science; poetry and the environment; poetry and business; and performance poetry in Oxfordshire. The City Council works with Oxford Brookes University to co-ordinate the city's Youth Ambassador for Poetry, a position held by Azfa Awad in 2013/14. The city also benefits from a range of educational outreach activities in the city, organised through the widening participation teams at The University of Oxford and Oxford Brookes University.

### **Oxfordshire County Council**

The County Council's cultural services – libraries, museums, archives and arts – remain committed to actively working in partnership with the city to improve children's and adults' literacy and skills; provide curatorial expertise to the Museum of Oxford and its redevelopment; help conserve and provide access to the city's archives; support the jointly funded organisations of Pegasus and OVADA; and work closely with members of the Cultural Partnership Group, in particular to strengthen the relationship with the LEP to emphasise the economic benefit of culture in the county and city. A significant improvement to the library provision in the city will be the presence of the county's Central Library (3rd busiest in the country) as part of the redevelopment of the Westgate Centre.

### **Arts at the Old Fire Station**

Arts at the Old Fire Station focuses on great art for the public, professional development for artists and building the confidence and skills of homeless people. Since opening in November 2011, the centre has developed an eclectic programme of events ranging from new writing to comedy to jazz nights to contemporary dance. They have produced ground-breaking visual and performing arts work for the public created by professional artists with homeless people. Exhibitions in the gallery prioritise work by early to mid-career artists and the shop sells unique hand-made work by designer-makers. Now a significant local venue for festivals and conferences, the Old Fire Station also offers a programme of regular events for artists of all disciplines to share ideas and works in progress. Over the coming years, they will launch a new 'Making Space' Programme which will explore the process of making; present more of the best theatre, music, dance and work which crosses art forms; and put down roots as a sustainable social enterprise.

### **Oxford Contemporary Music**

OCM is an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation, producing some of the highest quality and most innovative new music and sound events in the UK. It engages diverse local and national audiences with its work and aspires to deepen understanding and appreciation of musical cultures from within the UK and worldwide. Its raison d'être is to bring music, artists and audiences together in ways that encourage and create memorable and meaningful experiences for all. It aims to do this by presenting concerts, producing new work and programming education and outreach activity in Oxford, the UK and abroad. Working in partnership with the City Council's Culture team, OCM bring world-class contemporary music to Oxford audiences through free events such as the Christmas Light Festival and Lord Mayor's Celebration. Recent achievements include Mira Calix's Nothing Is Set In Stone (2012), Audible Forces (2013), and Nathaniel Mann's SAM Embedded residency (2013/14). Future plans include increased investment in new projects and the launch of OCM's associate artist and producer scheme. [www.ocmevents.org](http://www.ocmevents.org)

### **Film Oxford**

Film Oxford is a centre for film and digital media committed to building a strong community of local filmmakers and digital creators through its 'Learn, Network, Create. Exhibit' programme. The centre provides a range of accessible training for all and particularly invests in developing projects with marginalised communities. Over the last 5 years Film Oxford has built a reputation for its ground breaking work with artists with disabilities as well as its work with young filmmakers and digital creatives. A strong partnership with the BFI through 'Youth Academies' and 'Into Film' has offered unprecedented opportunities for a new emerging generation of young talent in the area. Film Oxford supports a number of local network groups, offers a production service for charities and 'not for profit' organisations and runs Location Oxfordshire - the locations website and information service for film and television companies looking to film in the area.

### **Ark T**

The Ark T Centre is a creative arts project with a recording studio for young musicians, rehearsal space for dance, artist studios, a café and an outdoor creative play garden. Opened in 1997, it is based at John Bunyan Baptist Church in Cowley. Nurturing the courage to create, and providing the right support to let freedom of expression flourish are central to the projects which attract around 700 people each week. The Centre employs six staff, has

four resident artists and a team of sessional workers. It runs a volunteer programme for skills-training and rehabilitation and works in close partnership with agencies which make referrals to its various programmes. The volunteer programme aims to help people experiencing difficult situations benefit from mixing with a wide range of other life experiences and be useful and productive to others. Volunteers provide food every day in the cafe; learn administrative and customer service skills; garden, and support creative workshops. These volunteers are referred to Ark T from agencies working with marginalised groups experiencing the difficulties of drug and alcohol abuse, homelessness, mental health difficulty or are NEET. Through their work at Ark T, they acquire skills and training as well as re-finding social and personal confidence to move on from challenging circumstances.

## **OVADA**

Established in 2004, OVADA is a dynamic, artist-led organisation, passionately committed to the development of creative practitioners and promoting access to high quality arts for all. From a designated warehouse space in central Oxford, OVADA creates a supportive environment for the transfer of skills, knowledge and experience. OVADA's artistic programme enables students to work alongside professional artists and practitioners through workshops, professional development talks and exhibiting opportunities. OVADA offers volunteering opportunities for people who are not in education or employment to gain experience in Arts Management, alongside formal work experience placements for City of Oxford College students. With support from Oxford City Council, OVADA is in the process of registering as an Arts Award provider. OVADA runs continuing practice courses through the alternative Warehouse Art School and weekly Drawing Classes for the community. Hosting four artist's studios and a multi-use project space, OVADA provides a base for Oxford Hackspace and collaborate with them on digital projects and public lessons in new technologies. OVADA also contributes to major Festivals such as Audiograft (Sonic Arts), Artweeks and the Christmas Light Festival.

## **Oxford Playhouse**

Oxford Playhouse is an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation. Positioned at the cultural heart of Oxfordshire, with the drive to inspire, engage and entertain a wide-reaching and diverse audience, Oxford Playhouse brings together artists and audiences to experience great live performance. Over 150,000 people each year experience the Playhouse's world class programme. The Playhouse plays an active role in the arts ecology within Oxford, the wider region and national cultural sector; presenting, producing and touring the highest quality middle-scale, small-scale and off-site theatre, developing relationships and partnerships which enable artists to make work and develop their practice, creating imaginative and ambitious opportunities for children and young people and embracing involvement by all in exceptional cultural experiences.

## **Cowley Road Works**

Cowley Road Works is a small, community based charity, which produces the annual Cowley Road Carnival in July and associated activity during the year. Its mission is to present Carnival in East Oxford as a means of celebrating community through culturally diverse arts, events and education. The Carnival held on 6 July 2014, from 12 noon to 6pm, attracted 45,000 people to the Cowley Road for wide range of music, dance, family activity, food and other stalls and the Carnival procession. The charity works in partnership with a number of arts and community organisations, individual artists, and businesses to prepare for and

produce the event, and welcomes new collaborations in order to enrich the quality of the Carnival experience and deepen its impact in the local and wider community.

### **Experience Oxfordshire**

Experience Oxfordshire is a not-for-profit partnership of businesses and organisations committed to realising Oxfordshire's potential as a cultural tourism destination. The mission is for Oxfordshire's name to be known throughout the world; to be synonymous with our rich, distinctive cultural heritage, our world class arts, tourism offer and welcome. Because of this people will want to enjoy more of the Oxfordshire experience, spend more and invest more. The aim is to achieve twice the forecast UK tourism growth rate, creating 5,800 new jobs by 2025. Experience Oxfordshire operates the Oxford Visitor Information Centre and undertakes a range of leisure and business tourism marketing activities reaching around 2.5 million customers a year. Improving cultural marketing and promotion, ticket sales, and helping organisations tap into the wider visitor market are priorities from 2014.

### **Modern Art Oxford**

Modern Art Oxford is an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation. Located in a rare industrial building in the centre of the City, Modern Art Oxford is one of the UK's leading contemporary art spaces with an international reputation for innovative and ambitious artistic programmes and community outreach. Celebrating the relevance of contemporary visual culture to society and Oxford today, the programme is shaped by a belief in dialogue between contemporary art, ideas and society. Celebrating its 50th anniversary in 2016, the gallery seeks to create new relationships between artists, audiences and communities at the beginning of the 21st century.

### **Pegasus Theatre**

Pegasus Theatre is an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation. Situated on Magdalen Road in East Oxford, Pegasus is a theatre with young people at its heart. In everything it does, Pegasus considers how to attract, engage and spark the imaginations of young people. This includes families with young children, schools, teenagers and students. Yet the work has a wider, crossover appeal, so that people of different ages can experience together art that is vibrant, inspiring, urgent and exciting. Pegasus is a meeting place between generations, cultures, artists and participants, a place of creative exchange and community. Within its 50 year history Pegasus has produced and programmed diverse and inspiring performances; pioneered the field of participatory arts; played a special role in supporting new and emerging artists; and provided training, education and career paths for young people.

### **The Story Museum**

The Story Museum celebrates stories in all forms, harnessing their power to teach and delight. Since 2005 we have been running storytelling projects in schools and the local community with proven impacts on language, empathy, confidence and imagination. In April 2014 we opened the first phase of our most unusual museum in Oxford in which people of all ages and abilities enjoy stories through exhibitions, talks and performances, and create stories of their own. Part of Oxford's West End regeneration, the museum is already a hub for our wider work with partners across Oxford city, county and beyond. Given successful completion of our £8m capital development by 2017/18, The Story Museum will be an

international centre of literature inspiring present and future generations and reaching well over 100K visitors annually.

### **Oxford Philomusica**

Since 2002, Oxford Philomusica has enjoyed a close association with the University of Oxford as its first-ever Orchestra in Residence. Oxford Philomusica is firmly committed to community and education work. Its projects in the community focus on taking music where access is not normally available, in areas of social and economic disadvantage. The Orchestra's work in special schools and hospitals has been honoured with a major award for its excellence and effectiveness. As part of its University Residency, the Orchestra collaborates with the Faculty of Music in educational programmes for the student community. Partnerships with Oxford City Council and Oxfordshire County Council provide performance and tuition opportunities to hundreds of talented young musicians. 2013 saw the Orchestra and its Director awarded with the City's Certificate of Honour, in recognition of the contribution they have made to education and performance in Oxford.

## **Appendix 2**

### **Reference Documents**

Arts & Business Private Investment in Culture Survey Report 2011/12, May 2013  
Arts Council England Report 'The Role of Diversity in Building Adaptive Resilience', May 2011  
Arts Council England Stakeholder Focus Research, April 2014  
Arts Council England Strategic Framework 2010-2020 'Great Art and Culture for Everyone', October 2013  
Audience Agency Area Profile Report for Oxford, May 2013  
Christmas Light Festival 2013 Evaluation Report, February 2014  
DCMS Report 'Creative Industries: Focus on Employment', June 2014  
DCMS Statistical Release 'Creative Industries Economic Estimates', January 2014  
Insight Oxford 'Needs Assessment for Older People in Oxford: A research project for Oxford City Council', October 2013  
Living in Oxford Talkback Survey Report, Spring 2014  
Oxford City Council Children and Young People's Plan 2014-17  
Oxford City Council Corporate Plan 2014-18  
Oxford City Council Youth Ambition Strategy 2013-17  
Oxford Strategic Partnership - Oxford Economic Growth Strategy, January 2013  
Taking Part Survey 2012/13 Annual Child Report, August 2013  
Taking Part Survey 2012/13 Quarter 4 Report, June 2013