

**Chief Executives' Group – North Yorkshire and York
8 November 2018**

A Cultural Strategy for North Yorkshire

1 Purpose of the Report:

To consider the proposal that local authority partners in North Yorkshire develop a new Cultural Strategy.

2 Background

- 2.1 High quality cultural activity is widely understood to be an essential component of successful and vibrant local communities and is shown to make a significant contribution to individual health and wellbeing. Culture and the arts are at the heart of what make local communities distinctive and special places and alongside creative industries have been an important component of social and economic development in York and North Yorkshire.
- 2.2 In recent years reduced local government funding and the need to deliver core services more efficiently has resulted in a reduction in the overall capacity to support and develop the arts and culture in North Yorkshire. At the present time, with the exception of Craven District, there are no formally adopted culture or arts strategies in the County and this is beginning to impact upon the area's ability to access funding and to influence key partner organisations, including the Arts Council, Local Enterprise Partnerships, Lottery Organisations, DCMS and BEIS.
- 2.3 This paper proposes that partners in North Yorkshire should work together to develop a new Cultural Strategy and that it should sit alongside work taking place in the City of York and across Leeds City Region and should also support local cultural strategies and plans where there are aspirations to develop them.

3 Arts and Culture in North Yorkshire

- 3.1 Since the early 2000's there has been significant investment in culture in York and North Yorkshire. Development projects including theatres, galleries, museums and festivals have taken place alongside the successful delivery of The Tour de France Grand Depart and Tour de Yorkshire cycle races. In North Yorkshire there are eight Arts Council National Portfolio Organisations (NPOs) three of which are in Scarborough, two in Harrogate, one each in Thirsk, Ripon and Gargrave.
- 3.2 Provision across the County is variable however and Selby District is notable for not having received any Arts Council funding during 2017/18 and has no NPOs. It is also apparent that within North Yorkshire the lack of clear strategic direction for Culture has in some instances been identified by funding bodies as a disadvantage when bidding for Arts Council and Heritage Lottery Funding. Again it is notable that Craven District and the Yorkshire Dales National Park has been successful in bidding for Great Places Funding linked to a clear rationale focussing on retaining and attracting younger residents through the Lakes and Dales Great Place project.

- 3.3 As the nature of employment continues to change and communication technologies increasingly become part of everyday lives there is likely to be greater emphasis on creative skills and creative industries. The Government's Creative Industries: Sector Deal, published in March 2018 identifies Harrogate as a location with the Country's 6th highest concentrations of creative industries with potential for significant growth and also recognises the value of film making at Church Fenton in Selby District. There are also clear economic links to tourism and wider local industries including catering and food production.
- 3.4 The changing face of the high street also means that cultural experiences are often expected to fill the void created by the impact of online retailing on the basis that leisure in its broadest sense can bring people back into town centres. Culture and the arts can also play an important role in shaping public spaces through temporary installations, festivals and events and through more permanent installations of public art. For example, a recent collaboration between Hambleton District Council and Chrysalis Arts at Sowerby to create a series of public art installations within new housing development.

4 Cultural Sectors / Issues

- 4.1 Across North Yorkshire there are a range of strategies and policies which indirectly recognise the importance of culture however, with the exception of Craven District, no specific cultural or arts strategies or policies are in place. NYCCs website currently hosts the York and North Yorkshire Cultural Partnership Strategy 2009-2014.
- 4.2 All of North Yorkshire's District Councils have economic growth plans and in some cases visitor economy strategies and it is understood that Selby District Council and Scarborough Borough Council through its Creative Driver Partnership, are both at the early stages of developing local cultural strategies. All of North Yorkshire's local Council Plans have priorities which include wellbeing, economic growth and quality of place and this identifies an initial framework from which to develop a new Cultural Strategy to support these aspirations.
- 4.3 City of York Council is currently developing a new Cultural Strategy and therefore it would be appropriate to recognise this. In addition Leeds City Region is also exploring its future approach to supporting culture, sport and major events and Leeds City Council and is continuing to work towards Leeds 2023 international cultural festival.
- 4.4 Initial conversations with the Arts Council have highlighted that there is a requirement to develop a clear strategy within North Yorkshire before any future significant local strategic cultural development aspirations are likely to be supported. The Arts Council has indicated that they would consider supporting the development work to deliver a new Strategy in North Yorkshire subject to match funding from partners and the submission of a suitable proposal. In the event that Arts Council funding was sought then this could be

used to develop local policies alongside a North Yorkshire overarching strategy.

- 4.5 Capacity to support cultural activity has also changed over the last decade and NYCC's focus has moved to its Stronger Communities and the Libraries Service which have both been successful in supporting culture and the arts as part of a wider agenda. Changes in personnel can have an impact on this approach however and there is a risk that over time the emphasis can change and thereby diminish support for culture and the arts.

5 Outline strategy proposals and scope

- 5.1 This paper proposes that partners in North Yorkshire (District Councils, NPAs and County Council) in consultation with the cultural sector, should work together to develop a new Cultural Strategy for North Yorkshire. The scope of the strategy can be defined by partners in further work however, following initial consultation with colleagues in the County an outline scope has been proposed as follows:

- The Strategy should be a high level overarching document which identifies aspirations consistent with the aims of all partner organisations particularly those linked to quality of place, sustainable economic growth and individual wellbeing.
- The geography of the strategy is the County of North Yorkshire but recognises the importance of the City of York, the East Riding of Yorkshire and Leeds City Region.
- The strategy should focus on those sectors which are currently under represented in terms of funding and investment specifically the arts, heritage, and creative industries.
- The development of the Strategy will be undertaken in consultation with the cultural sector by directly contacting key stakeholders in each of the Districts.
- The strategy should be jointly owned by all partners and enable local strategies, priorities and action plans to be developed within its framework. It will be developed by an Officers working group made up of lead officers for culture reporting to YNYER Directors of Development.

- 5.2 It is anticipated that the development of the Strategy would take 9-12 months and be completed by summer / autumn 2019.

6 Recommendations

- 6.1 It is recommended that an officers working group which includes all District Councils, National Parks, North Yorkshire County Council and City of York Council, is formed to develop a new Cultural Strategy for North Yorkshire.

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8 November 2018