

**West of England Local Enterprise Partnership
Board meeting – 6 October 2021**

West of England Cultural Compact

Purpose of the report

1. To set out the West of England Cultural Compact's approach to its (Cultural) Strategic Plan.

Recommendation

2. The LEP Board is asked to endorse the approach to the West of England (Cultural) Strategic Plan ("Cultural Plan"), which will include ambitious deliverables.

Background

3. The West of England Recovery Plan (September 2020) committed to a review of the draft Cultural Strategy, developed through 2019/20, to ensure every opportunity is taken to enable culture to thrive. The Cultural Compact was to be established as the vehicle through which to support the implementation of the West of England's recovery plans.
4. At the June LEP Board, members discussed the importance of transitioning from cultural strategy to a strategic plan. This work has been informed by a series of consultations and document reviews on place-based cultural plans, alongside our collective real time understanding of priorities and impact through the design and implementation of the region's (£2m) Cultural and Creative Recovery Fund interventions. In addition, the Cultural Compact's initial cross-sector sprints, themed around culture and placemaking, culture and social prescribing, culture and spatial planning, culture and tourism and the direct support of cultural and creative workers, have identified clear needs as well as opportunities.
5. The Cultural Plan will be structured to reflect regional ambition whilst recognising the importance of local delivery and impact. Areas of focus concern talent development, the freelance economy and start-ups, placemaking and wellbeing; with diversity, environmental sustainability and digital technology and innovation as cross-cutting themes.
6. Six strategic themes for the Cultural Plan, underpinned by investment approaches, are around:- building on the 'pollinator' ecology (nurturing, encouraging and connecting the key features of the region's cultural and creative ecology); using a strengths-based approach; reflective practice and co-production shaping how stakeholders work together; a whole ecology perspective; data informed; financial resilience of the sector.
7. The Cultural Plan will highlight the commencement of activities for the *short-term (12mths)* - building on Covid Recovery measures, prioritising freelancers, young people and wellbeing audiences; *medium-term (1-5yrs)* – additional emphasis on start-ups/ creative enterprise,

8. placemaking initiatives, communications and branding of the region, environmental initiatives; and *long-term (5+yrs)* – financial resilience initiatives.
9. The Cultural Compact will engage with a targeted and select number of individuals and communities from across sector, from across the region, prior to finalising the Cultural Plan. Some of those stakeholders are collaborators in the sprints (identified at item 4 above).
10. The high-level timeline sees the Cultural Compact sign off on both a detailed report and executive summary for the Cultural Plan at its meeting of 8 November, with a fully designed executive summary providing the basis for a communication tool from December onwards.
11. The Cultural Compact is looking to align with plans to double the Recovery Fund to ensure there is sufficient resource in place to kick start the implementation of the Cultural Plan.
12. The purpose of the West of England Cultural Compact is to focus and amplify the role of culture in the region, as a driver for economic success, placemaking, community cohesion and personal wellbeing. As well as developing a strategy and strategic plan that focuses funding and resource where it can have the greatest impact, the Cultural Compact is:
 - Working to understand and support the cultural ecosystem of the West of England.
 - Promoting policies and practice that regard culture as central to the purpose of local and regional government, business and community groups.
 - Influencing and attracting funding for cultural activities in the region.
 - Ensuring that the value of culture is promoted, and that the value of investment in culture is evaluated and publicised.
13. The Cultural Compact and strategy work is jointly funded by Arts Council England (ACE). Let's Create (2020-2030) Outcomes and Investment Principles (ambition & quality, dynamism, environmental responsibility, inclusivity & relevance) in part guides this work.
14. The ACE Delivery Plan (2021-2024), published on 16 September, sets out a detailed road map for implementing their strategy, with a focus on supporting cultural sector recovery from the pandemic and delivering against their stated Outcomes and (above-mentioned) Investment Principles. Fifty-four priority places are identified (including North Somerset). The Delivery Plan will be resourced through five main investment programmes for 2021/22 totalling over £500m, including a new Creative People and Places budget (£23m).
15. The national network of (ACE supported) Cultural Compacts is gathering momentum, intelligence and insights, facilitated both through ACE and the M10 Creative and Cultural community.
16. The West of England Cultural Compact and Cultural Plan will be formally launched in the autumn, as indicated in the West of England Business Plan (2020/21), by Metro Mayor Dan Norris and Dr Darren Henley, OBE, Chief Executive, Arts Council England.

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