

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE:	Education, Culture and Sport
DATE:	24 November 2009
DIRECTOR:	Annette Bruton
TITLE OF REPORT:	UK City of Culture
REPORT NUMBER:	ECS/09/069

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report brings to Committee an update on the 'UK City of Culture' feasibility study currently being undertaken. It also provides details of the outline proposal and an overview of subsequent feedback received from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). The report also outlines plans to bring a draft initial bid with potential resource implications to the Finance and Resources Committee on the 10th of December for consideration. Finally the report also outlines the role of a 'bid champion' and seeks the recommendation of the Committee of an appropriate individual.

2. RECOMMENDATION (S)

That the Committee:

- i. Endorses the work completed to date and instructs officers to formally contact external partners in order to finalise the draft initial bid.
- ii. Notes that a draft initial bid with resource and other implications will be presented to the Finance and Resources committee on the 10th of December 2009.
- iii. Identifies a potential 'bid champion' to lead the bid and endorses offering the position to the appropriate individual.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Aberdeen City Council's lead role in the development of the draft initial bid will be delivered within existing resources. Any further financial implications of delivering a UK City of Culture programme in 2013 will be included in the draft initial bid, and be brought to the Finance and Resources committee on the 10th of December for consideration.

A successful bid would result in existing cultural resources, where relevant, being focused on the UK City of Culture programme in 2013. In this financial year cultural grants expenditure of just over £400,000 resulted in projects to the total value of over £3.5 million being delivered.

5. SERVICE & COMMUNITY IMPACT

The scope of this opportunity covers culture in its widest sense including Arts, Sport, Technology, Education, and Heritage.

The report links to outcome 13 in the Single Outcome agreement - We take pride in a strong, fair and inclusive national identity.

Aberdeen's Cultural Forum has just launched its new Cultural Strategy, 'Vibrant Aberdeen'. This strategy is aspirational in its outlook, ambitious in its plans for improving the Cultural life of the City, and the social and economic benefits associated with the arts and cultural activity. The strategy will serve to enhance the City's strong Cultural tradition and develop the Cultural life and tourism for the benefit of practitioners, residents and visitors. The bid for UK City of Culture is probably the most important opportunity that will exist in Aberdeen over the next five years to drive forward the aims of 'Vibrant Aberdeen' and is key to the success of the Cultural Forum and The Aberdeen City Alliance's plans for Culture.

The report also relates to all the key aims set out in the Arts, Heritage and Sport strand of the Community Plan, and aligns with the following Cultural objectives set out in Vibrant, Dynamic and Forward Looking:

- Support arts venues to bring the best and most innovative performances to the City
- Recognise the contribution of Sport, Culture and Arts to promoting the area as a tourist destination
- Promote the City as a tourist destination
- Recognise the role of Sport and Arts in tackling anti-social behaviour

The process in developing a bid has already helped drive up the perception of culture in the North East of Scotland both by residents and visitors, and has identified a range of opportunities for working together cross local authority and the public and commercial sectors.

5. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal, resource, personnel, property, equipment, environmental or health and safety implications specific to this report.

6. REPORT

6.1 Outline Proposal

As part of the research into the feasibility of submitting a bid to become 'UK City of Culture' the DCMS presented all UK cities with the opportunity to submit an outline proposal. This outline proposal was structured through a ten page pro forma, which covered the potential cultural, social and economic objectives of any bid as well as requesting an outline of the city's cultural track record and potential sources of funding. Although not part of the formal application process it was determined that the process of developing an outline proposal and the subsequent feedback would be essential to the feasibility study and following

the Education, Culture and Sport committee on the 8th of October, an outline proposal for Aberdeen was submitted. This proposal was developed by a working group containing partners from across the city. Details of the Officer level UK City of Culture working group can be found in Appendix 1. The group is composed of Officers and partner organisations who are expert in their field and who are key to the development of the draft initial bid.

6.2 Outline Proposal Feedback

Feedback was received via email on the 30th of October, provided by Regeneris consultants on behalf of the DCMS. Although not in-depth the feedback did provide crucial information, including the statement that: *'your cultural track record clearly indicates you have the capacity to deliver a UK City of Culture standard programme'*. At the core of the feedback received was the requirement to develop promising but unrefined ideas and objectives, providing more detailed information to evidence points. This included developing what the key objectives of the bid would be, highlighting what is unique and special about Aberdeen, and detailing the organisations and partnerships involved in delivering the bid.

All of these issues along with outlining costs and potential sources of funding (which was also picked up on in the feedback) are currently being addressed in the development of a draft initial bid.

6.3 Draft Initial Bid

A draft initial bid is currently being developed and will be presented to the Finance and Resources Committee on the 10th of December for consideration. This bid is being led by the Culture and Leisure Strategy team, supported by a working group (Appendix 1) containing various partners from across the city.

The core purpose of drawing up this draft initial bid is to determine the feasibility of submitting an initial bid however the process brings a series of benefits for developing culture in Aberdeen. Already the focus and structures created by the UK City of Culture bidding process has increased partnership engagement with organisations and individuals around delivering Aberdeen's cultural objectives set out in the draft cultural strategy. This level of engagement is essential for developing the cultural strategy and its objectives and there is little doubt the focus of UK City of Culture continues to provide a vehicle to do this successfully. At a local level organisations from across the City have been actively involved through the working group and the Cultural Forum. On a national level, we have engaged with high-level Scottish Arts Council and Scottish Government officials to discuss our draft cultural strategy and the future of culture in Aberdeen.

The exploration into a bid has also hugely increased the level of public debate and consultation on culture in Aberdeen. Local and national media coverage has resulted in Creative Cultures Scotland establishing social networking sites with 100 discussion points posted on the first day alone. The working group is also currently conducting a survey based around increasing discussion about culture throughout the city. This engagement with cultural practitioners, residents and visitors is essential in planning the future of culture in Aberdeen and implementing the cultural strategy. Thus far the UK City of Culture has

provided a unique focus which has allowed this to be carried out at a level which has never previously been achieved.

There has been a range of articles over the past few weeks, in particular in the Press and Journal. The editorial of 7th November commented on the second report on the effect of the EU City of Culture on Liverpool: *'it is important to look beyond the simple profit and loss account when reaching a decision which will have long lasting repercussions on the City and the whole of the North East. What must also be considered, although the benefits are intangible, is the effect Year of Culture had on the morale of the people of Liverpool. The legacy is a City brimming with optimism and pride'*.

Further to this it is also providing an opportunity to analyse our current position in line with national criteria, providing a stimulus for new ideas and collaborations which can be implemented irrespective of any bid and ultimately laying a foundation of research, creative thinking, skills and knowledge, which are crucial in delivering on any future cultural aspirations. The work that has been carried out so far has proved to be essential in the development of the cultural strategy and will play a fundamental role in delivering the strategic objectives outlined in the document.

Specific to the UK City of Culture process, the overall research and drafting of a potential programme will allow for the cost implications to be determined and weighted against the potential benefits and risks for the city. It is these factors that will be considered prior to any recommendation to the Finance and Resources Committee on the feasibility of submitting a bid.

6.4 Initial Bid Themes

The development of the initial bid and the programme that would sit within this has focused around a title of, ***Aberdeen 2013: Energised by Culture***. This focus considers a vision of a society where culture permeates as a living force and leaves its mark on all human activity. The aspiration is to create a city infused by culture as an energising force for the City of Aberdeen and its people, as a platform for igniting joy, passion, debate and forging new ways of thinking and working that will shape the city locally, nationally and internationally and finally utilising culture not only as a lever for increasing the cultural awareness and participation of citizens but as a tool for promoting cultural, social, environmental and economic sustainability.

The theme of 'energised by culture' has led to development of themed years leading up to UK City of Culture year 2013. These are:

2010 **Vibrant**: Building the buzz through highlighting, networking, consulting and events such as Grays, Art Gallery 125th anniversary, Foyer 10th and potential mini SEAS.

2011 **Live**: 40 years of AIYF, Inspire and new multimedia festival

2012 **Light**: Drawing the focus to Aberdeen 2013

2013 **Energised through Culture**: UK City of Culture programme

2014 **Synergy**: Reflection and celebration

2015 **Inspire**: Presentation of evaluation

6.5 'Bid Champion'

The research carried out so far has clearly shown that should an initial bid be submitted then a 'bid champion' and other 'bid ambassadors' will need to be appointed.

The necessity of appointing such a champion after submitting an initial bid is to provide a public facing voice of the bid who will lead the development of the bid and handle any initial media engagements. Should a bid be short-listed in January then the role of the 'bid champion' would develop and involve heading up a senior level strategic team, which ensures the full engagement of all relevant local, national and international partners in developing a full bid. This potentially includes seeking external funding, liaising with national governing bodies, meeting with DCMS delegates to the city, national media engagements and as part of the bidding process presenting the final bid to the UK City of Culture advisory panel.

Following consultation with the DCMS and Scottish Government officials, it has been advised that a 'bid champion' should be a prominent political figure within the local authority. This individual should have the highest possible public profile, and have significant commensurate knowledge and experience of leading large-scale projects and media engagement across a range of portfolios.

7. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

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8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

'Vibrant Aberdeen' the Draft Cultural strategy for Aberdeen 2010 – 15
Appendix 1 – UK City of Culture working group

Appendix 1 - UK City of Culture - Initial Bid Working Group

Listed below are the members of the UK City of Culture initial bid working group. The group is constructed of individuals who not only represent key partners in the bid development but who possess a broad and comprehensive range of skills and experience which will be essential in developing a strong bid.

Members

Mark Armstrong (Chair) - Head of Service Communities, Culture and Sport, Aberdeen City Council

Mark Bremner – UK City of Culture Officer (Seconded), Aberdeen City Council

Lesley Thomson – Strategist (Arts, Culture, Heritage and sport), Aberdeen City Council

Gary Cameron - Culture & Leisure Strategy Officer, Aberdeen City Council

Neil Bruce - Service Manager, Aberdeen City Council

Victoria Livingstone - Marketing Manager, Aberdeen City Council

Christine Rew – Art Gallery and Museums Manager, Aberdeen City Council

Louise Scott – Head of Corporate Communications, Aberdeen City Council

Heather Farquhar – Skills and Business Training Manager, Aberdeen City Council

Duncan Hendry – Director, Aberdeen Performing Arts

Stewart Aitken – Chief Executive/Artistic Director, Aberdeen International Youth Festival

Phil Thompson – Co-ordinator, Creative Cultures

Fraser Lovie – Policy Advisor, University of Aberdeen

Alexandra Kokoli – Lecturer, Gray's School of Art, The Robert Gordon University