

Report of: Executive Member for Equalities, Culture and Inclusion

Meeting of: Executive

Date: 14 March 2024

Ward(s): All wards

Subject: Imagine Islington Culture Strategy 2024-2030

1. Synopsis

- 1.1. Imagine Islington is our new Culture Strategy that sets out the vision, priorities and action plan for supporting people to access Islington's culture offer especially under-represented groups in the borough until 2030. Championed by the Executive Member for Equalities, Culture and Inclusion and led by the Cultural Enrichment Team, the strategy has been created with input from a range of internal and external stakeholders from residents, cultural organisations, businesses and the voluntary sector, who are all passionate about bringing culture front and centre in Islington.
- 1.2. This strategy supports the council's vision in the Islington Together 2030 Plan to create a more equal future for our borough by 2030, by recognising and supporting how culture can drive change. The strategy also sets out governance, monitoring and review processes to ensure that the strategy's aims and actions stay relevant up to 2030.
- 1.3. The strategy highlights how culture can reduce stress and improve our quality of life, bring people together and connect the communities we live in to build civic pride and community cohesion, brighten the world around us and attract visitors and investment into the borough, and offer opportunities to learn skills and improve pathways into jobs.
- 1.4. Aligning with co-creative ethos of the Islington Together 2030 Plan, through the Imagine Islington engagement programme, we spoke to local people about what culture means to them and what helps and stops people doing what they love. We asked people for ideas of how we could work together to build a place where

everyone can enjoy the benefits of culture and creativity. From surveys and workshops to singing sessions and theatre, we listened to people in our communities.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. To approve the new Imagine Islington Culture strategy and action plan which will help bring about a shift change within the council, to elevate Culture as an intrinsic tool to achieving our core council priorities.

3. Background

- 3.1. Islington's last Arts Strategy 'Inspiring Islington' ran from 2017-2020.
- 3.2. Councillor Roulin Khondoker took over as Executive Member for Culture in May 2022 and has been championing culture as a priority for the council, alongside the Cultural Enrichment Team, leading to the development of this new strategy.
- 3.3. In 2023, The Cultural Enrichment team moved from Children Services to the Community Engagement and Wellbeing directorate, expanding their focus from Children and Young People through programmes such as 11 by 11 and Music Education Islington, to focus on all people in Islington.
- 3.4. The Imagine Islington engagement programme began in November 2022 and was designed to offer mass, open opportunities for feedback and challenge from the sector, services, and communities, as well as a targeted approach with marginalised groups. In total, we engaged over 1000 people and organisations, which included an open online survey which gathered 317 responses from local people, a survey with 22 LBI services, a cultural business survey and surveys and engagement workshops with 75 community and cultural sector organisations, and four targeted creative projects, which engaged 511 local people from groups that we know experience exclusion, marginalisation or barriers when it comes to cultural activities.
- 3.5. The new strategy has been built out of the findings of this engagement programme and has been further developed through deeper conversations with internal and external stakeholders, including workshops with residents, and community and cultural sectors, meetings with Corporate Directors and management teams, meetings with Executive Members, and a roundtable with community and cultural sector colleagues in November 2023 to present the first draft of the strategy. The strategy has been positively received by internal and external stakeholders, with new partnerships already emerging. Feedback has been included and represented in the strategy.
- 3.6. The vision for culture is for a more equal and connected Islington, where everyone can celebrate the joy of everyday creativity, experience the cultural activities they love, and live more independent lives. The lives of Islington people of all ages are enriched every day by culture and creativity reflecting who they are, where they

come from and who they could become.

- 3.7. This vision is delivered through five themes:
1. Connecting Communities
 2. Health and Wellbeing
 3. Children and Young People
 4. Inspiring Spaces
 5. Creative Enterprise and Pathways
- 3.8. To deliver this strategy requires a cross council and stakeholder way of working. Residents, Council services, cultural and community sector organisations, the NHS, schools, and Higher Education Settings and more, have a key role in owning and delivering this strategy.
- 3.9. The strategy attached will be designed to create a friendlier and more inspiring document. Plain text will also be hosted on the council website to ensure it is accessible. We will create a short two page 'easy read' version which will be translated into several different languages. Given our environmental ambitions, a limited number of strategies will be printed with most people accessing information online. Printed material will be prioritised for digitally excluded groups.
- 3.10. The strategy is scheduled to launch in June 2024, with an event that celebrates Islington, through its diversity and richness of culture and communities, its outstanding cultural organisations and venues of all sizes, vibrant community organisations, cuisines from across the world and a wealth of heritage.

4. Implications

4.1. Financial Implications

- 4.1.1. The Culture team sits within the Strategy, Policy and Equality department of the Community Engagement and Wellbeing directorate, with a core budget of £227,800 for 2023/24.
- 4.1.2. The culture strategy proposed within this report does not currently require any additional funding.
- 4.1.3. Any additional costs that may occur must be approved via a business case as they would be unfunded by the core budget.

4.2. Legal Implications

- 4.2.1. The council has wide powers to provide or arrange the provision of cultural activities and entertainments for its residents and visitors to the borough (section 144 and 145, Local Government Act 1972). The proposed culture strategy for Islington is conducive to the exercise of those powers (section 111, 1972 Act).
- 4.2.2. In the process of implementing the proposed culture strategy, the Culture team may enter into individual contracts or apply for grants to assist in delivering the strategy.
- 4.2.3. Such contracts must comply with the council's Procurement Rules and the Public Contracts Regulations 2015; and they must provide value for money for the council.

4.2.4. Any grants received by the Culture team must comply with the Subsidy Control Act 2022 where applicable.

4.3. **Environmental Implications and contribution to achieving a net zero carbon Islington by 2030**

4.3.1. The Creative Industries represent 6% of the Gross Value Added (GVA) of the overall UK economy and employs over two million people. Whilst many actors, musicians and creative leaders have been at the forefront of environmental campaigns and industry action, the creative Industries still contribute daily to the problems of sustainability.¹

4.3.2. At the heart of this strategy is the Council's Islington Together 2030 ambition to make Islington a more equal place in a responsible and environmentally sustainable way.

4.3.3. This strategy sets out to support an increase in cultural activities in the borough, so it is imperative we support organisations to reduce their environmental impact, both directly relating to this strategy and long term beyond 2030.

4.3.4. We will action this priority through four key areas:

1. Supporting Council services to deliver environmentally sustainable events, regularly sharing knowledge and resources.
2. Supporting Cultural organisations with and without venues to be low carbon and understand and reduce the environmental impact of their buildings and activities, including developing toolkits and exploring hyperlocal delivery models.
3. Supporting Cultural organisations to understand and empower behaviour changes of the people who engage with culture through their venues and events, to influence their decision making in areas such as travel and recycling.
4. Working with the cultural and community sectors to influence conversation, education and engagement linked to climate action, using culture and creativity as a tool to drive conversation and change within our local communities.

4.3.5. The delivery of the culture strategy itself may have a low negative environmental impact in areas such as workshop and event delivery, promotional activities and resources and staff travel. To mitigate this impact, some of the actions we will take are:

- Providing online workshops and meetings where possible to limit the need for travel.
- When events take place in person to support relationship building, we will hold them locally and will encourage people to find sustainable travel options such as walking or biking.
- We will limit printed material to only use, when necessary, e.g., for supporting residents who face digital exclusion or who have accessibility needs.
- We will share event and workshop resources with other services to reduce new purchases and will encourage 'BYO' and digital solutions that limit the need for

¹Creative Industries and the Climate Emergency: The path to Net Zero (2022, pg. 4-5) [Creative Industries and the Climate Emergency: The Path to Net Zero \(culturehive.co.uk\)](https://culturehive.co.uk)

use of paper and other non-reusable materials, and when avoidable, we will ensure materials are recycled.

4.4. Equalities Impact Assessment

- 4.4.1. The council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and to advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations, between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it (section 149 Equality Act 2010). The council has a duty to have due regard to the need to remove or minimise disadvantages, take steps to meet needs, in particular steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities, and encourage people to participate in public life. The council must have due regard to the need to tackle prejudice and promote understanding.
- 4.4.2. A Screening Tool was completed as part of the Equalities Impact Assessment. As this strategy is likely to have a positive effect on all sections of the community, with priority given to people from marginalised groups, a full EQIA was not required.

5. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

- 5.1. Launching this new cultural strategy for Islington Council will have a positive impact on the borough, most notably community cohesion, health and wellbeing of all local people, the attainment and future of our children and young people, the safety, welcome and aesthetic of the borough, improving access to skills and jobs and the future of our creative industries and the people who work in them. The strategy will help develop a thriving, diverse and inclusive local cultural sector, where people from all backgrounds are able to succeed in business and where we support businesses to grow sustainably and operate safely.
- 5.2. The strategy will strengthen our ability to work together within the Council and with key stakeholders and will highlight culture as a powerful tool for change to support the Council's priority to make Islington a more equal borough by 2030. By working together better, we can maximise resource and develop more sustainable ways of working to combat issues such as the cost-of-living crisis and climate change.
- 5.3. Its development has had a positive response from residents, Council Services, the Cultural and Community Sectors and Education and Youth Settings, as well as other people who invest in and have interests in Islington. New relationships, partnerships and opportunities have already begun, and we are all keen to begin working to make this vision a reality.

Appendices (Separate Document):

- Imagine Islington Culture Strategy 2024-2030

Final report clearance:

Authorised by Executive Member for Equalities, Culture and Inclusion

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