

City of London Corporation Committee Report

Committee(s): Culture, Heritage and Libraries – For Information	Dated: 9 May 2025
Subject: Developing the Cultural Strategy – Progress update February to April 2025	Public report: For Information
This proposal: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Delivers on Corporate Plan 2024-29 outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Diverse Engaged Communities• Vibrant Thriving Destination• Flourishing Public Spaces• Providing Excellent Services.
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	No
If so, how much?	N/A
What is the source of Funding?	N/A
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?	N/A
Report of: Gregory Moore, Deputy Town Clerk	
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Summary

This report provides an update on activity between February and April 2025 on the development of the Cultural Strategy and provides a forward look for the delivery plan to January 2026.

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to receive the content of this report for information.

Main Report

Background

1. In December 2024, Member of Culture, Heritage and Libraries Committee (CHL) approved the [Terms of Reference](#) for developing the Cultural Strategy.
2. Following a procurement process, in February 2025 CHL Committee were informed that Things Made Public (TMP) and The Audience Agency (TAA) had been contracted to deliver the work. With TAA leading on the audience insights work and TMP leading on the Cultural Strategy development.

Current Position

3. This report provides a summary of the work undertaken between February and April 2025 on the development of the strategy since the appointment of the two consultants.
4. The work undertaken includes:
 - Programme set up
 - Research and insights phase
 - Audience insights phase one
 - Consultation and stakeholder engagement phase
5. **Programme set up** – took place in February with contracting, finalising scope of work and initial timeline development. This included kick off meetings between the consultants to ensure alignment and collaboration between the two workstreams.
6. **Research and insights phase** – carried out by TMP, supported by the Culture Team and parallel audience research by TAA between February and April. Work included:
 - Desk based review of the City of London against key policy and strategy documents.
 - Development of a key cultural infrastructure map within the City of London to ascertain current provision, further developing the work of the Cultural Planning Framework.
 - An audit of key cultural initiatives planned in the City over the coming years.
 - Analyses of Open Grants data and City of London Corporation cultural funding.
 - SWOT analysis of how culture can best contribute, support and amplify the wider strategic aims of the City Corporation.
 - Analyse of creative industries employment and density in the City of London.
7. From this work, seven themes were identified to help guide the development of the strategy into the next phase and form discussion points and an evidence-base for the consultation phase. Identified emerging themes for consideration from this work include.
8. **Where Culture Means Business:**
 - Igniting forces between business and culture creating genuine cultural and commercial sector collaborations.
 - Maximising rapidly growing creative industries sector in the City to create and promote creative clusters and the creative image of the City.
 - Change perceptions of culture in corporate environments and generate cultural life to attract workers.
9. **Seeding a Creative Ecosystem:**

- Maximise potential to grow an ecosystem of independent culture to create a healthier environment for grass roots cultural and larger cultural institutions to mutually thrive.
- Provide a more supportive environment for freelance artists and creatives to generate a more vibrant cultural community.
- Prioritise funding towards more sustained relationships with smaller organisations to support self-sustaining organisations in the City.

10. City of Firsts

- Attract more children, families and young people into the City through youth-friendly approaches to culture including weekend activity and culture in the public realm.
- Address challenges regarding route progression into creative careers through established learning and engagement programmes.
- Improve equity in access to cultural experiences for children and young people in the City of London and Inner London.

11. Old City, New Stories

- Reevaluating the City's heritage and telling its stories from the diverse perspectives of its people throughout history provides the City the chance to create a more inclusive and equitable cultural future.
- Put cultural organisations led by marginalised and under-represented groups at the centre of the next iteration of the City. With a stake in long-term decision making to amplify and express perspectives and voices that have previously been marginalised.
- Work with City businesses to create more inclusive and equitable working environments where people of all backgrounds feel recognised, respected and a sense of ownership.

12. World in One City

- Play a central role in exporting London and UK culture across the world, promoting cultural exchange and welcoming global cultural talent to the City.
- Use specialist expertise in importing and exporting culture to both grow talent in the city and attract talent inwards.
- Develop strategic partnerships with private sector partners who have a shared interest in increasing international visitors.

13. Building for the Next Century

- Build long term strategic thinking about the cultural offer including infrastructure but also organisational sustainability and business models.
- Establish substantial collaborations between the City Corporation, developers and cultural partners to deliver impactful and sustainable cultural offers.
- Become a global thought leader through developed research understanding of the benefits of cultural infrastructure to working environments and corporate ESG priorities, meaning shared commitments to monitoring, evaluation and impact assessments.

14. Culture that Cares

- Create a superpower from the wellbeing benefits of engaging in creative activities, heritage, volunteering and green spaces unlocking better mental health and ensuring the City is somewhere you don't just experience culture, but make it.
- Ensure the cultural offer directly benefits City communities to support their everyday creativity and plays a meaningful role in their lives.
- Develop partnerships between employers, health providers and cultural partners to unlock the wellbeing benefits of creativity and evidence impact.

15. The full TMP Insights and Research report can be found in Appendix 1.

16. **Audience Insights phase one** – carried out by TAA between Feb and March with the analysis of existing data including:

- Analysis of 47 documents containing audience insights and data from a range of City organisation between 2017 and 2024 to:
 - i. Understand the breadth of existing research - population, themes, quality and relevance.
 - ii. Add value where possible through deeper analysis.
 - iii. Synthesis findings relevant to the strategy development.
 - iv. Identify gaps for phase 2 primary research.

17. Existing data included post event surveys, qualitative data, footfall and credit card analysis, data from culture, leisure and retail sectors, ticketing data from City cultural venues and Audience Spectrum/Census analysis.

18. Headlines from the research included:

- Location - 62% of current audiences are from London, 23% rest of the UK, 12% international. The London catchment skews towards the East.
- Demographics and profiles – majority are liberal, well-off arts-goers, leaning towards the older age range. Large majority of audiences do not have children and are affluent.
- Market Opportunity – 200k ticket bookers per annum with locals booking more often.
- Motivations and behaviours – 6-12% come for culture, 25-39% to explore the area, 34% want more events and 23% want more culture. The top cultural motivator is to 'do something different'. High frequency of ticket booking.
- Perceptions – initial analysis is inconclusive. Some view as expensive, others as welcoming. 83% see it as distinctive.

19. The gap analysis identified the need to focus on the following areas in the second phase of primary research to support the development of the emerging themes:

- **Workers and businesses** – understanding the value of culture to employers to shape ideas for development and partnerships. The cultural interests of City workers, their interest and uptake in current City cultural offer, their wider cultural interests and the intersection of both. It is essential to understand the viability of this segment for audience development and what form activities would take, with a focus on drawing out data on the cultural needs of international businesses, workers and visitors.

- **Young People** – insights regarding how, why and how many young people engage with culture in the City. A schools engagement report and schools target area report would identify pupils reached by current engagement and schools of interest.
- **Hyper local communities** – hyper local hot spot analysis to understand more about the needs and interest of communities and match potential activity.
- **Peripheral Communities** – identify further insight into perceptions of the City, levels of interest in the history and heritage and how these can be drawn upon.
- **Cultural tourist market** – understand more about the scale of the cultural tourist market, hotspots and matching offers.
- **Long term view** – explore more on population change and changes in future audiences.

20. The full TAA report can be found in Appendix 2.

21. TAA are currently developing the proposal for how the second phase of the primary research will be carried out based on the gap analysis.

22. **Consultation and Stakeholder Engagement** – an extensive consultation and engagement plan started in March. With a strong and inclusive process at the core of the work to capture insights from those who engage with culture in the City.

23. The consultation plan sets out the approach to gather input from a diverse range of voices, ensuring the strategy is co-created with the people and organisations it will serve. It has been designed to be accessible, engaging and representative, using a combination of creative engagement, structured dialogue and collaborative workshops.

24. Consultation methods include:

- **Creative consultation** with the public in the form of two artist residencies in the City delivering creative activity to ‘meet people where they are’ and engage in conversation to provide a qualitative snapshot of perceptions of the City cultural provision and aspirations.
- Online and in person **survey** to capture broad, high-level feedback from a wide range of participants generating quantitative data on cultural provision, barriers to engagement and aspirations.
- **One to one conversations** to gather nuanced insights and specialist perspectives with key stakeholders.
- Ten themed **focus groups** designed to engage targeted sector groups (including residents; City workers; young people; place, leisure and tourism; global exchange; creative enterprise; culture; heritage; cultural investment; and property development) in structured discussions to gather detailed information, test emerging themes and recommendations and build relationships with partners.
- **Go and See visits** open to anyone who would like to feed into the process, delivered on a first come, first serve basis. Participants will have the opportunity to explore a place in the City they would not normally have

access to with a tour, followed by a creative session, with strategy presentation and Q&A.

- Weeklong **Out and About visits** where TMP will engage with stakeholders who have been unable to engage through other methods of consultation but have shown a keen interest to involved.
- Open resident forum **City Question Time** to provide an update on strategy development, share key findings and respond to questions.
- **Cultural Strategy Development Group (CSDG)** bringing together a core group from culture, business, education, heritage, and tourism to co-create and refine the strategy through a series of interactive workshops. To ensure cross-sector collaboration and shared ownership of the strategy, creating a framework that is both ambitious and achievable.
- City Corporation **Officer workshops** to ensure joined up internal collaboration in both the development and delivery of the strategy.
- City Corporation **Member sessions** (including CHL and the Lead Member for Resident Engagement) outside of the committee forum to update on the development of the strategy and provide feedback with a Q&A session. To ensure Members are kept informed at key points in the development of the strategy and provide the opportunity to input and feedback.

25. To date the following activity has been delivered:

- Ten themed focus groups engaging 179 participants in participatory workshops.
- Survey distributed through City Corporation and partner digital channels and networks of 250k+ subscribers including the Corporation's Corporate and visitor facing channels, City resident comms, City business networks (City Belonging/BIDS/SBREC/CHARN), pan London partners (London and Partners), on the City Corporation intranet and through the Town Clerk's bulletin. Printed copies distributed to City venues and attractions (CIC, Guildhall Art Gallery, City Libraries, community centres, housing estates etc).
- 12 one-to-ones booked with national and London based organisations.
- One artist residency from the creative consultation programme completed with results and findings to come.

26. The full consultation plan for delivery is outlined in Appendix 3.

Proposal

27. Officers continue to implement the delivery plan for developing the strategy.

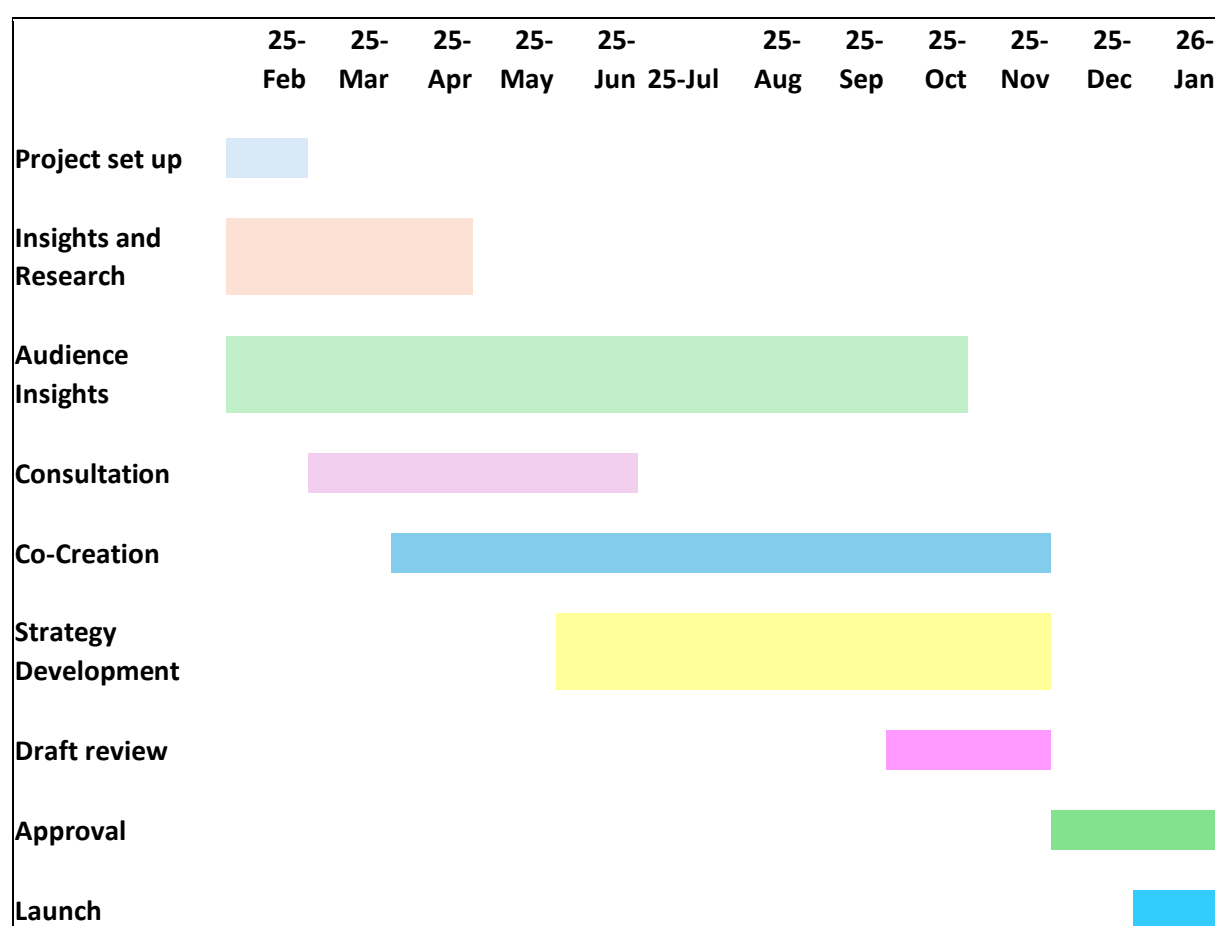
28. The next stages include:

- **April – June: Consultation plan** – continued delivery of live survey, one-to-one's and second public creative consultation.
- **April – October: Co-creation engagement** – delivery of Cultural Strategy Development group workshops; internal officer workshops and Member sessions.
- **June – November: Strategy development** – definition and vision for culture, refining cultural priorities and developing cultural framework, developing a short to long term list of recommendations, outlining funding

opportunities, developing a Theory of Change with intended outputs, outcomes and impacts, identifying quantifiable, comparable and baseline KPIs and milestones and developing guidelines for monitoring and evaluation.

- **October – November: Draft Reviews** – producing two drafts of the full strategy document for stakeholder review ahead of submission to committee for approval.
- **December – January:** Approvals - final strategy approval for decision at Committee and Court of Common Council.
- **January:** Launch - stakeholder celebration and launch event with press announcement and distribution of the new strategy.

29. The timeline to deliver the outlined work above is between April 2025 and January 2026. Launching the new five-year strategy at the end of January 2026. A timeline overview is detailed below:



30. In addition to the overall timeline a detailed governance plan has been developed to ensure the strategy has Chief Officer and Member input. Key internal governance processes include:

- Attending the Strategy Forum for peer review and feedback.
- Attending the Executive Leadership Board to present on key developments and receive input and feedback.
- Attending the Senior Leadership Team meetings ahead of Committee.

- Attending CHL and any other relevant Committees with updates and for approval throughout the development.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

31. Strategic implications – the Cultural Strategy spans four areas of the Corporate Plan, Diverse, Engaged Communities; Flourishing Public Spaces; Providing Excellent Services and Vibrant Thriving Destination.
32. Financial implications – In November 2024, a bid of £45,000 to the 2024/25 Policy Initiative Fund, categorised as ‘Supporting the development of a Culture Strategy’ and charged to City’s Estate was approved. Any additional budget (for an expanded scope of work or implementation) would be funded from local risk allocations.
33. Resource implications – currently being delivered within existing culture team resource, supported by two external specialist consultants.
34. Legal implications – None identified.
35. Risk implications – None identified.
36. Equalities implications – None identified. Any emerging work with equalities implications would be handled through the City Corporation’s existing equalities-related groups.
37. Climate implications – None identified.
38. Security implications – None identified.

Conclusion

39. The development of a new Cultural Strategy is underway with an extensive consultation plan, co-creation methodology and internal governance processes mapped out at key milestones.
40. The next phase is being implemented to ensure it is co-created with the people and organisations it will serve.
41. Members will receive updates through informal sessions and the formal Committee structure throughout 2025 with the approval of the final strategy at the end of the year.
42. The launch date for the strategy is planned for end of January 2026.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Cultural Strategy Research and Insights Report
- Appendix 2 – Cultural Strategy Audience Insights Report – Existing data and gap analysis
- Appendix 3 – Cultural Strategy Consultation Plan

Background Papers

[Developing the cultural strategy - Terms of Reference](#), Cultural, Heritage and Libraries Committee, Monday 9 December 2024

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