

Committee(s): Culture, Heritage and Libraries Committee	Dated: 22/09/2025
Subject: Developing the Cultural Strategy – progress update June to August 2025	Public report: For Information
This proposal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivers 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?	£
What is the source of Funding?	N/A
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?	No
Report of: Greg Moore, Deputy Town Clerk	
Report author: Emma Markiewicz, Head of Profession for Culture Omkar Chana, Interim Culture Director	

Summary

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on activity between June and August 2025 on the development of the Cultural Strategy and provide a forward look on the delivery plan for 2026.

Recommendation(s)

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

Main Report

Background

1. The Destination City – Independent Review 2024 recommended the reframing of Destination City as an opportunity for the City Corporation to create and deliver a world class cultural strategy. The review states “*if any local authority area needs a culture strategy, it is surely the City of London*”, with its unique depth and range of cultural and heritage attractions.

2. In December 2024, the Culture, Heritage and Libraries Committee (CHL) approved the Terms of Reference for developing the Cultural Strategy. The CHL committee is responsible for the governance to develop and implement the Cultural Strategy.
3. In July 2025, the Culture, Heritage and Libraries Committee received a report on the progress of the Cultural Strategy from April – May 2025, a period which involved significant internal and external consultation with stakeholders.
4. An extensive process of consultation has been carried out which was led by our consultants (Things Made Public). The views of many stakeholders have been consolidated through a programme of engagement. This is in line with the approach to co-create the Cultural Strategy, involving those that may also play a part in its implementation.
5. Previous updates to the CHL Committee have included the following interim reports, included here for reference and hyperlinked for ease of access.
 - [Research and Insights report](#)
 - [Consultation Findings report](#)
6. To complement the strategy development, The Audience Agency (TAA) was commissioned to deliver a workstream on audience insights to gain a comprehensive understanding of our existing audiences, identify potential growth markets, and uncover opportunities within current audience segments. The first phase of this work reported on relevant findings in terms of the market size, perceptions of the City as a place to experience culture, and activity preferences. The report is included here for reference and hyperlinked for ease of access.
 - [Audience Insights report – Existing Data and Gap Analysis \(phase 1\)](#)
7. Phase 2 of the audience insights work was planned with a focus to fill in gaps of knowledge about audiences for cultural activity in the City of London including size of market, perceptions of the City as a place to experience culture and activity preferences.

Current Position

8. This report provides an update on continued activity on the Cultural Strategy development between June – August 2025.

Definition, Commitment and Priorities

9. The latest draft of the Definition, Commitment and Priorities is provided in Appendix 1. Final versions will be included in the Cultural Strategy.
 - a. **Definition** – what Culture means to the City.
 - b. **Commitment** – a set of statements that encapsulate the different ways in which we think about culture and what this means for the Cultural Strategy (previously referred to as Manifesto).
 - c. **Priorities** – the headlines and logical structure that have emerged from the consultation process which describe what we want from the Cultural Strategy, and what we want to do to make it a reality.

10. Ongoing consultation has led to the second iteration of the Definition, Commitments and Priorities that will form the basis of the Cultural Strategy. Draft versions of these three key areas have been tested through several workshops with stakeholder groups that included: the Culture Strategy Development Group; Officer Group and CHL Members; as well as the City Corporation's Executive Leadership Board and the Strategy Forum. The versions in Appendix 1 are the result of internal and external feedback and represent a collective point of view.

Audience Insights – population survey

11. Following the proposal for the second stage of the Audience Insights programme (i.e. a population survey), The Audience Agency has completed this work and the phase 2 report is included in Appendix 2.
12. Headlines from The Audience Agency's Population Survey report include:
- **Where is the potential market and how big is it?** The City's cultural market spans London, Essex, large parts of Kent, Surrey and Sussex, as well as counties to the west and north and the home counties. The market size for arts and culture activities is estimated to be 10.2 million people resident in this target area.
 - **How frequently do audiences engage?** Overall, audience interest varies significantly by experience type. Audiences engage in cultural activities 3 to 4 times every two years, mostly occasionally; only a few "super-engagers" visit frequently.
 - **What are potential audiences interested in?** Museums attract the largest share of interest: 43% visited in the past two years, and 54% said they might visit one in the City. About a third attended heritage sites and over a third attended performing arts, with nearly half expressing interest in major City venues. Around 40% showed interest in pop-up markets, while niche activities like literature events or creative workshops drew only small, single-figure audiences.
 - **How interested are potential audiences in the City?** The City commands a large, willing cultural audience, but it must compete with wider London and the South East. Audiences seek unique experiences – whether lively, historical, calm, or community-based – and the City can meet these diverse demands by amplifying its history while cultivating a vibrant, urban vibe. People currently describe the City most often as "historic," "interesting," and "expensive," with "vibrant" and "creative" ranking lower, so repositioning its contemporary appeal remains essential. Positively, few people view it as "boring," "generic," or "confusing".
 - **Are potential audiences all the same?** The research identifies distinct audience segments for the City's cultural offer, including the core arts market, City workers, local residents, and cultural tourists. It highlights a divide between those drawn to contemporary and emerging culture and others, with differences shaped by taste, geography, and demographics. Additional segments can be identified by their interest in history, family friendly offers, and participating in their community.

13. Phase 2 was designed to build on findings and information gaps from analysis of previous surveys and ongoing work for the Cultural Strategy. It sought in particular to understand who might be “in the market” for the City’s cultural offer, and to identify the preferences of potential audiences, including by age, ethnicity, and whether or not they work in the City. It also compared the appeal of the City as a cultural destination with surrounding cultural neighbourhoods.
14. Phase 2 involved a panel survey of audiences within the catchment geography for City culture (identified in phase 1) with targeting and quotas to reach a sample group of 1,363 representative of the population, including age-groups, ethnicity, geographic location, gender, national statistics socio-economic classification (NS-SEC) category and education level. This allows a high level of confidence in the accuracy of the survey at both a general population level and for individual characteristic groups.

Proposals

Definition, Commitments and Priorities – next steps

15. In developing the Cultural Strategy, up till now our three stakeholder groups have met independently. Next, we will bring everyone together to share perspectives and build on the conversations and collaborations emerging, to move from ambition to delivery. This will be the last formal session with the Culture Strategy Development Group.
16. An additional workshop for CHL Committee Members is planned for 12 September as an opportunity to discuss the developments of the strategy in more detail.
17. A final ‘Go and See’ visit is planned which invites new and engaged stakeholders for a tour of Guildhall Art Gallery and London’s Roman Amphitheatre to share strategy progress and gather their views.
18. The documents in Appendix 1 have been shared for feedback with Officers (ELB and Strategy Forum Workshop participants), Go & See participants, Focus Group participants, Creative Consultation partners and individual participants of the One-to-One sessions. This enables us to keep those that have engaged with the development of the strategy so far, updated with our progress.
19. The next step will involve using the Priorities to build a set of recommendations. These will comprise the what (‘Focus Areas’) and the how (‘Action Plan’). The Action Plan will identify the work that needs to be carried out to implement the strategy. These plans will be built in collaboration with internal departments and external partners, and this will be an opportunity to feasibility test ideas.
20. The recommendations will be developed through a series of focussed one-to-one conversations and workshops involving both internal departments and external stakeholders. These sessions will provide the necessary time and space to create the Action Plan in a way which:
 - Inspires a shared ambition across all parties

- Establishes effective collaborative working practices
- Maps out resource needs and potential fundraising opportunities.

21. Without sufficient time dedicated to this phase of development, the Action Plan risks being developed without full partnership and alignment, potentially undermining its long-term impact and sustainability.

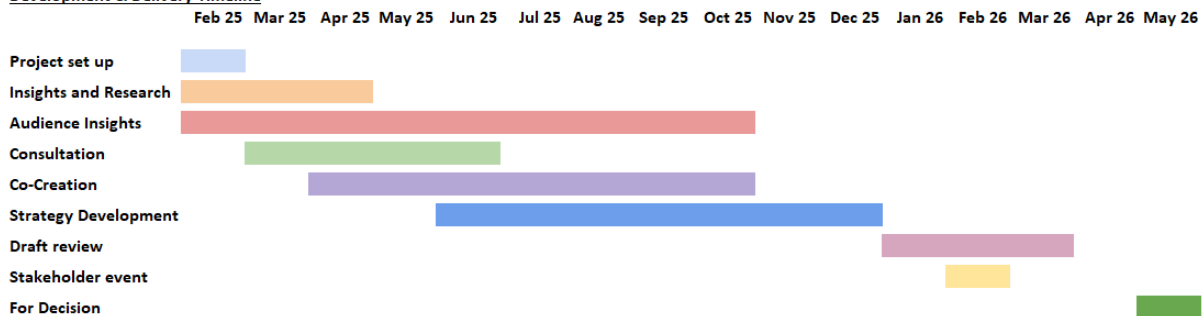
Cultural Strategy – timetable

22. The timeline has been revised and is set out below, with some key highlights:

- All Member engagement on the draft will take place through drop-in sessions during February – March 2026. The drop-in session format has worked well in the past for engaging broader than those Members that will have direct involvement via committee and it will be a good way to continue to raise the profile of culture.
- The CHL committee event in February 2026 will be a celebratory moment to thank our stakeholders and collaborators such as the Culture Strategy Development Group for their role in the development.
- The final Cultural Strategy will be submitted 'For Decision' to the CHL Committee in May 2026.

Developing the Cultural Strategy

Development & Delivery Timeline



Audience Insights – next steps

23. Preparation is underway for phase 3 of the Audience Insights work. The Audience Agency's next phase of work will focus on deeper engagement and analysis to test and develop emerging priorities and recommendations of the strategy. It will provide content that feeds into the monitoring & evaluation and communications & audience development activities, including:

- Developing an initial market segmentation of City culture audiences based on analysis and survey work to date, to support the development of more targeted communications and audience development plans.
- Developing an audience framework that will feed into the monitoring and evaluation of the Cultural Strategy including audience-related KPIs.
- Hosting focus groups with key target audiences to test specific proposals of the Cultural Strategy drawing out quotes that can influence proposals and indicate support.

- Planning for monitoring and research that guides the City and the partners of the cultural strategy on how to share and use audience data to become more effective at evaluating projects, knowing its audiences and informing its future programmes.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

24. **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.
25. **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.
26. **Resource implications** – the Cultural Strategy is being developed using existing Culture team resource, supported by two external specialist consultancies (Things Make Public and The Audience Agency).
27. **Legal implications** – none identified.
28. **Risk implications** – none identified.
29. **Equalities implications** – the Cultural Strategy will have an impact on the public, cultural institutions, residents and partners in the Square Mile. There are several strands of the Cultural Strategy in development which seek to promote and create cultural opportunities and experiences to those with protected characteristics, who may currently experience barriers to access. Officers will be working with EEDI colleagues to assess whether this strategy warrants an Equalities Impact Assessment or whether this is more appropriate for individual projects that come out of the Cultural Strategy. In either case, an explanation of how the Culture Strategy complies with our Public Sector Equality Duty 2010 will be considered.
30. **Climate implications** – none identified
31. **Security implications** – none identified

Conclusion

32. Significant progress has been made on the development of the Cultural Strategy with key areas (i.e. Definition, Commitments and Priority) now near final after having collaborated widely and received rigorous feedback.
33. Work on the Cultural Strategy continues to progress in line with the agreed Terms of Reference and governance arrangements. The draft Definition, Commitment, and Priorities have been refined through consultation with stakeholders, and the findings from the Audience Insights work are providing a strong evidence base to inform the next stage of the audience development work.

34. The forthcoming phase will focus on progressing the Priorities and creating clear recommendations and actions, ensuring that delivery is both achievable and aligned with the City Corporation's objectives, including materials that can feed into the monitoring, evaluation and communications that will be required to implement the Cultural Strategy.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Definition, Commitment and Priorities (draft)
- Appendix 2 – Audience Insights Report – Population survey (phase 2)

Background Papers

- Developing the cultural strategy - Terms of Reference
 - [Appendix 1 – Terms of Reference](#)
 - 9 December 2024, Cultural, Heritage and Libraries Committee
- Developing the Cultural Strategy – Progress update: February to April 2025
 - [Appendix 1 – Cultural Strategy Research and Insights report](#)
 - [Appendix 2 – Audience Analysis – Existing data and Gap Analysis report](#)
 - 9 May 2025, Cultural, Heritage and Libraries Committee
- Developing the Cultural Strategy – Progress update April to May 2025
 - [Appendix 1 – Consultation Findings report](#)
 - 7 July 2025, Cultural, Heritage and Libraries Committee

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