

## ▶ Draft Cultural Strategy Consultation

### ▶ A response from London Councils

London Councils represents London's 32 borough councils and the City of London. It is a cross-party organisation that works on behalf of all of its member authorities to make the case for powers, freedoms and resources to best serve the needs of London's residents and businesses.

#### **1. What impact does the capital's culture have on quality of life for Londoners? What could the Mayor do to amplify and support these areas?**

London Councils welcomes the opportunity to respond to the draft Cultural Strategy. The London boroughs have a strong interest in enabling all Londoners to benefit from the capital's cultural offer. Culture provides many benefits to the quality of life in Londoners both economically and socially. It can play an important role in driving regeneration, place-shaping, improving local economies and town centres and creating job opportunities. Culture also contributes to individual health and wellbeing and can support a sense of community and inclusion. London's cultural officer is also an important contributor to London's status as a world city. The importance of culture for the quality of life for Londoners has received increased recognition in recent years. This is due in part to the focus the Mayor has put on how culture positively impacts the capital and the links made to the wider social and economic benefits of arts and culture.

The strategy rightly recognises the role of London boroughs in shaping local cultural offers across London. London boroughs are key delivery partners, vital to the success of this strategy. It is essential that the GLA works closely with boroughs and their communities to develop a cultural offer that is inclusive and recognises the diversity of London's communities. The strategy acknowledges that cultural spend within boroughs has significantly reduced, given a 50 per cent drop in government funding since 2010. However, boroughs remain the largest investors in culture; with a collective spend of just over £200 million in 2016-17 on culture and related services. Boroughs' local knowledge and connections mean that they can work with diverse communities to improve their well-being through culture in a way that the pan-London strategy cannot.

Consequently, the strategy should be informed and refined according to local cultural activities and strategies. It should also be ambitious and inform and encourage the development of local cultural strategies. Crucially, the strategy should be flexible enough to work in different parts of London.

The Mayor should consider how the priorities on health and wellbeing in the strategy can be more closely linked to the activity of other organisations looking to use culture to improve the quality of life for Londoners. The London Borough of Culture competition recently awarded a cultural impact award to the London Borough of Lewisham for their 'Festival of Creative Ageing'. Other organisations are currently doing similar work to this project. Arts Council England awarded £1.5 million of funding to projects from their 'Celebrating Age' fund. A recent report by Age UK entitled 'How important is creative and cultural participation to our wellbeing?' also made similar conclusions on the benefits of culture to quality of life. Arts Council England has also funded activities targeted at the wellbeing of young people through the 'Ambition for Excellence' fund, with projects such as [London 1666](#). By mapping the activities already ongoing and joining up with projects already happening in London, the Mayor can better identify gaps in provision across London and develop even more access to culture for the benefit of ageing.

The role of sport and the impact it has on the quality of life for Londoners should also feature more prominently within the strategy. Sport also has a major impact on health and wellbeing and should be recognised as part of the well-being agenda set out in the strategy. The Mayor should consider how culture is integrated into major sporting events such as the London Marathon and Wimbledon and how local communities can feel part of these events through cultural activities.

London boroughs also welcome the commitment in the draft strategy to develop an evidence base that better understands the benefits of culture on the quality of life for all Londoners, including on mental health and wellbeing. The Mayor should consider developing this evidence base into a toolkit or a set of resources that can be used to engage a wide range local authority Leaders and officers in order to join-up culture with complimentary work in other services. When delivering health and social care commissioning in London boroughs it can be hard to join up this activity with arts and culture, particularly when there is limited dedicated arts and culture resource and limited capacity for commissioners to be aware of complimentary strategies. The link to the Health Inequalities Strategy is welcome. The Mayor should use his leadership role to actively communicate the benefits of culture directly to the health and social care sector to ensure more prominence in the delivery of Adult Social Care.

The Mayor can support local and accessible cultural offers across London by emphasising the role of libraries in the final culture strategy and by encouraging greater integration of libraries and arts and culture through his representation on ACE's London Area Council. Libraries serve an important local function both in the services and community spaces they provide and serve many diverse communities that may not participate in arts and culture, The Mayor should consider how the cultural strategy can support and promote creative cultural delivery in libraries to diversify audiences. The London Borough of Bexley is receiving funding from the Carnegie UK Trust to deliver night-time library activity, a project that was developed as part of their London Borough of Culture bid and is part of a longer term approach to developing libraries as evening venues, adding to the development of a night time economy.

Libraries have the potential to provide a cultural infrastructure across the whole of London and the strategy should support boroughs to make effective use of libraries as open, free and accessible cultural spaces.

Many cultural organisations face challenges in adapting to new technologies and targeting new, particularly younger audiences who do not access information on events through more traditional means. The cultural strategy should recognise and offer support to these organisations to reach out to new audiences. One method would be to develop a toolkit for organisations to understand how to attract new audiences. The Love London pass presented in the draft strategy is an interesting new approach to producing a platform that targets young people and introduces them to cultural offers that they may otherwise not hear about. This approach should consider how local incentives and offers are created through this scheme in order to target new audiences. There has been some success at addressing the attraction of a younger audience by the Audience Agency and their work with outer London library services as part of the [Young People's Laureate for London Tour 2017-18](#). This project has relied on young people reaching out to their peers locally. Key to the tour's success was the up-skilling of librarians in engaging with young people which the Mayor should look to build on so more local organisation have the tools required to engage with a young, local audience.

**2. Do you agree that London must embrace a broad definition of culture that includes less formal places and spaces? If yes, what could the Mayor do to best support informal culture?**

London boroughs welcome a broad definition of culture that complements the full range of communities and diversity of London. In order to deliver a cultural strategy that is inclusive of the diverse communities of London, the Mayor is right to support less formal places and spaces and cultural offers that speak directly to local needs and local definitions of culture. To best support informal culture, the strategy needs to be more explicit in recognising that culture means different things to different communities. There is a risk that without supporting and recognising more locally organised and less formal cultural activity, cultural hierarchy can develop. London is a place where all marginalised communities should have a voice and be empowered to define and shape local cultural and heritage activity..

London Councils welcomes the launch of the Mayor's 'Culture Seeds' funding programme, particularly its aim to connect communities with less access to culture via small scale grants. This funding stream has the potential to support a wide range of informal cultural activity across London and London boroughs welcome further support from the Mayor towards informal culture through small grant mechanisms. The Mayor should evaluate the impact and reach of the Culture Seeds programme and subject to this, consider whether this programme can be extended. Whilst Culture Seeds is a welcome funding stream for supporting informal culture in neighbourhoods across London, accessibility could be improved. The Mayor should consider the audience for this funding stream and how bid writing may act as a barrier to those wishing to deliver worthwhile, less formal cultural activity in their community. Smaller cultural organisations struggle with their capacity to bid for funding. It is positive this funding

stream does not require evidence on previous experience or a track record of delivery, which can be a barrier for smaller charities bidding for funding. However, it is constructed in a traditional written bid format and accessibility to the scheme should be a central part of the evaluation. The Mayor should consider piloting alternative routes for bidding, whether this is audio/visual or on an informal interview basis. This could extend the reach of this programme even further.

The strategy also recognises the less formal places and spaces brought about by the night time economy (NTE). The Mayor should continue to work closely with the boroughs and the 'Night Time Economy Borough Champions' network in order to diversify London's NTE offer. As the key decision-making body for shaping place, London Councils welcomes the draft strategy's recognition that boroughs play a vital role in developing the NTE with support from the Mayor.

Local libraries and archives also offer flexible and less formal space to deliver cultural activity for a range of local communities. They benefit local communities and support small-scale activity that allows all Londoners to participate in a cultural offer that speaks to them. The final strategy should recognise the added value these spaces have to the delivery of informal culture.

### **3. How could the Mayor help to remove barriers that prevent all Londoners from securing creative jobs? What examples of good practice are you aware of in this area?**

In order to inspire the next generation of creative sector leaders, the Mayor and London boroughs should work closely to identify and address the local barriers facing disadvantaged young Londoners from pursuing a career in creative industries. London boroughs wish to see the sector become more diverse, attracting talent from across the many different communities in the capital. Social capital and personal connections are often recognised as offering a major advantage in the creative industries. In order to open up disadvantaged Londoners to opportunities in the creative sector the lack of advice, insight and experience available to those without the necessary social capital must be addressed.

Careers guidance in London schools is patchy and inconsistent. The government recently launched its Careers Strategy to address this inconsistency by ensuring every school has a careers adviser and all schools engage with employers. The critical role of the Mayor in facilitating links between schools and employers is a feature of the government's strategy. London Ambitions demonstrates the impact of good partnership working between the Mayor, London Councils and London boroughs. This partnership work should be built on to deliver a stronger 'careers cluster' for the creative sector through the expansion of the London Enterprise Adviser Network. The Mayor should increase creative sector advisers in the London Enterprise Advisers Network and ensure they are from a diverse range of backgrounds. The Mayor should encourage these advisers to use the requirement for a minimum employer 'touchpoints' in the government's careers strategy to increase the engagement through schools. The Mayor and GLA should work closely with London boroughs to identify which schools to engage with and shape engagement around local labour market opportunities.

The recent and dramatic 25 percent drop<sup>1</sup> in students studying creative subjects at GCSE since 2014 is a significant concern and does not reflect increasing job opportunities in the creative industries. The Mayor should lobby for relevant changes to the national curriculum but also to work with London Councils to promote local approaches to promoting arts, often alongside science, technology, engineering and mathematics – such as Camden’s [STEAM Commission](#) – which look at how to equip young people with the creative and technological skills to thrive in a future labour market. The Mayor should consider how the devolved Adult Education Budget (AEB) can be used to promote such skills in adults as well.

London boroughs would also like to see the Mayor take a tougher stance on low and unpaid internships in the capital. These routes into creative professions further entrench barriers that prevent disadvantaged people from getting the necessary experience to secure paid work in the creative sector. The Mayor is an important sponsor of events for the Creative Industries such as London Fashion Week. London boroughs would like to see the Mayor use his influence on creative sector to eliminate unpaid internships in London. Recent research by the Sutton Trust<sup>2</sup> suggests that an unpaid internship would cost a single person £926 per month excluding transport - far beyond the reach of young people from average-income backgrounds. The Mayor could look to provide a quality-mark or accreditation to the sector to combat this trend.

Many London boroughs have made affordable and flexible workspaces a priority in order to drive SME development within their borough. These flexible workspaces serve those working in the creative sector, with rising demand across the creative industries. The Mayor can increase the number of job opportunities in the sector by working closely with boroughs to develop affordable and flexible workspaces that support this ambition and London boroughs welcome the grants provided to develop plans for Cultural Enterprise Zones (CEZ). The final strategy should outline how the Mayor will support further development of local CEZ plans that are not taken forward in the selection process. London Councils is keen to work with the GLA to identify alternative funding streams. Important momentum will be lost if these local plans are not supported further.

#### **4. How can the Mayor increase participation in the arts and cultural life of the capital, particularly for people who don’t currently have access to it? Who should he be partnering with?**

In order to increase participation across London the Mayor should continue to work closely with London boroughs, who share the ambition to create inclusive neighbourhoods with a cultural offer that is accessible to all. London boroughs have long worked towards improving the economic and social

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/entries-for-gcse-as-and-a-level-summer-2018-exam-series>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.suttontrust.com/newsarchive/london-living-cost-unfair-unpaid-internships/>

inclusion of those furthest away from London's opportunities and are key delivery partners in order to realise the aims of the Cultural Strategy

In order to ensure the sustainability of this strategy there needs to be a clear line of sight between the Mayor's ambitions and local borough strategies. Where the strategy contains a series of initiatives that aim to sustain increases in long term participation, these can best be achieved through close working with the boroughs. By being responsive to local strategies and supporting creative growth that has been identified by the local authority, the Mayor will also reduce the likelihood of duplicating efforts and achieve greater impact through close collaboration. This approach has worked well with the development of the night time economy, with the Borough Champion network featuring prominently in the Mayor's approach. The London Borough of Culture competition has since resulted in culture featuring more prominently in local strategies and the Mayor should look to capitalise on this.

As highlighted earlier, the strategy should give more emphasis to the role that libraries play in promoting inclusion and participation in arts and culture locally. The absence of libraries in the strategy is a missed opportunity to develop participation across London where cultural infrastructure is already in place. Libraries can be very effective at promoting inclusion and access in the community. Library services are increasingly joined up with the cultural offer within a borough.

Boroughs undertake granular cultural activity within diverse local communities. To maximise participation in arts and culture, the strategy should recognise that boroughs as key partners who undertake a variety of approaches depending on the needs of a community. A pan-London strategy is unlikely to be able to apply a standard answer to increasing participation across the many social, ethnic and gender groups in London. A sustainable increase in the engagement of Londoners with arts and culture can only be achieved in close partnership with the boroughs.

There are steps that the Mayor can take to increase participation in the night time economy. Anti-social behaviour and crime can deter people from travelling at night. This can affect overall participation in and weakens the potential of the night time economy, which the strategy recognises as a significant contributor to London's overall cultural offer. In order to maximise its inclusivity, transport at night must be safe and convenient. London Councils welcomes the introduction of the Night Tube and the social and economic benefits this brings. However, to ensure that boroughs can plan effectively for the night time economy, it is important for TfL and the GLA to work with them to address any local concerns around safety.

In order to target those who do not have access to culture and increase participation, the Mayor should look to strengthen and support the outer London cultural offer. The draft strategy rightly recognises there is an appetite amongst visitors to disperse across London and there is a huge potential to build on this. This should be a cultural offer that serves local communities as well as visitors. The Mayor's Cultural Infrastructure Plan will help boroughs, key funders and the Mayor better identify significant



gaps in provision across London. The Cultural Infrastructure Plan will be of particular benefit to outer London boroughs who will welcome collaboration with the Mayor and other stakeholder to make best use of this evidence base.

##### **5. What other opportunities are there to support culture in the capital?**

There is a significant opportunity to increase the capacity of local arts and culture organisations through the development of skills within smaller community organisations. A lack of effectiveness or capacity to deliver in small arts and culture organisations can often be the result of a lack of leadership, management or financial skills. The Mayor should consider what support is available to increase the capacity of organisations undertaking valuable cultural work in their community and identify the gaps in provision available to small organisations. The final strategy should identify ways the Mayor can increase apprenticeships within the creative industries, as well as ensuring there is a strong cultural influence in the devolved Adult Education Budget.

The draft strategy should recognise and emphasise the importance of archives in London. Although archives are recognised in relation to the work of the Museum of London, there is not recognition in the strategy of the hundreds of local archives in the capital or the cultural value they provide to communities. With the ongoing Windrush Scandal, archive services have played an important role in providing evidence of residency through locally held records. London boroughs support their archives as a statutory service but do not have the ability to celebrate and promote their contribution on a pan-London basis. The draft cultural strategy should consider how these services can be celebrated and also how archives can be incentivised to catalogue and capture a record of the delivery of this strategy. Supporting archives as outlined could contribute to a recorded legacy of the Mayor's draft cultural strategy.

London boroughs welcome a focus within the draft strategy on museums beyond the large destinations in central London. The strategy outlines plans for a public map of the city's museums and heritage infrastructure. This should allow the outer London museum offer to be featured equally alongside London's major museums. The final strategy should ensure that the marketing and visitor incentives are in place to make this map a success. It is also welcome that the Mayor has supported some of the smaller museums in outer London with grants to assist in collection care. £10,000 was awarded to 19 museums in 2016-17. Due to high demand for this support, London boroughs would welcome an expansion of the available pot for collection care and related heritage activity.

##### **6. How can you or your organisation contribute to the Mayor's vision for culture and pledge to support the final strategy?**

London Councils will continue to work closely with the Mayor and the GLA in order to deliver on shared priorities related to culture. As highlighted, London boroughs are key delivery partners in the Mayor's

Cultural Strategy and the largest investors in the capital's culture. London Councils proposes to work with the Mayor on the Cultural Strategy in the following ways:

- Develop and promote senior political and officer leadership on the economic and social value of culture and its potential to improve places and communities in an inclusive way;
- Ensure that the final cultural strategy can positively influence and encourage the development of local cultural strategies, whilst being flexible enough to be informed by local cultural strategies and activities and be effectively delivered in different communities;
- Promote the value of culture to other parts of local government and the public sector, such as education, health and social care, regeneration and economic development. Building practical links at both a local and regional level will be important in delivering the aims of the strategy;
- Supporting the London Culture Forum, a network which supports borough officers delivering arts and culture and promotes collaboration and working with the London Chief Culture and Leisure Officer Association network.
- Joint lobbying on key issues such as overall funding for culture and the importance of creative skills in school and adult education.

#### **7. Is there anything else that could be considered in relation to the draft Culture Strategy?**

More consideration should be given to the audience of this strategy. This strategy is very clear on the offer to Londoners and very clear on the offer to international tourists. However, the strategy does not focus on the relevance of the strategy or London's cultural offer to those living in the UK but outside of London. It is vital that this strategy addresses the offer and benefit of the capital's culture to the rest of the UK. A significant challenge facing London in the current funding landscape is how to best make the case for sustained arts and culture funding in London.

There is a lot of focus from other city regions on the perceived over-funding of London's culture. A cultural strategy for London needs to recognise that the offer is not there to benefit just those living in the capital. The capital's culture benefits everyone in the United Kingdom and domestic visitors should feature as a key audience for the strategy, in addition to Londoners and international visitors. London Councils wants to see an equitable and effective spread of arts and cultural funding, networks and activities across England, but this must be achieved fairly and without damaging London's cultural infrastructure. Any further rebalancing of funds from sources such as the National Lottery and Arts Council England would significantly harm London's cultural sector. This is a complicated national narrative to address directly through the Mayor's Cultural Strategy. However, the Mayor could consider including recommendations from the [Cultural Cities Enquiry](#) that will consider how to increase the totality of funding across cities.

#### **Response submitted by:**

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