



London Councils' response to the Mayor's Draft Culture Strategy

This briefing summarises London Councils' response to the Mayor of London's draft Culture Strategy. The Mayor's vision, entitled 'Culture for all Londoners', aims to sustain a city that works for everyone where all Londoners have access to an inclusive arts and culture offer. Our response to the consultation emphasises the role of boroughs in achieving the strategy's aims.

Overview

London Councils responded to the Mayor's consultation outlining broad support for the priorities and policies in the strategy. In particular, we welcome the recognition of the role boroughs play in delivering the strategy, their importance in reaching the diverse communities of London and the role of boroughs in place-making.

The strategy rightly identifies how culture benefits many other local agendas, such as place-making, regeneration, skills and jobs, education, health and well-being. The Mayor needs to continue championing the relevance of culture to these priorities and link up culture to other GLA strategies such as Skills for Londoners, Better Health for Londoners and The London Plan.

As most cultural services are non-statutory they have been hit harder than other services since 2010. Despite this, boroughs remain significant investors in arts and culture, recognising the wider impact on other local services.

The 'Culture for all Londoners' strategy contains four key principles:

- 1. Love London** - more people experiencing and creating culture on their doorstep
Some of the ways the Mayor aims to achieve this is through the 'Culture Seeds' micro-grant programme for funding grassroots culture, delivering an annual programme of community events and successfully deliver London Borough of Culture 2019 and 2020. The Mayor will also map arts and cultural activities aimed at improving health and wellbeing across London to identify gaps and opportunities in the offer to Londoners.
- 2. Culture and Good Growth** - supporting, saving and sustaining cultural places
The Mayor restates some elements in the 'Culture and Heritage' chapter of the London Plan, including policies to help venues and homes co-exist and to protect creative workspace, pubs and clubs. The draft culture strategy also includes policies such as delivering up to three Creative Enterprise Zones, investing £70 million in the Museum of London's move to

West Smithfield, developing an East London fashion district, a new culture and education district at the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park and masterplans underpinned by culture and heritage for Old Oak, Park Royal and Royal Docks.

3. Creative Londoners - Investing in a diverse and creative workforce for the future. Closely linked to the Mayor's Skills for Londoners strategy, this principle will be supported by policies to improve pan-London careers guidance for all ages and improving digital skills for the creative industries. The Mayor also aims to address a lack of diversity in the creative industries, championing positive business practice and establishing a Good Work Standard accreditation for diverse employers. There is also funding streams available to support young artists and musicians.

4. World City - maintaining a global powerhouse in a post-Brexit world. The strategy rightly recognises London as a global leader in the creative industries. The strategy highlights the role of the mayor in championing London's creative industries and advocating for an immigration system that preserves its global status. The Mayor will collaborate with city leaders from around the world by leading the World Cities Culture Forum and continuing the #LondonIsOpen campaign.

Boroughs can understand and work with the different needs of their diverse communities in a way that a pan-London strategy cannot.

Analysis

In response to the strategy, London Councils has made these key points to the Mayor:

The role of London boroughs

London Councils has responded to the Mayor by emphasising the role of boroughs in achieving the aims of the strategy. London 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 can understand and work with the different needs of their diverse communities in a way that a pan-London strategy cannot. Boroughs' local knowledge and connections mean that they lead the way as local place-makers and therefore the strategy should inform, but also be informed by, local cultural strategies. There are many active culture strategies being developed and implemented locally. This is due in part to the London Borough of Culture competition, but also the recognition that culture underpins many other economic and social objectives locally. The Mayor should look to compliment and support the role and ability of boroughs to deliver cultural strategy locally.

The relationship of culture to other aims and priorities

The commitment in the draft strategy to develop an evidence base to better understand the benefits of culture on the quality of life for all Londoners, including on mental health and wellbeing, is welcome. The Mayor should consider developing this evidence base into a toolkit or a set of resources that can be used widely within boroughs. For example, these toolkits could benefit the understanding of Adult Social Care Commissioners on the benefits of culture in delivering the Mayor's Health Inequality strategy.

Supporting community and informal culture

The 'Love London' principle aims to support community led, less formal arts and cultural activity. London Councils supports the principle of producing an inclusive offer that speaks to the needs of the many diverse communities of London. The objective to map activity across London to identify gaps in provision will be a useful tool for boroughs to understand the cultural landscape and opportunities in their local area.

Establishing the 'Culture Seeds' grant programme will result in more small-scale cultural activity across London. This type of activity is often ineligible for Arts Council grant funding and will help to diversify the cultural offer in boroughs and result in more community-

led activity. Whilst we welcome the 'Culture Seeds' programme, we ask that the Mayor explores making the fund even more accessible as traditional bid writing processes may act as a barrier to those wishing to deliver worthwhile, less formal cultural activity in their community.

Skills, employment and workspace

In order to inspire the next generation of creative sector leaders, London Councils has asked the Mayor to work closely with boroughs 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 and attract talent from all of London's communities.

Careers guidance in London schools is patchy and inconsistent. The recent and dramatic 25 percent drop in students studying creative subjects at GCSE since 2014¹ is a significant concern and does not reflect increasing job opportunities in the capital's creative industries. The Mayor has a critical role in facilitating links between schools and employers and features in the government's careers strategy. We have asked the Mayor to increase creative sector advisers in the London Enterprise Advisers Network and ensure they are from a diverse range of backgrounds. The Mayor and GLA should utilise the local insight of London boroughs to identify which schools to engage with and shape engagement around local labour market opportunities.

Many London boroughs have made affordable and flexible workspaces a priority in order to drive SME development within their borough. 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). London Councils has asked that the Mayor outline how he will support further development of local CEZ plans that are not taken forward in the selection process ensuring that this opportunity benefits as many boroughs as possible.

Increasing participation in arts and culture

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. London boroughs have long worked towards improving the economic and social inclusion for those furthest away from London's opportunities.

In our response London Councils has also highlighted the absence of libraries and archive services in the strategy, spaces which serve as important cultural infrastructure across London. This is particularly true in outer London, where residents do not benefit from the concentration of cultural infrastructure found in parts of inner London. Absence of libraries and archives in the strategy is a missed opportunity to develop participation across London where cultural infrastructure is already in place. Rates of engagement with the arts are lower in London than the national average, so making best use of existing infrastructure in outer London is vital to achieving equal access to arts and culture across London.

National funding conversations

London Councils see the challenge for culture in capital at odds with some of the national conversation on the over-investment in arts and culture in London at the expense of the

“
The recent and dramatic 25 percent drop in students studying creative subjects at GCSE since 2014 is a significant concern.
”

rest of the UK. London is not a homogenous entity and there are vastly different levels of access to arts and culture across the capital. The final strategy also needs to communicate that London's offer serves all of the UK, not just Londoners and international tourists.

Commentary

Although London local government remains a substantial investor in the arts, the cumulative effect of successive finance settlements has seen the value of this support decrease over time. The Mayor's creation of new funding streams for grassroots organisations which closely linking culture to economic development and place-shaping should contribute to widening participation across London.

Many of the initiatives outlined in the strategy offer significant opportunity for boroughs to understand and develop their local offer. London Councils welcomes the strategic pan-London mapping of arts and culture provision as this will allow limited resources to be targeted effectively at the lowest levels of participation and inclusion. There should be an equitable and effective spread of arts and culture provision across London. Comprehensive mapping of provision is an important first step for achieving this.

There is significant innovation in this strategy, particularly in addressing some of the issues around the reduction in creative workspace. Creative Enterprise Zones and the Creative Land Trust are new approaches to solving the pressing problems caused by rapid property price growth. With a substantial 30 per cent loss of artistic workspace expected between 2014-2019, it is welcome that the Mayor is addressing this at-pace and with new approaches.

The key to success in this pan-London strategy depend on how closely the Mayor works with London Boroughs, understanding local cultural strategies and how these can best complement each other. There is less recognition of local cultural strategies in the Mayor's draft than we would hope to see in the final version. We are interested to see how conversations with boroughs will be facilitated, ensuring that local cultural strategies and local stakeholder buy-in is fully utilised. London Councils will work with the GLA to help facilitate this.

Footnotes

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

The key to success in this pan-London strategy depend on how closely the Mayor works with London Boroughs, understanding local cultural strategies and how these can best complement each other.

Author: Spike van der Vliet-Firth, Principal Policy Officer (T: 020 7934 9916)

[Click here to send a comment or query to the author](#)

Links:

[Mayor of London: Skills for Londoners](#)

[Mayor of London: Better health for Londoners](#)

[Mayor of London: The London Plan](#)

This member briefing has been circulated to:

Portfolio holders and those members who requested policy briefings in the following categories: Culture and Economic Development