



Meeting:	Cabinet Council	Date:	15 July 2026 16 July 2026
Subject:	Cultural Strategy 2026-2036		
Report Of:	Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure		
Wards Affected:	All		
Key Decision:	No	Budget/Policy Framework:	Yes
Contact Officer:	Louisa Davies, Head of Culture and Leisure Services		
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Appendices:	1. Gloucester Cultural Strategy 2026-2036 2. Gloucester Cultural Strategy Tracker Updated May 2026		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To set out a new Cultural Strategy for Gloucester, 2026-2036
- 1.2 To provide an overview of progress made against the previous Cultural Strategy for the period January 2025-May 2026.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 Cabinet is asked to **RECOMMEND** to Council that:

- (1) the progress made in delivering the previous Cultural Strategy be noted;
- (2) the work undertaken to develop the Cultural Strategy 2026-2036 be noted;
- (3) the Cultural Strategy 2026 – 2036 be approved and adopted.

- 2.2 Council is asked to **RESOLVE** that:

- (1) the progress made in delivering the previous Cultural Strategy be noted;
- (2) the work undertaken to develop the Cultural Strategy 2026 – 2036 be noted;
- (3) the Cultural Strategy 2026 – 2036 be approved and adopted;
- (4) authority be delegated to the Head of Culture in liaison with the Cabinet Member of Culture and Leisure to oversee implementation and delivery of the Strategy, including partnership arrangements where appropriate.

3.0 Background and Key Issues

- 3.1** Gloucester's Cultural Vision and Strategy 2021 – 2026 was an effective mechanism, providing focus and context for the development of culture in Gloucester. Having a clearly articulated Cultural Strategy for the city ensures that partnerships, funding streams and activity can be aligned to ensure greatest impact, thereby making Gloucester a suitable and valid place for the investment of funders, especially Arts Council England. During 2025 and early 2026, a new Cultural Strategy has been developed through consultation with the sector and communities of the city.
- 3.2** Both the previous and new Cultural Strategies are for the whole city, not just the City Council and are delivered in partnership with Gloucester Culture Trust (GCT) and others. Since GCT was established, the council and GCT have worked closely to monitor progress and delivery of the actions. At the end of the timeframe of the Cultural Strategy 2021-26, it is evident this approach has been successful, with most of the actions marked complete, or complete and ongoing. It is normally the case that progress on the Cultural Strategy has been reported in January, however given the development of a new strategy, it was agreed the final progress updates on the previous strategy's actions should be provided at the same time as the new strategy.
- 3.3** Over the last 17 months, delivery of the successful Together Gloucester project has continued, and is documented elsewhere. GCT are leading this programme with nine other partners including the council. Over the three-year duration of this project, the council's £450k in match funding has secured a further £1m of investment, including £500k from ACE. ACE have also continued to invest into other projects and programmes. In the financial year 2025-26, total ACE funding awarded to organisations and individuals in Gloucester across their revenue (National Portfolio Organisations), capital and project funding programmes totalled £3.8m, and in the 2024-25, the same figure was £3.3m. These figures are indicative of the impact of the Cultural Strategy which in turn led to the city being selected as an ACE Priority Place. This is a scheme that aims to 'level-up' places across the country that had not previously attracted strong public investment from Arts Council England. Gloucester's status as an ACE Priority Place has been confirmed until March 2027. It is a recognition of the continued investment of the council and its partners into culture, together with having a clearly articulated cultural strategy. An ongoing commitment to support the work of GCT is key to the continued success of the city's cultural journey. Further details on the final outcomes on the previous Cultural Strategy are provided in Appendix 2

3.4 Consultation

The Gloucester Cultural Strategy 2026-36 has been developed through broad consultation with the city's cultural sector and its residents. This has happened in three ways. Firstly, in April 2025, an Open Space conference took place at Gloucester Guildhall, open to all invested in the future of the city's cultural sector, attended by 127 people. Bursaries were made available for freelancers to attend to ensure the voices of this important part of the sector were heard. Secondly, GCT hosted artform-specific workshops for different parts of the sector, asking what conditions were required for the artform to thrive over the next 10 years. Thirdly, a cultural survey was emailed/ posted to all Gloucester residents alongside the annual council tax bill. In addition, a Members briefing session took place during May 2026. The dominant

themes from the consultation are described in Appendix 1 and reflected in the strategy vision and outcomes.

3.5 Cultural Strategy 2026-2036

The new Cultural Strategy is framed around a vision, five outcomes and four cross-cutting themes. The vision is 'A city alive with culture, making good things happen for people and place.' It is designed to reflect the city's ambitions to be a regional cultural centre, the positive benefits for people in engaging with culture, and the positive impact on the city and wider economic growth. The five outcomes are Ambition, Ecosystem, Communities, Health and Placemaking. The four cross-cutting themes are Children and young people, Artists and artforms, Heritage, and Inclusion, Diversity, Equality and Access (IDEA). Each outcome is expressed by describing what will have changed or be different by 2036. This includes:

- 3.5.1 For ambition: for cultural participation and engagement to be more embedded and valued, for the sector to have grown in terms of professional individuals and organisations, for Gloucester to have more and better national partnerships, for more financial investment to have been brought into the city, through collective working.
 - 3.5.2 For ecosystem: for Gloucester to have the infrastructure, resources and assets of a city to enable creative production, presentation and engagement, for different artform areas to be developed and supported according to their needs and starting point, for museums to play an active role in broadening and revealing the city's heritage.
 - 3.5.3 For communities: for communities to be taking a leading role in shaping and deciding on the cultural offer and for it to be inclusive and representative of its residents
 - 3.5.4 For health: for the role of creative activity in addressing health inequalities and preventing interventions to be widely understood and embedded, for care and safety for all to be established tenets of our spaces and practices, for events to be delivered sustainably contributing to our net zero targets.
 - 3.5.5 For placemaking: for the city to be viewed as somewhere that is actively sharing its heritage and championing its diverse culture, making it a great place to live, work, study, play and visit, and for this to have a discernible and evidenced impact on its economic growth.
- 3.6** The strategy also includes a list of 22 planned and/or intended projects and workstreams, not intended as an exhaustive list, but indicative of the likely focus whilst allowing it to evolve through its lifetime. This includes the development of the Greyfriars Cultural Centre and Performance Space, the ambition for city-wide funding bids, including consideration of a bid for City of Culture at the next opportunity (likely to be in 2029) and supporting the development of the University of Gloucestershire as a major stakeholder in the city's cultural sector. Projects and workstreams do not assume any financial commitment beyond what is indicated; most would require further financial support most likely to be achieved through active fundraising.

- 3.7** The strategy document concludes with a brief section on how the strategy will be reported on and monitored. The approach being taken is to do this collaboratively with the sector, enabling an annual process of reflection and future planning ahead of formal reporting. This is intended to echo the way in which the strategy was devised through broad and deep consultation, and underpin the continued investment of the city's cultural organisations and individual practitioners in its future delivery.

4.0 Social Value Considerations

- 4.1** Social value is integral to the delivery of both the previous and new Cultural Strategies. Culture and cultural activity in the city can provide far-reaching benefits to citizens' health, well-being, skills and help develop social cohesion and a sense of place. Cultural participation in activities such as events and festivals can bring disparate communities together to celebrate and collaborate.
- 4.2** The cross-cutting themes of children and young people, and IDEA (Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Access) running through the strategy are there to ensure culture has the broadest reach possible and is accessible to all, delivering on social value.
- 4.3** Statistics from the Creative health consortium's work to date demonstrate the social value recorded through funding creative activities. By making health one of the five outcomes, we will ensure that creative health practice is grown, leading to significant social value.

5.0 Environmental Implications

- 5.1** Work to minimise the environmental impact of cultural events and projects has already taken place, through participating in the Green Events Code of Practice pilot, a project led by the University of Gloucestershire. The new strategy intends for this to continue with sustainable practice part of the health outcome, with a dedicated climate and sustainability workstream.
- 5.2** Gloucester Guildhall, Gloucester Culture Trust, Strike a Light, Complicite and Gloucestershire Libraries (the five Gloucester NPOs) are all committed to recording and reducing their environmental impact as part of their Arts Council England NPO reporting agreement and exploring how to be more environmentally sustainable through the related ACE Investment Principle.

6.0 Alternative Options Considered

- 6.1** Gloucester could proceed without a Cultural Strategy, or extend the previous one. However, following investment of UK Shared Prosperity Funding in the development of a new strategy, the engagement of stakeholders and the sector, there is an expectation this new strategy will be adopted. Furthermore, the existing strategy was developed a considerable time ago, and is felt to be generic in its approach and no longer fit for purpose.
- 6.2** Recommendation 2.1 (1) is an update on progress, so an alternative option is not applicable.

7.0 Reasons for Recommendations

- 7.1 The evidence of the importance and value of having a Cultural Strategy is clear, particularly in terms of the weight it adds to funding bids and the likelihood of investment. Moreover, this strategy has been developed through a collaborative and collective approach, engaging over 600 people.
- 7.2 Recommendation 2.1 (1) is an update on progress only.

8.0 Future Work and Conclusions

- 8.1 A partnership agreement between the Council and GCT should be put in place to ensure this strategy is delivered and that there is clear demarcation of roles and responsibilities.
- 8.2 GCT and the Council will regularly review and report on progress in terms of the projects and workstreams, as indicated in the strategy

9.0 Financial Implications

- 9.1 Having a cultural strategy in place has supported the case for investment and funding from strategic bodies including Arts Council England, National Lottery Heritage Fund, Historic England, Paul Hamlyn Foundation and other trusts, foundations and businesses investing in Gloucester.
- 9.2 The city council's cultural budgets are used to deliver services that support the cultural strategy and any additional budget required will be sought from external funding bodies, such as those mentioned above – and by working in partnerships and collaboratively across the city. Finding innovative ways of funding cultural activities will assist with ensuring these events continue even if Council budgets continue to reduce.
- 9.3 GCT do not receive any direct core funding from the council. However, like The Music Works, they benefit from peppercorn rent on their occupancy of one floor of Kings House which effectively is grant funding specifically for rent.

(Finance has been consulted in the preparation of this report.)

10.0 Legal Implications

- 10.1 The delivery of the objectives of the Cultural Strategy 2026-2036 is the responsibility of the Council working in partnership with external organisations including Gloucester Culture Trust. Any collaboration or new delivery models must comply with all relevant legislative requirements and the Council's Contract Rules.
- 10.2 Gloucester Culture Trust is an independent Charitable Incorporated Organisation and operates separately from the Council. Any arrangements between the Council and the Trust must be properly documented and structured to reflect this independence, ensuring appropriate governance, accountability, and risk management.

- 10.3 The Subsidy Control Act 2022 came into force in January 2023 and applies to any financial assistance provided by the Council to an 'enterprise'. This includes but is not limited to grants, loans, guarantees and the disposal of land at an undervalue. The Council must ensure that any such assistance complies with the subsidy control principles and is appropriately assessed, documented, and where required, reported.
- 10.4 Legal advice should be sought at an early stage in the development of partnership arrangements, funding mechanisms, or asset transfers arising from the Strategy to ensure compliance and mitigate legal risk.

(One Legal have been consulted in the preparation of this report.)

11.0 Risk & Opportunity Management Implications

- 11.1 The successful delivery of the Cultural Strategy requires the support of multiple partners in the city, the continued leadership of the Head of Culture working with the CEO of Gloucester Culture Trust (GCT) and a clear, mutually agreed strategic partnership between the Council and GCT.

12.0 People Impact Assessment (PIA) and Safeguarding:

- 12.1 The PIA Screening Stage was completed and did not identify any potential or actual negative impact, therefore a full PIA was not required.

13.0 Community Safety Implications

- 13.1 None

14.0 Staffing & Trade Union Implications

- 14.1 None

GLOUCESTER'S CULTURAL STRATEGY 2026-2036

Culture is...

“The accumulated mesh of experience and heritage of everybody living in an area.”

Comment from Gloucester residents' culture survey (GCT, 2026)

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Foreword

We began the process of writing this Cultural Strategy with a question:

How can we work together to shape Gloucester's cultural future?

And an invitation – we invited everyone that was interested and invested in Gloucester's cultural life and sector to help us answer it, and join us for a day of conversations and discussion at Gloucester Guildhall. So, this is truly a strategy developed from meaningful consultation.

Our ambition for this new strategy was for it to capture, support and develop the creative energy of the city. We wanted a strategy where you could remove every mention of the word Gloucester, and we would still recognise it as Gloucester's cultural strategy

So, why do we need a (new) Cultural Strategy?

In 2016, Gloucester's first ever ten-year Cultural Vision and Strategy was born. It set out ambitions for the city's cultural offer and a plan for how they would be achieved. It has been instrumental to so many things, from the creation of Gloucester Culture Trust (GCT) and establishing a creative community at JOLT, through to the growth in public investment in the city's cultural sector, particularly from Arts Council England. It led to us being identified as an ACE Priority Place. In the final year of the strategy (2025-26) ACE invested a huge £3.8m in the city's artists, cultural organisations, libraries and museums.

2016 feels like a lifetime ago – so, as you would hope and expect most of what that first strategy aimed to achieve has happened – or is ongoing and on track. It has done a good job for us, but we don't want that to stop. We want the cultural energy of the city to continue to thrive, and for the people of Gloucester to be proud and supportive of what is happening in the city and in communities. As we approach Local Government Reorganisation, the importance of having a new strategy, specific to Gloucester, developed in partnership with its artists, practitioners and communities, is vital for that continued growth.

Culture is everything we do and everything we are, the sum total of our creativity and identity. We are delighted to see this new strategy come to life, born from wide engagement with the city's creative people and communities.

Caroline Courtney, Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure
Jennifer Taylor, Chair, Gloucester Culture Trust

Introduction

This cultural strategy has been developed over the last 12 months through a wide-range of consultation methodologies including an Open Space Conference attended by over 120 people, workshops with artform specific groups from across Gloucester's cultural sector, individual conversations and presentations with key stakeholders and a residents' survey which was posted to all households in the city. Over 600 individuals with an interest in the city's cultural future have helped develop this 10 year strategy, which is designed to act as a catalyst for the sector to thrive in an ever-changing, and increasingly polarised world where coming together to share our stories and reflect our lived experiences remains at the heart of what is it to be human. The strategy has been co-devised by Gloucester City Council and Gloucester Culture Trust, working in partnership. Its successful delivery will be rooted in this partnership.

Culture is....

"the everyday customs of Gloucester people that collectively are powerful. Gloucester culture is the empty streets on game day knowing everyone is at the game. The West Indian community getting dressed up for Church, tradies and local businesses going home early on friday afternoon, local makers keeping craft alive"

Comment from Gloucester residents' culture survey (GCT, 2026)

Context

Gloucester is:

- a young city. 21.6% of the population under 18 and 30.2% under 25
- a diverse city. 15.1% of residents identifying as from ethnic minority groups.
- a city of wealth inequality. 11.4% of the population live in neighbourhoods ranked in the top 10% most deprived in England
- a growing city. Gloucester's population is growing at 0.88% to 1.68%; faster than the South West region and the national England and Wales average.
- a city of health inequality. Where average life expectancy (78.3yrs and 82.1yrs respectively for men and women) is lower than the South West region and the national averages
- a place of sanctuary. Approximately 1,600 people are housed as asylum seekers or refugees.
- a collaborative city. Where organisations can come together for the good of the city. Partnership projects such as Great Place, the Roundhouse exchange and Together Gloucester were made possible through this collective way of working.
- a city of creative health. Where social prescribing and engagement in creative health activities reduced NHS service use by 6.4% since 2023

Consultation

How did we get here?

In April 2025, Gloucester Culture Trust and Gloucester City Council hosted an Open Space Conference where 127 delegates, drawn from across the city set the agenda in response to the question '**How can we work together to shape Gloucester's cultural future?**'

The notes from the 66 separate conversations that took place can be read [HERE](#) but the themes that emerged were:

- Care, inclusion and wellbeing
- Community, collaboration and breaking silos
- Space, infrastructure and placemaking
- Identity, reputation and ambition
- Participation, audiences and engagement
- Innovation, and the future of culture
- Celebration, festivals and shared experiences

Throughout the Autumn and Winter of 2025/6, Gloucester Culture Trust hosted artform-specific workshops with invited representatives from across the culture sector to better understand what the current strengths and future opportunities were from the perspective of those working within visual arts, performing arts, music and literature. We also asked what conditions needed to be in place for the artform to thrive over the next 10 years. The recurrent themes from these sessions were the need for:

- More spaces, including creative hubs, studio spaces, exhibition and performance
- Access to a wider range of funding
- Improved networks
- More national partnerships
- Clear career pathways and opportunities
- Better promotion of what's on

The case for Culture – the views of Gloucester residents

Alongside sector consultation, Gloucester residents were surveyed during March and April 2026. Over 300 responses were received.

- 97% believe that everyone has the right to culture
- 85% agreed that festivals, arts and culture are important for the economic recovery of the city
- 53% agreed that the city has an exciting cultural offer
- 66% said that festivals, events and culture make Gloucester a better place to live
- 73% agreed that taking part in arts and cultural activity makes them feel better
- 75% said that culture positively benefits their mental health
- 71% said that arts and cultural activity benefits loneliness and helps them feel connected to others

A report of the findings from the residents' survey can be found [here](#)

The key themes emerging from analysis of the survey, which are all interconnected and reinforce each other are:

- **Pride and identity** – civic pride is rising (up from 52% in 2019 to 57% in 2026) but fragile
- **Welcoming spaces** – perception of safety in city centre improving, but more work needed
- **Heritage as civic identity** – the strongest identity asset, but more needed to activate it for all communities

- **Arts, culture and wellbeing** – residents value culture for health and connection
- **Diversity and inclusion** – Gloucester is a vibrant, multicultural city but cultural offer doesn't reflect this
- **Access and barriers** – knowing what's on and cost are key barriers to engagement
- **Venues and infrastructure** – strong demand for investment in infrastructure and venues

Culture is...

“The old being brought to the new. Celebrating the past and inviting the new faces of Gloucester to join us with open arms to tell us about theirs”

Comment from Gloucester residents' culture survey (GCT, 2026)

Vision

A city alive with culture, making good things happen for people and place.

Outcomes

The outcomes are the building blocks of the strategy and all contribute and feed into the vision. Everything we do should connect to one or more of the outcomes. They set out, collectively, where we intend to be by 2036. They are:

1. Ambition

A CITY THAT IS **AMBITIOUS** ABOUT CULTURE

By 2036, cultural participation and engagement will be valued and embedded across the city, and part of the everyday experience of its residents. We will have created pipelines for talented young people to develop creative careers in the city and have more homegrown artists and cultural organisations, working in partnership to create exciting and accessible cultural experiences for all. We will have established national partnerships that enable the outside influence of the country's most exciting artistic voices and minds to meet Gloucester's communities on their own terms. This ambition for culture will be further reflected in other Gloucester strategies, with a demonstrable impact of cultural partnerships improving health and wellbeing, community cohesion and contributing to economic growth. As a city we will have come together to share our collective ambition for celebrating the city's rich heritage and vibrant culture. We will have created nationally significant bids to enable this celebration of Gloucester, such as for City of Culture in 2033, and in doing so will have driven considerable financial investment into the city.

2. Ecosystem

A CITY WITH A DIVERSE CULTURAL **ECOSYSTEM**

By 2036, Gloucester will be a city with the cultural infrastructure, resources and assets of a city, with the foundations, partnerships and environment for creative endeavour to thrive. This will be reflected in more established and shared spaces for production, presentation and engagement, with artform-specific development opportunities for practicing artists of all backgrounds. We will be nationally recognised as a city of music. There will be dedicated gallery spaces for the visual arts, enabling fine artists through to socially engaged practitioners to show their work, complemented by selected national touring exhibitions. We will be established on the networks for touring dance and theatre, as well as presenting homegrown work. Museums will be at the heart of the city's cultural ecology with a transformed city museum sharing the city's stories, empowering and broadening the visible heritage in the city. We will have explored what responsible use of AI technology looks like, protecting the human intent intrinsic to great art.

3. Communities

A CITY OF CREATIVE AND CONNECTED **COMMUNITIES**

By 2036, our cultural sector and its artists, practitioners, audiences and participants will be representative of the diversity of the city, with inclusion core to systems and policy rather than a concession to individuals' needs. Citizen-led decision-making and cultural democracy will be embedded in our approaches to programming and commissioning across both city and county. Residents will be able to participate in creative and cultural activities within their local community, on their doorstep, and will be active collaborators in shaping what happens. A broadened understanding and increased visibility of the stories that make up the city's heritage will have contributed to civic renewal and improved cultural confidence.

4. Health

A CREATIVE **HEALTH** CITY

By 2036, the role of creative activity in addressing health inequalities will be understood and embedded in both public health policy and the strategic plans of the city's cultural organisations. Evidence of impact and mutual benefit able to drive further investment will have been produced through academic research in parallel with civic delivery, often with a public art focus. We will have worked collaboratively to establish spaces and practices that prioritise the care and safety of artists, practitioners and participants. Events will be delivered sustainably, with a net zero impact on climate, contributing to a greener and healthier city.

5. Place-making

A CITY INTENTIONALLY SHAPED BY THE SYNERGY BETWEEN CULTURE AND **PLACE-MAKING**

By 2036, Gloucester will be viewed as a city celebrating and revealing its heritage and championing its diverse culture, making it a great small city to live, work, study, play and visit. Our thriving music scene and improved cultural infrastructure will have contributed to a growing night time economy, filling office spaces with new business and bringing more people to live in a bustling city centre. Days of cultural celebration, new homegrown festivals and the occasional outdoor spectacle will all play their part in an annual cultural programme that activates our public spaces and attracts both residents and visitors, creating a discernible economic impact. We will have more and better interpreted public art in the city that reframes the city's rich and diverse heritage, its present realities and its future narratives through contemporary artistic practice.

Cross-cutting themes

The cross-cutting themes are principles that run horizontally across the five outcomes, impacting the approach we will take in each area. They are:

A. Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Access (IDEA)

These principles must be core to everything we do. That might be reflected in the representation of a panel awarding grants, in approaches to commissioning or programming, in how we develop our venues and the way they operate, as some examples.

Inclusion in the cultural sector is about more than seeking diverse representation. It means supporting, championing and developing the contributions of people from all backgrounds and lived experience, and to do that means designing systems and policies that are inclusive at their core rather than devising concessions or workarounds to meet individuals' needs.

Diversity refers to the active involvement and inclusion of people, voices and narratives from a wide spectrum of backgrounds. It is recognised that in arts and culture, there is a 'creative case' for diversity – that different perspectives and lived experiences make for richer, more relevant and therefore, better, artistic work.

Imagine three people standing behind a wall. They'd all like to see over it to view something exciting on the other side. Three boxes are provided to those three people, all of the same size. When the tallest of the three stands on a box, they can see over the wall. But the shortest of the three, when they stand on the box, they still can't see over the wall. The third person can just about, if they stand on their tip toes. Equity is about treating people according to who they are, and their specific circumstances, whereas equality means treating everyone the same. When we treat everyone the same, we often can't or don't level the playing field. Therefore, in this strategy we want to commit to the principle of equity.

Access refers to the proactive and deliberate removal of barriers so that everyone can access cultural experiences. Barriers can be environmental, such as stairs for a wheelchair user, or needing to be able to hear something for a d/Deaf person. It can be a car park ticket machine which is too high to reach. Very often we focus on this type of barrier, and forget that barriers can also be institutional or attitudinal, based on previous experiences of feeling unwelcome or not included.

B. Children and young people

Access to the arts and culture for children and young people is a human right and fundamental for developing creativity and expression. The 2025 Curriculum and Assessment Review recommends that arts subjects are given equal value to the humanities and access to extracurricular arts activity is made available to all young people. As young people's creativity develops, routes for talented and skilled young people to find their way into creative careers should be available. For the Cultural Strategy, this means we must put children and young people front and centre in our programmes, engagement work and commissioning, creating the opportunities for them to discover, develop and lead.

C. Heritage

Heritage is anything from the past, be that buildings, objects, stories, traditions, practices or skills, that we want to hold onto in the present and preserve for the future, whether that be as inspiration or lesson. If culture is everything we are and everything we do, heritage is central to it. Gloucester is a city rich with heritage; 2000 years ago as Glevum, a retirement city for the Roman army and since then waves of migration, and with it new culture, from the Anglo-Saxons right through to dockworkers and post-war migrants, have made Gloucester their home. This diversity and global outlook is imbued in its identity. However, Gloucester was also the home of entrepreneur Samuel Baker, investor in slavery and a leading voice in the case for its continuation. Heritage is always complex and multi-layered. Creativity is a powerful tool to explore it – as such they are natural bedfellows and in a city with a paucity of infrastructure bringing the two closer together makes sense for the visitor economy, for audience development and for placemaking.

D. Artists and art-forms

The previous Cultural Strategy did not set out art-form specific objectives, and neither does this one. However, in including this cross-cutting theme, we recognise that the starting point, access to opportunities and infrastructure in Gloucester are very far from equal, for example, for a visual artist compared to a musician. In a city that is, currently, without a theatre, or an art gallery, it is important consideration is given to addressing these disparities through the projects that are developed, seeking to level the playing field and create equitable conditions for practicing artists to be able to work in their home city.

Projects and workstreams

This is a list of initial planned or intended projects and workstreams, and where they fit the outcomes and cross-cutting themes. It is not intended to be an exhaustive list, and it will evolve on an annual basis through the monitoring of the strategy. Gloucester City Council and Gloucester Culture Trust will work with the cultural sector and residents of the city to develop a delivery plan for the strategy that is owned by local people.

#	Workstream/project	Description	Outcomes					Cross-cutting themes				Timetable	Lead
			1. Ambition	2. Ecosystem	3. Communities	4. Health	5. Place-making	A. Children and young people	B. Artists and art forms	C. Heritage	D. Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, Access		
1	Talent development	Many organisations are already seeing positive results from their individual talent development plans. Gloucester City Council and GCT will bring the sector together to share best practice, what's working and what isn't to ensure that everyone that wants to has the opportunity to find their route into creative careers in their city.	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	Ongoing	GCT

2	Collaboration	Gloucester's approach to working in collaboration with communities, stakeholders and the cultural sector has been transformative in the last two years. The next ten years calls for more collaboration, more opportunities to come together to share successes and challenges. Together Gloucester City Council and GCT will hold space for this to happen. This will form part of the annual monitoring of the strategy.	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓	Annually	Both
3	Celebrating Gloucester's rich heritage	Gloucester is rightly proud of its rich heritage. Creativity and culture offers the opportunity to reframe what heritage means today making it relevant and exciting to local communities. For example 2027 marks 200 years since the opening of Gloucester Docks. A city-wide arts and heritage programme is being developed to celebrate and mark it, exploring the city that developed around the Docks, and relationships to industry, nature, communities and the wider world. Learning from this project will allow us to identify what's next.	✓ ✓ ✓	✓	2027	Both, plus Canal & River Trust
4	Greyfriars Cultural Centre and Performance Space	The Greyfriars regeneration scheme, funded by the Levelling Up Fund, includes the transformation of the Eastgate Shopping Centre Market Hall into a new Cultural Centre and Performance Space, incorporating a 450-500 seat/ 680 standing performance space, capable of presenting mid-scale theatre, dance, music and comedy, as well as a range of other types of events. This will vastly improve the city's cultural infrastructure.	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓	2028	GCC

5	City wide bids	Gloucester has a vibrant and diverse cultural story to tell to the country. Over the next few years, the city's cultural sector will come together with Gloucester communities to explore how this could be realised through city-wide bids such as the UK Government's City of Culture programme, Global City of Music status or the next iteration of Together Gloucester.	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	2029 (bid)	Both		
6	Public art strategy implementation	Stakeholders will work together to implement the recently published public art strategy, embedding the strategy within the plans for strategic partners and supporting those wishing to put the public art toolkit into practice.	✓				✓		✓	✓	Immediate	Both, plus UoG		
Page 223	University of Gloucestershire as a cultural nexus for Gloucester	The University of Gloucestershire recognises its unique role as a major stakeholder in the development of the cultural sector. This includes its offer to current students and support for graduates, the Centre for Arts and Health at City Campus, and its focus on visual arts development through The Bon, as well as the opportunity to position Gloucester as a centre for creative health. The University will work with other stakeholders across the city to realise Gloucester's cultural opportunities.			✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	Ongoing	Both, plus UoG		
8	Grow your own projects	Gloucester will support cultural entrepreneurs to grow and deliver their projects. Whether that's a pop-up event in a meanwhile space or a white cube gallery space, the city will enter into conversations on the basis of artists' ambitions and what might be possible, rather than what resources might be available.	✓		✓			✓		✓	✓	✓	Ongoing	GCT

9	Next-step studios	GCT's highly successful Jolt programme has been at full capacity for the past 18 months. This project will create much needed 'grow-on' spaces for the creative sector, freeing up studio space at Jolt and enabling the next generation of creative entrepreneurs and artists to join the Jolt programme.	✓ ✓	✓	Ongoing	Both
10	Local government-owned cultural assets and governance	Local Government Reorganisation creates an opportunity and challenge for the operation of the cultural assets owned by the council. This includes the Museum of Gloucester, Gloucester Guildhall and the Greyfriars Cultural Centre and Performance Space. We will work with the other councils to map, analyse, scope and recommend future governance and management options to ensure these assets thrive and survive.	✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓	Ongoing	GCC and other Glos Councils
11	Museum of Gloucester transformation	The Museum of Gloucester requires significant investment to update and transform its building, and create a museum fit for the 21st century, which meaningfully connects people to their heritage and identity, making space for its art collection and contemporary responses, attracting residents and tourists. A transformation roadmap will be developed in 2026 with short, medium and long term objectives.	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓	Immediate	GCC
12	Safe spaces	Gloucester is committed to create safe spaces for all, across everything that we do. Our commitment to equality, openness, and inclusivity—and to ensuring the city reflects the cultural aspirations of all—will be clear in how the sector is convened. In practice, this means explicitly setting out the terms of engagement in sector events, workshops and meetings,	✓ ✓ ✓	✓	Ongoing	Both

		ensuring people treat each other respectfully and everyone feels safe to express themselves.				
13	Community grants	Extending the Together Gloucester (TG) model of democratising cultural decision-making by providing grants to and supporting communities to present and experience cultural activity in their neighbourhoods.	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓	Immediate	GCT
14	Disabled artist network	GCT will work with TwoCan Theatre company to establish a disabled artist network for Gloucester, in order to remove systemic barriers, reduce professional isolation and create a powerful voice for inclusive practice in the city.	✓ ✓	✓ ✓	Ongoing	GCT
15	Citizens at the heart of cultural decision-making	Democratising cultural decision-making is at the heart of this strategy, reflected in the Communities outcome and project 13 above. GCT and GCC will work together to resource and support our citizen's panel for Gloucester. This panel draws from the residents of the city and will be central to the shaping of the future operation and programme of the Museum of Gloucester, city-wide events programme, Jolt and Greyfriars Cultural Centre. In the last two years the panel has become an indispensable resource for the city in testing thinking and engagement models with those that will be directly targeted by the work.	✓ ✓ ✓	✓	Ongoing	Both

16	Pride of Place	Matson and Robinswood is a recipient of Pride of Place funding, £20m over 10 years. We will work with the community steering group formed for Pride in Place to explore the role of culture in their plans and projects.	✓	✓	✓	✓	Ongoing	Both		
17	Family-friendly	We will address the paucity of programming for families with young children through the Greyfriars Cultural Centre development and seek to prioritise opportunities and partnerships that drive more family-friendly work into the city. We will ensure new and transformed cultural assets gain appropriate family-friendly accreditation for their offers and services and play an active role in sharing practice and learning.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Ongoing	GCC	
18	Culture in neighbourhoods	Everyone has the right to culture. Over the life of this strategy, Gloucester residents will have more opportunities to shape and experience cultural activity that is relevant to their lived experience in their neighbourhoods, across every ward in the city.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Ongoing	Both	
19	Creative health	Gloucestershire is a national leader in creative health, with a rich dataset that demonstrates not just the positive benefits to those taking part but also the benefits to the NHS as a treatment tool and as a preventative measure. Gloucester will celebrate and enhance this status by becoming a creative health city. Working with Gloucestershire Creative Health Consortium and the NHS to build on existing networks and opportunities.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Ongoing	GCT

20	Together Gloucester (TG)	TG has successfully run for the past two years, delivering a wide range of cultural events across the city. The 'TG way of working' has been embedded within the Festivals and Events Team at Gloucester City Council's way of working and the next phase of this programme will see that approach evolve through future programming, funding and commissioning.	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	Ongoing	Both
21	Sustainability and climate	Responding to the climate emergency is a key priority for the cultural sector, and an investment principle of major funders. The culture sector will continue to address, learn about and ensure the responsible delivery of cultural events, programmes and projects, including through engaging with Green Events Code of Practice and through requiring funded projects to demonstrate delivery to it.	✓	✓ ✓	Ongoing	Both
22	City masterplan	The city council is currently working to develop a city masterplan that sets out its intentions to develop the city over the next 25 years, across the themes of people, place, environment and economy. Culture will be a key contributor across these themes.	✓ ✓ ✓	✓	Immediate	GCC

Monitoring progress and reporting

Successful delivery of this strategy will be the shared responsibility of the Head of Culture at Gloucester City Council and the CEO of Gloucester Culture Trust.

This strategy, and particularly the listed projects and workstreams, will be viewed as a live document. To ensure it is owned and continues to be driven by the sector's needs and aspirations, there will be an annual gathering of the sector, convened by Gloucester City Council and Gloucester Culture Trust, to review the year that has passed and agree priority projects for the year ahead.

Following this, annual reporting to Gloucester City Council's Cabinet and Gloucester Culture Trust's board will take place, setting out progress against the projects and workstreams in the previous year, and indicating the focus for the year ahead.

The reporting calendar will align with financial years, with the first of the gatherings to take place in March 2027,

Gloucester Culture Trust
 Report to Gloucester Culture Trust & Gloucester City Council on progress in delivering Gloucester's Cultural Strategy 2021-2026
 Report period - January 2025 to present

Objective	Action	KPI	Progress at May 2026	Progress RAG
1. Embed culture in the city's future plans	A.1 Integrate this Cultural Strategy into the city's future plans for regeneration, environmental sustainability, place-making and community well-being.	Number of GCC strategy, policies and plans that reference Culture and enable Cultural Strategy	Corporate Plan 2025-2028 has a dedicated objective for Culture and references this Cultural Strategy. Culture is sited several time in early stages of city Masterplan work with a broad understanding of the role it plays in city centre.	Completed
	A.2. Work with the city's artists, arts and heritage organisations to integrate environmental sustainability into cultural planning and delivery, and use creative activity to support and promote a green agenda.	KPI1: Number of artists, arts and heritage organisations in contact with Gloucester Culture Trust. KPI2: Training, support or advice delivered in relation to the Green agenda for arts and artists	KPI1: 1034 unique users of Jolt, as well as 74 creative businesses housed in Jolt. 54 Live memberships, all studios and 'pods' let and 21 creative businesses supported through 346hrs of 121 mentoring. KPI2: The University of Gloucestershire completed an audit project in the city, working with Gloucester Culture Trust and Gloucester City Council to capture environmental and social sustainability practice in the cultural sector. 10 events and festivals have participated in the process and outputs from the audit will be included in the national Green Events Code of Practice pilot. Phase two of the project postponed due to lack of funding.	On track/paused
2. Build the cultural and creative industries by developing artists and arts organisations	A.3 Continue developing Kings House into an exemplar arts, and creative industries hub and incubator to build and support a thriving diverse creative community at the heart of Gloucester	KPI1: % Occupancy rates at JOLT studios. KPI2: Completion of fit-out of The Music Works.	All Jolt spaces remains full to capacity. Significant growth in memberships taken out over the year (from 41 to 54)	Completed
	A.4 Develop and implement a business transformation and creative development plan for Gloucester City Council-run cultural venues to release their potential	Completion of Blackfriars Development Plan. Delivery of Museum Development Plan. Completion of Guildhall Development Plan.	Completed as the original action specified, but further work underway now to create a roadmap for the future transformation of the Museum.	Completed
	A5. Invest in talent development programmes and networks across Gloucester to develop cultural leaders, existing and emerging, and nurture future generations of artists and creatives.	Number of people participating in Talent Development Programmes eg. Kickstarter apprenticeships.	525 individuals were supported through GCT to develop their business development skills: supporting the development of funding applications, developing leadership skills and creative business growth. Together Gloucester - place partnership project investing in Gloucester's cultural development including funding and commissioning for creative projects, artists and organisations - going into final year of first phase 2026-27.	Completed & ongoing
	A.6 Invest in and champion the city's independent cultural sector, to boost the professional skills, qualifications and employability of people who lead, manage, work in or aspire to work in the creative and cultural sector	Number of professional qualifications gained as a result of cultural investment into sector. Number of new roles created in cultural sector.	GCT, 1 new fixed term part-time position created through the Together Gloucester programme, alongside a number of short-term artist commissions and days of employment.	Completed & ongoing
3. Broaden the cultural offer to support social and economic development	A.7 Ensure a unified approach to cultural planning by aligning Gloucester Culture Trust and independent cultural organisations with the local authorities, Covid-19 recovery groups and other economic and social policy-makers.	Number of cultural orgs engaging with Covid-Recovery activity.	Completed as of March 2024	Completed
	A.8 Develop a cultural and creative industries infrastructure masterplan and investment plan for the city, to ensure the city's built infrastructure becomes industry-leading, supports this Cultural Vision & Strategy and is as ambitious as the rest of the city's bricks and mortar regeneration. (This builds upon the recommendations of the independent 2019 Report into the feasibility of a major new venue for Gloucester.)	Initial KPI: Completion of Infrastructure and investment masterplan	A city masterplan, incorporating cultural infrastructure, is being developed in 2026 by the GCC place team, alongside Museum of Gloucester transformation roadmap and the Greyfriars Cultural Hub development. Ripple mapping of the TG programme continues	Complete at the end of 2026
	A.9 Continue to build partnerships with national cultural organisations, artists and producers to inspire the sector's ambitions and drive up audience demand for cultural experiences.	Number of partnerships with national organisations, artists and producers.	Ongoing. A number of national partnerships exist or are in development. This includes Counterpoints Arts, national touring networks, rural touring networks, Future Arts Centres English Civic Museums Network, 64 Million Artists and Citizens in Power for Together Gloucester	Completed & ongoing

	A.10 Empower local people through investment in grassroots arts activity. Deliver against mutually agreed health and wellbeing outcomes for residents, especially those who are particularly culturally disengaged, by working closely with them, as well as the NHS, Active Gloucestershire, Community Builders and others.	Number grassroots arts and cultural activities undertaken with disengaged communities with health and well-being outcomes.	Together Gloucester, Summerfield	Completed & ongoing
	A.11 Invest in Gloucester-based arts and heritage organisations to diversify and develop their participation and talent development programmes.	Organisations diversify and develop participation and talent programmes	On going partnerships in place.	Completed & ongoing
Objective	Action	KPI		Progress RAG
4. Develop a vibrant city centre full of cultural activity and things to do	A.12 Work with local businesses, economic development bodies, arts and heritage organisations to commission and effectively promote a regular and diverse programme of high-quality outdoor arts events, including street arts and parades, using the city centre's fantastic array of outdoor spaces.	Number of outdoor arts events supported and commissioned	Delivered in 2025/26: Moomins 80, Retro Festival, Bright Nights, Kings Square programme and funding programmes through Together Gloucester. Work in partnership with BID but other business support/ sponsorship limited in current climate.	Completed & ongoing
	A.13 Work with the city's many heritage destinations and historic 'spaces' to develop a high profile, contemporary creative programme unique to Gloucester, regularly bringing together arts, heritage and local communities.	Number of arts and cultural activities in 'heritage' spaces	No specific update. Heritage to be more embedded in the new Cultural Strategy	Completed
	A.14 Animate Kings Square as a revamped, lively, year-round cultural and public space, integrated into and a proud exhibitor of the cultural life of the city.	Number of cultural events taking place on Kings Square	A programme of activity takes place year round and in 2025 this included Lantern Parade, Retro, Moomins Picnic, Bright Nights programming, cultural heritage days. Programme is limited by budget.	Completed
5. Develop audiences for all the cultural opportunities being created	A.15 Promote Gloucester's cultural offer more effectively. First, by researching, listening to and understanding current audiences to map demand, opportunities and gaps, and second, by raising investment for a long-term audience development action plan that addresses these findings.	1. Completion of map of demand 2. Completion of Audience development Action plan.	No update on the 2024 developments. Mapping has taken place. A city-wide audience development plan is not a current priority, with organisations working on an individual basis.	Completed
	A.16 Work with the city's and county's destination marketing organisations to develop a cultural tourism marketing strategy and campaign, collaborating with neighbouring towns and regions as appropriate, to attract visitors nationally and internationally.	Completion of a Marketing Plan for the promotion of Cultural tourism in the region.	Completed as of the end of 2025	Completed
	A.17 Building on existing local strengths, invest in and develop a portfolio and regular programme of regionally or nationally significant Signature Events, including Three Choirs Festival, Tall Ships, Gloucester History Festival, Kings Jam, Carnival and working with other programming partners such as Strike A Light. (This builds upon the recommendations of the 2017 review of Gloucester's Festivals & Events)	Funding scheme in place to support development of key festivals, Festivals and Events funding issued by GCC. Annual report to GCC.	Completed as of the end of 2025	Completed

6. Put Gloucester on the cultural map by developing high profile events	A.18 Coordinate the city's calendar of festivals and events to facilitate better city-wide and long-term planning, as well as coordinated promotion of ambitious, high quality cultural festivals and events	Calendar of Festivals and Events maintained, updated and shared by F&E team.	Completed as of the end of 2025	Completed
	A.19 Monitor the funding model for festivals and events supported by the Council, to ensure it meets the needs of this Strategy, supports the growth of the local independent cultural sector and maximises the artistic, social and economic impact of those events.	Number of grants and/or amount of funding administered via grant applications process	Completed as of the end of 2025	Completed
	A.20 Building on the successes of the first five years of the Cultural Strategy, evaluate the potential impact and return on investment of a bid for UK City of Culture, if and when the conditions are right for the city, and the structure for delivering this goal.	Analysis of bid criteria for becoming a host city.		Completed
	Objective	Action	KPI	Progress RAG
7. Make things happen to continue the momentum for change	A.21 Strengthen the innovative Cultural Partnership that has been set up between Gloucester City Council and Gloucester Culture Trust to ensure this strategy is delivered, building on the achievements of the first five years. To do this, support the further strategic devolvement of culture to Gloucester Culture Trust, allowing the City Council to focus on its vital role in creating the conditions for culture to thrive.	Number of meetings between GCC and GCT Number of attendances of councillors at GCT board meetings.	Cabinet Member for Culture is a trustee of GCT and attends all board meetings. Head of Culture and GCT CEO meet regularly to enable coordinated approach to culture. GCC and GCT to develop a partnership agreement based on the new Cultural Strategy and renegotiation of the Kings House lease. Future work on devolvement happening in tandem with preparation for LGR.	Completed & ongoing
	A.22 Connect this Cultural Partnership to networks and organisations across the city and beyond, to ensure a broad range of residents, artists and organisations can shape the city's cultural future. This will include developing the range of Cultural Forums and co-creation networks.	Number of Strategic Events Group meetings held	This is taking place as business as usual, through Strategic Events Group and Together Gloucester, and on a project/ consultation basis i.e. Open Space conference for the new Cultural Strategy in April 2025.	Complete
	A.23 Work with a wide range of strategic and funding partners who share our Vision (such as Arts Council England, University of Gloucestershire, NHS, GFirst LEP and major local businesses), to pool resources, generate greater investment in culture and ensure this strategy is resilient.	Amount of additional investment leveraged into Cultural activity by GCT and GCC	In the financial year 2025-26, total ACE funding awarded to organisations and individuals in Gloucester across of their revenue, capital and project funding programmes totalled £3.8M.	Completed & ongoing
8. Empower young people to create, experience and participate in culture	A.24 Support young people to develop skills and leadership in arts and cultural production - identifying and providing training opportunities	Number of training opportunities provided for young people.	GCT provides training opportunities through its Jolt programmes. 67 people took part in Creative Start Up business training with 55% under 30's. Jolt incubation programmes at full capacity with 70 participants (18 under 30).	Completed & ongoing
	A.25 Amplify the voices of young people, through encouraging youth-led publications, support on Youth boards and more widely	Number of young people on cultural boards. Number of youth-led publications. Number of youth-led initiatives.	GCT's Jolt CoLab young networking group provided 12 informal meetings aimed at young people under 30. Average attendance of 20 young people at each event. No additional members on GH Steering Group currently, however Guildhall Young Programmers will now develop into a Youth Advisory Board from 2026/27.	Completed & ongoing
	A.26 Ensure there are opportunities for young people to participate in and create culture, through supporting, marketing and investing in youth led- programming	Amount invested into youth-led programming, marketing and promotion.	GH Young Programmers have successfully produced a programme of events at the GH and will now progress to a Youth Advisory Board who will commission and curate a youth led programme, as well as shadowing the Steering Group.	Completed & ongoing