

## **Arts Council England's Delivery Plans**

### **Purpose of report**

For direction.

### **Summary**

This report provides an update on the resourcing of Arts Council England (ACE)'s new delivery plans, which set out how ACE will deliver the objectives of their ten-year strategy 'Let's Create'.

It also discusses the future of the partnership between LGA and ACE. In 2016, ACE and the LGA signed up to a [Shared Statement of Purpose](#), which is now due for renewal and we are seeking Member's views on the form and content of a revised statement.

### **Recommendation/s**

That Board Members note updates to ACE's new delivery plan and consider options for a refreshed statement of joint working between the LGA and ACE.

### **Action/s**

Members are invited to discuss a refreshed Shared Statement to be adopted by both organisations; to give approval to officers developing his piece of work in partnership with ACE; and to share their views on its proposed content.

**Contact officer:** Lauren Lucas  
**Position:** Adviser – Culture, Tourism and Sport  
**Phone no:** 07920 278485  
**Email:** lauren.lucas@local.gov.uk

## Arts Council England's Delivery Plans

### Background

1. In January 2020, ACE published their ten-year strategy 'Let's Create' with the following vision: *"by 2030, we want England to be a country in which the creativity of each of us is valued and given the chance to flourish, and where every one of us has access to a remarkable range of high-quality cultural experiences"*.
2. 'Let's Create' sets out three Outcomes the strategy is seeking to achieve, (as outlined in an earlier Board paper): Creative People, Cultural Communities and A Creative & Cultural Country. Delivery will be supported by four new Investment Principles: inclusivity and relevance, dynamism, ambition and quality and environmental responsibility.

### Delivery Plan Priorities

3. To help Arts Council to achieve the vision set out in 'Let's Create', they will publish a series of Delivery Plans over the next decade. These will set out in more detail the steps they will take to deliver 'Let's Create' and how they will resource them.
4. The first Delivery Plan (2021-24) sets out five new themes:
  - 4.1 **Fit for the future:** how arts and cultural organisations can innovate and develop new business models, including working with health and social care providers or higher education, improving efficiency and addressing environmental sustainability.
  - 4.2 **Supporting individuals:** how ACE will provide more direct support to individual creative practitioners, including a combination of improved financial support alongside improved access to training and development opportunities.
  - 4.3 **Strengthening our place-based working and levelling up:** how ACE will work differently in different geographic areas in order to most effectively realise the ambitions of Let's Create, including setting out shared principles for collaboration with the Local Government Association.
  - 4.4 **Working internationally;** how ACE will support cultural organisations with appropriate legal and practical advice to navigate the new environment established by wider factors including EU Exit and the COVID-19 pandemic; and
  - 4.5 **How the Arts Council will change:** ensuring ACE is inclusive, relevant, dynamic, accessible, customer-focused, agile, and responsive.
5. Full details of each of these themes and their connection to the LGA's work programme are set out in an [earlier paper shared with the CTS Board in June 2021](#).

### Resourcing the Delivery Plan

6. Since the last report to the Board, ACE has published the second half of their Delivery Plan, which sets out how the Plan will be resourced. Their five main investment programmes are:

- 6.1 The National Portfolio, including Creative People & Places.
    - 6.1.1 National Portfolio Organisations budget 2021/22: £414 million (awarded to organisations in the 2018-22 Portfolio)
    - 6.1.2 New Creative People and Places budget 2021/22: £23 million
  - 6.2 National Lottery Project Grants (Budget 2021/22: £99 million)
  - 6.3 Music Education Hubs (Budget 2021/22: £76 million)
  - 6.4 Capital Investment (Budget 2021-22: up to £20 million)
  - 6.5 Developing your Creative Practice (Budget 2021/22: £22.4 million)
7. Some of the key changes from previous years are:
- 7.1 The Creative People and Places scheme, which targets areas of low engagement, will be brought into the National Portfolio along with regularly funded organisations. Successful organisations will receive three years of funding.
  - 7.2 The upper threshold for small National Lottery Project Grants is raised to £30,000 from £15,000. Applications will be streamlined and libraries and museums (including non-accredited museums) are specifically mentioned as being supported. There will be some ring-fenced funds within this, including one for Place Partnerships to support our place-making work . Place Partnership Funds will include support for the development of capital projects that align with their ambitions around place making. ACE will combine their expertise as a national development agency with seed funding to work with local and national government and other partners to make the case for improved and sustainable cultural infrastructure in key places. Their role in future will be about providing consultancy and early development funding rather than large-scale completion funding.
  - 7.3 Their Capital Investment will support projects that deliver the Investment Principles. Investment will be in organisations to help them develop plans to make physical adjustments to buildings and equipment so that they can operate safely post-pandemic, improve access, seize on technological opportunities and reduce environmental impact. Projects will be funded up to a maximum of £750,000.
  - 7.4 The increased budgets for Developing Your Creative Practice offered during the pandemic will be sustained, while applications will be streamlined.
8. Besides the five main investment programmes, the Delivery Plan includes a number of new and ongoing development programmes, including the Culture Recovery Fund, Museum Accreditation, Single Digital Presence for Libraries and Artsmark. Shared LGA/ACE programmes Leadership Essentials for councillors and Local Government Peer Challenges are both listed in this section of the Plan. It also includes the Thriving Communities Fund: a joint programme with the National Academy for Social Prescribing to create opportunities for the cultural and health sectors to work more closely together.

## Action Plans

9. The Delivery Plan also includes actions plans for each of the five themes. These include delivering the Creative Development Fund, strengthening the Creative People and Places programme, Music Education Hubs, City of Culture, Commonwealth Games, Platinum Jubilee and a number of other important programmes. Some of the key actions relating to the work of the LGA include the following:

- 9.1 **Supporting named priority places.** ACE has identified 54 '[priority places](#)' across England in which their investment and engagement is too low, and where they have identified opportunities for ACE to effectively increase investment and engagement. They will prioritise working with these 54 areas from 2021 to 2024. These places were selected on the basis of 'need' and 'opportunity' and [the full methodology is available on the ACE website](#).
- 9.2 **Supporting local government to build leadership and delivery capacity.** This action sets out ACE's plans to work in partnership with the LGA to deliver a programme of leadership training for culture portfolio holders, and peer challenges for library and cultural services teams in local authorities.
- 9.3 **Refreshing how we work with local government.** ACE notes they will revise their Shared Statement of Purpose with the Local Government Association to serve as a set of principles by which we will seek to work with local government which is identified as 'their most important strategic local delivery partner'.

## Sector response

10. Feedback received from the Chief Culture and Leisure Officers' Association (CLOA) by the LGA in response to the Delivery Plan (and broader relationship between ACE and local government) has been positive. Specific points included the following.

- 10.1 In relation to the announcement of 'Priority Places' the general feeling is that this is the right approach if ACE are going to address the 'cold spots' that exist in accessing any funding. For example, some areas have no NPO's and/or have struggled to access wider funding. Furthermore, the existence of an NPO does also tend to cultivate further funding in an area, so the absence of one can create a vicious circle in relation to investment. Where those places are some of the most deprived areas nationally it is even more important that this imbalance is addressed. The key to making this approach successful will be ensuring local factors have been fully understood. The recent LGA, ACE, National Lottery Heritage Fund and Historic England regional workshops were aimed at starting this conversation with less engaged areas.
- 10.2 In the longer-term it is important to ensure that prioritising places where there is little activity and other investment does not create a disincentive for local government and others to invest in culture. Engaging local authority officers in regular dialogue about these issues is therefore essential.

- 10.3 It is acknowledged that ACE have been very busy the last 18 months distributing funding in the wake of the pandemic, but they have still managed to maintain positive relationships with local authorities. Those asked felt they knew who to contact and seek advice, which is vital if there is a local issue or new leader of council or chief executive who might not yet understand the value of cultural investment. There is a broadly positive response to the way ACE maintain local relationships and acknowledgment that they are relatively swift to offer to support/influence.
- 10.4 Having a named lead in each area was felt to be important and that should work both ways. This view was also reflected in feedback from the LGA's recent regional workshops with ACE, NLHF and Historic England.

### **Refreshing the Shared Statement of Purpose**

11. In 2016 Arts Council England and the LGA set out a [Shared Statement of Purpose](#) which outlined a vision for the wider social contribution that arts and culture can make, and how the two partners aspired to work together to realise it. It also set out the principles by which the Arts Council would work bilaterally with individual local authorities. This followed on from a previous 2012 partnership agreement.
12. This Statement was due for renewal in 2020, but the planned refresh was interrupted by COVID-19. Instead, the LGA set out a [shorter statement](#) in response to the crisis and in partnership with Arts Council England, Core Cities, Key Cities, the Culture and Leisure Officers Association (CLOA), Community Leisure UK (CLUK), London Councils, and the Rural Services Network, in which they committed to aligning their support to work with all cultural organisations, sharing good practice and collecting evidence, and making the case for culture and the future.
13. The two statements have been helpful in providing a framework for partnership working with Arts Council England over the years. Some of the key benefits of the agreement have included:
- 13.1 developing the shared improvement programme, including introducing new work focused specifically on libraries;
  - 13.2 running several successful joint conferences and events; and
  - 13.3 working closely with ACE on our advocacy work.
14. We are proposing to develop a revised Shared Statement with Arts Council England seeking a steer from Board Members on its content.
15. Some of the potential areas for building on existing strengths in the partnership working between local government and Arts Council England have been set out in feedback we have received from CLOA and our events surveys.

- 15.1 Ensuring simple lines of communication between local government and ACE officers in a place, and ensuring both ACE lead officers and local authority officers have a clear understanding of one another's work.
  - 15.2 An ACE/local government working group to help develop a shared approach to place-based working. This would draw on the perspective of LGA councillors and CLOA's officer members and could be achieved by building on the work of the existing ACE/local government stakeholders' group.
  - 15.3 There was some desire to see ACE supporting combined authorities and regional groupings of councils, particularly where wider funding options might be secured. However, this needs to be tempered with caution to avoid establishing a 'competing narrative' on local need.
  - 15.4 There is a desire to understand how the ACE place-based funding will work, so that local authorities can prepare.
  - 15.5 ACE has a role to play in really making sure that National Portfolio Organisations (NPOs) work hard to tackle the 'engage' aspect of their work to ensure participation is not for the few, whether in schools, or festivals and wider community activities.
  - 15.6 Finally, it would be helpful for local authority officers to be involved in conversations about disinvestment as early as possible if current NPO's are to lose this status; an early indication helps councils to prepare for the resulting challenges at local level. An alternative could be ACE encouraging the NPO to also speak to the council about the challenges they face.
16. We would recommend that the statement includes the following:
- 16.1 A brief outline of the changed context in which cultural services and organisations are operating and arising challenges and opportunities.
  - 16.2 A statement of our shared ambition for the sector.
  - 16.3 A framework for how the LGA and ACE will work together to achieve this, including our continued work on the improvement programme.
  - 16.4 General principles for how both parties will engage with local government more broadly to inform and influence our work, including the key stakeholders involved in the joint approach to pandemic response.
17. We recommend that the length of this agreement is aligned to the ACE Delivery Plans and will be refreshed again in 2024.

### **Implications for inclusion, diversity and equality**

18. The Delivery Plan also includes a separate section on Equality Objectives. These are:

- 18.1 We will ensure a more equitable distribution of our investment to improve opportunities for everyone, especially those with under-represented, protected characteristics and from disadvantaged socio-economic groups.
- 18.2 We will invest in inclusive cultural organisations whose leadership, governance, and workforce – and the independent creative practitioners they support – represent the diversity of contemporary England.
- 18.3 We will invest in a cultural sector that is more relevant to all of England's communities, especially those that have been historically underserved by public investment in culture.
- 18.4 We will become a more inclusive and relevant national development agency for creativity and culture that models good practice.

19. These objectives should be considered in our own emerging work in this area.

#### **Implications for Wales**

20. The Delivery Plan only applies to England.

#### **Financial Implications**

21. None.

#### **Next steps**

22. Officers to reflect Members views as this work progresses.

23. Officers will further discuss the feedback from the sector with ACE, recognising that some elements will be best addressed through actions outside of the shared statement.