

WALTHAM FOREST COUNCIL – CULTURE STRATEGY 2023-27

SPECIFICATION FOR CONSULTANCY SERVICES

1. BACKGROUND

Culture and creativity are part of our DNA. In 2019, Waltham Forest became the first ever Mayor of London Borough of Culture, reflecting our history of makers and creators whose creativity, radical thinking and shared sense of purpose has helped drive innovation and progress.

Waltham Forest in north-east London has a young and highly diverse population of over 270,000 residents across Leyton, Leytonstone, Walthamstow, Highams Park and Chingford. More information about the borough and our residents can be found [here](#).

London Borough of Culture 2019

Waltham Forest was the very first Mayor of London Borough of Culture (LBoC) in 2019. Described as a ‘global exemplar’ by the Deputy Mayor for Culture and Creative Industries, it delivered 1000 cultural activities, co-created with over 800 partners including 800 artists, creative organisations, schools and venues and involving 1000 volunteers and attracted 500,000 visits. Highlights of the programme can be viewed [here](#).

The ambitions to deliver a sustainable and bold legacy from LBoC were put on hold due to the COVID 19 pandemic, as we worked with council teams and the local culture sector to support our residents and businesses through this challenging period. Precarity resulting from the rapidly changing funding landscape, the cost-of-living crisis and ongoing inequality in the culture sector in terms of access, employment and engagement are particular challenges we will address over the coming years.

Culture continues to be a high priority for the Council with several major projects demonstrating a commitment to build on the legacy of Borough of Culture. These include the opening of a new cultural and civic space, Fellowship Square, (the opening event can be viewed [here](#)) and the forthcoming launch of [Soho Theatre Walthamstow](#) in 2023, a major new theatre in the heart of the borough.

Why a culture strategy?

As we emerge from the pandemic, we are now in a position to reflect on the strengths and learning from our year as the first London Borough of Culture and the borough’s rapidly evolving cultural landscape to develop an ambitious new Culture Strategy for Waltham Forest

Waltham Forest Council is commissioning a place-based culture strategy for the next four years (2023-27). Its purpose is to focus our resources and energy so that the borough realises its potential and ambitions to be recognised as a destination for residents and visitors with a unique, inclusive and coherent culture offer. Our vision is a place that nurtures cultural organisations and attracts investment- a great place to live, work and play.

2. PROJECT SCOPE

The new culture strategy will set out the ambitions and opportunities for culture in Waltham Forest and clearly define the council’s role in achieving these, working strategically and collaboratively with local, regional and national partners and stakeholders.

Priorities are to:

- Build a sustainable legacy from the London Borough of Culture 2019, to deliver an inclusive and high-quality culture programme, co-created with our community and partners
- Identify how culture will be a major part of delivering the council's priorities for a vibrant, thriving borough where all residents can enjoy a good quality of life, with access to good jobs and services.
- Position Waltham Forest as a cultural destination and a vibrant contributor to the local, regional and international cultural landscape
- Support the local cultural sector to recover and grow, and to focus the council's role in facilitating this
- Maximise opportunities to support and develop new and existing cultural infrastructure
- Attract external funding and investment
- Create a roadmap and delivery plan, with a defined set of KPIs to evaluate and measure the return on investment

The culture strategy should also align with and take account of the following plans and opportunities:

- The development of 15 min neighbourhoods
- The development of Fellowship Square as a key cultural destination at the heart of the borough
- Ambitions for Coronation Square in Leyton to become a significant cultural contributor for the borough
- The development of a Cultural Jobs Academy
- Plans for Waltham Forest to be the first National borough of Storytelling
- Review of governance arrangements for the award-winning William Morris Gallery and a new vision for Vestry House Museum
- Development of a Walthamstow Arts Quarter as part of maximising the arrival of Soho Theatre Walthamstow
- Development of a University of Portsmouth campus in Waltham Forest
- The Local Plan and infrastructure statement
- The response to the Climate Emergency
- Studios for artists, workspace provision and space for arts organisations - and shaping policy for this within the local plan

Waltham Forest Council's Culture & Heritage Team

The Council's Culture and Heritage Team (with emerging plans to become the Directorate of Culture and Destination) is leading on the development of the Culture Strategy. It has direct responsibility for:

- [William Morris Gallery](#) – an Arts Council National Portfolio Organisation dedicated to sharing and exploring the work and ideas of William Morris
- [Vestry House Museum](#) – the borough's local history museum currently at the start of a major revitalisation project
- One Hoe Street- recently returned to the culture portfolio following a period as a COVID test centre.
- A borough-wide culture programme designed to meet the Council's Strategic Priorities which includes a £150k grant funded programme
- Cultural programming in Fellowship Square
- Strategic Partnerships with external arts organisations including the Barbican and East Bank
- Culture Jobs Academies and wider work to support residents into jobs in the cultural and creative sector

This new Culture Strategy will set out a clear delivery plan for the department over the next four years, aligning with the Council's priorities for Waltham Forest and its residents and building on the legacy of London Borough of Culture.

The appointed person/s will work closely with the Culture & Heritage Team to determine the shape and direction of the strategy. It is expected that this will involve consultation with stakeholders internally at the Council and externally, as well as incorporating information from existing policy, strategy and evaluation documents.

The London Borough of Waltham Forest values diversity in all its forms. Our borough is one of the most diverse in the country, a feature that is a strength, and we are committed to improving inclusion and representation within our communities and in the work we undertake as a Local Authority. Proposals should demonstrate a commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion with regards to: composition of teams, service delivery, engagement process and measures of success. We encourage proposals which actively seek to improve the representation of women, people of Colour, LGBTQ+ people, those with visible or non-visible disabilities and those from varied backgrounds.

3. DELIVERABLES

- Culture Strategy for 2023 -2027 with a clear vision and strategic objectives
- Delivery Plan for the first two years of the strategy with SMART actions and resource plan
- A financial plan showing the indicative budgets for individual activities in the delivery plan and a total budget for the full delivery programme
- Key Performance Indicators which will enable evaluation of delivery of the strategy and demonstrate return on investment
- Meaningful consultation with internal and external stakeholders throughout the process
- Reference to relevant existing policy, strategy, mapping and evaluation documents from across the Council and externally

4. PROJECT MANAGEMENT AND WAYS OF WORKING

- We expect a highly collaborative approach, working closely with the provider throughout the duration of the project. The Council will engage to support with introductions to staff, outlining of processes, providing access to data and documents to ensure the smooth running of the project.
- A member of Council staff will be the internal lead on the project and will act as the main point of liaison between the appointed provider and Council throughout.
- The provider will provide weekly updates on progress to the internal 'lead' for the project, as well as immediately highlighting any challenges or risks to delivery if they arise.
- The provider is expected to attend regular meetings of the core project team and provide updates on progress for the duration of the project.

5. CONTRACT VALUE

- Providers are invited to submit bids below the maximum threshold of £15,000 (excluding VAT) but inclusive of travel costs and disbursements.

6. COMMISIONING TIMETABLE

Invitation to Tender on Pro Contract	Monday 9 May – Sunday 5 June
Supplier Evaluation Period	w/c 6 June
Decision confirmed	w/c 13 June
Commencement of work	w/c 20 June

7. DELIVERY TIMETABLE

Research phase: consultation and meetings with key stakeholders internally; detailed delivery timeline and workplan	End of June – Mid July
Key delivery phase: scoping; consultation internally and externally; development of vision and strategic objectives	Mid July – End of August
Write up phase: drafting of strategy, delivery plan, financial plan and KPIs in consultation with team	September
Sign off phase: Draft papers for Cabinet due	Early October
Present to Cabinet	Early November