

Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee
Cabinet

5 February 2026
10 February 2026

Name of Cabinet Member:

Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities - Councillor N Akhtar

Director approving submission of the report:

Director of Regeneration and Economy

Wards affected:

All

Title:

Coventry Creative Industries Strategy 2026 – 2029

Is this a key decision

Yes - the proposals are likely to have a significant impact on residents or businesses in two or more electoral wards in the city.

Executive summary:

Whilst having nationally recognised strengths in creative industries, Coventry does not currently have an adopted creative industries strategy. This has become more pertinent following the publication of the Government's Creative Industries Sector Plan in June 2025, including significant sector investment for 2026-2029. This includes a £25m allocation to West Midlands Combined Authority to drive growth of the creative industries, aligning with the West Midlands Growth Plan which identifies creative industries as a priority sector.

Ahead of the Government sector plan, the Coventry City Council culture and creative economy team commissioned an independent Coventry Creative Industries mapping report in May 2025. The purpose was to provide fresh evidence about size of the sector, as well as to identify key opportunities and challenges. The mapping involved stakeholder consultation through roundtables and focus interviews. A public event was held on 24 June 2025 to share key findings and collect further sector evidence, followed by an All-Members Seminar on 6 October 2025. The report was published on the Council website on 2 October 2025.

The mapping report and its key recommendations have strongly informed the development of the creative industries strategy, which as a key decision is coming to Cabinet for adoption. The strategy will provide a future roadmap for the development of creative industries in Coventry, as well as give us an opportunity to clearly articulate our priorities to potential funders and other stakeholders. The adoption of the strategy is time sensitive given the WMCA funding detail due to be confirmed by the end of March 2026.

The Strategy was developed with stakeholders and partners by the Council's Culture and Creative Economy team. There are no new and direct cost implications for the Council within the Strategy itself. The accompanying delivery plan is based on either existing funding or capacity, but with the ambition to secure further funding in the future, including potentially from the WMCA through alignment with West Midlands Growth Plan.

Recommendations:

Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee is recommended to:

- 1) Consider the contents of the report and identify any additional recommendations or comments to Cabinet for their consideration.

Cabinet is recommended to:

- 1) Consider any recommendations or comments from Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee
- 2) Approve the draft Coventry Creative Industries Strategy 2026 – 2029 set out in Appendix 1 to the report and the associated strategy delivery plan set out in Appendix 2 to the report.
- 3) Delegate authority to the Director of Regeneration and Economy, following consultation with the Director of Law and Governance, the Director of Finance and Resources, and the Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities to:
 - a) finalise the Coventry Creative Industries Strategy 2026 – 2029 and associated strategy delivery plan and thereafter adopt the Coventry Creative Industries Strategy 2026 – 2029 and associated strategy delivery plan.
 - b) further amend, edit and adapt the Coventry Creative Industries Strategy 2026 – 2029 and associated strategy delivery plan over the life of the strategy in response to subsequent review, opportunity and consultation as required.
- 4) Delegate authority to the Director of Regeneration and Economy, following consultation with the Director of Law and Governance, the Director of Finance and Resources, and the Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities to:
 - a) Identify potential funding opportunities, submit funding bids and accept funding awards up to a total sum of £2.5 million pounds.
 - b) Undertake the necessary due diligence, negotiate the terms and condition of the funding agreement and enter into the necessary agreement to deliver the aims and objectives of the Coventry Cultural Industries Strategy 2026-29.

List of Appendices included:

The following appendices are attached to the report:

Appendix 1 – Coventry Creative Industries Strategy 2026 – 2029

Appendix 2 – Coventry Creative Industries Strategy Delivery Plan

Appendix 3 – Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

Background papers:

[What's next for Coventry's Creative Industries? – report](#) by independent consultant David Furmage, published 2 October 2025 on the Council website

Other useful documents

West Midlands Combined Authority [Plan for Growth](#)
Government's [Creative Industries Sector Plan](#), June 2025

Has it or will it be considered by Scrutiny?

Yes - Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee, 5 February 2026

Has it or will it be considered by any other Council Committee, Advisory Panel or other body?

Coventry Culture Works cultural compact Creative Industries Task Group, 14 January 2026

Will this report go to Council?

No

Report title: Coventry Creative Industries Strategy

1. Context (or background)

- 1.1. With strengths in both creativity and technology, two strong universities and the creative legacy of UK City of Culture 2021, Coventry is well-placed to maximise the potential of its creative industries.
- 1.2. They represent a significant economic sector, with over 1,290 creative businesses (13% of all businesses), directly employing 7,250 workers. When adding freelancers and creative professionals working in non-creative sectors, the sector footprint is much larger, with approximately 14,500 workers, (9% of city workforce) engaged in creative occupations.
- 1.3. Combined with Warwickshire, the sub-region boasts over 7,000 creative businesses and 80 game development studios, forming one of the UK's biggest creative clusters.
- 1.4. Coventry has developed a particular strength in createch, providing a unique opportunity to combine the creative knowhow with innovation across other key sectors, from automotive to advanced manufacturing and healthcare.
- 1.5. This Strategy sets out a practical plan to turn potential into progress. It responds to national priorities outlined in the UK Government's Creative Industries Sector Plan and aligns with regional ambitions under the West Midlands Growth Plan.
- 1.6. It also responds to the specific sector challenges and opportunities identified through the mapping report.
- 1.7. The strategy focuses on five delivery themes:
 - Businesses, clusters and networks – providing targeted support to meet the needs of businesses
 - Skills and workforce development – delivering targeted skills development opportunities
 - Places and spaces – unlocking affordable creative workspaces and exploring opportunities to make existing specialist facilities more accessible
 - Tourism and branding – positioning creative industries at the heart of Coventry's visitor economy and storytelling
 - Funding and policy – Aligning with regional and national strategies to secure public and private investment
- 1.8. Through this Strategy, the Council will seek to work collaboratively with stakeholders to ensure that Coventry will have a thriving, financially resilient creative sector, a highly skilled and diverse workforce, and a stronger creative city brand by 2029.
- 1.9. Although there are no specific funds attached to this activity, the Strategy will be an important tool in both making the case for new funding, also ensuring that we target future funds to maximise the potential benefits.

2. Options considered and recommended proposal

- 2.1 Option 1 (Not recommended).** The Council could choose not to have a Coventry Creative Industries Strategy 2026 – 2029, and to instead rely on strategic plans of the WMCA, such as the Plan for Growth.

The risk with this approach is that it would limit the specific, detailed case for investment for Coventry, particularly given wider planned and previous investment in the West Midlands region. The lack of a shared delivery plan and strategy for the city would also make partnership working more challenging, which would impact Coventry's likelihood of securing other types of investment as well. Most funders now want to see how their investment aligns with city strategies and plans. The strategy document is also an important tool in facilitating partnerships between the Council, the universities and the private sector. Without a strategy, there would be no clear means for the Coventry creative industries sector to shape economic planning, major business support and economic development activities at the sub-regional scale.

- 2.2 Option 2 (Recommended).** The endorsement of the Coventry Creative Industries Strategy 2026 – 2029, which has been developed in response to the Coventry creative industries mapping, as well as aligned to the key opportunities around the Government's Creative Industries Sector Plan.

Development of the Strategy has been informed by in-depth consultation with key creative industry partners, universities and other stakeholders. By building on local strengths and addressing key challenges, the Strategy aims to provide a clear roadmap on how Coventry can grow its creative industries and maximise on the opportunities to align them with our other key industries, including automotive. This also allows the city to diversify the economic base, as well as provide opportunities to create new jobs and improve the diversity of the creative industries workforce and leadership.

- 2.3** It is recommended that the Cabinet supports Option 2 and endorses the Coventry Creative Industries Strategy 2026 – 2029.

3. Results of consultation undertaken

- 3.1.** As part of the development process for this strategy, Coventry City Council has undertaken consultation and other evidence gathering activity including:
- Review of the previous mapping in 2020-2021 and other available data
 - Review of the current creative industries within the Council
 - Commissioning an independent consultant in May 2025 to deliver a Creative Industries mapping report, providing up to date evidence and data. This included several industry/academic roundtables and focus interviews key experts, with

over 40 people taking part. This was augmented with an analysis of current and recent reports and strategies locally, regionally, nationally and internationally

- A public consultation event was held on 24 June 2025 to share key findings from the report and collect further sector evidence, with circa 80 creative industries professionals and stakeholders attending
- Publishing the report on 2 October 2025 on the Council website and holding an All-Member Seminar on Creative Industries, in partnership with University of Warwick and Coventry University on 6 October 2025
- Final sector consultation event on 30 October 2025, attended by approximately 20 sector experts and stakeholders
- Ongoing conversations in 2025-26 with WMCA on their creative industries plans for 2026-2029, including alignment with Coventry's strengths in this area

3.2. A number of key challenges and opportunities were identified, including:

- A lack of affordable creative spaces, venues, and specialised facilities
- Tourism and branding needing a stronger, coordinated city identity
- Business support services for the sector being fragmented and lacking specialist support.
- Short-term funding cycles cause instability, hindering business investment
- Skills shortages and limited career opportunities leading to poor graduate retention.
- Freelance creative work is often uncertain, poorly paid and lacks career progression, with limited business focused support available.
- Current wider challenges pushing businesses into survival mode, limiting planning, innovation and collaboration.

The key opportunities identified included:

- Business Development: specialist support, better funding access, and stronger freelancer networks can boost growth in all creative areas
- Cluster Development: building on the success of Coventry and Warwickshire Exchange (CWX) as a cluster development body
- Skills and Innovation: Can position Coventry as a national leader in createch
- Infrastructure: new projects like the City Centre Cultural Gateway
- Tourism and Branding: relaunching Destination Coventry

3.3. This evidence – and particularly the 2025 Creative Industries Mapping Report – has given us a strong foundation to build our strategic approach on. Whilst the mapping and strategy are primarily focused on economic development, links to culture, tourism and the visitor economy were also considered.

4. Timetable for implementing this decision

- 4.1. The Coventry Creative Industries Strategy 2026 – 2029 is a three-year strategy. Progress will be reported annually to the Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities.

5. Comments from Director of Finance and Resources and Director of Law and Governance

5.1. Financial Implications

The strategy has been developed internally by the Council's Culture and Creative Economy team, resulting in no direct financial cost for its creation. Delivery activity will be supported through existing budgets and staff capacity. However, the strategy includes an ambition to secure additional external funding in the future, including potential contributions from the WMCA, to expand and enhance delivery. Approval of the acceptance of any external funding will be reported back following the constitutions procedures

5.2. Legal Implications

The Council has powers under s145 Local Government Act 1972 and s111 Local Government Act 1972 which support the development and delivery of the Coventry Creative Industries Strategy 2026 – 2029. There are no legal impediments to the Cabinet approving this report.

Where the Council secures grant funding, it will need to ensure that the receipt of the grant is compliant with the UK's subsidy control rules as set out in the Subsidy Control Act 2022 and any regulations and amendments thereto. Legal and Procurement Services will provide the necessary support to ensure that any legal agreement to secure funding protects the Council's interest.

6. Other implications

6.1. How will this contribute to the One Coventry Plan?

<https://www.coventry.gov.uk/strategies-plans-policies/one-coventry-plan>

- 6.1.1 The Coventry Creative Industries Strategy 2026 – 2029 will help to deliver all five objectives within the One Coventry Plan.

- 6.1.2 **Increasing the Economic Prosperity of the City and Region.** This Strategy will contribute strongly towards delivering this objective given that its main objective is to support the creative industries to grow and flourish. This includes aims to support new jobs, incubate new businesses, support freelancers, attract investment and support key economic industry sectors through convergence between creativity and technology. In addition, the Strategy presents the opportunity to contribute towards the development of our visitor economy, and future development of the storytelling about Coventry. Alignment with regional and national strategies will improve the chances of securing investment to the city.

- 6.1.3 **Improving Outcomes and Tackling Inequalities Within our Communities.** A key part of the Strategy is focus on skills development to ensure that the city has a skilled workforce to drive the sector forward. A vital part of this is to ensure that the City can create conditions to increase the diversity of our creative industries workforce, particularly given the young and diverse population of Coventry. This entails looking at the Strategy and its implementation can support people from different communities to access opportunities – and be supported through their learning and career journey. The aims around unlocking new affordable creative workspace and making existing spaces more accessible will support in tackling inequality of opportunities.
- 6.1.4 **Tackle the Causes and Consequences of Climate Change.** The strategy recognises the importance of climate change, both in terms of making the creative industries more environmentally sustainable – but also in how they can aid behaviour changes through storytelling. A key part of the business support programme is to ensure businesses in this sector will know about opportunities e.g. on environmental grants to make their operations, equipment or buildings more energy efficient.
- 6.1.5 **Continued Financial Sustainability of the Council.** As a Strategy for the Creative Industries, the activities are aimed at supporting businesses to grow, which would generate income through business rates and tax revenues. Given that the Strategy also aligns with a Government sector plan, there is an opportunity for the Council to use the Strategy to secure more direct delivery or devolved funding.
- 6.1.6 **Council's Role as a Partner, Leader and Enabler.** The creative industries strategy provides an opportunity for the Council to adopt all these roles. The Council has worked together in partnership with the sector and a wide range of stakeholders to develop the Strategy, aligning with partner needs. The Council has thus operated as an enabler and will continue to broker partnerships or unlock new opportunities. The Council will also be in a key leadership position to advocate for devolved funding and to facilitate and coordinate the actual strategy delivery.

6.2. How is risk being managed?

The key risks include:

- Lack of dedicated funding to deliver beyond the actions identified at this point, as well as some funding decisions not being confirmed. However, many of the actions can be contributed without any additional funding – and can support the development of future funding applications. There is a strong track record in securing funding through the Council, with the strategy delivery also involving universities and other partners with significant fundraising experience.
- Sustaining the partnership commitment to deliver the Strategy. The Council already has strong partnerships in place through the consultation process and therefore expects that partner commitment will deepen through the delivery process.
- Uncertainty around the delivery model for the WMCA's Creative Places Growth Fund (CPGF) and how it can support the delivery of the Strategy. Further clarity on the CPGF is expected in the next few months, and it is proposed the Strategy and Delivery Plan can be further amended and tailored to ensure optimal implementation, in line with Recommendation 2. This should not, therefore, present significant risk.

6.3. What is the impact on the organisation?

In relation to the whole organisation, we expect the strategy to deliver positive outcomes in supporting local businesses, creating new skills opportunities and contribute the external narrative about the city. The implications of no dedicated funding being attached to the strategy have already been covered in Section 5. In terms of staff impact, the delivery will mainly concern the Culture and Creative Economy Team, where this forms a core part of their roles already. Input will also be required from the Economy team, but this should not have any major staffing implications and will help to align the creative industries strategy with the wider economic frameworks.

6.4. Equalities / EIA

- 6.4.1 As outlined earlier in the report, one of the key aims of the Strategy is to address the lack of diversity across the creative industries workforce. This is particularly pertinent for Coventry given the city's young and diverse population. It is planned that any interventions are designed carefully to provide support for those experiencing disadvantage. The Council will also pay particular attention to how we will reach people from different communities and experiencing different challenges. This involves using locally based community organisations, community leaders and other trusted partners to promote opportunities. Given the lack of data across some parts of the creative industries, the Council will further ensure we can collect and analyse data to ensure that Coventry can contribute to national data. An Equalities Impact Assessment has been completed.

6.5. Implications for (or impact on) climate change and the environment?

As outlined in the "Tackling the Causes and Consequences of Climate Change" section, the Strategy will look to enhance the opportunity for local businesses to improve their environmental sustainability, as well as play a role impacting behaviour change across the city's communities.

6.6. Implications for partner organisations?

The Strategy is very much delivered through a partnership approach to maximise impact and reach, as well as to avoid a duplication of activities. The Council will play a convening role to allow different partners to contribute, as well as providing feedback and challenge as required. Through the consultation process, the Council has developed good sector networks both in Coventry, but also beyond. This also enables knowledge exchange.

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