

Arts & Culture Strategy

Final Decision-Maker	Economic Regeneration & Leisure
Lead Head of Service	John Foster, Head of Regeneration and Economic Development
Lead Officer and Report Author	Ann-Marie Langley, Arts & Culture Officer
Classification	Public
Wards affected	All Wards

Executive Summary

Following the appointment of an Arts & Culture Officer in February 2019, an audit of active arts and cultural organisations has been carried out to better understand the cultural ecology of the borough.

The results of this audit have been combined with previous research to produce a new Arts & Culture Strategy and action plan for the borough.

Purpose of Report

Decision

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

1. That the Arts & Culture Strategy and Action Plan be adopted

Timetable

Meeting	Date
Economic Regeneration and Leisure	26 November 2019

Arts and Culture Strategy

1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
<p>Impact on Corporate Priorities</p>	<p>The four Strategic Plan objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embracing Growth and Enabling Infrastructure • Safe, Clean and Green • Homes and Communities • A Thriving Place <p>Accepting the recommendation will materially improve the Council's ability to achieve 'A Thriving Place' through supporting high quality arts and cultural venues and events that are accessible by all; and through cultural place-making to increase pride in our communities.</p> <p>Accepting the recommendation will materially improve the Council's ability to achieve 'Embracing Growth and Enabling Infrastructure' by developing skills, knowledge and academic achievement, providing a highly skilled workforce for local businesses.</p> <p>Accepting the recommendation will materially improve the Council's ability to achieve 'Safe, Clean and Green' by providing opportunities for inter-cultural and inter-generational learning, fostering greater understanding and more tolerant communities.</p> <p>Accepting the recommendation will materially improve the Council's ability to achieve 'Homes and communities' by providing opportunities for people to try new things and learn new skills, co-creating activities that address specific local needs.</p>	<p>John Foster, Head of Regeneration and Economic Development</p>
<p>Cross Cutting Objectives</p>	<p>The four cross-cutting objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heritage is Respected • Health Inequalities are Addressed and 	<p>John Foster, Head of Regeneration and Economic</p>

	<p style="text-align: center;">Reduced</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deprivation and Social Mobility is Improved • Biodiversity and Environmental Sustainability is respected <p>The report recommendation supports the achievement of the 'Heritage is Respected' cross-cutting objective by raising awareness of the town's history and heritage and a programme of cultural place-making.</p> <p>The report recommendation supports the achievement of the 'Health Inequalities are Addressed and Reduced' cross-cutting objective by helping to reduce social isolation and delivering improvements in physical and mental health for target groups.</p> <p>The report recommendation supports the achievement of the 'Deprivation and Social Mobility is Improved' cross-cutting objective by promoting activities designed to address barriers to participation and providing opportunities for people to develop their skills, knowledge and academic achievement.</p> <p>The report recommendation supports the achievement of the 'Biodiversity and Environmental Sustainability is respected' cross-cutting objective by supporting events and activities that encourage greater understanding of the natural environment and how to protect it.</p>	Development
Risk Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refer to paragraph 5 of this report 	John Foster, Head of Regeneration and Economic Development
Financial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accepting the recommendation will require additional funding in order to deliver certain items within the action plan. We plan to fund that spending as set out in the Action Plan (Appendix 1). • To extend the role of Arts and Culture Officer to deliver the action plan will require £37,750 in salary and on-costs for a further 12 months, or £56,625 for a 	Section 151 Officer & Paul Holland, Senior Finance Manager

	<p>further 18 months. This will be paid for out of the Kent Business Rates Pool.</p>	
Staffing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will deliver the recommendation with our current staffing. 	John Foster, Head of Regeneration & Economic Development
Legal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The recommendations in the report and the Arts and Culture Strategy align with the Council's general duty, under section 3 of the Local Government Act 1999 as a best value authority, to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness. It is a function of the Economic Regeneration and Leisure Committee to take the lead within the Council for ensuring that the Council delivers its strategic objectives with respect to Maidstone as a decent place to live by providing opportunities for engagement in cultural and leisure pursuits and, therefore, it falls to this Committee to consider the Arts and Culture Strategy report. 	Keith Trowell, Team Leader (Corporate Governance), MKLS
Privacy and Data Protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accepting the recommendation will increase the volume of data held by the Council. We will hold that data in line with our retention schedules. 	Anna Collier, Policy and Information Manager
Equalities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We recognise the recommendation may have varying impacts on different communities within Maidstone. Therefore we have completed a separate equalities impact assessment at Appendix 2 	Orla Sweeney, Equalities and Corporate Policy Officer
Public Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We recognise that the recommendation will have a positive impact on population health or that of individuals. 	Paul Clarke, Senior Public Health Officer
Crime and Disorder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The recommendation of this report has no impact on Crime and Disorder 	John Foster, Head of Regeneration

		& Economic Development
Procurement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On accepting the recommendation, the Council will then follow procurement exercises for procurement of materials and services where necessary to deliver specific objectives within the action plan. We will complete these exercises in line with financial procedure rules. 	John Foster, Head of Regeneration & Economic Development

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 In October 2015, the Heritage, Culture & Leisure Committee agreed to support further work on culture and heritage in the borough following a consultation carried out by Nick Ewbank Associates. The Museum's new 20-Year Plan addresses much of the heritage, but the arts and culture have not been equally considered.
- 2.2 In 2018 the Heritage, Culture & Leisure Committee proposed that funding be allocated to support a 12-month fixed term Arts & Culture Officer. An officer was subsequently appointed and in post from February 2019.
- 2.3 In order to understand the current arts and cultural offer in the borough, an audit was carried out to identify as many existing arts and cultural organisations as possible. These included commercial enterprises as well as community groups and voluntary organisations. Meetings were also held with various cultural organisations, collectives, individual artists and freelance creatives to ascertain their views.
- 2.4 It is clear that our arts and cultural assets have an important role to play in the borough's ambitions. They are strong drivers for economic growth and regeneration, offering wide-ranging benefits to our society and the health and wellbeing of residents, as well as contributing to a sense of place.
- 2.5 There are strong links with the Council's Strategic Plan, Economic Development Strategy, Destination Management Plan, Festivals and Events Policy and the Museum Transformation Plan.
- 2.6 To ensure we maximise the potential benefits that arts and culture can bring, it is recommended that the formal Arts and Culture strategy set out at Appendix 1 be adopted, along with the action plan for delivery.

3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 3.1 The Committee may choose to keep the status quo. This is **not recommended** as it will result in missed opportunities to celebrate our history and culture, and to capitalise on the many other potential benefits arts and culture can bring to the borough.

- Lack of access to high quality arts and cultural experiences, particularly in early years, can restrict people's life chances. Research from Arts Council England (ACE) shows that children from low income families who take part in arts activities at school are three times more likely to get a degree. Those who engage at secondary school are twice as likely to volunteer in the community and 20% more likely to vote as young adults.
- Opportunities to attract inward investment will diminish without a vibrant arts and cultural offer.
- Our ability to attract and retain creative talent will be restricted, particularly as surrounding areas, such as Medway and Canterbury, continue to strengthen their creative hubs.
- Opportunities to improve health outcomes and reduce social isolation will be limited without access to high quality arts and cultural activities.

3.2 The Committee may choose to adopt the strategy and action plan.

Arts and culture have the potential to deliver wide-ranging benefits to our economy, our society and the health and wellbeing of our residents.

Economic benefits

- The Creative Industries is the fastest growing sector of the UK economy, with arts and culture contributing £10.6 billion.
- Culture brings around £850m to the UK, through tourism, each year.
- Maidstone attracts over 4.5m visits per year with over £284m spent in the local economy.
- Tourism accounts for around 8% of total employment in the borough.
- A thriving arts and cultural scene can also attract inward investment.

Social benefits

Participating in arts and culture can:

- promote community cohesion by developing a shared sense of local identity and pride in communities
- help develop skills, knowledge and academic achievement, creating a skilled workforce for local businesses
- increase an individual's confidence and self-esteem, helping them reach their full potential
- encourage inter-generational and inter-cultural learning, fostering greater understanding and more tolerant communities
- break down barriers between ethnic, religious and other minority groups
- help to reduce crime/fear of crime by providing meaningful activity and strengthening community networks

Health and wellbeing benefits

A lot of health benefits are only just beginning to be recognised and understood, but there is a growing body of evidence to suggest that access to, and participation in arts and culture can have a positive influence on both our physical and mental wellbeing. For example:

- Almost 60% of people are more likely to report good health if they've attended a cultural place or event in the last 12 months (ACE research)
- Singing, dance and drama can improve physical health through increased exercise, better breathing techniques and posture

- Dancing can help with falls prevention in the elderly
- Singing has been shown to have positive effects on those living with dementia, Parkinson's and depression
- Participation in arts and cultural activities can reduce social isolation

The Action Plan sets out a number of actions that have no cost implication other than officer time. Where existing budget has been set aside for specific items, these are indicated in the Action Plan.

There are some items that will require external funding, for which an application may or may not be successful. To avoid any potential reputational damage, no new events/activities will be promoted until sufficient funding has been secured.

It may be necessary to work with potential partners prior to securing funding in order to support the application, but this will be addressed on a case by case basis.

4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 Option 3.2 is the preferred option as this will provide a clear vision and strategy for arts and culture in the borough, and allow officers to implement the action plan.

5. RISK

- 5.1 The risks associated with this proposal, including the risks if the Council does not act as recommended, have been considered in line with the Council's Risk Management Framework. That consideration is shown in this report at paragraph 3. We are satisfied that the risks associated are within the Council's risk appetite and will be managed as per the Policy.

6. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

- 6.1 In October 2015, a Culture & Heritage positioning report was presented to the Heritage, Culture & Leisure Committee. Further development of the proposed work streams was recommended and supported by the Committee.
- 6.2 In July 2017, the Museum's new 20-Year Plan was approved by the HCL Committee and addresses most of the 'heritage' work streams.
- 6.3 An audit of all active arts and cultural organisations based within the borough was undertaken in Feb/March 2019, the results of which are set out in the Arts & Culture Strategy.

7. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 7.1 The next steps will be for the Arts & Culture Officer to implement the action plan.

7.2 The strategy will be added to the Maidstone Borough Council website.

8. REPORT APPENDICES

The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix 1: Arts & Culture Strategy
 - Appendix 2: Equality Impact Assessment
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9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None