

<b>TITLE</b>	<b>Arts and Culture Strategy 2020-2030</b>
<b>FOR CONSIDERATION BY</b>	The Executive on Wednesday 22 April 2020
<b>WARD</b>	None Specific;
<b>LEAD OFFICER</b>	Deputy Chief Executive - Graham Ebers
<b>LEAD MEMBER</b>	Executive Member for Environment and Leisure - Parry Batth

**PURPOSE OF REPORT (INC STRATEGIC OUTCOMES)**

The report seeks approval for a draft Arts and Culture Strategy, associated draft statement of intent and to consult extensively with residents and stakeholders.

The Council currently does not have a cultural strategy but has an aspiration that the Borough's cultural offer will grow and develop into the future. The strategy has the potential over time to significantly enhance the cultural and leisure offers in the Borough to the benefit of the vast majority of residents, improving quality of life and enhancing well-being. Providing access to arts and culture for those who, for a variety of reasons, might otherwise miss out, including our more vulnerable residents, is a key priority. The strategy is closely aligned with the principles and priorities of key national agencies such as Arts Council England (ACE) and Public Health England (PHE) and has the potential to leverage external funding. The strategy is potentially a key strand for delivering the Council's priority for Enriching Lives but it also contributes to the other priorities of: Supporting People; Clean, Green and Safe Spaces; as well as addressing elements of the Health and Well-being Strategy.

**RECOMMENDATION**

That the Executive:

- 1) endorses the principles and content of the draft Arts and Culture Strategy;
- 2) approves the draft Strategy and statement of intent for consultation with residents and stakeholders;
- 3) agrees to consider the results of the consultation and any resulting changes to the draft Strategy at a future meeting of the Executive.

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

In the context of a growing population and the Borough's reputation as an excellent place to live with a high quality of life, the quality of the cultural offer can play a significant role in enhancing the Borough's reputation and enriching the lives of residents. An up to date and inclusive strategy that aligns with both national imperatives and local priorities is extremely useful in shaping future provision, co-ordinating and aligning activity across a range of partners and stakeholders and for maximising the impact of collective resources.

There is a growing demand to enhance and improve access to the Borough's cultural offer. Over time the Council's capacity to focus on culture has reduced but it is now proposed to invest in additional capacity to deliver on a cultural strategy, with the intention that this additional capacity can be funded by growing income from an extended programme of cultural events and activities.

Effective delivery of the Arts and Culture Strategy will be dependent on the actions and resources of a wide range of agencies, partners and stakeholders, including our residents. Extensive consultation and engagement is proposed as a means of further developing the strategy and the related statement of intent into a more detailed action plan, fostering positive relationships and joint working into the future. It is the intention to conduct this consultation exercise post local elections through May and June of 2020.

A complementary updated Sports and Leisure Strategy is also being developed and together both strategies play a significant role in 'enriching lives', as well as having connections between them, particularly in relation to the shared use of indoor and outdoor leisure venues, creating animated spaces and supporting health and well-being priorities.

## **BACKGROUND**

The Arts and Culture Strategy is set firmly in the context of national policy and guidance and with the associated priorities of key national agencies: Arts Council England and Public Health England, including priorities to address inclusivity and diversity. Over recent years national policies have shifted from a focus on activity to outcomes and particularly the impact on health and well-being of residents and communities.

As recently as 2016 the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) produced and presented to Parliament its 'Culture White Paper', the first for over 50 years. The White Paper was very clear about the benefits of culture and why the Government should invest to support its development:

- The intrinsic value: the enriching value of culture in and of itself;
- The social value: improving educational attainment and helping people to be healthier; and
- The economic value: the growing contribution culture makes to economic growth and job creation.

Arts Council England launched its new ten year strategy 'Let's Create' in January this year. The new strategy for 2020-30 focuses on individual creative potential and the need for artists, arts organisations, museums and libraries to play an important role in every community, bringing people together, supporting local economies and helping to improve lives. The four key investment principles for the next 10 years will be inclusivity and relevance, dynamism, environmental responsibility and ambition and quality. There is also a specific pledge to boost library spending.

PHE have a strong influence on policy and practice nationally with regard to promoting enhanced well-being and, in parallel, the NHS has a challenging target to make a step-change in the quantum of 'social prescribing' over the next three to four years. They also have a strong evidence base of what works and are a key source of data for informing local strategies and priorities.

## **BUSINESS CASE**

In the context of a growing and increasingly diverse population and the Borough's existing reputation as an excellent place to live with a high quality of life, the quality of the cultural offer can play a significant role in enhancing the Borough's reputation and enriching the lives of residents. The draft Arts and Culture Strategy aligns well with a number of other key pieces of work currently underway that are focused on a better quality of life and enhancing the Borough's reputation, including the 'place branding' work that is being undertaken with consultants 'Thinking Place' and the ongoing work to develop an updated Sports and Leisure Strategy. Both the cultural and leisure strategies play a complementary role in 'enriching lives', as well as having connections between them, particularly in relation to the shared use of indoor and outdoor leisure venues, creating animated spaces and some areas of activity, such as dance, contributing to both.

An up to date Arts and Culture Strategy that aligns with both national imperatives and local priorities is extremely useful in shaping future provision, extending reach to more vulnerable cohorts and communities, co-ordinating and aligning activity across a range of stakeholders and for generating and maximising the impact of collective resources.

Cultural activities are universal in their ability to contribute to well-being and impact on all residents across all age-groups. In addition they can support better outcomes for more vulnerable groups, be this tackling social isolation, improving health and well-being or educational attainment. Unsurprisingly the strategy therefore links to a range of the Council's key priorities and has touch points with a large number of Council services.

The Borough does not currently have a cultural strategy and with increasing interest in and support for developing the cultural offer and identity of the Borough this is a substantive gap. In order to effectively implement the strategy there is a need to reach out to and engage a wide range of stakeholders, operating within a complex ecosystem of delivery partners that will ultimately be pivotal to success. It is therefore essential that there is an effective consultation and engagement process to ensure that the strategy and the action plan that is developed are fit for purpose, stakeholders can align with and endorse key principles and contribute directly to more detailed plans focused on delivery.

Set within the context of national policy, the strategy sets out an ambitious vision, key priorities and desired outcomes, and a more detailed initial statement of intent to support delivery of the longer-term outcomes. All these elements will form part of the consultation in order to maximise the input and contribution of stakeholders at both strategic and operational levels. It is proposed that consultation on the Strategy will take place in May and June.

#### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION**

***The Council continues to face severe financial challenges over the coming years as a result of reductions to public sector funding and growing pressures in our statutory services. It is estimated that Wokingham Borough Council will be required to make budget reductions of approximately £20m over the next three years and all Executive decisions should be made in this context.***

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	£7k	Yes	Revenue
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	£40k	Yes	Revenue
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	£40k	Yes	Revenue

#### **Other Financial Information**

The costs identified above are the investment costs associated with establishing one new post (initial two year fixed term) and amending the responsibilities of an existing post to provide capacity to take forward and implement the arts and culture strategy. These posts will be focused on extending and enhancing the quality of a cultural events programme across the Borough in future years. It is the intention that this expanded events programme will generate additional income that as a minimum over time covers the costs of the posts established. This will be reviewed on an ongoing basis but as this future income is to a degree 'at risk', at this stage only the initial costs have been identified.

<b>Stakeholder Considerations and Consultation</b>
Extensive stakeholder and public consultation on the draft strategy and action plan is planned to take place in May and June 2020.

<b>Public Sector Equality Duty</b>
Due regard has been taken to the Public Equality Duty and an Equalities Impact Assessment is attached to this report.

<b>Climate Emergency – <i>This Council has declared a climate emergency and is committed to playing as full a role as possible – leading by example as well as by exhortation – in achieving a carbon neutral Wokingham Borough by 2030</i></b>
As a long term strategy it is not possible to fully determine its carbon impact at this point. However, arts and cultural activities can play a significant role in communicating key messages linked to the climate emergency, raising awareness and encouraging positive action. More directly a more extensive and engaging programme of activities in the Borough is likely to grow local audiences and reduce the need to travel to more distant venues and locations.

<b>List of Background Papers</b>
Culture White Paper, DCMS 2016 ‘Shaping the next ten years’ Draft Strategy 2019 Arts Council England LET’S CREATE, Strategy 2020 – 2030, Arts Council England

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