

Arts and Culture Strategy Consultation Summary

Between Autumn 2020 and Winter 2020 we ran a consultation on the Draft Arts and Culture Strategy 2020-2030. A total of 115 responses were received, of which 99 were from residents of the Borough, 5 where from Parish and Town Councils and 11 where from Wokingham based cultural organisations.

The three different surveys asked a variety of questions in order to ascertain the following: whether anything was missing from the Strategy; was there agreement with the objectives set out in the strategy; whether there was anything to add to the objectives; whether the purpose of the document was clear; the desired outcomes of the strategy; and what the most effective methods to achieve these outcomes may be.

Questions asked and summary from Public Survey

- Would you like to be kept informed about arts and culture events in the borough?
- Please tell us where you usually go for arts events and activities?
- If you do not visit venues in Wokingham borough, please tell us why not -- what are we missing in the borough that leads you to leave the borough for your arts and culture?
- What creative venues or events do you value in your local area?
- Where in the borough would you like to see more arts and culture events happening? Select your top three choices.
- What sorts of events would you like to see in these places?
- One of the key priorities in the draft strategy is improving health and wellbeing. Which activities below do you think would improve residents' health and wellbeing? Select your top two choices.
- If you could attend three local arts events happening across a year which would they be? Select your top three choices

A recurring theme within the feedback from the public survey was of respondents referencing that they were keen to have a dedicated cultural venue and that in regards to cultural activities within the Borough they were either not aware of activities at all or found out about them too late. This will be picked up through the Partnership working section of the action plan. As a result of the consultation we now have a whole plethora of information to be used to influence the accompanying action plan.

Here are two examples of how feedback from the consultation and the other information gathered has directly been fed into the action plan:

One of the key priorities in the draft strategy is improving health and wellbeing. Which activities below do you think would improve residents' health and wellbeing? Select your top two choices.

Arts on Prescription for older people who are isolated or experiencing loneliness (43)
47%

Public art, such as the mosaic trail in Wokingham town centre or sculptures in new housing developments (38) 42%

Comedy festival (25) 28%

Couch to 5k arts inspired event (15)17%

Well-being week (14) 15%

Community choir competition (14) 15%

Other (14) 15%

Strictly Come Dancing inspired competition (5) 6%

Local bake-off competition (3) 3%

Britain's Got Talent inspired competition (3) 3%

If you could attend three local arts events happening across a year which would they be? Select your top three choices.

Most popular: Arts exhibition and fairs (37)

2nd most popular: Music concert (29)

Joint 3rd most popular: Literary talks or festivals (25) Play (25)

Please tell us where you usually go for arts events and activities:

Top three answer's:

Reading 36

London 25

Wokingham 15

Questions asked and summary from Town and Parishes

- What do you think of the strategy?
- How does this strategy link to your plans over the next two years/next five years?
- How does this strategy link to your organisation's longer-term goals and mission?
- What do you think is missing?
- What do you think you may be able to contribute? For example: space, funding, other resources, ideas, advocacy, anything else?
- How might your local communities / stakeholders benefit?

It was noted that the responding Parish and Town Councils mentioned the need for a dedicated arts venue.

The committee noted no details within the strategy on how the current lack of performance specific venues within the Borough might be rectified over the next 10 years. With such a strong vision to increase engagement with the Arts and Culture, the need for an increase in quality venues should be expected? Wokingham Town Council

'In particular, the Arts could be improved, by using existing infrastructure to establish possibly Art Galleries' Woodley Town Council

It was felt that the draft strategy needs to now take into account Covid – 19, which is one of the major changes to the updated strategy.

'This draft strategy doesn't feel like it takes any account of the Covid situation, and the impact this has had, and will likely continue to have, on organisations within the arts and culture sphere.' Wokingham Without Parish Council

Lastly there was a recurring theme of asking how the Council's Climate Emergency status would feed into the strategy.

'How will Wokingham Borough Council's Climate Emergency status and the subsequent Carbon Neutrality Action Plan feed into the thinking for Arts and Culture within the Borough?' Wokingham Town Council

Questions asked and summary from Arts and Culture Organisations

- What do you think of the strategy, do you think there is anything missing?
- How does this strategy link to your plans over the next two years/next five years? How does this strategy link to your organisation's longer term goals and mission?
- Does your organisation work specifically to target hard-to-reach groups in the area? If so which groups?
- What do you think you may be able to contribute? For example: space, funding, other resources, ideas, advocacy, anything else?

This feedback covered a wide geographic area and in the main was very specific to the individual art organisations. The Cultural Alliance has a membership that reflects this and will continue and update the Action Plan in order to achieve goals.

'Our charitable purpose is 'To promote the enjoyment of theatre in Wokingham and the surrounding area'. We interpret that as promoting enjoyment both through participation in theatre making as well as being a member of the audience. This is absolutely in line with your strategy. We had planned to spend the next 2 years on major building development, instead we will be working out how to make theatrical performance work in our theatre space in the 'new normal' Covid19 conditions.' Wokingham Theatre

In summary there is much work to be done to achieve the action plan and most feedback has been positive and supportive of the strategy.

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