

<b>TITLE</b>	<b>Update on Arts and Culture Strategy</b>
<b>FOR CONSIDERATION BY</b>	Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 4 <sup>th</sup> September 2023
<b>WARD</b>	None Specific
<b>LEAD OFFICER</b>	Director, Place and Growth - Giorgio Framalocco

<p><b>OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY</b></p> <p>Arts and culture can bring added value to communities helping to address issues such as health and social inequalities, as well as being used as an economic driver and as a place shaper helping to create a strong cultural identity. For Wokingham Borough, although a substantial part of the Borough could be deemed as affluent and able to afford to take part in cultural activities outside of the area, this means unfortunately that the Borough could also be seen as culturally poor with more significant differences in cultural participation between the more affluent and least affluent residents. Working strategically with internal services and with external partners to maximise cultural opportunities will enhance quality of life, help strengthen communities and grow the Borough’s reputation as a great place to live, to visit and to work in.</p>
<p><b>RECOMMENDATION</b></p> <p>That the Committee notes the progress made against the Wokingham Borough Arts and Culture Strategy since its adoption in February 2021 and recognises the potential positive impact arts and culture provision can have against other Council service areas and budgets.</p>
<p><b>SUMMARY OF REPORT</b></p> <p><b>Background</b></p> <p>The Wokingham Borough Arts and Culture Strategy (2020-2030) was adopted in February 2021.</p> <p>This is a 10-year strategy and identifies a vision supported by six key priorities which have been informed by consultation with the public, town and parish councils, cultural organisations and the wider business community. The vision states that <i>‘by 2030 Wokingham Borough will be recognised regionally and nationally as a dynamic cultural hub, a Borough of surprises that delight across all our towns and villages, a Borough where everyone can access or get involved in creating high quality cultural experiences and where creativity is nurtured across all age-groups’</i>. The six priorities that will help this vision to be realised are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Enhancing cultural identity and sense of ‘place’.</li> <li>2. Fostering social interaction and community cohesion.</li> <li>3. Improving health and well-being.</li> <li>4. Developing opportunities for children and young people.</li> <li>5. Supporting economic growth.</li> <li>6. Maximising partnerships and collaboration.</li> </ol> <p>In 2016, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) produced its ‘Culture White Paper’, the first for over 50 years. Drawing on an extensive evidence base, the paper was clear about the benefits of culture suggesting that systemic investment in culture provides ‘a powerful cocktail of public good and commercial return’.</p>

Through developing an Arts and Cultural Strategy the Council seeks to help its communities benefit from these nationally acknowledged benefits by developing the cultural offer here in Wokingham Borough. Developing the arts and culture offer helps build on Wokingham's identity and reputation, providing opportunities for cultural participation which will help benefit the health and well-being of residents as well as helping to attracting visitors and investment from outside the Borough. In this regard the Strategy will also link directly with delivery of the Council's strategic priorities of 'Enriching Lives' and 'Safe, Strong Communities'. It also feeds into a number of key strategies including health and wellbeing, tackling poverty and economic development.

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) is an economic development fund awarded to each local authority as part of the Government's levelling up agenda. Wokingham Borough Council was awarded a total of £1m over a three-year period for three local priorities including communities and place; support for local businesses; people and skills. The Council's allocation has key strands including an arts and culture strand and an associated allocated budget which is paying for a Senior Cultural Development Officer on a 2 year fixed term contract. The postholder has been in place since January 2023 and is focussed on the following arts and culture workstreams:

- **Health and Wellbeing** – utilising arts based approaches and creative social prescribing to improve and support health and wellbeing for both children and adults
- **Economic Development** – an arts and culture project proposal utilising the UKSPF budget allocation for arts and culture
- **Education** - supporting schools and education settings in increasing access to professional arts and culture activities for pupils, and CPD for teacher/education professionals
- **Place Making** – including securing/utilising developer contributions for arts and culture public realm projects, and incorporating cultural elements into the Borough's significant place making projects where feasible
- **Strategic Partnerships** – working collaboratively with internal partners to embed arts and culture across the organisation as well as building partnerships with external partners to maximise opportunities

The current arts and culture work programme has the following aims and objectives:

- Improve and support health and wellbeing through arts based approaches.
- Use arts and culture to support and contribute to economic development.
- Primarily but not exclusively, through the UKSPF Arts & Culture Project develop a cultural identity for the Borough, increase access to, and participation in arts and cultural activity. The project will also seek to raise awareness and understanding of Climate Change and the Council's Climate Change Emergency Action Plan, using creativity to explore these issues and help influence behavioural changes around sustainability.
- Secure Developer contributions to include where relevant, the use of arts and culture to improve public realm, increase social cohesion, and/or improve health and wellbeing
- Broker, develop and manage partnerships with external organisations to raise the cultural profile of the Borough and enable the development and delivery of arts and culture projects.
- Embed arts and culture into a range of services across the Council.
- Develop and establish joint/cross service working, project development and delivery maximising resource and opportunities for the benefit of the Borough.

## Analysis

Since the Arts and Culture Strategy was adopted in February 2021 a number of actions have been successfully progressed. This includes the following:

- Recruitment of a Senior Cultural Development Officer on a 2 year fixed term contract as part of the Council's UKSPF allocation. This is a strategic role helping to embed arts and culture across service areas and link in with Council priorities.
- Development of an Arts and Culture proposal as part of the UKSPF arts and culture grant allocation which will help develop the Borough's cultural identity and encourage participation in arts and cultural activities.
- Brokering new partnerships and initiating projects with the following external partners, for example: University of Reading, Charlie Waller Trust, the British Museum, the Natural History Museum, Berkshire Music Trust, House of Imagination, National Saturday Club, National Academy for Social Prescribing, the V&A Museum, Dundee.
- Establishing links with the following internal service areas including Children's Services, Adult Social Care, Education, Education Psychology, Public Health, Housing, Library Service, Economic Development and Customer Experience.
- Developing and implementation of a new arts and health programme schools focussing on supporting and improving children and young people's mental health (from September 2023).
- Development and implementation of a professional training and mentoring programme for school Nurture Assistants enabling them to delivery the above programme and embed it into schools in a sustainable way.
- Development of a new arts based programme to support pupils with Stage 1 or 2 Emotionally Based School Avoidance.
- Development and implementation of an arts based programme for vulnerable adults (e.g. people with learning difficulties via CLASP (counselling life advice suicide prevention charity), and people with moderate anxiety and depression via Wokingham Recovery College) to support and improve mental health and wellbeing.
- Developed an arts based and multi-agency approach to work with housing associations to target vulnerable tenants such as care leavers to address issues such as tenancy sustainment. Pilot project to commence Autumn 2023. Working with Housing Association's to plan further project delivery.
- Input into Adult Social Care, Social Care Future Event. Presented and co-delivered a workshop with University of Reading on the new arts based project to support and improve mental health and wellbeing.
- Working with Public Health on the Inequalities Project and on arts based community engagement to inform the Inequalities Plan. This work will feed into and help inform future arts and culture programmes.
- Development of a Wokingham Borough Cultural Education Partnership (CEP) CEPs are a network across England, set up by Arts Council England in 2015). This followed a consultation and engagement project with children and young people to ascertain what arts activities they participate in, what they would like to participate in, barriers, and what they gain from engaging in arts and culture.
  - This work was funded by Artswork through a 10k grant. Artswork were one of 10 Bridge Organisations setup by Arts Council England, supported by the Department for Education, to facilitate joint working between local authorities, statutory services e.g. schools, youth justice, health, and community settings working with children and young people, and professional arts and culture organisations, solely for the benefit of children and young people.
  - A local specialist organisation was commissioned to work with young people to co - design and deliver a series of creative workshops for children and

young people to collect information. A film was created by local young people working with a film maker to capture children and young people's thoughts. An online survey was also made available. This led to the development of a Wokingham Borough CEP, its activities, and has helped inform some other work including, for example, the development of a National Saturday Club (see below), and arts based approaches to improving and supporting mental health. The Council is exploring linking up with neighbouring CEPs and opportunities for joint funding bids and projects.

- To note whilst there are a range of different partners as part of the Wokingham Borough CEP, more resource is required for this to grow and deliver cultural programmes.
- The National Saturday Club to commence in the Borough from October 2023 which is part of the National Saturday Club Film & Screen Programme funded by the British Film Institute, the National Saturday Club, external funders, and supported by the Department for Education. This is a national scheme which works in partnership with local schools, colleges, and professional cultural organisations. The scheme is targeted for those in low income families, looked after children, and those whose parents/carers have not attended university. There is evidence to support increased career aspirations, and educational progression.
- Delivery of Arts Awards in the Borough's libraries from September 2023. Arts Awards enable children and young people to undertake a structure programme leading to an assessed and accredited award for Explore, Bronze, Silver and Gold. Gold level includes UCAS points. 'Discover' is the non-assessed and is suitable for young children, people with moderate to more severe learning difficulties, adults with low literacy, and those for whom English is not their first language.
- Development and expansion of a Creative Network for teachers and education professionals, with the purpose of knowledge sharing, and hear from guest presenters from the creative industries who offer free/accessible creative learning programmes and/or sector advice and training re: skills, training and careers.
- Development of an Arts, Business and Culture Forum as a key partnership vehicle focussed on developing partnerships and collaborative working. This group has been built on a previous Arts and Culture Alliance (which ceased due to the pandemic) and a 'world café' event which highlighted the desire to continue with an external partnership model. The current group brings together town centre managers, arts groups, local businesses from across the Borough, to develop, deliver, and promote arts activity with the aim of increasing partnership working between the arts and business sectors, increasing participation in and access to the arts for the benefit of residents and support the local economy. The forum meets regularly and has run a successful networking session which brought together local arts and business representatives to share information and create opportunities for joint working.
- Working with the Planning Policy team to assess whether a new policy is required to secure developer contributions for SDL (strategic development location) arts based health and wellbeing programmes, community and social cohesion projects, placemaking through arts based community engagement and public realm, and creative industries skills and training.
- Inclusion of the above within the new Local Plan.
- Securing developer contributions for public realm enhancements in Shinfield West involving the community.
- Worked with the Libraries Manager, and Adult Social Care on a bid to Arts Council England for 500k to support the capital development of a library branch and the delivery of activities for vulnerable residents, and those on low incomes.

The Senior Cultural Development Officer is part of the following corporate groups helping embed arts and culture into the Council's strategic approach:

- Social Isolation and Loneliness Group which reports to Health & Wellbeing Board.
- Tackling Poverty Strategy Action Plan Year 2 Scoping and Delivery Planning Groups for a. Leading a Fulfilling Life, b. Education, c. Training and Jobs
- Social Value Policy Group re: the inclusion of arts, culture and heritage.
- Community Vision Group

Whilst the Covid pandemic changed the consumption of arts and culture for a period of time and prevented the delivery of many arts and culture events both locally and nationally, there is now a re-focus on arts and culture, especially with the opportunities this brings with regards to furthering and supporting wider agendas around tackling poverty, addressing social, health, and education inequalities, engaging communities, and maximising partnerships and opportunities. The Council has made huge strides in linking arts and culture with the different strategic priorities, maximising opportunities by working with a range of external partners.

There has been a good proportion of work in the arts and cultural field delivered to date as evidenced above. This has been delivered with no direct budget and has relied on external support for projects via strategic partnership brokerage and working. Arts and culture has a key role to play within the local authority and will help to provide savings in Council budgets by providing preventative programmes and activities (such as helping to address mental health and wellbeing and supporting tenant sustainability). There are challenges in the lack of resource. There is no dedicated budget for arts and culture other than the UKSPF grant allocation which has paid for the Senior Cultural Development Officer post which is for a fixed term period. Whilst part of the current work programme will create sustainability, there is an issue longer term around resourcing arts and culture activity.

### **Next steps**

- Delivery of the Arts and Culture service plan for 2023/24
- Contracting on the arts and culture project proposal as part of the UKSPF's arts and culture grant allocation
- Develop a method of evaluation, including cost-benefit analysis which the Council can apply to its arts and culture projects to measure the wider benefits and impact of arts and culture. This will then help inform the development of future projects, provide an evidence base for supporting future funding bids, and the continuation of arts and culture work as part of the Council's delivery of services.

## FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

***The Council faces unprecedented financial pressures as a result of; the longer term impact of the COVID-19 crisis, Brexit, the war in Ukraine and the general economic climate of rising prices and the increasing cost of debt. It is therefore imperative that Council resources are optimised and are focused on the vulnerable and on its highest priorities.***

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	None	Yes	
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	None	Yes	
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	None	Yes	

### **Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision**

Financial resource which was required for new Senior Cultural Development Officer post and arts and culture project is being funded from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund grant allocation to the Council.

### **Cross-Council Implications**

Arts and culture supports a range of other Council priorities and areas of work. These include, health and wellbeing, economic development, community cohesion, education, and help improve health and wellbeing.

### **Public Sector Equality Duty**

Our Public Sector Equality Duty has been taken into account. Enhancing the Borough's cultural offer will increase cultural engagement and ensure that all sectors and stakeholders make a positive contribution and enable access to cultural opportunities irrespective of background, social or economic circumstances.

### **Climate Emergency – *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***

The arts and culture project (being paid for out of the Council's UKSPF arts allocation) will raise awareness of climate emergency and hopefully influence behaviours around sustainability.

### **Reasons for considering the report in Part 2**

None

### **List of Background Papers**

Wokingham Borough Arts and Culture Strategy 2020-2030

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