

People and Health Overview Committee

04 May 2021

Cultural Strategy

For Recommendation to Cabinet

Portfolio Holder: Cllr J Haynes, Customer and Community Services

Local Councillor(s):

Executive Director: J Sellgren, Executive Director of Place

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Report Status: Public

Recommendation:

That the committee agrees:

1. To support Dorset's Cultural Strategy 2021-2026 and recommend it to Cabinet for adoption.
2. That officers work with Arts Council England, the Arts Development Company and key stakeholders to develop a Cultural Compact type framework that will enable the work of the strategy to be fulfilled and effectively managed, and this is recommended to Cabinet for approval.

Reason for Recommendation:

A cultural strategy helps to increase the opportunities of securing new investment into Dorset and maximise the leverage value of the council's own investment in arts, heritage and culture. This cultural strategy will be the foundation on which Dorset Council will set its own funding criteria, ensuring that all grant recipients are contributing to the priorities and ambitions of the plan.

The strategy will also play a key role in the recovery of the sector. It will not only inform how Dorset Council will support the sector in the future, but it will set out a united direction for culture in our county for other stakeholders, funders, cross

sector partners, Parish and Town Councils, organisations and individuals. A collaborative approach to cultural provision will directly benefit our communities, visitors, and the local economy.

A framework, in the shape of a Cultural Compact will nurture a cross sector partnership designed to support the local cultural sector and enhance its contribution to the life of that place. Such a collaboration will facilitate co-ordinated action to support the delivery of the ambitions within the strategy; sustain our cultural infrastructure, drive lasting social and economic benefits and leverage new resources.

1. Executive Summary

The new cultural strategy is a key aspect of 'making Dorset a great place to live, work and visit', and will be closely aligned to the priorities and ambitions of the Dorset Council's Plan. It will help to sustain our cultural infrastructure, drive lasting social and economic benefits and leverage internal and external funding. It will assist us to deliver on our own council priorities, enable communities to come together; breaking down social isolation and helping build happy, empowered, and connected communities.

This strategy is for the Dorset Council area and has been developed in a collaborative way; one that has given stakeholders the opportunity to influence its development and shape the ambitions and priorities.

Appendix 1 is the full strategy, and in terms of what external funding organisations expect, this level of detail is a basic requirement. It will provide the strategic context on which local cultural organisations can develop their own business plans and it will improve their chances of achieving successful funding bids.

Once the strategy has been adopted, a more eye catching mini brochure will be produced that summarises the priorities and ambitions of the strategy and sets out what will be done to leverage funding, evidence social and wellbeing improvements, increase the sense of pride by local people in arts and culture, and increase diversity of audiences.

The cultural strategy will sit within a new framework, one that will drive the vision and support the delivery. This will be based on the model for a Cultural Compact; a cross sector partnership designed to support the local cultural sector and enhance its contribution to the life of that place.

Although there is sound evidence of community engagement, further work will take place to target hard to reach communities. Similarly, the strategy

will need to evolve and flex during its life cycle, especially in an uncertain economic and post Covid-19 climate.

2. Financial Implications

The Council currently provides £600,000 annual funding to a diverse range of arts, culture and heritage/museum organisations. This is a vital component in them leveraging external funding; helping to stimulating our local economy.

Between 2019 and 2021, nearly £7.5 million of revenue and strategic funding was invested by Arts Council South West. Similarly, in the last 5 years, over £87 million worth of capital and revenue funding has been externally invested into Dorset's arts, heritage and culture sector

3. Well-being and Health Implications

Arts, heritage and culture, provide a vital role in improving health and wellbeing within our communities. It can bring communities together; breaking down social isolation and helping build happy, empowered, and connected communities.

The strategy will focus on those living with poor mental health, people aged 65 and over, young people and those living with dementia. It will promote the delivery of initiatives, events and programmes in areas of socio- economic disadvantage and aim to engage with those impacted by rural isolation. A Cultural Compact will help develop stronger relationships with a wide range of health and wellbeing partners such as those in "Our Dorset" – the integrated care system (NHS, CCG, Public Health Dorset) and Dorset Council directorates including parks and green spaces, adult social care, education and environment.

Dorset aims to be at the forefront when it comes to how arts, heritage and culture can deliver on social prescribing and early prevention initiatives. A significant proportion of Dorset Council revenue funded organisations (2021-2024) will be asked to measure their social impact through the HACT social value calculator which measures both social and wellbeing impacts and savings to the NHS.

4. Climate implications

The environment and the importance of the climate emergency is reflected within the strategy and one of its four priorities. The strategy aims to create a green future for our county; using arts, heritage and culture to celebrate the environment and inspire action to tackle the climate and ecological emergency.

The cultural sector will set a target to reduce its carbon footprint in Dorset, help change public behaviour to reduce environmental impact and support communities to develop sustainable and regenerative responses to the climate and ecological emergency.

5. Other Implications

No other implications

6. Risk Assessment

Having considered the risks associated with this decision, the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: Medium

Residual Risk: Medium

7. Equalities Impact Assessment

An Equality Impact Assessment (Appendix 5) has been carried out to inform the development of the strategy. Priority groups have been identified within the assessment and will form part of any developing action plans.

8. Appendices

Appendix 1 Dorset's Cultural Strategy 2021-2026

Appendix 2: List of consultees for the Cultural Strategy development

Appendix 3: Desk research

Appendix 4: Results of Young Peoples' survey on culture 2021

Appendix 5 Equality Impact Assessment

9. Background Papers

Appendix 3: Desk research

10. Background

- 10.1 In the summer of 2020, Dorset Council began the development of a new five-year cultural strategy for the Dorset Council area of Dorset set within the context of post COVID – 19. The current cultural strategy was due to end in the spring of 2021. Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole (BCP) will also have a new cultural strategy in place by the end of December 2021.

- 10.2 The Council currently has a contract with the Arts Development Company to deliver an arts development service and given that they were responsible for developing the last strategy, they were again commissioned to work alongside council officers and sector stakeholders to develop the new one.
- 10.3 The scope of the project was to develop a new strategy that will not only inform how Dorset Council will support the sector in the future but also how organisations can work together to provide a more collaborative approach to cultural provision across the county. It is anticipated that the strategy will not only be adopted by the Council but that other cultural sector delivery organisations will align their business plans with the priorities of the new strategy in order to attract external investment and maximise partnership opportunities over the next 5 years and beyond.

11. A Collaborative Approach

- 11.1 Although Dorset Council commissions and funds a wide range of cultural organisations, and delivers culture through its archive, museums, libraries and music services, it was always keen to play an enabling role; and that real success will only be achieved where a collaborative approach involving a wide and diverse range of stakeholders was adopted.
- 11.2 An officer steering group was set up to support the Arts Development Company in developing the project plan, timelines and scope of the project. The steering group has met monthly throughout the process.
- 11.3 An advisory group was also set up to provide cross sector representation during the development period. The Advisory Group were able to contribute regular feedback throughout the process and provide supporting content relevant to their respective areas of expertise. A smaller working group was also formed to help shape/write the text of the draft cultural strategy, prior to consideration by the wider group. The breadth of sector representation and depth of engagement is detailed further in Appendix 2.
- 11.4 During the final Advisory Group meeting, there was a strong consensus that the draft strategy would provide the framework on which to align many of their own business plans. It is seen as a tool that would support their own organisational ambitions and enhance their bids for external funding.
- 11.5 It should also be recognised that the strategy has a 5-year life cycle and will evolve and flex over this period. It also highlights the need to develop baseline data and this will help inform future decision making.

12. **Strategy Versions**

- 12.1 The cultural strategy is a full body of work, demonstrating the depth and breadth of culture across the Dorset Council area. It is recognised that funders will welcome this level of detail, much of which will align to their own strategies and ambitions. Similarly, the sector themselves will embrace a document that provides evidence of existing success stories and sets out a clear vision for culture within Dorset.
- 12.2 However for many within our communities, the full strategy will be too wordy, a little off putting, and likely to be left on the shelf to gather dust. For these people, our priorities, ambitions and actions are what will matter most, so it's important that we are able to capture and encourage their interest.
- 12.3 Once the strategy has been adopted a 'straight to the point' and 'eye catching' mini brochure will be produced to highlight our priorities and focus on what the sector aims to achieve. We will also produce an 'easy read version' to ensure our message is communicated to all.

13. **Cultural Compact**

- 13.1 Having a cultural strategy is vital, but how will that transmit into creating real change and social value for our communities. Critically it comes down to how and what will be done, by who and where the accountability lies. Although Dorset Council has influence, it's the cultural community that will deliver on many of these outcomes.
- 13.2 The plan is for the cultural strategy to sit within a new framework, one that will drive the vision and support the delivery. This will be based on the model for a Cultural Compact. In 2019 Arts Council England (ACE) and the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) supported the creation of 20 Cultural Compacts. These Compacts are cross sector partnerships designed to support the local cultural sector and enhance its contribution to the life of that place.
- 13.3 The new framework will consist of cross sector partners including representatives from the cultural sector, health, education, business, community and environment. This collaboration will ensure co-ordinated action to support the delivery of the ambitions within the strategy; sustain our cultural infrastructure, drive lasting social and economic benefits and leverage new resources.
- 13.4 It will commission and coordinate effective data capture, as a key to measuring success, will be having effective ways of both benchmarking where we are currently and capturing data to know we have made a difference. This will set the measurable indicators of success for the

strategy, including leverage value, social impact measurements, increased sense of pride by local people in arts and culture, growth in sector employment opportunities and increased diversity of audiences.

- 13.5 It will monitor where we are delivering on the priorities and where the gaps are; ensuring the strategy remains a live and purposeful document which can ultimately flex and change to respond to place-based priorities.
- 13.6 Given the way the strategy was developed, it would appear natural to harness the great work of the Advisory Group, who demonstrated their value through expertise, knowledge, enthusiasm and commitment, and create a formalised body accountable for taking the strategy forward.

Footnote:

Issues relating to financial, legal, environmental, economic and equalities implications have been considered and any information relevant to the decision is included within the report.