

**REGENERATION, COMMUNITY AND CULTURE  
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
31 JANUARY 2013  
CULTURAL ACTIVITIES PROGRAMME**

Report from: Richard Hicks, Assistant Director Customer First,  
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**Summary**

Following a Committee request to debate the Council's cultural offer, this report reviews progress made since the approval of the Council's Cultural Strategy in October 2009 and sets out the steps taken to market and promote the Council's activities.

**1. Budget and Policy Framework**

1.1 One of the Council's 5 priorities is concerned with Regeneration, and the Council Plan sets out that within that priority a key outcome is establishing Medway as a destination for culture, heritage, sport and tourism. The Council's adopted Cultural Strategy clearly contributes to that agenda.

**2. Background**

2.1 At a previous meeting of the Committee on 16 August 2012, a Member requested that an additional report was added to the Committee's work programme detailing the Council's cultural activities programme, with particular information on the marketing and promotion of all types of cultural events.

**3. Medway's Cultural offer**

3.1 Medway has much to be proud of in terms of its cultural offer, which is integral to the place making and place shaping of Medway. Culture adds colour and vibrancy to the area, making it an attractive place to live, study and visit, and as such, our cultural offer is pivotal to the success of Medway. With over 28 days of free festivals, more than anywhere else in the South East, Medway is recognised for its outstanding cultural offer.

3.2 Since the adoption of the Council's Cultural Strategy in October 2009 significant strides have been made and a number of new initiatives have been introduced, in addition to the core work of the service. Key innovations delivered over the last 3 years are set out below, themed under the strategic priorities contained within the Cultural Strategy:

### 3.2.1 Stewardship:

- £1.3 million Heritage Lottery Funding (HLF) funding secured for Eastgate House within a £2 million scheme
- Opening the Doors programme completed at the Guildhall Museum
- 14 Green Flag Awards secured
- Play areas refurbished under the Playbuilder scheme, securing £1 million external funding.

### 3.2.2 Engagement:

- Under Siege Festival
- English Festival
- River Festival.

### 3.2.3 Economic Prosperity:

- Secured £400,000 from Project Recreate and £1.4 million from Creative People and Places (across North Kent) to support the creative sector
- Established the Christmas Markets at Rochester
- Work with Visit Kent to develop a Tourism Strategy to maximise the 3.6 million yearly visits, worth around £286 million to the local economy
- Total visitor numbers to Medway attractions have increased from 2010 – 658,036, 2011 – 724,162 and 2012 – 744,330 (our highest ever Tourist visits).

### 3.2.4 Health and Wellbeing:

- Established Medway Park as a regional centre of Sporting Excellence, hosting the Modern Pentathlon World Cup, Modern Pentathlon European Championships and the British Transplant Games
- Introduced Free Swimming
- Entered into a strategic partnership with King's Rochester to run the Stirling Centre and bring £500,000 investment into the facility.

3.3 The Cultural Strategy also pointed to the significant range of anniversaries and milestones in 2012 and the Year of Celebration has been an outstanding success in raising Medway's profile and securing significant, positive media coverage. Specific activities have been around the Dickens Bicentenary (travelling conference, filming, festivals, and an exhibition at the Museum), the Queen's Diamond Jubilee, (River Festival, Beacons programme and Cathedral Service), the Olympics (pre-Games training camps, Olympic Torch Relay, Medway Mile and opening ceremony for the Games) and the Royal Engineers bicentenary (Bicentenary Bridge, new exhibition and football match against Gillingham Football Club).

3.4 This activity has been undertaken alongside the core business of the team – grounds maintenance operations, delivering our extensive festival programme, running our theatres, operating our 7 leisure centres which

generate 2.5 million visits and around £4 million of income, and running the library service, transforming our offer through our community hubs programme. At the same time the service has delivered consistently high satisfaction scores and brought in a balanced budget year on year.

#### **4. Communications and Marketing**

- 4.1 The Council's extensive programme of cultural activities in 2012 was backed by a major marketing campaign "Celebrate Medway 2012". This campaign pulled together a number of existing promotional activities to create an umbrella brand for the 2012 programme. This approach included an events guide inserted into every issue of Medway Matters magazine - sent to every home in Medway six times a year and read by two thirds of residents. The campaign also included a large number of lamppost banners, railing banners, email newsletters, flyers, posters and online advertising.
- 4.2 This approach proved very successful with more than 81% of residents being aware of the Celebrate Medway 2012 campaign and high levels of awareness of many of the cultural activities that made up the programme. Based on the success of this approach to promoting the diverse cultural programme in 2012, we have continued an umbrella campaign under the branding "Enjoy Medway" for 2013.
- 4.3 In 2012 the council launched a new What's On 32-page brochure which is delivered bi-monthly to every household in Medway (approximately 116,000 homes) and also to a further 3,000 people outside of Medway. This is the core of the theatres marketing, reaching significantly more residents than previous brochures and is a main source of theatre information for nearly 9 out of 10 theatre customers.
- 4.4 Printed materials including posters and flyers are produced to support key shows and advertising is regularly placed in events magazines with PR used to achieve free coverage in local media.
- 4.5 Targeted marketing, which sees the biggest return, includes online advertising on Google and Facebook, genre-specific emails to past bookers and cross-selling to audiences of similar shows (approximately 18,000 people). All of these activities click through to the dedicated theatres website – [www.medwayticketslive.co.uk](http://www.medwayticketslive.co.uk)
- 4.6 The theatres also feature as a key message on lamppost banners and railing banners at strategic points across Medway to reach mass audiences.

#### **5. Risk management**

- 5.1 Risk management is an integral part of good governance. The Council has a responsibility to identify and manage risks to achieve its strategic objectives and enhance the value of services it provides to the community.

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk	Risk rating
Reputational damage	Events do not go well or are poorly organised	Robust operational procedures are in place across the Events Team which are stringently followed, given the team's significant experience	D2
Loss of income	Charged-for events, such as theatres or castle concerts, do not meet income targets	Programming of acts and performances is a vital consideration and is carefully planned on the basis of previous successes and customer preferences	D2

## 6. Financial and legal implications

6.1 There are no financial or legal implications arising from this report.

## 7. Recommendations

7.1 Members are asked to support and endorse the steps being taken to promote Medway's cultural offer.

### Lead officer contact

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### Background papers

Cultural Strategy 2009 - 2014