

# REGENERATION, COMMUNITY AND CULTURE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**30 JANUARY 2014**

## **CULTURAL ACTIVITIES**

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### **Summary**

This Report updates Members on the Council's cultural activities, and given the requirement to refresh the Council's Cultural Strategy, reflects on progress made over the last 4 years, considering potential areas of focus for the next 5 years.

### **1. Budget and Policy Framework**

1.1 The Cultural Strategy 2009-2014 was formally approved by Cabinet in October 2009 and delivers against the Council Plan commitment to establish Medway as a destination for Culture, Heritage, Sport and Tourism.

### **2. Background**

2.1 Members of the Regeneration, Community and Culture Overview and Scrutiny Committee have asked for annual updates on the progress being made in delivering Medway's cultural activities programme; this Report and accompanying powerpoint presentation seeks to set out progress made against the Strategy's Delivery Plan and commence the debate around areas of focus for the next 5 years.

### **3. Medway's Cultural Strategy 2009 - 2014**

3.1 The Strategy sets out 4 strategic priorities, and top-level progress made against each is set out below:

#### **3.1.1 Stewardship**

- HLF funding secured for the renovation and conservation of Eastgate House. Works commencing Spring 2014, concluding Spring / Summer 2015
- Opening the Doors project at the Guildhall Museum completed
- Green Flag accreditation secured at 5 sites (Riverside Country Park, Capstone Country Park, The Vines, Hillyfield Community Park and Broomhill Park)
- Significant investment secured in play areas across Medway
- Significant volunteer hours secured.

#### **3.1.2 Engagement**

- Medway's outstanding festival offer has been enhanced through the addition of Under Siege, River Festival, English Festival, Armed Forces Day and the Music Festival. Medway now offers 30 days of free festivals, more than anywhere else in the South East outside London
- Established Rochester, Gillingham and Chatham Libraries as Community Hubs, providing a gateway to Council services in vibrant spaces offering a wide range of activities beyond the traditional library offer
- Held Culture and Design Awards ceremonies celebrating Medway's creative talent.

#### **3.1.3 Economic Prosperity**

- Developed a draft Destination Management Plan (Tourism Strategy) 'Celebrating World Class Heritage' together with the Cathedral, Dockyard Visit Kent and the industry through the Medway Tourism Association, which will be launched in Summer 2014. The Plan sets out an action plan for the delivery of a range of key projects which will enhance Medway's appeal as a visitor destination
- Launched the Explore Medway Tourism Bus
- Established the Christmas Markets at Rochester Castle
- Supported the Creative Sector by facilitating the establishment of creative workspace – Project 161, Rochester; Sun Pier House, Chatham; and Riverside Creative Hub, Military Road, Chatham.

#### **3.1.4 Health and Wellbeing**

- Delivered Medway Park, Medway's regional centre of Sporting Excellence, that received over 750,000 visits in 2013
- Hosted the Modern Pentathlon World Cup, Modern Pentathlon European Championships, British Transplant Games and Wheelchair Rugby League World Cup
- Secured significant volunteer hours

- Entered into a highly successful ground-breaking partnership arrangement with King's Rochester for the running of the Stirling Centre
- Established Medway's Sporting Legacy Programme, including Free Swimming for under 11s and over 60s.

3.2 The Strategy also envisaged a Year of Celebration in 2012 and this was successfully delivered, with a range of events and celebrations showcasing all Medway has to offer.

#### **4. Medway's Cultural Strategy 2014-2019**

4.1 Clearly much has been achieved over the last four years and Medway's cultural offer is increasingly recognised and celebrated. This momentum must be continued and attention is now turning to the next iteration of our Cultural Strategy.

4.2 It is proposed to retain the existing 4 strategic priorities, underpinning the commitment to establishing Medway as a destination for Culture, Heritage, Sport and Tourism. Early proposals for consideration under each of the priorities are set out below:

##### **4.2.1 Stewardship**

- Delivery of the HLF scheme for Eastgate House and supporting partners in their delivery of the Command of the Oceans scheme at the Dockyard, the Crypt project at the Cathedral, the Royal Engineers Museum and the Huguenot Heritage Centre.

##### **4.2.2 Engagement**

- Continuing the Community Hub development programme at Strood and Twydall
- Establishing a Cultural Quarter in Rochester around Eastgate House, Eastgate House Gardens and Rochester Community Hub
- Encouraging greater use of the River.

##### **4.2.3 Economic Prosperity**

- Delivering the Destination Management Plan (Tourism Strategy)
- Establishing a Creative Quarter around Sun Pier House
- Maximising the opportunities HS1 and the new Rochester train station will bring to Medway
- Maximising the opportunities Paramount Park will bring to Medway.

##### **4.2.4 Health and Wellbeing**

- Delivering the Sporting Legacy programme
- Maximising the opportunities Rio 2016 creates for Medway.

4.3 Marketing and promoting our offer will continue to be vital and the Communications Team provides excellent support, mounting campaigns such as Year of Celebration and Enjoy Medway, which will continue.

4.4 Further overarching themes for the Cultural Strategy through 2014-2019 will be to seek to secure City Status for Medway, should a further opportunity arise, and celebrating our rich connections with Dickens, marking his creativity and love of people and places in the area.

## 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. Conclusions

7.1 Medway's cultural offer is an integral part of establishing Medway as a vibrant and attractive place to live, work and study. It is also a key driver for economic prosperity, as we can only attract talent to the area if Medway is a place where people want to live and study. This in turn will attract business investment and location.

7.2 The creative and tourism sectors account for around 15% of Medway's economy, and both are growing sectors. By ensuring a dynamic cultural offer Medway's wider interests are secured.

7.3 Medway's cultural offer also brings a range of intangible wellbeing benefits, bringing communities together, tackling social isolation and promoting more active lifestyles.

7.4 Medway's cultural offer sets Medway apart as a vibrant, dynamic place that attracts interest regionally, nationally and internationally. The intention of the Cultural Strategy is to establish Medway as the destination for Culture, Heritage, Sport and Tourism.

## **8. Recommendations**

8.1 Members are asked to endorse the progress made in delivering Medway's Cultural Programme and to support and contribute to the emerging thinking around Medway's Cultural Strategy 2014-2019.

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### **Background papers**

Cultural Strategy 2009- 2014

<http://www.medway.gov.uk/leisureandculture/arts/culturalstatement.aspx>