

**REGENERATION COMMUNITY AND CULTURE
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
2 OCTOBER 2014**

DRAFT MEDWAY CULTURAL STRATEGY 2014-2019

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Summary

This report brings forward the draft Medway Cultural Strategy 2014-19, reviewing the last 5 years and setting out aspirations for the next period.

The report sets out the Strategy, for the views of the Committee before being submitted to Cabinet on 28 October.

1. Budget and Policy Framework

1.1 The Cultural Strategy underpins the Council Plan priority of establishing Medway as a destination for Culture, Heritage, Sport and Tourism.

2. Background

2.1 Much has been achieved since the adoption of the current cultural strategy in October 2009. Improvements have been made across the range of Medway's cultural offer, including:

- enhancements to our green spaces: green flags, play investment
- heritage buildings: Rochester Castle, the Guildhall Museum, Eastgate House
- introduction of new festivals and events: Under Siege, the English Festival, the River Festival
- roll out of our community hub programme: Gillingham, Rochester, Chatham and Strood
- support provided for the creative sector: Project 161, Recreate, Pop, Nucleus Arts
- tourism: tourism bus, Christmas markets
- investment into our sporting facilities: Medway Park, Strood Sports Centre, the Stirling Centre
- hosting national and international sporting events: the Modern Pentathlon World Cup, the Modern Pentathlon European

Championships, the British Transport Games, the Wheelchair Rugby League World Cup

- mass participation sporting events as part of our sporting legacy: the Medway Mile, the Big Splash, the Big Ride.

But there is more to do ...

- 2.2 Our cultural offer has a pivotal role to play in the regeneration and place making of Medway, making Medway an attractive place to live, work, study and visit, and the next iteration of the cultural strategy is intended to continue that trajectory, establishing Medway as a city in all but name.
- 2.3 The cultural partnership, chaired by Mark Little at UCA, and comprising partners from across Medway’s cultural offer (the universities, Mid Kent College, English Heritage, King’s Rochester, the Dockyard, the Cathedral, Nucleus Arts, artists and creatives, the French Hospital, Gillingham Football Club, Icon Theatre and the Royal Engineers Museum), produced the existing cultural strategy and has developed the draft for 2014-19. This has involved a series of sub groups and workshops giving consideration to how Medway can develop its potential as a future city. This draft is intended to be both a public facing document and a strategic overview for the council and other cultural organisations in Medway. The strategy is deliberately action focused, but within a strategic framework provided by the priorities retained since 2009 of:
- stewardship
 - engagement
 - contributing to economic prosperity
 - health and wellbeing.
- 2.4 Delivery against the strategy will be through the plans of individual organisations, and for the Council will be through the Leisure and Culture divisional and service plans, and monitored through quarterly reports. For the Council, the cultural strategy underpins the Council Plan aspiration to establish Medway as a destination for culture, heritage, sport and tourism.

3. Risk management

- 3.1 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 achievements and customer preferences	D2

4. Consultation and governance

4.1 In addition to the work developing the strategy through the cultural partnership, the citizens' panel has been consulted, an online survey was included on the council's website (home page), the draft of the strategy has been shared with specific groups (youth parliament, older people's forum, ethnic minority forum and mental health) and an overview of strategies has also been undertaken to ensure read-across with other related Council activities already underway. A diversity impact assessment is also being undertaken.

4.2 The Strategy will follow the governance route set out below:

- Overview and Scrutiny 2 October
- Cabinet 28 October.

4. Financial and legal implications

4.1 There are no specific financial implications arising from this report.

4.2 The decision to adopt the Cultural Strategy will be a decision for Cabinet.

5. Conclusions

5.1 Medway's cultural offer is vital for our place making agenda, and establishes Medway's credentials as a city in all but name. Our cultural strategy will help to re-shape perceptions of Medway and secure recognition as a city, bringing benefits to the residents of Medway. Culture should not be viewed as 'nice to have'; it brings hard-edged economic benefits too: 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.

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

5.3 Our cultural offer sets Medway apart as a vibrant, dynamic place that attracts interest regionally, nationally and internationally, supporting the essential place making of Medway and establishing Medway as the destination for culture, heritage, sport and tourism, putting Medway on the map.

6. Recommendations

6.1 The Committee is asked to consider the draft cultural strategy 2014 – 19. Any comments received will be included in the report to Cabinet on 28 October 2014.

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Background Papers

<http://www.medway.gov.uk/pdf/CulturalStrategy2014.pdf>