

REGENERATION, COMMUNITY AND CULTURE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

28 JANUARY 2016

CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

Report from: Richard Hicks, Director of Regeneration Community and Culture

Author: Richard Hicks, Director, Regeneration, Community and Culture

Summary

This report updates Members on the Council's cultural activities, setting out the progress achieved against Medway's Cultural Strategy 2014-2019.

1. Budget and Policy Framework

1.1 Medway's Cultural Strategy 2014-2019 was approved by Cabinet on 28 October 2014, having been considered by the Regeneration, Community and Culture Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 2 October 2014, and underpins the Council Plan priority of establishing 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 the progress made against the Strategy,

3. Medway's Cultural Strategy 2014 - 2019

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

3.1.1 Stewardship

- As reported elsewhere on this agenda, a new contractor has been appointed to progress the Eastgate House project, following the demise of FWA. The restoration of Eastgate House will now be completed in time for Summer 2017.

- Chatham Historic Dockyard's Command of the Oceans project is on track for Summer 2016, Rochester Cathedral Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) project continues and the Huguenot Museum is now fully open.
- Command of the Heights - the Council together with Fort Amherst Heritage Trust, has been successful in securing funding from Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) to help the area reconnect with its military roots and discover secrets from the past. The project will include the careful demolition of Riverside One, which sits within the walls of the historically important Barrier Ditch, to create more public realm on Chatham's waterfront, the creation of a new entrance to Fort Amherst from Chatham town centre as well as the restoration of the Spur Battery - the highest part of Chatham within Fort Amherst.
- A Feasibility Study for the Guildhall Museum is underway, which will set out the long-term development options for the Museum that will increase the use of the building, collections and services, encourage more people to become involved in museums and activities and ensure the long-term preservation of the collections. The Feasibility Study is scheduled to be completed by the end of the financial year, and once approved will then form the basis of a Stage 1 Heritage Lottery Fund application in 2016-17.
- Following public consultation and engagement with the National Archive, the Archive will be relocated from the Civic Centre site to the former Strood Library site. This £1m project will see construction begin in April 2016, with the new facility open to the public in March 2017.

3.1.2 Engagement

- Medway's Community Hub programme continues, with Strood Community Hub opening in March 2015, Hempstead Neighbourhood Community Hub opening in November 2015 and work commencing on Twydall Neighbourhood Community Hub this month, to a completion date of July 2016.
- Medway's biennial Culture, Design and Tourism Awards attracted a record number of entries, with 120 nominations across 14 categories. The award culminated in a highly successful ceremony held at Mid Kent College in October. Winners included: Literature – Wordsmithery, Fashion and Design – Sian Bostwick, Music – The James Taylor Quartet, Heritage – The LV21 Lightship.
- The great siege of Rochester Castle is possibly the most famous siege of the medieval period due mainly to the fact that its outcome would ultimately decide whether the crown of England would stand or fall. It is also the best documented of all medieval sieges. Over 6,000 people watched the story of the Siege of Rochester Castle unfold via a stunning live event comprising of live battle scenes and action by re-enactors, filmed action projected onto the Keep, Digital mapping projection – which enabled the simulation of the collapse of the south east tower, pyrotechnics, stunning lighting, smoke and sound effects and a comprehensive introduction by Dr Marc Morris – one of the leading authorities in the world on King John. The event was held as part of the celebrations to mark the 800th anniversary of the sealing of Magna Carta, which ultimately led to the Great Siege.
- The Council provides many activities for young people from arts, events, free swimming to youth clubs. The range of activity is vast and the youth

offer campaign will pull all the opportunities for young people together in one place so we co-promote the full range to young people, giving them the opportunity to discover the full range of activity on offer.

3.1.3 Economic Prosperity

- Medway's Open top bus secured Tourism South East Beautiful South Bronze Award and enjoyed a highly successful year, with record numbers of passengers. More than 4,100 passengers took the tour, which ran over Easter and then throughout the Summer school holidays.
- In 2015 Medway had 150 filming days which equated to an estimated spend into the local economy of £1,541,924. The Historic Dockyard Chatham continued to attract high profile productions including Netflix drama The Crown, feature film Deep Water and the return of Call The Midwife and Mr Selfridge. The ITV drama Jekyll and Hyde was shot in Rochester and The Historic Dockyard Chatham with close liaison with Medway Council. Rochester Castle was chosen to feature in ITV's Rugby World Cup Opening Titles.
- Following the successful launch of the Dickens Country Experience tour in 2014, additional activities included the introduction of horse-and-carriage rides around Rochester, weekend street entertainment, a new children's trail and a series of sell-out performances of a Christmas Carol at the Guildhall Museum.
- The tourism team has been working closely with Network Rail and Southeastern to ensure visitor opportunities arising from the opening of the new Rochester station are maximised. Plans include new orientation maps and improved signage, together with performance space in and around the station to coincide with major festivals and events. The official opening of the station is due to take place in February.

3.1.4 Health and Wellbeing

- Medway's Sporting Legacy strategy will be refreshed to highlight plans for the next four years. A major focus is on non-traditional activities in non-traditional settings, in line with national Government policy for boosting grassroots participation levels outlined in the new strategy Sporting Future published in December 2015.
- The £1.9m Strood Sports Centre refurbishment programme has completed.
- The Medway Cycling Action Plan is currently being developed following the award of £2.5m from the South East Local Enterprise Partnership for infrastructure improvements to the cycle network. Work is underway on developing and delivering an enhanced network of cycle routes. It is planned to develop 19 new or improved routes between 2015 and 2018 and funding opportunities will be pursued to continue the work in future years.
- Parksport – multi-sport sessions will be brought to a range of new park and open space settings in some of Medway's most deprived areas. The target is to engage almost 3,000 participants over three years, steering participants towards existing community sports clubs or forming permanent new clubs themselves through the creation of community champions groups. Medway Sport also works closely with the Street Games charity to set up Doorstep Sport Clubs in partnership with the

Medway Youth Service. Multi-sport and handball clubs have been set up at three locations and more than 60 young people regularly attend the free weekly sessions on a weekly basis. We are currently working to identify young leaders from the sessions who can be trained to run the clubs on an ongoing basis.

3.2 Clearly, much has been achieved, helping to establish Medway as a great place to live, work, learn and visit, but there is still more to do, working in partnership, and activity continues to deliver against all the ambitions set out in Medway's Cultural Strategy 2014-19.

4. Risk Management

4.1 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 the services it provides in 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

5. Financial and legal implications

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

6. Conclusions

6.1 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.

- 6.2 Medway's cultural offer also delivers a range of intangible wellbeing benefits, bringing communities together, tackling social isolation and promoting more active lifestyles.
- 6.3 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.

7. Recommendations

- 7.1 Members are asked to endorse the progress made thus far in delivering Medway's Cultural Strategy 2014 – 2019.

Appendices: None

Lead officer contact

Richard Hicks, Director, Regeneration, Community and Culture, tel: 01634 3312764
email: richard.hicks@medway.gov.uk

Background papers

Regeneration, Community and Culture Overview and Scrutiny Report – 2 October 2014

Weblink to Cultural Strategy 2014-2019:

<http://www.medway.gov.uk/leisurecultureandsport/arts/culturalstrategy.aspx>