

REGENERATION, CULTURE, ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

17 JANUARY 2017

CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

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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, Culture, Economic Development & Transformation 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 sets 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

- Following the appointment of the new contractor, the restoration of Eastgate House is now back on schedule and will now be completed in time for summer 2017.

- Chatham Historic Dockyard's Command of the Oceans scheme, which secured funding of £8.75 million from HLF, was successfully completed and opened to the public in May 2016.
- Rochester Cathedral's Hidden Treasures Fresh Expressions project was completed with £5.5 million HLF funding in October 2016 with an official opening.
- Command of the Heights – The £2.4 million 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 and 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.
- The project to relocate the Medway Archive & Local Studies Centre to a new home at Bryant Road in Strood has progressed well over the course of the year. The main contractor started work on site in July 2016 and is expected to have completed the conversion of the former district library building on programme in February 2017. The collections will be moved from the current civic centre site early in the New Year and the new Medway History Centre is expected to open in April 2017.
- In the spring of 2016, the Guildhall's magnificent 17th Century façade was restored. The historic High Street frontage was renovated and the Rochester crest, weathervane and bell were restored by local craftsmen due to the generosity of the Friends of the Guildhall Museums, the City of Rochester Society and the Rochester Bridge Trust, who made donations totalling £16,000 for the work to be completed. The historic market bell, dating from 1811, now rings twice each day to announce the opening and closing of the Museum.

3.1.2 Engagement

- 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.
- More than 30 days of free festivals every year, one of the largest free festivals and events programmes in the country.
- Battle of Medway - Planning is currently taking place for this major event planned to take place within the period of 8 June to 17 June 2017, to commemorate the 350th anniversary of the Dutch raid on Upnor Castle and the Chatham Dockyard. This event greatly influenced and informed the creation of the British Royal Navy and subsequently Britain's supremacy and command of the world's oceans, during the age of sail. This will be one of the most spectacular events to happen in Medway and will feature a Civic opening ceremony, with representation from both the British and Dutch Navy, and conclude with an event entitled "Medway in Flames", which promises to truly put Medway on the Map.
- A study has begun on the processes and major considerations required to transform the Brook into an iconic powerhouse of creativity – the Quadruple Helix Centre of Excellence for Performance Arts Innovation, will bring together the public, private, voluntary and University sectors to enable end-to-end culture and arts delivery.

- The Guildhall Museum is a lead partner in the ‘100 Objects that Made Kent’, an initiative funded by the Arts Council. School visits to the Guildhall Museum have reached record levels. In 2015/16, 7,911 children visited the Museum in organised groups, an increase of 24% on the previous year. In the first three quarters of the current year more than 6,200 school children have made visits in organised school parties.
- Plans are currently being put into place for the commemoration of the 150th anniversary of the Death of Charles Dickens, one of the countries most famous writers.

3.1.3 Economic Prosperity

- The Establishment of a sustainable Christmas Market with over 140,000 visitors attending over the first three week-ends of December now means that Rochester has become one of the Country’s top ten destination for Christmas Markets (6th overall in the Sun Newspaper)
- The value of tourism to Medway continues to grow, as demonstrated by independent research. Using the industry-respected Cambridge Economic Impact Model, the research showed the value of tourism to the Medway economy reached £313,164,600 in 2015 a rise of 3% on the previous (2013) study. The number of day trips grew to 4,099,000 and the number of overnight trips to 528,500. This had a positive impact on the jobs front with 6,112 people in Medway now employed in this area, a rise of 5.2%. Tourism now represents 6.9% of all employment in Medway.
- Work has begun with colleagues in the regeneration and planning teams on establishing a “Creative Quarter” in Chatham, through sensitive planning for mix use facilities along the lower high street and the development of affordable creative workspaces.
- The involvement with the Universities and Private sector organisations in the development of the Quadruple Helix Centre of Creative Excellence will encourage the migration of artists and creatives from London, as well as the retention of students from Medway’s Universities.

3.1.4 Health and Wellbeing

- Medway Sport’s new four-year strategy was launched in the summer 2016, and indicates how Medway will respond to, and meet the challenges set out in both Sport England’s – “Sporting Future Strategy” – and its new investment strategy – “Towards an Active Nation”.
- Play, Compete, Spectate sets out how we will continue to use sport to:
 - encourage active and healthy lifestyles
 - maintain and develop the quality of sports and facilities
 - support and inspire local talent
 - Cement Medway’s reputation as a centre of excellence for sport.
- Medway Mile 2016 returned to Rochester Castle in July 2016 as more than 3,000 runners and walkers took part in a mass participation running/jogging event, which highlights the benefits of developing a healthy and active lifestyle. Strood Sports Centre underwent a £1.9million redevelopment with the facility completely modernised. The redevelopment saw the gym being doubled in size, the installation of brand

new state of the art fitness equipment, 3 new dance studios, a new dedicated indoor cycle studio, and the refurbishment of the swimming pool changing rooms, reception area and health suite. The project was delivered on time and within budget.

- Sir Geoff Hurst was the guest of honour for the official opening at Strood Sports Centre on 14th July 2016. A 1966 style football tournament, featuring 16 local primary schools representing the 16 nations from the 1966 World Cup, was held on the day. After presenting the winning nation with a Jules Rimet replica Sir Geoff officially opened the newly-refurbished centre and then spent time meeting customers and signing autographs on everything from books, programmes, football shirts and even football boots. This event generated a huge amount of interest at Strood Sports Centre with coverage by press and TV.
- In 2016 Medway Park hosted the European Championship Qualifier between GB ladies and Slovenia ladies, the Wheelchair Rugby League cup final between Leeds and Halifax, the European Handball Federation challenge cup fixture between London Olympia and LK Zug from Switzerland, New Age Curling World Championships, European Veterans Fencing Championships and an International Sitting Volleyball match between GB ladies and Canada ladies

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
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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 (£313m): 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 well-being 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 in delivering Medway's Cultural Strategy 2014 – 2019.

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Appendices

None

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>