

COUNCIL

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MEDWAY - CITY OF CULTURE 2025

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Alan Jarrett, Leader

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Summary

Medway has an aspiration to become the next City of Culture in 2025, which is supported by the Medway Place Board and Medway Cultural Partnership. This report sets out the reasons why this is a great opportunity for Medway as well as the support required for a successful bid.

1. Budget and Policy Framework

- 1.1 The aspiration to seek City of Culture status for Medway supports the Council's Priority of Medway: a place to be proud of, and the associated Outcome of Putting Medway on the Map.
- 1.2 There is a requirement for funding to establish a core bid team, which will be managed at arm's length from the Council as best practice is that the campaign for the bid should not be led by the local authority, but by community partnerships.
- 1.3 The Bid team will consist of a Bid Manager/Coordinator, Communications and Engagement post and a Bid Officer. A governance model is yet to be established, to facilitate the City of Culture work which will report to the Place Board and Cultural Partnership, but the team will be funded by Medway Council and hosted externally. These opportunities will be put to advert externally but secondment opportunities will be considered too. £205,000 funding will cover the salaries of the 3 roles between December 2019 and December 2021. This will require an addition to the revenue budget, which is a matter for Full Council.
- 1.4 The Cabinet has responsibility for economic development, tourism, inward investment, communications and marketing and can fund promotion of Medway the place.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Place Board, a partnership of local organisations working together to take forward the placemaking agenda for Medway, has proposed the bid for City of Culture in 2025. This was subsequently endorsed by the Medway Cultural Partnership, which is a group of arts and cultural organisations with a vested interest in Medway and its future.
- 2.2 In developing their view, the Place Board arranged a visit from a cultural sector expert, who has previously worked with Hull and Coventry on their successful City of Culture Bids to give a view on the viability of Medway making a bid. The visit took place between 24-26 April 2019, with the expert meeting with the Place Board and a number of key stakeholders, as well as a tour around Medway's cultural assets.
- 2.3 A feedback report was produced, which outlined a number of strengths, such as Medway's ambition, regeneration growth and strong and committed partnership engagement. The report also highlighted challenges such as the need to develop cultural capacity and the requirement for external funding. There is already growing community support for this aspiration.
- 2.4 A local launch was held at the Medway Mile event on 19 July, where the Leader announced Medway's aspiration to become the UK City of Culture in 2025. Medway has also shared its ambitions with Members of Parliament at a reception, hosted by Rehman Chishti MP. The event was attended by key decision-makers, stakeholders and opinion-formers who have warmly supported our bid.
- 2.5 Previous winning cities have witnessed significant benefits.

Hull have reported the following economic and social benefits from their City of Culture year in 2017:

- Increased tourism by 1.3m people
- Excess of £300m to the economy
- 800 new jobs
- 2800 events and cultural activities.

Coventry are expecting to see the following benefits in 2021:

- £1bn investment
- 2000 new jobs
- 80% of local people experiencing 3 or more cultural events.

Other shortlisted cities have also experienced positive outcomes for their communities, without winning the City of Culture title. For example, Durham now hosts Lumiere, the UK's largest light festival.

2.6 Why should Medway be the next City of Culture in 2025?

- Recognising the importance of arts and culture in improving health and wellbeing
- To support our young people through the provision of creative and cultural skills through schools, our College and our Universities, providing new employment opportunities
- Reaping the benefits of economic regeneration that arts and culture bring
- To enhance our cultural and creative offer, raising our creative ambitions and aspirations
- To create a legacy for Medway and deepen sense of belonging
- To improve local pride within our communities
- To support our “Putting Medway on the Map” agenda
- To develop new creative and stakeholder partnerships
- To improve diversity and inclusion, supporting both the social regeneration and social isolation agendas
- To increase business engagement.

2.7 Why Medway, and what is great about Medway?

- We have a significant cultural offer in Medway; the title of City of Culture for our communities will engender greater self-belief, allow a greater appreciation of Medway’s unique offer amongst our visitors and help realise our potential for the future
- Our communities are enthusiastic and passionate; our City of Culture bid will support consultation and engagement across the whole of Medway, promoting “Growth for All”
- Our location - strategically positioned mid-point between the capital city of London and the continent of Europe and a gateway to the county of Kent.
- Our Rich Heritage and Great Future:
 - Rich Heritage- Medway has the finest and tallest Norman Castle in the country, the second oldest Cathedral, the best preserved Dockyard dating from the age of sail, Chatham Historic Dockyard, and rich historical connections with Charles Dickens
 - Great Future – Medway has four Universities, the University of Kent, University of Greenwich, Canterbury Christchurch University and the University for the Creative Arts, the largest Further Education provision in the county, MidKent College, a University Technical College, more than 85% of our schools are good or outstanding, fantastic connectivity with High Speed1 through our 5 main train stations into central London and new employment opportunities, such as Innovation Park Medway
- Our greenspaces: we have the equivalent of 13.3 Hyde Parks under the Council’s direct management, and 7 Green Flag- accredited parks
- There is a highly successful and innovative underground arts scene.
- We have the most business start-ups of any place in the South East

2.8 What will 2025 look like for Medway?

- Activities and proposals are currently being developed, but events such as the Turner Prize, a Literary Festival, Light Festival and a new international festival are examples of what other cities have showcased for their year of culture. It is also clear from those other cities that national and international organisations will want to associate their offer with Medway as City of Culture
- Some of the other proposals that are being considered include:
 - New commissions by internationally renowned artists
 - New festivals of national and international significance planned, managed and run by young people, mentored by professionals
 - Medway artists given a platform for their work
 - Emphasis on innovation/digital, recognising our heritage but celebrating it in a contemporary context.

2.9 Timescales:

- The competition is expected to be officially announced by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport by the end of 2019
- An Expression of Interest is expected to be submitted in February 2021
- The Initial Bid is expected to be submitted in April 2021
- The shortlisting process is expected to take place over the summer in 2021, with around 4/5 cities being chosen for the last stage of the competition
- The Final Bid is expected to be submitted in September 2021
- It is anticipated there will be a panel interview and visit from the decision-makers in Autumn 2021
- The Decision is expected to be announced in December 2021, at the culmination of Coventry's year.

2.10 Other cities that have expressed an interest with this competition include Bradford, Lancashire and Luton.

3. Options

3.1 Given the positive media coverage and support since the Leader launched the local bid campaign at the Medway Mile event on 19 July, the preferred option would be to continue with the campaign and to establish the Bid team to lead on Medway's City of Culture Bid, operating at arm's length from the Council, to ensure this is a community-led campaign and not to be seen as solely a Medway Council initiative.

3.2 There is the option of not supporting the funding for a Bid Team and for this to become a Council-led campaign, with resource being found from the current workforce, and the campaign being in addition to current workloads. This option is not advised, as previous experience has shown community-led campaigns support greater engagement, and there is no capacity within existing teams to fully support this work.

4. Advice and analysis

4.1 Officer advice is to support the requirement for funding to establish the Bid Team, to progress the Bid and to continue the momentum from the Local Launch by the Leader in July and Reception in the House. This approach was supported by the Cabinet at its meeting on 24 September 2019.

5. Cabinet

5.1 The Cabinet considered this report on 24 September 2019 and made the following decisions:

- The Cabinet approved a bid for City of Culture status for Medway and agreed to encourage all Medway communities to back the bid (decision no. 104/2019 refers);
- The Cabinet recommended to Full Council to approve the revenue funding of £205,000 to establish the City of Culture bid team to progress Medway's campaign, to be met from the Council's reserves (decision no. 105/2019 refers); and
- The Cabinet recommended to Full Council to formally express its support for the bid for City of Culture status for Medway (decision no. 106/2019 refers).

5.2 The Cabinet gave the following reasons for decision: The aspiration to secure City of Culture for Medway in 2025 is widely supported by our partners, businesses and our communities. The funding is required to serve as a catalyst for the bid, establishing a team to fundraise, consult and engage with Medway's communities, undertake research on health, employment data, cultural participation levels and health inequalities, producing a compelling case for Medway to be recognised as UK City of Culture 2025.

6. Risk Management

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk	Risk rating
Unsuccessful bid	Medway does not become the UK City of Culture in 2025	The Bid team will work closely with all communities to ensure the Bid covers all aspects of Medway's ambition for the people and place. The Bid team will create a legacy for Medway, no matter what the outcome from the competition	Medium, given the number of Cities who have already announced they are bidding for the title

7. Financial and Legal Implications

7.1 The revenue funding of £205,000 is requested to establish the City of Culture bid team that will be required to progress the bid through the next stages. This funding will be available to the end of 2021 as a catalyst for the bid process, with the intention to secure additional funding from external sources through sponsorship and fundraising.

- 7.2 The £205,000 contribution from Medway Council would cover the salaries for the three Bid team roles. The Business Case produced by the consultant proposed around £150,000 of further external funding is required to support the bid until submission in 2021. The external funding will be secured by the Bid team and spend will be monitored through the Place Board and Cultural Partnership (external stakeholders).
- 7.3 There is no existing budget for this work, and as such the £205,000 contribution would need to be funded from the Council's reserves. As additions to the revenue budget are a matter for Council, this report is now presented for approval. This will also present the opportunity for the Council to express its support for the campaign.
- 7.4 The legal structure of the Bid team and any agreements with it should be in a form agreed by the Chief Legal Officer.

8. Recommendations

- 8.1 The Council is asked to approve the revenue funding of £205,000 to establish the City of Culture bid team to progress Medway's campaign, to be met from the Council's reserves.
- 8.2 The Council is asked to formally express its support for the bid for City of Culture status for Medway.

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Appendices

None

Background papers

None