

## **REGENERATION, CULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**21 JANUARY 2020**

### **ATTENDANCE OF THE DEPUTY LEADER AND PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SERVICES**

Report from: Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing and  
Community Services Councillor Doe

#### **Summary**

This report sets out progress made within the areas covered by the Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Services Councillor Doe which fall within the remit of this Committee.

#### **1. Background**

1.1 The areas within the terms of reference of this Overview and Scrutiny Committee covered by the Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Services Councillor Doe are:

- Archives
- Armed Forces Covenant
- Events and Festivals
- Greenspaces
- Heritage
- Leisure Services
- Sporting Legacy
- Theatres and Arts
- Tourism

1.2 Achievements for 2019 are detailed by service area below.

## **2. Archives**

- 2.1 Medway Archives continues to be the core location for any resident who is keen to explore the history of Medway and its people. So far this year staff have dealt with over 2000 historical enquiries.
- 2.2 The Service was very pleased in September to welcome our new Archivist, Elspeth Millar, who previously was employed at the Templeman Library, University of Kent.
- 2.3 Reminiscence sessions have been very popular, have attracted a core group of visitors who have discussed and collected oral reminiscences around the subjects of the Navy in Chatham, World War two and evacuation, working at Winget's and Short's, Prefabs and Council housing, Transport, Pubs clubs and restaurants, Railways trams and omnibuses, Dockyard Apprentices, and National Service.
- 2.4 Talks have been well attended and have included presentations on Women in Medway, undiscovered Rochester, Conscientious objectors, a schoolgirl's war and the Short Brothers (over 100 residents packed the Community Hall at Strood for this.)
- 2.5 Exhibitions have included the Watts Charity, Short Brothers and Bridgeworks: a story of the Rochester Bridge Wardens Trust.
- 2.6 The Local Studies Librarian has been working with a range of local groups including Kent Guiding Association, the Women's Institute and Medway Soroptimists.

## **3. Armed Forces Covenant**

- 3.1 Medway Council continues to honour the Armed Forces Covenant, and I am the Armed Forces Champion with Daniel Ratcliff, Skills and Employment Programme Manager appointed as the lead officer. The covenant ensures the council has the policies and practices in place to ensure members of the armed forces are not disadvantaged in their dealings with the Council.
- 3.2 An officer group is well established which works across the council and with key partners such as Brompton Barracks and Chatham Job Centre Plus. The group ensures policies and practices are robust and respected. Medway Council was delighted to receive the Employer Defence Recognition Silver Award for the work that the Council does to support those in the Armed Forces and provide opportunities for staff to join and participate in the Reserves in 2018. Work has taken place to apply for the Employer Defence Recognition Gold Award, and an application will be made in 2020.
- 3.3 A project has commenced to create an Armed Forces Veterans Hub. This will provide veterans with the opportunity to socialise with other veterans and access support where required. A bid to the Armed Forces Covenant fund will be made to support the development of the hub. The hub will go live early in 2020.

## **4. Events and Festivals**

4.1 The Festivals and events team directly produce one of the largest free outdoor events and festivals programme in the country reaching over 300,000 residents and visitors. The programme brings people together, celebrating Medway's communities and heritage whilst supporting the local economy and putting Medway on the map.

### **4.2 The English Festival**

4.2.1 A much-liked event by local people and it drew 15,500 visitors which was the joint highest since the event's inception.

### **4.3 Sweeps Festival**

4.3.1 Now in its 39th year, the three-day Sweeps Festival continues to celebrate Morris dancing and folk music throughout Rochester. The recently added Artisan Produce Fair, which was brought in to supplement the existing Record and Musical Instrument and Psychic and Folk-Art Fairs has proved extremely popular. Officers were pleased that an estimated 61,000 visitors attended, given the very cold weather and a bus replacement service.

### **4.4 Dickens Festival**

4.4.1 The Dickens Festival continued the tradition of attracting visitors from across the country and from abroad. There was an excellent programme of street theatre, displays, talks and general entertainment. An estimated 34,500 visitors attended over the two days.

### **4.5 River Festival**

4.5.1 After a couple of years away at Dockside and at the Dockyard, the event returned to Chatham Waterfront in 2019. There was a programme of land activities and a water-based programme of spectacular displays. The weather was very unkind but an estimated 3,600 visitors braved the wind and rain.

### **4.6 Armed Forces Day**

4.6.1 Over 11,000 visitors attended this event that is now regarded as the most prominent in the region and is regularly attended by visitors and military personnel alike. The event is used to promote the close and special relationship between the people of Medway and Her Majesty's Armed Forces and the commitment of Medway Council.

### **4.7 Castle Concerts**

4.7.1 Castle Concerts took place in July, after early good ticket sales and a sell out on Jess Glyn, she unfortunately pulled out with very late notice. She was replaced by Craig David but tickets sales did not cross over. The Proms sold out and whilst the concerts were excellent, ticket sales were disappointing and significantly increased the level of public subsidy required to deliver

them. The Castle Concerts series subsequently went into review. Please see point 4.12.1.1

#### 4.8 Will Adams Festival

4.8.1 Approximately 4,000 visitors attended and were treated to an exciting day of Japanese culture through demonstrations, performance and hands-on activities, including martial arts demonstrations; calligraphy; origami and Taiko drumming as well as displays, stands and exhibitions of Japanese life and culture.

#### 4.9 Visit of HMS Medway

4.9.1 HMS Medway came to Medway to be commissioned and for the crew to be awarded the Freedom of Medway. On Thursday 19 September the Commissioning Ceremony took place at Basin 2 and was attended by many local VIPs, Lady Fallon, the ship's sponsor.

4.9.2 On Saturday 21 September Freedom of Medway status was conferred on the ship's crew which saw a ceremonial march through Chatham with a salute being taken by the Mayor of Medway, followed by a civic lunch at the Historic Dockyard where the ceremonial casket was presented to the ship's captain.

#### 4.10 Focus on Festivals

4.10.1 The Focus on Festivals continued into their second year celebrating local communities with events in Rainham, Walderslade, Strood and Hoo. Filled with local performers and activities these events bring together local areas with a family fun packed programme.

#### 4.11 Audience figures

<b>Events</b>	<b>Dates in 2019</b>	<b>Audience numbers</b>
The English Festival	20 April	15,500
Sweeps Festival	4, 5 & 6 May	61,000
Focus on Rainham	18 May	5,200
Rochester Dickens Festival	1 & 2 June	34,500
River Festival	16 June	3,600
Armed Forces Day	29 June	11,000
Castle Concerts	10 to 13 July	9,400
Focus on Walderslade	30 June	3,300
Will Adams Festival	7 September	3,820
Focus on Strood	14 September	3,800
Royal Engineers Corp Memorial	15 September	700
Focus on Hoo	21 September	2,060
Fireworks Night	2 November	Cancelled
Rochester Christmas Markets	29,30 November & 1, 6,7,8,13,14,15 December	90,000
Rochester Dickensian Christmas	7&8 December	84,000

<b>TOTAL NUMBER OF VISITORS</b>	<b>327,800</b>
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4.12 2020 developments

4.12.1 Rochester Castle Concerts

4.12.1.1 On 17 December 2019 Cabinet agreed that after review and analysis of data and information and soft market testing with external promoters, the Council withdraw from the direct delivery of the Rochester Castle Concerts and that officers work with a third-party to deliver a commercial music concert series in Medway removing the council from future financial risk.

4.12.2 Estuary Festival 2020 co-commission

4.12.2.1 In Spring 2020 the Culture team will be commissioning a new one off event with Estuary Festival 2020. Estuary Festival 2020 is a major festival of art, music, literature and film along the 60 miles of spectacular Thames estuary coastline in September and October 2020.

4.12.2.2 This new one-off creative commission will bring together local people in a community engagement programme in the lead up to one off special moment yet to be determined.

4.12.3 Will Adams 400

4.12.3.1 In 2020 we will be marking the 400th anniversary of the death of Will Adams on 12th September with an enhanced festival by combining with a Focus on Event and so within existing budgets with creative commissions and high-profile performances and workshops.

**5. Theatres**

5.1 Review of 2019

5.1.1 Central Theatre

5.1.1.1 The Central Theatre continues to attract internationally famous artistes, delivering a very popular and successful programme.

5.1.1.2 Some stand out shows were Russian National Ballet – Nutcracker; Henning Wehn; Jimmy Carr; The Stars from Strictly; The Stylistics; Ben Elton.

5.1.1.3 Cinderella became our best-selling pantomime in five years with over 26,000 tickets sold.

5.1.2 The Brook Theatre

5.1.2.1 The Brook Theatre is well established as a creative hub in Medway with the professional creative resident companies contributing to Medway's creative offer.

5.1.2.2 The Brook Theatre continues to provide performance and rehearsal space for both community and professional companies augmented by an innovative programme of performing arts such as: The Bully Wee Band; Patrick Monahan; Jive Aces; Mark Steel; Fest of Fiddles; Andy Parsons.

5.1.2.3 There is also the much admired 'Sundays are for Kids' programme and the much-vaunted Christmas productions for toddlers created by three of the resident creative companies. This year the show 'The Christmas Adventures of Archie the Mouse' has been very popular and has received excellent feedback.

## 5.2 2020 developments

### 5.2.1 Future High Streets

5.2.1.1 Platform 1 is a project in the wider Future High Streets Fund programme that will see the development of the Brook Theatre into a contemporary, flexible, affordable, digital creative hub that will drive innovation and collaboration kick starting a creative revolution in the heart of Chatham as part of Medway bid's for City of Culture 2025.

5.2.1.2 The vision is to support creative businesses and organisations to grow and thrive by providing a desirable, high quality and creative working environment including performance, rehearsal, digital, co-working and serviced offices, at affordable scales for emerging and growing creative individuals and organisations.

5.2.1.3 For this to succeed, The Brook Theatre will be significantly developed opening-up spaces, providing flexible workspace solutions, enhancing existing features and character that celebrate the buildings heritage and maximise the user experience.

5.2.1.4 The Brook Theatre will continue to provide an accessible public programme of performances and workshops and working with our education partners will be used a city centre venue for creative and cultural course projects, bringing students into the centre of Chatham to use as a location for filming, photography, architecture, digital arts and performance. The Brook Theatre will also offer advice on skills development, training and qualifications supporting those looking for experience and opportunities find work in the cultural and creative sector.

5.2.1.5 A thriving cultural and creative scene has long supported the development and growth of towns and cities. Liverpool, Hull, Shoreditch and more recently Margate and Peckham have benefited from the energy, vitality and economic growth that the subsidised and commercial creative and cultural sector have brought to these areas. By supporting this programme we are making Chatham more attractive and desirable for business and investment growing the reputation of Medway as a creative forward thinking place to live, work, learn and visit.

## 5.3 Rochester Corn Exchange

### 5.3.1 Review of 2019

5.3.1.1 The Corn Exchange continues to be well used by event and meeting organisers across Medway and Kent. With hundreds of events being hosted in 2019, the Corn Exchange plays an important role hosting the Dickensian Christmas Mistletoe Ball, Dickens Summer Ball, Mayoral events and the Make a Difference annual awards dinner.

The multi-cultural wedding business continues to increase outside the typical Summer wedding season. This year saw weddings taking place into late December.

There has been a significant increase in the number of birthday celebrations and school proms this year, the Corn Exchange benefiting from the closure of The Roffen in 2018.

The Corn Exchange is well used mid-week by the Education Team for Primary School seminars being a central location for all schools across Medway to come together and share information.

Christmas Party season has been the best for several years.

### 5.3.2 2020 development

5.3.2.1 *Capital programme* – From January – March 2020 the Corn Exchange will undergo a refurbishment programme that will see some essential exterior works and an internal refurbishment that will create a refreshed and flexible venue that can be more competitive and generate increased income. Redecorated rooms, better digital infrastructure, improved furniture and floors will create an enhanced environment to host weddings, business events and celebrations.

5.3.2.2 *Business planning* - A new five-year business plan for the Corn Exchange will be agreed in early 2020 and the venue will be relaunched after the capital programme is completed. The new business plan will include a range of wedding, business and celebration packages that provide the quality and support that customers require. There will be a comprehensive promotional plan that aims to ensure that The Corn Exchange is visible and competitive and becomes a viable income generating venue.

## 6. **Arts**

### 6.1 Culture Development

#### 6.1.1 Review of 2019

6.1.1.1 *Overview* - Medway Council's Arts Development Team supports and works in partnership with artists, companies, organisations and departments from across the council, to enable them to deliver arts projects and activities. These projects form part of the local cultural offer, allowing the community to

engage with the arts, and they also nurture and develop the professional expertise of the artists, companies and organisations delivering them.

6.1.1.2 *Partnerships* - The Arts Team's small grants programme has seen £18,000 shared between twelve projects across 14 organisations enabling them to unlock over £750,000 of external funding from sources such as Arts Council England; the National Lottery Heritage Fund, for the delivery of cultural activities in Medway engaging over 44,000 residents.

Partnerships projects this year include:

- The Chatham Witch delivered by Icon Theatre was a site-specific, open-air community theatre project led by Icon Theatre, in partnership with Fort Amherst Trust and the Command of the Heights Project with financial support from Heritage Lottery and Arts Council England.
- The Windrush Project delivered by Medway African and Caribbean Association was a community heritage and arts project celebrating the contributions of the Windrush generation in Medway and Kent, in partnership with Chatham Historic Dockyard Trust, University of Kent and Medway Libraries and part funded by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.
- Ideas Test, Medway and Swales Creative People and Places programme was again successfully awarded a further three years funding from Arts Council England. Projects including Sea Folk Sing (choral/composition project for over 55s) and BLINK (a public art installation project led by young producers from Medway and other parts of the UK) have all been hugely successful and we look forward to the next three years.
- The Empty Chair is a literature, poetry, spoken-word and art project delivered by Medway-based Wordsmithery to mark the 150th anniversary of Dickens' death and we are hopeful this will be supported by Arts Council England.

6.1.1.3 *Advice and support* - An important part of the arts development team's role is to advise and support colleagues, artists and organisations in the development and delivery of their programmes. Below are a few examples of this support:

- This Wounded Island by Anything Other Theatre was new Arts Council funded show about the closure of the dockyard. The show premiered at Chatham Historic Dockyard as part of Paint the Town Festival's final season.
- Sun Pier House and the MESS Room's Open Arts Project is a visual arts programme aimed at providing accessible arts to blind and visually impaired and deaf and hearing-impaired participants.
- The Confluence Sessions run by Confluence Magazine are delivering live literature to new audiences with accessible poetry and spoken word events tailored for older people and families with young children.



- 51Zero Festival is a festival celebrating the moving image across Medway and Canterbury, working with young team of producers and international artists.
- D Live/Big D Stories is producing deaf and hearing-impaired accessible storytelling and performance experiences, to be largely performed across Medway Libraries in 2020.
- The team provided artists and newly commissioned work to the festivals and events programme including a 'Meetin' Beeton' play at the Dickens Festival, Medway Print Festival workshops at the River Festival and circus crafts at the four Focus On events. The team also supported craft workshops for Mental Health Awareness Week in Libraries, supported the regeneration team on the High Streets Heritage Action Zone bid and connected Economic Development with professional artists and performers to support school children in raising their aspirations and highlighting career options.

## 6.2 Rochester Art Gallery

- 6.2.1 This small gallery welcomed more than 9,000 visitors enjoyed a variety of shows and over 1,800 people of all ages participated in 41 workshops and special events in 2019.
- 6.2.2 The exhibition programme consisted of '*Feels Like Forever Ago*', and '*Three Threads*', a very popular textile season including three shows by leading UK textile artists '*Painting with Cloth*', '*Bizarre and Curious Silks*' and '*Flax, Fibres and Plant Dyes: Kent Cloth*', the latter two being ACE funded. In addition to this, RAG hosted a special Primary School Exhibition '*START Primary Prints*' funded by Children and the Arts and Royal Opera House Bridge. In total we worked with 13 artists/makers, 12 of whom are Medway or Kent based. The programme was delivered in partnership with Guildhall Museum, Huguenot Museum, Rochester Cathedral, Eastgate House, Medway Print Festival, Fort Amherst, Age Concern, UCA and David Walters and Sons Silk Mill in Sudbury.
- 6.2.3 The fourth Medway Print Festival took place in June and offered the community the chance to participate in 51 events over two weeks including workshops, talks, exhibitions and courses across 16 venues making it Medway's biggest print festival to date with over 5,000 people taking part.
- 6.2.4 The 2020, Rochester Art Gallery exhibition programme includes; '*Echoes*' experimental photography by Rochester artist Zara Carpenter, '*The Last Dream of My Soul*' - the Dickens 150 Printmakers Open Call exhibition & competition and '*All the Remains, Thirty Years in the making*' - Silk Textiles by Neil Bottle.
- 6.2.5 In 2020 RAG has a focus on wellbeing through creativity, with exhibitions exploring issues including invisible illness and pain, memory and loss and a show looking at homelessness.

### 6.3 The Wigmore Lectures

6.3.1 The Wigmore lectures season runs October to March, reaching an audience of over 900.

6.3.2 The current series includes the now established Wigmore Lectures on tour events at other Medway libraries. To date, every event has sold out.

### 6.4 Splat!

6.4.1 Splat took place in Rochester Castle Moat on 6 May as part of Rochester Sweeps Festival. An estimated 4,000 people attended the events that included a Splat! Commission – *Summer Island*, an intimate, miniature interactive puppet show for the very young from artists Nicola Flower and Daisy Young.

6.4.2 Delivered with support from University of Kent and more experienced practitioners from Half a String, the show went on to be performed at the bOing Festival at Canterbury's Gulbenkian Theatre and University of Kent Campus.

### 6.5 Dance

6.5.1 U.Dance Medway 2019 and community showcase: part of a national programme from One Dance UK to encourage children and young people to develop their skills in dance and performance which increases their self-esteem and confidence. 179 people of all ages and abilities participated.

6.5.2 Medway Open Dance Studios was piloted and four dance organisations in Medway offered a diverse range of dance styles in the form of 48 sessions to a mixed age range from children aged 4 years to adults.

6.5.3 Medway and Kent Dance, Arts, Culture for Health and Wellbeing Symposium was held in Medway. The symposium was in partnership with the University of Kent, Medway Council's Public Health team and One Dance UK was produced to highlight national and local research into how dance, arts and culture can benefit peoples' health and wellbeing. 111 arts and health professionals, academics and arts practitioners attended.

6.5.4 Dance on the Pier 2019 took place as part of the River Festival. An audience of over 1,500 attended, with 56 taking part in three pop up taster workshops. 122 performers included a diverse range of local dance groups and professional companies, from children as young as 3 years old to women over the age of 50 from Moving Memory Dance Theatre Company and Ying Tao Association.

### 6.6 2020 developments

#### 6.6.1 Medway Cultural Compact

6.6.1.1 The UK Cultural Cities Enquiry, an independent enquiry into the cultural resources of Britain's cities recommended that cities consider setting up "Cultural City Compacts" – partnerships across the city's cultural sector and

extending out to sectors and stakeholders beyond culture to provide leadership and strategic capacity. In England, both the Arts Council England and the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, consider that this recommendation can help urban areas make a step change in their strategic governance of culture, which will help more people and more places benefit from engaging with cultural opportunity.

6.6.1.2 The compact approach is to co-create and co-deliver a holistic vision for culture in a place and work together and with partners to deliver a step change in the sustainability and impact of culture in that locality. It must link the cultural sector to broader aspirations and priorities intersecting with the ambitions of health agencies, business, universities and other sectors.

6.6.1.3 The views of citizens and communities must be at the heart of the compact, either through membership of the Compact or meaningful engagement with the principles of equality and diversity being fundamental.

6.6.1.4 The creation of the Medway Cultural Compact provides the opportunity to develop the existing Cultural Partnership Group (CPG) and write a new cultural strategy for Medway, ensuring that it is fit to deliver the new priorities identified in the Council Plan, emerging strategies, key programmes and bid for City of Culture 2025.

6.6.1.5 The development of the cultural strategy and the Compact will include engagement with the cultural sector and residents across the Medway and set the framework by which we can work together to grow and thrive.

## 6.6.2 Cultural Strategy

6.6.2.1 In November 2019 Medway Cultural Partnership Group, supported by the Council began work developing a new ten-year cultural strategy for Medway. Funded by Arts Council England GJG Consultancy were brought in to:

- Review the current strategy
- Audit our cultural infrastructure
- Engage with organisations, business and individuals
- Explore emerging themes
- Test ideas
- Draft the strategy
- Develop an action plan

6.6.2.2 A broad engagement programme has reached strategic partners, the cultural and creative community, connected sectors and residents through one to one interviews, focus groups, large open meetings and digital surveys. These views and insights have been collected and brought together the opportunities, challenges and ambition of Medway to create a strategy and action plan. The strategy, in turn, will form on key pillar in our bid to be City of Culture 2025.

6.6.2.3 The strategy is expected to be ratified by the council and other partners in Summer 2020.

### 6.6.3 Theatre 31

6.6.3.1 In April 2019, the Council led the Medway Cultural Education Partnership and along with Ideas Test and Royal Opera House Bridge were successful in winning £1million investment from Art Council England for a new three-year Youth Performance Programme. This young people led a programme titled Theatre 31, a partnership with Sheppey Cultural Education Partnership which will see a step change in engaging culturally deprived populations with theatre performance projects including stage craft and new writing.

6.6.3.2 The programme is currently in its mobilisation stage, being led by ICON Theatre and to date has:

- Established a steering group and Project Board groups.
- Completed an Initial baseline research into current young people engagement in performing arts and barriers to engagement conducted via surveys (online, face to face, through schools and steering group networks) completed by young people. Over 1000 young people engaged in initial survey activity.
- Marketing and outreach activity to engage young people in the young people's steering panels conducted.
- Youth Panel meetings held in Sheppey and Medway
- Theatre visits for young people
- Young people researching commissioning opportunities to explore and test model, including events, workshops and small-scale projects including pilot commissioning opportunity.
- Conversations with local partners about establishment of performance 'bases' in spring 2020. Developing a full website for the programme.

### 6.6.4 South East Creative Cultural and Digital Support (SECCADS)

6.6.4.1 The Culture Team is working with several other local authorities on SECCADS, aka South East Creatives, a three-year European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) programme that provides grants and business support for business development in Essex, Kent and Medway.

6.6.4.2 Between March 2019 and December 2020, the programme will help more than 370 companies and sole traders with business support or grants, giving a £2.5 million boost to the creative economy in the south east of England.

6.6.4.3 SECCADS offers grants that cover up to 35% of individual project costs – typically grants are between £1,000 and £3,000 but can be up to a maximum of £20,000 if the project has a very strong business case.

6.6.4.4 Led by Thurrock Council who have appointed a range of delivery partners, the project reaches out to creative freelance, small and medium enterprises to offer business support in this area.

6.6.4.5 Medway Council has been connecting Medway creatives to the programme and from January 2020 a focused engagement programme will make further progress with workshops and one to one support.

6.6.4.6 To date 23 Medway businesses have engaged in the process and over £160,000 of grants have been awarded.

#### 6.6.5 Creative Heritage Quarter

6.6.5.1 In September 2019 Creative Heritage Quarter, from Sun Pier to Star Hill, was awarded Heritage Action Zone status. The Culture Team have been working with Regeneration colleagues supporting the development of a cultural consortium that will lead to a funding bid to support a new cultural programme for the area.

#### 6.6.6 Docking Station

6.6.6.1 The Docking Station is a partnership programme led by University of Kent with Medway Council and Chatham Historic Dockyard to bring back to life the old Police Station.

6.6.6.2 The Docking Station will be an eco-friendly, iconic and unique flexible “laboratory” accelerator space bringing together industry, artists, students, academics and young people in flexible spaces with state-of-the art creative training and learning digital facilities and communal working spaces, it will provide a novel and innovative approach to knowledge exchange in the Creative and Cultural sector. This will include a new digital immersive and interactive public gallery space.

6.6.6.3 This will drive innovation and collaborative research in particular around gaming and place making, fueling the growth of the Medway creative economy through experimentation, skills development, product development, ideas, sharing, research and partnership – key Industrial Strategy targets. It will bridge the gap into the world of business for graduates, encouraging them to both live and work in Medway and inspire young people to consider creative and cultural courses of study.

6.6.6.4 It will act as a catalyst igniting a hub and spoke arrangement with at least ‘one’ spoke on Chatham High Street with creative workspace and event space all connected and supported by the Docking Station.

#### 6.6.7 Creative Estuary

6.6.7.1 In January 2019 Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, has announced an award of £4.3m from the Cultural Development Fund (CDF) to the University of Kent.

6.6.7.2 The fund aims to allow cities and towns to invest in creative, cultural and heritage initiatives that lead to culture-led economic growth and productivity and has been awarded to contribute to the development of the Thames Estuary area as Europe’s largest creative corridor, making it a world-leading location for creative and cultural industries. This will cover areas including Basildon, Canterbury, Castle Point, Dartford, Gravesham, Medway, Southend-on-Sea, Thanet, and Thurrock.

6.6.7.3 Plans for the CDF funding, now titled Creative Estuary, include building a programme of activity that develops critical cultural infrastructure, research

and development and innovation, training and capacity building for local businesses and the commission of new cultural products.

6.6.7.4 The investment will help support the creation of over 500 creative industry jobs, provide skills and qualifications to 200 workers and 60 apprenticeship opportunities for young people in the region.

6.6.7.5 The estuary will also host a major new festival called Estuary 2020, planned for September 2020, which will include new commissions and collaboration with business, innovators and education and will be curated by Metal and Whitstable Biennale. It is estimated 200,000 people will attend the festival.

6.6.7.6 Further events to take place between 2019 and 2022 include:

- Estuary Works: new creative workspaces for creative and digital production in creative clusters like Margate, Southend and Chatham Historic Dockyard
- Cultural Co-Location: piloting an innovative approach to embedding art and culture into Ebbsfleet, Purfleet and Basildon demonstrating new practice in the role that arts and culture can play in planning and placemaking
- Estuary Producers: producer 'residencies' in locations across the Estuary, creating new cultural experiences in high streets and parks, on watersides and other venues
- Creative Labs: a project bringing together creatives, technologists and academics from the universities of Essex and Kent to explore how culture can address key issues such as mental health, ageing and town planning
- Creative Apprenticeships: targeting future sector leaders in the Estuary aged 15- 24 years supporting the SELEP (South East Local Enterprise Partnership) skills strategy. This new model will be developed in partnership with others in the Higher Education and Further Education, schools, creative freelancers, Small and Medium Enterprises, and skills agencies and young people themselves.

6.6.7.7 To date the project has recruited a director who is recruiting further and created working groups for each of the seven individual programmes.

## 6.6.8 Dickens 150

6.6.8.1 Progressing the Empty Chair Project; partnering Guildhall Museum on Dickens 150 activities; Dickens 150 Print Open Call and 'The Last Dream of My Soul' Printmakers Open Call competition and exhibition at RAG. Connecting with other plans for Dickens 150 across the council.

## 6.6.9 Windrush 2020

6.6.9.1 Hip Hop Opera and Hands photography exhibition. A further application for Windrush funding for a project for 2020. The Hip Hop Opera will form part of the Theatre 31 Project.

#### 6.6.10 Ideas Test

6.6.10.1 Continued partnership and support for Ideas Test as they relocate to Medway, raise further funds and begin to deliver their three-year plan across Medway and Swale.

#### 6.6.11 Confluence Hothouse

6.6.11.1 A new Arts Council England application for further Confluence project activities from Wordsmithery. The literature and art activities on this project will take a Dickens theme in order to connect with Dickens 150 commemorations.

#### 6.6.12 D Live – Big D Stories

6.6.12.1 The continued support of this deaf-accessible storytelling and performance in Libraries.

#### 6.6.13 Black History Live Phase II

6.6.13.1 National Lottery Heritage Fund have encouraged Medway African and Caribbean Association to submit another significant application for further work on this project, following success in 2018. Early plans include a new Chatham Conversation play, putting Dickens and freed-slave Chatham Cuffay in conversation, both of whom lived and worked in and around Medway and share 2020 as the 150th anniversary of their death.

### **7. Greenspaces**

7.1 Greenspace Development were successful in securing all seven of Medway's Green Flag Awards. The Green Flag Award recognises and rewards well managed parks and green spaces, setting the benchmark standard for the management of recreational outdoor spaces across the United Kingdom and around the world. Five sites received a judges' visit and the other two were Mystery Shopped. All sites received high scores with the Mystery Shop sites receiving the highest score of Green. Judges once again praised both site management and the continuing community participation and support saying "we should be proud of what we achieved". The seven Green Flag sites are Hillyfields, Gillingham Park, Broomhill, The Vines, Capstone Farm Country Park, Great Lines Heritage Park and Riverside Country Park. The Management Plans for each Green Flag site were refreshed and updated. The judges were joined by representatives of Medway Norse and the local "Friends of" Group. Work is now underway to ensure the above seven sites achieve similar status in 2020 and for an eighth Green Flag site, Ranscombe Farm, to be added to the list. Work on the Ranscombe Farm Management Plan is nearing completion and the Greenspaces Partnership Officer has been sharing experience with the manager of the site – Plantlife.

7.2 The customer experience of Medway's two key country parks remains very high. Trip advisor for Riverside Country Park supports 420 reviews, which is up from 383 reviews in 2018, of which 89% were either 'excellent' or 'very good' (1% less than 2018). Capstone Farm Country Park received 216

reviews – up from 195 in 2018, of which 84% were either ‘excellent’ or ‘very good’. This was the same as for 2019. Ranscombe Farm Reserve (managed by Plantlife) received far fewer reviews of which 66% were either ‘excellent’ or ‘very good’, and 33% ‘average’. Plantlife staff have received planning permission for additional parking, public access and a small office and education facility. The Trust have secured funds and works will be completed in 2020.

7.3 The Medway Playing Pitch Strategy was completed and will now contribute to the evidence base of the draft Local Plan. The strategy has established the quality and quantity of Medway’s outdoor pitches and will be used to inform planning applications, s106 requirements and future funding bids, e.g. Football Foundation. In addition, officers have liaised with Kent Football Association on a Local Football Facilities Plan which explored pitch and pavilion improvements opportunities across Medway.

7.4 Greenspace investments: Medway’s Priority Play invested £82,000 across Capstone Farm Country Park and Kings Frith. This was supported by additional funds from s106 and revenue budgets, which have also supported the provision of enhanced play provision at Riverside Country Park, Downland Walk, Sycamore Road, Hillyfields and Broomhill.

7.5 The Command of The Heights (a Heritage Lottery Fund project) has seen significant capital investment of over £2m to restore and enhance Chatham’s historic defences. The funds have transformed the Riverside 1 area into a new open space completed with high quality public realm and archaeological features (the three discovered case mates). Part of this area will remain closed to the public until the grass seeding has taken. The Barrier ditch has been developed into a new arrival space creating greater accessibility and opportunities for small events and gatherings. Spur Battery has seen the creation of a new amphitheatre for 200 people and was the venue for a three night showing of a play called the Chatham Witches. 750 people booked the events within two days of the tickets being available.

7.6 Community engagement: The Team continue to support a suite of “Friends of” Groups including the Medway Urban Greenspace Forum. A new group has been established for the Esplanade. This year work has been prioritised to support the development of the Medway Urban Greenspace Forum to grow in strength and robustness. The Forum has been encouraged to participate in the development of a Medway Green and Blue Infrastructure Framework. The Friends of Horsted Valley were supported in holding two ‘drop in’ sessions to allow local people to give their opinion on open space improvements. Over 150 people attended the event and supported the activities planned.

## **8. Sport and Leisure**

8.1 The Council directly operates four sports centres across Medway plus The Strand seasonal open-air swimming pool. In addition, the Council works in partnership with external providers on a further two community facilities at Lordswood and Kings Rochester.



8.2 The sport and leisure teams offer a range of facilities, programmes, projects and events to maximise opportunities for residents to Play – Compete – Spectate, including bringing national and international sporting events to Medway and staging an array of activities from mass participation events such as the Medway Mile through to the annual Mini Youth Games primary schools competition throughout the year.

8.3 Medway Council Sports Centres generate £3.5m income and attract 1.5m visitors per year.

#### 8.4 Medway Park

8.4.1 Medway Park regional centre of sporting excellence attracts circa 800,000 visitors annually and is the venue for many national and international sporting events including table tennis, wheelchair rugby league, handball, badminton and wheelchair rugby.

8.4.2 Medway Park is also a regional centre for swimming galas, hosting weekly events during the winter gala season, attracting thousands of spectators and participants.

8.4.3 Away from sport Medway Park has been the host venue for an unprecedented three elections this year.

8.4.4 In partnership with Medway an ongoing programme of improvements is being undertaken, including a refurbished sports hall floor and extensive planned pool plant replacement.

#### 8.5 Strood Sports Centre

8.5.1 As part of a wider football development plan Medway Council is working in partnership with the Football Foundation and Kent FA to increase usage of Strood Soccer Centre and to introduce a new 3G all-weather facility in Gillingham.

8.5.2 Strood Soccer Centre also hosts The MAN v FAT footballing weight-loss programme, endorsed by Medway's Public Health, which continues to grow in popularity with 120 current members. Since September 2018 MAN v FAT has helped its clients to lose more than 1,600Kg of body weight. In addition, the programme has also partnered with Medway Time To Change Hub to be proactive in supporting our clients with their Mental Health. MAN v FAT was 'highly commended' at the 2019 Make a Difference Awards."

#### 8.6 Hoo Sports Centre

8.6.1 Hoo Sports Centre has undergone a mini refurbishment this year working with our partners at Norse to renew centre reception flooring, gym flooring and decorating the Gym area.

8.6.2 New resistance machines and hand weights have been introduced into the gym to improve customer experience.

## 8.7 Splashes Sports Centre

8.7.1 Medway Council has commissioned an options and appraisal study looking at future sporting needs for the east of Medway and potential improvements or replacements for the existing 30-year-old Splashes Sports Centre. A number of options are being explored through a Member Working Group.

8.7.2 Splashes are working with the Public Health team to pilot a Healthy Vending Scheme.

8.7.3 Splashes has also seen some gym improvements with new weights and refurbished machines.

## 8.8 The Strand

8.8.1 The Strand open-air swimming pool continues to prove popular in hot summer weather. The service is currently reviewing options of an online booking system to improve logistics and customer service for next season.

## 8.9 Major Sports Events

8.9.1 Medway has a strong track record of hosting national, and international, sporting events supporting the Putting Medway On The Map agenda and the City of Culture 2025 bid

8.9.2 In April the Council partnered with Holcombe Hockey Club to host the EuroHockey Club Trophy (hockey's club European championship), with eight teams from across Europe participating.

8.9.3 In July the country's top domestic male and female cyclists raced along Rochester's cobbled streets and past Medway's historic landmarks to compete in the National Cycling Championships.

8.9.4 Later in the year Medway Park was once again the chosen host venue for the Wheelchair Rugby League Grand Final, with Halifax emerging victorious over Leeds

8.9.5 In partnership with the Football Association, Medway Park has been identified as a host for the new National Futsal (indoor football) League.

## 8.10 Medway Sporting Ambassadors

8.10.1 The service is proud of its Medway Sporting Ambassador programme, where residents offer their time to support sporting events and regular sporting activities.

8.10.2 Volunteers have supported various events in this year's programmes, reaching 5,083 volunteering hours.

8.10.3 This year the service has developed a Youth Ambassadors programme in partnership with MidKent college, who provide volunteers for the Council's school's events programme. Thirty-seven student ambassadors are currently

signed up to the programme, where they will receive training and continuous professional development in sports delivery.

#### 8.11 Swimming

8.11.1 We have continued to offer free swimming to under 16s and over 60's. This year has seen a further 3,000 new members sign up to the scheme across our pools, accessing more than, 35,000 free swims this financial year to date.

8.11.2 Medway Sport Swim Academy - School swimming is supported by all our swimming pools and Council swim instructors offer hundreds of pupils a vital lifesaving skill, supporting government targets of all young people swimming 25m before leaving primary school.

8.11.3 In addition, the Medway Sport swim academy offers weekly lessons to approximately 1,845 weekly learners – from babies to seniors - across our centres.

#### 8.12 Workforce Development

8.12.1 Medway Sport offers apprenticeship training to all its Sports Officers and Senior Sports Officers, to enable them to reach their potential within roles and support on site delivery. Currently there are 25 members of staff on accredited apprenticeships. We have also regular in-house training for lifeguarding and first aid qualifications.

#### 8.13 Senior Sport

8.13.1 As well as free swimming, the service offers a diverse senior sports programme at an affordable cost. In the past year the service has increased participation in Walking Football sessions at Medway Park and Strood with up to 80 participants per week.

#### 8.14 Disability Sport

8.14.1 Medway Sport is keen to increase sporting opportunities for disabled people, running a series of school competitions and festivals to promote sport, and aiming to link to Medway sports clubs.

8.14.2 The service hosted four disability school competitions – in swimming, football, skiing and multi-sports.

8.14.3 Medway Park also hosts a weekly mixed sport disability club and Strood has introduced sensory swimming sessions in the Hydrotherapy pool for young people and carers.

#### 8.15 Mass participation sporting events

8.15.1 The annual Medway Mile at Rochester Castle in July continues to be a flagship community event with more than 3,500 runners and walkers taking part and was proud to host the local launch of Medway's City of Culture 2025 bid.

- 8.15.2 The Medway Cycling Festival in June was delivered in collaboration with a number of other services including Public Health, Integrated Transport and club partners, with further support from greenspaces, libraries, tourism and communications. More than 870 participants took part including a 50-mile and 80-mile Sportive, Ride the Heron Trail, Go Ride Track Cycling and parksport sessions.
- 8.15.3 The Big Ride moved to be part of the National Cycling Championships, offering more than 500 family riders the chance to ride the championships circuit around Rochester
- 8.15.4 The Big Splash was staged across Medway's swimming pools in April, encouraging residents to take up aquatic sports, swimming or swimming lessons. Taster sessions included lifesaving, swimming, triathlon and diving.
- 8.15.5 The Medway10K saw 588 runners compete in this annual event around Gillingham Great Lines, universities and Medway Park. The service also hosts a series of 5k races throughout the year showcasing the excellent facilities and venues for running in Medway, including Riverside and Capstone Country Parks and Ranscombe Farm.

## 8.16 Tackling Inactivity and Active communities

- 8.16.1 Medway Sport supported the new Parkour facility open at the Strand, with a launch event for more than 100 participants.
- 8.16.2 Medway Sport's Parksport, Fit and Fed and other summer programmes attracted more than 400 participants.
- 8.16.3 More than 150 hours of free sports provision were delivered in Chatham, Gillingham, Rochester and Strood, with the support of more than 15 partners including the Youth Service, Medway CSP, KCC, FareShare, Olympia Boxing CIC, Street Games, The Moat Foundation and Arches Big Local.

## 8.17 PE & School Sport

- 8.17.1 Medway Sport offers quality PE and in-school coaching sessions to primary schools across Medway. This paid for service, brings income into the service as well as improving the PE offer in those schools.
- 8.17.2 The Mini Youth Games is Medway Sport's flagship inter-schools sports programme, providing more than 4,000 primary school pupils every year with the opportunity to experience the thrill of friendly, competitive team sport.
- 8.17.3 Currently 12 schools are part of the Medway School Mile scheme.

## 9. **Tourism and Heritage**

### 9.1 Tourism

- 9.1.1 Tourism in Medway continues to be strong with 4.9 million visits per year, worth £333 million per annum to the local economy supporting 6,500 jobs locally.

- 9.1.2 The Visitor Information Centre has had a busy year receiving 183,000 visitors from January to November 2019 hosting a café, Rochester art gallery, and a free cash ATM as well as working closely with the Huguenot Museum located upstairs.
- 9.1.3 The Open Top Bus which connects up most of the main visitor attractions in Medway during the summer holidays ran from 29th July to 1st September 2019 and received 4,186 visitors. It is planned that the Open Top Bus will be revamped for 2020 with a Dickens theme in commemoration of the 150th Anniversary of Dickens death.
- 9.1.4 The new Medway coach park on Curtis Way near to BAE systems has been built and opened and is now operational - this replaces the Acorn Wharf coach park in Rochester and a temporary coach park at Whiffens Ave. The new coach park will be promoted at various Travel trade exhibitions in early 2020 including Excursions in London.
- 9.1.5 This year Medway was a partner in the Visit Kent Summer digital campaign and a new North Kent video was promoted online. Medway is also part of a new Visit Kent INTERREG project called Experience which will support in our bid for City of Culture and destination development.

## 9.2 Guildhall Museum

- 9.2.1 The Guildhall Museum has attracted 70,316 visitors from January to November 2019. The museum is an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation working in partnership with the Historic Dockyard Chatham and the museum services of Canterbury and Tunbridge Wells. This funds the museum to employ a visitor experience officer and undertake increased research into our visitors and make improvements to our visitor experience. We are currently developing an interpretation plan for the museum and have made small improvements such as a reading corner and family backpacks to attract families and younger audiences. A museum staff training programme will follow in the next 2 years.
- 9.2.2 As part of the improvements to the museum a major new permanent gallery is being developed about Charles Dickens, the man which will open in June 2020, forming a key part of the Dickens 150 commemoration year. This immersive gallery will highlight the public and private life of Charles Dickens and the inspiration he derived from his childhood in Chatham and his later years at Gads Hill Place.
- 9.2.3 The heritage education team continue to implement their START funded programme (funding of £40,000) giving local school children in depth educational opportunities and experiences linked to the museum and its collection. The Royal Opera Bridge House is now involved after stepping in to fill the potential funding gap due to the excellence of the education the Council offers.

### 9.3 Rochester Castle

9.3.1 Major works to the main visitor viewing platforms at Rochester Castle were completed at the end of April which has been a great improvement to the visual impact of the interior of the keep.

9.3.2 A strategy for future improvements to interpretation and visitor facilities are being developed in the lead up to 2027, the 900th anniversary of the building of Rochester Keep (1127). This will include small quick wins along the way and larger funded step change projects aimed to position Rochester Castle as a key must see UK attraction.

9.3.3 A new local management agreement was agreed and signed with English Heritage and a series of works and operational meetings have taken place over the year to ensure the heritage sites are maintained and operated to a high standard.

### 9.4 Eastgate House

9.4.1 Eastgate House has put on a series of interesting exhibitions and events in 2019. From June to September the house held the “Something Old, Something New” exhibition telling the story of weddings over the centuries including traditions, folklore, cakes, and dresses. It has also hosted Easter Halloween and Christmas activities events with the Christmas Carol immersive play and Father Christmas activities being especially popular. Plans for 2020 include a Childhood exhibition including a Victorian toys area linked to Dickens 150 as well as a series of joint ticketing promotions and activities to drive ticket sales and income.

9.4.2 A new Gardens group has been set up working with The Friends of Eastgate House, and various other local organizations to support the maintenance, planting and development of Eastgate House Gardens and the surrounding area of the library and Adult education and Miss Twinkletons café.

### 9.5 Upnor Castle

The Battle of Medway of June 1667 now features as part of the AQA History GCSE curriculum on the Historic Environments paper. This has resulted in our education team working with school visits to Upnor Castle and should hopefully increase over the next couple of years.

### 9.6 Dickens 150

The key tourism and heritage focus for 2020 is the Dickens 150 commemoration. A number of council departments are working together and with external partners to develop a programme of events and activities which celebrate the author, his works and his extensive links to Medway.

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**Appendices**

None

**Background documents**

None