



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

**3 DECEMBER 2020**

## **MEDWAY CULTURAL STRATEGY 2020 - 2030**

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### **Summary**

Medway's Cultural Strategy is a bold new vision that speaks to Medway's broadest aspirations to put culture centre stage. This ten-year Medway-wide partnership strategy is a shared ambition for the future, built on extensive engagement across Medway, demonstrating how important culture is to Medway's future, enabling everyone to have the opportunity to take part in, or contribute to cultural life.

The new strategy is a ground-breaking model, that creates a new way of partnership working, that in the short-term shapes opinions and behaviours leading to social and economic benefits. Longer term, it should positively transform Medway.

This report establishes how the council, as a key partner, can participate, contribute, and facilitate, understanding that our resources and influence are considerable, and we can support and enable the vision, values, and themes significantly.

The aim is to embed culture within our priorities, developing a consistent cross-council approach. It provides a framework for the council to work collaboratively with stakeholders and partners to understand, promote and secure Medway's cultural and creative landscape for present and for future generations.

### **1. Budget and Policy Framework**

- 1.1. Getting the cultural offer right is essential to making Medway a great place to live, work, learn and visit. Culture can be the societal glue that connects people and communities defining a sense of place, contributing to health and wellbeing, education and regeneration, supporting sustainable and resilient economic growth.
- 1.2. This strategy is about building a brave ambition that is realistic, achievable and authentic. It will be strategy owned by all by, and something for all in Medway aspire to.

1.3. Medway's Cultural Strategy is new approach, designed to support the delivery of the council's Plan contributing toward the delivery of all themes:

- People Healthy active communities
- Place Put Medway on the map
- Growth A strong diversified economy and residents with jobs and skills

1.4. The strategy draws together targeted strategies and partnerships across Medway Council and our partners into a single Medway-wide Cultural Strategy including:

- [Medway Local Plan](#)
- [Medway 2035](#)
- [Medway Skills and Employability Plan](#)
- [Medway Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy](#)
- [Medway Children and Young People's Plan](#)
- [Medway SEND and Inclusion Strategy](#)
- [Medway for Business](#)
- Medway Learning Partnership
- Medway Tourism Association
- Medway Cultural Partnership
- [Thames Estuary Growth Board](#)
- [Creative Estuary](#)
- [Arts Council England ten-year strategy 2020 to 2030](#)
- [Ideas Test](#), Medway and Swale Creative People and Places Programme
- [Theatre 31](#), Medway and Sheppey Youth Performance Programme
- [South East Creative Economy Network](#)
- [South East Creatives](#)
- Kent and Medway Cultural Transformation Board
- [Kent Cultural Strategy](#)
- [Civic Universities](#)

1.5. Medway's Cultural Strategy is owned by a Medway-wide partnership that has shared goals, mutual respect and strategic leadership at its core. This partnership and its governance clearly set out the ways in which cultural investment can support the transformation of services for children and young people, regeneration, the local economy, social well-being and health.

1.6. The strategy will be a cornerstone of our bid for UK City of Culture 2025 and will concentrate its shared ambition, focus and energy on identifying the priorities, managing resources and expediting change. It will look beyond 2025, leading the legacy of the City of Culture bid, identifying opportunities for investment and development that support its longer-term vision to be recognised as a Child-Friendly City, putting our young people at the heart of our thinking.

## 2. Background

2.1. Medway has always been a centre of creativity from its historic docks, castles, and green expanses, there are galleries, museums, universities, theatres, and Community Hubs that would have, in a normal year been supporting a busy events calendar.

- 2.2. We are home to makers and creators, film sets and festivals, spaces and studios. The people living, working and learning in Medway, and our growing visitor numbers, all contribute to this evolving cultural landscape.
- 2.3. Medway is at a crucial point with significant potential to benefit from the opportunities offered by investment and growth, its central location geographically, its profile with UK City of Culture bid and as a potential leader due to its size and flexibility as a unitary authority.
- 2.4. To make the most of this, there is a need to define and share a clear vision, identity and compelling narrative around which all stakeholders can steer investment and delivery towards.
- 2.5. There continues to be strong investment in cultural activity especially from ourselves, our Universities, Arts Council England and Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, and a clear recognition of the value in culture at the heart of social regeneration.
- 2.6. The previous cultural strategy, 2014 to 2019, was clear and ambitious with a strong focus on Medway's past and heritage assets, physical infrastructure and a focus on landmark dates and events which could be used to enhance the cultural offer.
- 2.7. Many of the actions were successful and much has been achieved in Medway since the strategy was published, and the learning from this has been taken forward in the development of this new cultural strategy.
- 2.8. In 2019, the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), Arts Council England (ACE), Core Cities Group and Key Cities Group, undertook the UK Cultural Cities Enquiry, an independent enquiry into the cultural resources of Britain's cities. It recommended that cities consider setting up "Cultural City Compacts".
- 2.9. The Compact approach aims to co-create and co-deliver a holistic vision for culture in a place and to work together with broader partners (e.g. health agencies, business, universities) to provide leadership, strategic capacity and provide a step change in the sustainability and impact of culture in that locality.
- 2.10. Medway was selected by as an early adopter and received £20,000 from Arts Council England to support the development of a Compact for Medway and a new cultural strategy.
- 2.11. In October 2019, GJG Consultancy, supported by Ruth Melville Research and The Audience Agency, were engaged by Medway Cultural Partnership with support from Medway Council to develop a new cultural strategy and Compact model for Medway.

### 3. The impact of Covid-19

- 3.1. The work on this strategy began in November 2019 prior to the Covid-19 pandemic. Consultation was paused for two months in late March 2020 as lockdown was introduced.
- 3.2. Consultation resumed digitally in June, when it was considered essential that a strategy be in place to help guide the sector through the challenges of recovery over the difficult next few years.
- 3.3. The pandemic, and its continuation, is particularly critical for cultural and creative sectors due to the sudden and massive loss of income opportunities, especially for those dependent on it.
- 3.4. The creative sector in Medway includes major multinational and national companies with (in 'normal' times), sustainable revenues. This pandemic has however created a structural threat to the survival of many organisations in cultural and creative production; many small companies and freelance professionals essential for the sector may struggle to survive.
- 3.5. Sustainable and resilient business models during and after the initial crisis are imperative for the sector's survival. The current challenge is to design support that alleviates the negative impacts in the short term and helps identify new opportunities in the medium term for different public, private and non-profit organisations and individuals engaged in cultural and creative production.

### 4. Our definition of culture

- 4.1. Culture is often expressed only in the sense of museums, galleries, theatre, libraries, music, craft, dance, festivals and events. However here, culture is defined not only to include these things, but heritage, food, the night-time economy, the creative industries including fashion and to reflect the diversity and value the creative impulse in everyone in Medway.
- 4.2. The development of cultural infrastructure is important and has also looked to ensure support and development of the practice and production of artists and creative practitioners, to support creative opportunities for all.
- 4.3. It is recognised that many different 'cultures' exist – faith cultures, food cultures, political cultures, workplace cultures, sporting and artistic cultures (the list can be endlessly extended and sub-divided), we have created, however porous, a limit on our definition of culture, recognising that there exist limits in the field of influence that this strategy operates within.

### 5. Consultation and engagement

- 5.1. The approach taken mirrors the requirements of the DCMS Cultural Compact model that is to co-create and co-deliver an holistic vision for culture in a place, connecting the cultural sector to broader issues that intersect with the aims of other organisations and agencies.

- 5.2. Consultation has been embedded in the heart of the strategy with an extensive engagement plan that took place from November 2019 to September 2020 and has delivered a co-created strategy with partners and stakeholders that encourages ownership, trust and connectivity.
- 5.3. The methodology used builds on shared experience, embedding within it an iterative evaluation process that will lead to improved performance, enhanced stakeholder accountability and encourage organisational learning.
- 5.4. Stakeholders have included the cultural sector across Medway and Kent, the education sector, community organisations, residents who engage, residents who do not engage, potential sponsors, funders and local businesses.
- 5.5. As part of the engagement, GJG Consultancy has connected with a large range of stakeholders and people including:
  - Residents representing many different communities – from pupils at Rochester Grammar, MACA’s Senior Domino Group, Dragon Co-working lunch club to a knitting circle at Walderslade Library.
  - Interviews have taken place with around 70 stakeholders from sectors such as cultural, local government, health, voluntary and community, education, visitor economy, regeneration and economic development.
  - Over 150 people at the Open Space event in January 2020 including artists and makers, educators, council staff and charity workers.
  - In July/August five Zoom workshops were hosted, each attended by 20 to 50 people members of the Medway Cultural Partnership and other stakeholders attended to discuss the content of each theme.
  - An all Members workshop took place in October further identifying who and how Medway’s communities could input and benefit from the cultural strategy, its themes and action plans.
  - Two internal workshops with Service Managers to help define their services relationship with culture and creativity as a tool for creating strong and healthy communities.
- 5.6. In partnership with Medway UK City of Culture 2025 bid, four organisations that represent or who work closely with diverse communities across Medway, were supported to hold community conversations with those who feel that their community’s voice might be getting lost in current conversations about culture, for example where English is not spoken as a first language.
- 5.7. We have partnered with Medway Diversity Forum, Youth Ngage who work with young people across North Kent bemix who support people with learning difficulties and/or autism and Christopher Sacre a visual artist, art facilitator and Deaf British Sign Language signer.

5.8. Each held individual calls, social media groups, socially distanced events and online meeting technologies, in multiple languages. This included British Sign Language, and conversations that fed into the development of the themes and approach for new cultural strategy.

## 6. Mapping data and information analysis

6.1. Cultural provision in Medway, as offered by both venues and organisations, has been mapped according to organisation and genre/type of provision.

6.2. The map is not exhaustive and there is no distinction between size of organisation; thus, the Dockyard and a small gallery or creative company will have an equal presence, and the information has been gleaned from a variety of sources and is an 'live' process – additions and amendments can be made.

6.3. An [interactive map](#) identifies cultural provision in terms of organisation type and artform.

6.4. Full mapping of the sector is needed as part of the delivery of the strategy, but the initial work highlighted two main issues:

- The current cultural ecosystem in Medway is a spread of mainly small and often unsubsidised activity that shows a plethora of potential which needs to be supported to grow and interconnect as it needs and wants.
- The gaps in the mapping, both of individuals and organisations which came clear as part of the strategy development, highlights the starkness of the likely undercount of any estimate of the size of the sector.

6.5. Audience profile research has been carried out, giving a sense of who in Medway is accessing culture and the potential reach for new audiences.

6.6. Arts engagement in Medway is lower than the national average, with 57.4% of people in Medway having engaged in, or attended, an arts event according to the 2016/17 Active People survey, as compared with the then England figure of 60.3%.

6.7. Target Group Index (TGI) data identifies that engagement in arts and museums is significantly lower than the South East average apart from in Comedy, Cinema and Rock & Pop attendance.

6.8. Medway has a greater population than Southampton or Plymouth but has significantly less Arts Council England investment and fewer National Portfolio Organisations.

6.9. The mapping, data and information play a vital role in the development of the new cultural strategy helping us understand the challenges and opportunities that Medway has, benchmarking against similar towns and cities across the Southeast and UK and informing our focus and ambition.

## 7. Medway Cultural Strategy

- 7.1. The Medway Cultural Strategy is a bold new vision that speaks to Medway's broadest aspirations to put culture centre stage. The strategy is one of collaboration, and partnerships, setting a shared ambition for the future, built on extensive engagement across Medway, demonstrating how important culture is to Medway's future, and enabling everyone to have the opportunity to take part in, or contribute to cultural life.
- 7.2. The new strategy and delivery approach are a ground-breaking model, that creates a new way of partnership working, that in the short-term shapes opinions and behaviours leading to social and economic benefits. Longer term, it has the potential to transform Medway.
- 7.3. The strategy has an embedded cyclical evaluation approach, where the strategy and its delivery are regularly reviewed and its objectives, planning, delivery are assessed, and changes and amendments can be agreed. This process allows for continuous consultation and engagement and a shared ownership and a shared desire to deliver. This ensures the strategy impacts through a real-world connection with partners, communities, and audiences.
- 7.4. The strategy document can be found as Appendix 1.

## 8. The Vision

*By 2030, Medway will be internationally recognised  
for its culture and creativity,  
demonstrating its positive impacts on everyone's lives.*

*Diverse, collaborative and engaged,  
we will celebrate the strength and creativity of all our residents,  
inspiring a new generation of creatives and makers.*

- 8.1. The vision defines a journey for Medway that will be ambitious and exciting, big and bold, intimate and meaningful. Where there is a collective commitment to a true partnership approach, developing a strong cultural sector that can co-produce for the benefit of all.
- 8.2. The vision celebrates all Medway's communities, ensures opportunities and access to participate are understood and available, allowing the benefits of cultural activity to reach every person.

## 9. The Values

- 9.1. To support the delivery of the vision and to ensure that the strategy is the united ambition of all the themes and not reduced to simple targets, the following values are the proposed ways of working for all partners.

- 9.2. Value 1 - We work in partnership  
Partnerships involve being generous, open and creative. Good partners understand the needs of others, respect boundaries and are always looking for positives
- 9.3. Value 2 - We evaluate impact before we move on  
We employ a cycle of prototyping, testing, analysing, and refining to make sure the Strategy responds to change.
- 9.4. Value 3 - We are strategic and think long-term  
In anything we do, we consider the long-term implications, making sure we are guided by our values and fulfil our Vision.
- 9.5. Value 4 - Our actions are environmentally sustainable  
We recognise the cultural sector's role in leading change and promoting environmental responsibility in our communities
- 9.6. Value 5 - We ensure access for all  
We must reflect all the people of Medway, respect difference and recognise that diversity is a major opportunity - the source of new ideas and innovation.
- 9.7. Value 6 - We recognise culture is integral to wellbeing and health  
We acknowledge the positive impact of arts and culture on people's physical, spiritual, and mental health

## 10. The Themes

- 10.1. The themes shape where change must happen to deliver the vision. They are essential elements around which the strategy is built. They provide its structure, support, and boundaries.
- 10.2. Theme 1 – Connectivity  
How we connect and communicate with others is vital; connectivity enables a longer reach and a more inclusive approach – encouraging reciprocity and trust within communities.
- 10.3. Theme 2 - Shared Ambition  
Our activity must optimise impact and be inclusive; our focus must be on the delivery of the vision and the associated collective benefit.
- 10.4. Theme 3 - Spaces and Places  
Within Medway we must develop locations for creative practice to take place; making them accessible; and ensuring their benefits for the community and sustainability.
- 10.5. Theme 4 - Creative People  
A holistic, 'grass roots up' approach to nurturing talent and a healthy creative ecology where all the elements are supported – whilst understanding that the big, brave and bold events and cultural interventions can attract investment, raising the profile and reputation of Medway culture.



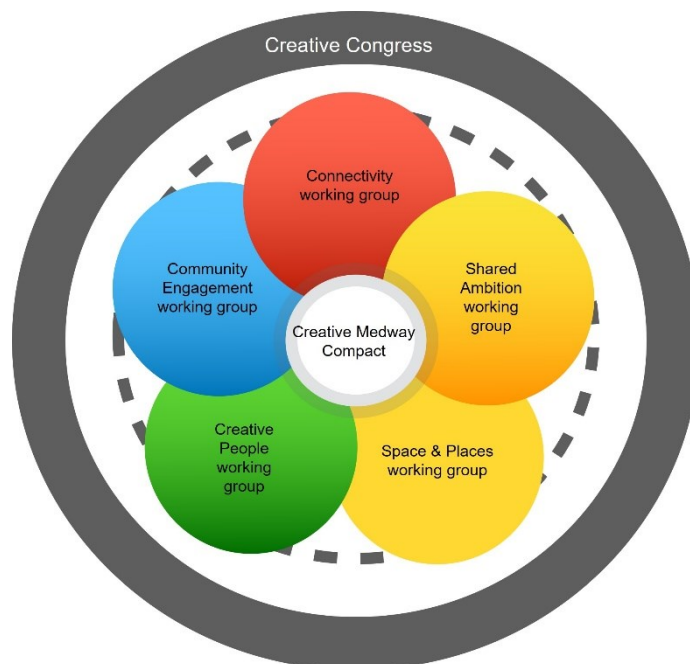
## 10.6. Theme 5 - Community Engagement

Unlocking the collective potential of Medway through our commitment to 'culture for all' by reaching as many people as possible; creating a diverse range of cultural engagement and participation opportunities.

## 11. Delivery and Governance

11.1. The delivery model for Medway's Cultural Strategy reflects both UK Cultural Cities Enquiry Cultural Compact model and the consultative process which developed the strategy. The model called 'Creative Medway' is open to everyone to participate in at a level and to a degree which suits them best.

11.2. Creative Medway is made of three components: Compact, Working Groups and Congress.



11.3. Creative Medway Congress is a broad group, open to all interested in culture in Medway and where culture can be the tool to support broader Medway objectives. In addition to receiving information and invitations to activities, it meets annually to review, reflect and plan.

11.4. Medway Council members and officers can be members of the network with no restriction on numbers.

11.5. Creative Medway Working Groups each have a membership made up of experts and leading lights to develop and deliver on the work strands for each theme. Each group will have clear terms of reference and code of conduct.

11.6. Medway Council Members and officers can be members of any of the working groups with no restriction on numbers.

- 11.7. Creative Medway Compact is at the core of the delivery mechanism. The group is responsible to drive the strategic ambition and the overall performance delivery of the strategy; it will be a strong advocate for Medway's culture, at a local, regional and national level.
- 11.8. The Creative Medway Compact is made up of the Champions from each of the five Working Groups, five key stakeholders from other sectors (children and young people, business and economic growth, health and wellbeing and voluntary sector and local authority), the Creative Medway Chair and the Creative Medway Facilitator.
- 11.9. Medway Council has a permanent seat on the Compact as the local authority representative. This will be taken by the Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Services.
- 11.10. The Compact will be facilitated by the Medway Council.

## 12. Medway Cultural Strategy Action Plan

- 12.1. Medway's Cultural Strategy will be accompanied by an action plan. This essential element will show how, as a partnership, the strategy will be pragmatically implemented.
- 12.2. The action plan will be led by Creative Medway Compact and driven by the Creative Medway Working Groups, bringing together projects, programmes and opportunities that match the shared ambition and vision of the strategy.
- 12.3. Due to the impact of Covid-19, the first action plan will run to July 2022. Restricted to 18-months this allows the plan to focus on support for the sector during the Covid-19 pandemic, to build sustainable responses to future support and to set out the initial actions for our greater ambitions and have the capability to adapt to the City Of Culture 2025 bidding outcome. This will allow a review in early 2022 and a second version to be developed when the future is clearer.
- 12.4. Partners, including the council, have started developing initial commitments and further developing and formalising action plans will be progressed by the Compact and Working Groups.

## 13. Advice and analysis

- 13.1. Medway Council recognises the significant role cultural access, and the creative industries plays and will increasingly play to residents.
- 13.2. Medway's Cultural Strategy is a partnership strategy and this collaborative approach requires the council to participate, contribute and facilitate understanding that its resources and influence it has is considerable and can support and enable the strategies' vision, values and themes significantly.

- 13.3. This is new approach is designed to support the delivery of the Council Plan and draws together targeted strategies and partnerships across Medway Council and our partners into a single Medway-wide cultural strategy.
- 13.4. The reduction in funding for local government and public bodies through a period of sustained austerity has placed pressure on the council and partners impacting on arrange of services and activities, including cultural ones. However, there continues to be strong investment in cultural activity especially from Medway Council, Arts Council England and the Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport. This is a clear recognition of the value in culture being at the heart of physical and social regeneration.
- 13.5. Culture does and will continue to play a significant role in the defining of Medway as a place. The clarity and nature of that identity is critical to the successes of many different strategies including the Local Plan and Medway 2035 alongside aspirations to be UK City of Culture 2025 and a Child-Friendly City.
- 13.6. Future priorities lie in embedding culture in all aspects of Medway's growth and regeneration, building strong relationships and partnerships to enable the sector to become resilient and prosper.
- 13.7. Medway Council is a committed partner to the growth of the Thames Estuary as a world-class centre for creative and cultural production: leading global innovation, creating new jobs, developing local talent and supporting the rapid growth of the creative economy. As such we play an active role in the Thames Estuary Growth Board, Thames Estuary Production Corridor and Creative Estuary.
- 13.8. There is a wealth of untapped potential in Medway, the challenge remains to ensure that this is retained and grown, and all our residents can access culture.
- 13.9. The growth in the value of commercial and housing property also impacts the creative economy, both in terms of affordable premises to operate from, but also in terms of access to a local workforce.
- 13.10. Medway needs to ensure that new creative spaces are affordable and that existing cultural organisations are not left behind with the growth and development of the area and can exploit temporary accommodation opportunities where they exist.
- 13.11. The creative economy is a major growth area for the UK. Before Covid-19, c. 9.1% of all UK jobs is in the creative economy, a thriving cultural sector positively supports the wider local economy.
- 13.12. The role and influence of the creative sector will continue to grow, as a key part of the economy creating and sustaining jobs and skills: as a community cohesion and engagement tool to support the people's health and well-being.

- 13.13. Changes in education policy, the decision not to include arts in the EBACC English Baccalaureate, has further exacerbated the skills gap for the creative industries, where a principal concern of employers is that there is a lack of suitable skills for the jobs available.
- 13.14. As set out under the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality duty (PSED) an equalities impact assessment has been carried out during the development of the cultural strategy. Extensive consultation was carried out with stakeholders and residents, and the aims of the strategy are broadly inclusive, and should foster good relations between people from different communities as well as advancing equality of opportunity.
- 13.15. The strategy has no clear detrimental impact to any group or protected characteristic as outlined in the Equalities Act or the PSED, and the broad aims and actions programmed are likely to increase participation, representation and accessibility to cultural provision across Medway. Consultation stakeholders, groups, audiences, and the wider community has been an integral part in developing this strategy.

## 14. Risk management

- 14.1. Risk management is an integral part of good governance. As part of the strategy and action plan we have looked to identify and manage the threats and risks to achieve its strategic objectives set out in the plan.
- 14.2. Risk 1 - Partnership - The council must be a good and engaged partner with creative sector and wider community. If not, there will be no ownership amongst our partners and residents

Mitigation 1 - The council is a committed partner in the delivery of Medway's new cultural strategy and as such will be generous, open and creative partner that understands the needs of others, respects boundaries and always looks for positives.

Risk rating – F3 – Almost impossible/marginal

- 14.3. Risk 2 – Resources - The appropriate council resources are not focused on the delivery of strategy, the shared ambition and actions may not be achievable, and the strategy will become redundant.

Mitigation 2 - As a committed partner the council will focus its associated resources, influence, and experience on supporting the delivery of the Medway Cultural Strategy.

Risk rating – F3 – Almost impossible/marginal

- 14.4. Risk 3 – Reputation - Not being a good and engaged partner will lead to a damaged relationship with the creative sector and the wider community, and potential negative media and press coverage.

Mitigation 3 - This is a partnership strategy, and the council are committed partners to this collaborative approach. The council will participate, contribute and facilitate, to support and enable the delivery of the strategy's vision, values and themes.

Risk rating – F3 – Almost impossible/marginal

## 15. Climate change implications

- 15.1. The council declared a climate change emergency in April 2019 and has set a target for Medway to become carbon neutral by 2050.
- 15.2. Medway's Cultural Strategy has proactively responded to this by placing environmental sustainability as one of our six core values. In doing so all partners recognise the cultural sector's role in leading change and promoting environmental responsibility within our communities.
- 15.3. From considering purchasing and travel plans to truly innovative creative approaches to sustainability, partners will consider both the present and future impact of our actions on the environment, the partnership will make plans to reduce impact and to measure, understand and report on doing so.

## 16. Financial implications

- 16.1. The strategy is led by the Creative Medway Compact of which Medway Council is a committed partner. As such the Council, alongside all other partners will focus its associated resources, influence, and experience on supporting the delivery of the Medway Cultural Strategy.
- 16.2. The action plan will outline the Councils' commitment including through existing cultural services such as Festivals and Events, Libraries and Theatres but also extends across Regeneration, Planning, Community Safety, Greenspaces, Public Health, Housing, Education, Children's, and Adult's Services and our Business Support teams including Finance, Communications and Business Intelligence.
- 16.3. Staffing and any other costs connected with the strategy and action is to be contained within existing departmental revenue budgets.
- 16.4. The council will, where appropriate, further support the Medway Cultural Strategy by leading strategic funding applications where the Compact can be partners and funding supports the delivery of the strategy and its action plan.
- 16.5. The council will, where appropriate, be a partner in Compact led funding bids, supporting where possible to lever funding that supports the delivery of the strategy and its action plan.

## 17. Legal implications

17.1. There are no direct legal implications arising from the content of this report.

## 18. Recommendation

18.1. The committee is asked to recommend the adoption of the Medway's new Cultural Strategy and Creative Medway governance and delivery model to Cabinet.

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### Appendices

Medway Cultural Strategy 2020 - 2030

### Background papers

[Medway Cultural Strategy 2014 to 2019](#)

[Medway Cultural Strategy website](#)