

REGENERATION, CULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

17 JANUARY 2023

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

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

Report from: Richard Hicks, Director of Place and Deputy Chief Executive

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:

- Medway Archives Centre
- Medway Adult Education
- Armed Forces Covenant
- Festivals and Events
- Theatres
- The Corn Exchange
- Culture Development
- Greenspaces
- Sport & Leisure
- Tourism & Heritage

1.2. Achievements for 2022 are detailed by service area below.

2. Medway Archives Centre

2.1. Medway Archives Centre (MAC) continues to be the thriving hub for any resident who wants to explore the history of Medway and its people. MAC has hosted several onsite exhibitions, curated by staff and external partners:

- 'Medway Queen: beside the seaside', an exhibition by the Medway Queen Preservation Society. This exhibition of photographs and ephemera brings the ship's story to life;
- 'The Thames Sailing Barge: a past, present and future' by the Thames Sailing Barge Trust;
- Mapping Medway - MAC is home to an important collection of historical, contemporary and specialist maps that cover Medway and the surrounding area;
- 'Welcome to Strood' project;
- 'Mother Nature, Gaia', by Wendy Cottam;
- 'Twydall: from Stone Age to modern housing estate';
- 'Medway in Print', to tie in with the Medway Print Festival, an eye-catching display that illustrated the variety of printed images the centre looks after. From the earliest printed book in the collections, which was printed in 1599, to 20th century artwork, this exhibition highlights some of our favourite examples of printing.

2.2. MAC has also hosted a whole range of events and activities:

- Focus on natural history- this event showcases the resources the centre holds on our natural environment, from the now-extinct animals which roamed the area, to major weather events and the research of local naturalists;
- Jubilee Roadshow, during April and May staff from MAC visited library branches and Community Hubs to highlight MAC resources and services and to encourage the communities in Medway to share their photographs and memories of Jubilees past and any other Royal connections;
- Reminiscence session - The Coronation - MAC welcomed residents to take a look at their collections and meet with others to share memories and anecdotes about the coronation of Queen Elizabeth;
- Focus on Mechanical Medway - this drop-in event was an opportunity for MAC to showcase the resources held on 'Mechanical Medway', from local industry to the everyday machines we used in our homes, and from historic images of windmills, pumping stations and steam engines to Louis Brennan's torpedo;
- Focus on Royal Medway - a chance for the public to examine all the amazing material held at the centre on Jubilees, coronations, and royal visits;
- Rochester Bridge Trust Archives - a talk;
- The Thames Sailing Barge, past, present, and future - a talk;
- The hidden history of Medway, a film produced by local filmmakers, part of Ideas Test's 'Make Waves' programme;

- History trails were organised for Strood town centre, Gillingham town centre and a special family trail for Strood;
 - Wendy Cottam, creator of the sculpture 'mother nature Gaia' - drawing workshop that celebrated nature;
 - Focus on theatres and cinemas in Medway, highlighted the material the centre holds on Medway's history of theatres and cinemas.
- 2.3. Between April and the end of October we have answered over 1,000 enquiries from remote users, who contact us by email, in writing or by phone. These enquiries can range in duration from a minimum of 15 minutes to answer a basic enquiry, to an hour for more detailed research enquiries.
- 2.4. The service has also answered over 1,700 search room and strongroom enquiries during this time period, with staff and volunteers having conducted over 900 hours of research time.
- 2.5. MAC hosted two more young people under the Kickstart scheme between April and October, creating work placements for Digital Archive Assistants. The two assistants did fantastic work on listing and digitising sections of the Local Studies Photographic Collection and also other local studies material. They continued to transfer our digital records currently held only on 'removable media' (CDs, DVDs, external hard drives). MAC has been digitising material since 2005 and owns a large collection of digital records. It is important that we proactively look after these and have workflows in place for bringing new digital records (such as digital photographs) into the collections. This proactive approach to managing your digital records is called digital preservation, and the ultimate aim is to ensure that digital records remain accessible and usable over time.

3. Medway Adult Education

- 3.1. Medway Adult Education (MAE) continues to rebuild from COVID-19, and continues to offer an excellent service to a wide variety of learners across our curriculum areas. Learner numbers are still lower than before COVID, however they are moving in the right direction. MAE delivered 95% of the Education & Skills Funding Agency contract, with performance comparable or better than last year, with the exception of E-learning. E-learning packages that were popular with people on furlough during the pandemic are no longer attracting the same level of interest, and as such this offer is being reviewed.
- 3.2. When on course, learner retention is high, at 90% across the curriculum areas, with a pass rate of over 98%. English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) pass rates have been impressive, with 98% of learners passing their Speaking and Listening exam on the hottest day on record. The highest course demand in 21/22 was for ESOL courses and digital skills.

	Adult Skills			Community Learning			Funded by Learner		
	Starts	Retention %	Pass %	Starts	Retention %	Pass %	Starts	Retention %	Pass %
End of July 2022	2016	89	95	1402	94	100	57	88	100
End of July 2021	1764	87	96	932	95	98	46	98	100
End of July 2020	2020	73	95	2696	71	99	102	89	98

3.3. Enrolments for 2022/23 continue to show improvement, with a particular increase in adult skills courses, as shown by the below table.

	Adult Skills	Community Learning	Funded by Learner
Up to 31st August 2022	624	491	22
Up to 31st August 2021	506	420	24
Up to 31st August 2020	343	297	31

3.4. A new Government Scheme called Multiply has been secured through an investment plan process for Medway. The programme is to support the development of numeracy skills for adults aged 19 and over who do not have level 2 in Maths. There are a wide range of interventions to be delivered, ranging from, helping people to manage their money, helping people to upskill in work and helping people to improve numeracy skills through vocational training. It is worth £1.458m to Medway, delivered across 2 ½ years, with the first tranche being delivered between September 2022 and March 2023. It is being delivered by a mixture of Medway Adult Education and commissioned providers. MAE are planning courses to teach numeracy skills through topics such as cooking, sewing and gardening, alongside other courses such as entry to bookkeeping, helping parents to support their children with maths, and working with employers.

3.5. MAE is working with the Skills an Employment Team to deliver a new Job Centre Plus contract to support people aged 50+ who are currently out of work. The programme supports people to reskill, and support is provided to apply for jobs and be successful at interview.

3.6. The Medway Learning & Skills Hub in Britton Farm Mall in Gillingham, opened to learners on 4th September 2022. Funded by the Getting Building Fund, it has a new domestic training kitchen, an IT suite and digital equipment available for learners. There will be a formal launch in January 2023.

4. Armed Forces Covenant

4.1. Medway Council has continued to uphold the Armed Forces Covenant and support the Armed Forces in line with our Employer Defence Recognition Scheme, Gold Award. Medway Council remains an active participant in the Kent & Medway Civilian Military Partnership Board and sub-groups including armed forces families, recognise and remember, skills and employment and welfare.

4.2. The Medway Armed Forces Veterans Hub, launched in November 2021, has thrived across the year, meeting every Monday alternating between Fort Amherst and MidKent College, it attracts between 15 and 20 veterans each week. Medway Council supported the hub to have a significant presence at Armed Forces Day, and helped facilitate engagement with a creative veterans programme, leading to a new Veterans model making club. The hub is organised and run by dedicated volunteer veterans and links to the Chatham Medway West Kent Armed Forces Veterans Breakfast Club.

5. Festivals and Events

5.1. Medway Light Nights was a brilliant first event with more than 60,000 visitors over the two nights. The event generated hugely positive publicity for Medway Council with all its partners, with the community sharing posts on the event throughout the weekend. Some stats include:

- 1,000 performers participated in the festival overall
- 90% were satisfied or very satisfied with the event
- 91% agreed or strongly agreed that the event created a sense of community
- 87% agreed or strongly agreed that the event enhanced Medway's reputation
- 93% would recommend the event to a friend
- 59% found out about the event via social media
- Social media posts reached more than 700,000 people
- Visitors spent over £800,000 in the local area

- 5.2. Rochester Sweeps Festival was attended by over 80,000 people even though the weather was grey, making it one of the largest gatherings of traditional folk music and dance in the country. The Festival was covered in The Sun and Radio 4 illustrating its reach and interest. Visitors stayed for more than four hours and spent more than £20 on average.
- 5.3. Medway Gaming Festival took place on 16 & 17 July 2022 in its first full version.
- Visitors rated their overall experience of the event at 88/100
 - 92% of visitors came from Kent and Medway with the remainder coming from outside Kent
 - 78% of visitors came from an ME postcode
 - 61% first time visitors to the event
 - 90% felt the event was excellent value for money
 - 71% of visitors would come again next year
- 5.4. Local events led by local organisations play a vital role in creating stronger communities, bringing communities and residents together to showcase talent, share traditions, create memories and have fun. This year we commissioned Nucleus Arts, Medway Culture Club, Fort Amherst Trust, Medway Pride, SparkedEcho, Paramount Foundation, Sun Pier House and Tiller and Wheel.
- 5.5. The Queen's Platinum Jubilee took place between 2 & 5 June and we estimated that over 30,000 people attended official events, including more than 60 street parties that took place in local communities across Medway.
- 5.6. This great [Jubilee film](#) brilliantly illustrates the celebratory atmosphere that was created across Medway.
- 5.7. There was also fantastic national, regional and local coverage of events across all media, both online and broadcast. Interviews included BBC South East, BBC Radio Kent, and ITV Meridian. Examples of coverage included:
- Evening Standard 5 June - [Dickens](#)
 - Sky News 5 June – [Picture roundup](#)
 - ITV Meridian 4 June - [River Pageant](#)
 - BBC News 4 June – [South East day 3 celebrations](#)
 - Kent Online 2 June – [General roundup](#)
 - Kent Live 26 May – [General Jubilee celebrations](#)
 - London Post 25 May – [River pageant](#)

- 5.8. Upon the death of Queen Elizabeth II, Operation London Bridge came into effect on 8 September and the Festivals and Events Team coordinated the immediate use of Rochester Castle Gardens for the Proclamation and the laying of floral and other tributes over the mourning period as well as the postponement of the Medway Food and Drink Festival.
- 5.9. In total, nearly half a million people visited festivals and events delivered, supported and funded by Medway Council.

Name of event	Date	Audience
Medway Light Nights	11& 12 February	60,000
Rochester Sweeps Festival	30 April, 1 & 2 May	60,000
Medway Gaming Festival	16 & 17 July	5,000
English Festival	16 April	15,000
Platinum Jubilee	2 to 5 June	30,000
Armed Forces Day	25 June	10,000
Love Chatham Carnival	9 July	26,000
Medway Culture Club Carnival	13 August	1,000
Fort Amherst Sunday Proms	Sundays from 17 July to 4 September	2,000
Medway Pride	20 August	8,000
Electric Medway	19 to 28 August	26,000
Sticks n Stones Festival	27 August	2,000
Medway Food and Drink Festival	16 to 18 September	Postponed
Festival of Chatham Reach	17 September	2,000
Medway Fun Palace	1 October	26,000
Icon Theatre commission	5 to 8 October	1,000
Fireworks Night	5 November	Cancelled
Rochester Christmas Markets	26&27 Nov & 10&11 Dec	Est.80,000
Dickensian Christmas	2 to 4 December	Est.120,000
Total		474,000

- 5.10. **Skills and Learning** - alongside supporting festivals in 2022 we have delivered a new community capacity building programme that provides for skills and training opportunities for Medway residents, with a particular focus on young people who want to deliver festivals and events.
- 5.11. **Events Uncovered** is our free events management training course, engaging 20 learners across two 2 days courses that covered:
- Introduction to event management
 - Planning and assessing the risks of planning events
 - How and when to apply for the event, inc. licensing awareness
 - Accessibility and sustainability in events
 - Site and venue management and on the day co-ordination

- 5.12. 100% of learners rated the course as good or excellent, 100% of learners felt more confident about events management and 94% of learners felt that they will put the skills and knowledge learnt into practice in the next 12 months.
- 5.13. Make Waves is a year-long programme for 18 to 25-year-olds living in Medway, co-funded by Creative Estuary. The programme ran to September 2022 and worked with nine young people from diverse backgrounds to upskill and empower them to move into creative careers. The programme included:
- Fortnightly workshops
 - Go sees and site visits to gain industry insight
 - A £200 professional development bursary
 - Access to £1,000 budget to produce an event
 - A 30-day paid work placement with a local creative company
- 5.14. Cohort members have produced and delivered their final events that covered a wide variety of cultural interests, including special effects makeup; poetry and spoken word; youth activism; sport; visual arts; illustration; song writing; cinema; world cuisine; fashion and local history.
- 5.15. Participants have told us:

“I don’t think I’ve ever been so confident within myself to do my own thing”

“Make Waves has been an absolute blessing. I’ve learnt more things about the industry and myself than anywhere else.”

6. Theatres

- 6.1. The Central and Brook Theatres continue to deliver a high-quality programme with over 128 professional and community-led productions delivering 297 performances with over 100,000 tickets sold. Alongside this, the box offices have sold 64 performances for productions taking place at other venues.
- 6.2. The sales in October 2022 represent our highest number of tickets sold (13,000) in October since recording the information.
- 6.3. Audience survey results show that:
- 100% satisfaction with ease of buying tickets
 - 98% satisfaction with the quality of shows
 - 97% satisfaction with the cleanliness of our venues
 - 90% satisfaction with the helpfulness of our staff
 - 96% satisfaction with access into and around of the venues
- 6.4. In December 2019, the Council received grant funding of £300k as part of the Future High Street Fund to improve the functionality of the spaces to support the development of Chatham’s creative sector.
- 6.5. A further £6.5 million funding from the Levelling Up Fund was received to improve the building’s facilities and undergo an overhaul of refurbishment

works to digitally upgrade and future proof The Brook to support Chatham's creative sector by upgrading spaces and providing affordable office and co-working facilities alongside digitally enhanced rehearsal and performance spaces to develop their practice and enhance their business.

- 6.6. Alongside this, The Brook will also see improvements made through the Re:Fit programme which include LED Lighting upgrades, installation of a heat pump and energy efficient boilers, upgraded controls, waterless urinals and new theatrical lighting. These works will be completed prior to any refurbishment works.
- 6.7. An officer-led Capital Project Group, with procured architects and designers, is currently working through the RIBA stage process to deliver the improved facilities, creative workspace and creative job outcomes to deliver a contemporary arts centre that will be the heart of a new vibrant city centre, leading the growth in Chatham's evening and weekend economy.
- 6.8. The Brook will be an inclusive and accessible city centre destination, offering an amazing public programme of performances and workshops inside and out that brings together new residential riverside living, animated public space filled with markets, events and public art and exciting food and social experiences.
- 6.9. The Brook will play a vital role in the growth of Medway's cultural infrastructure and creative sector. Its remodelling, refurbishment and future proofing will cultivate a flexible and mutually supportive environment where emerging and thriving creative businesses can flourish. The creative community will have access to contemporary, affordable office and co-working facilities alongside digitally enhanced rehearsal and performance spaces to develop their practice and enhance their business.

7. The Rochester Corn Exchange

- 7.1. The Rochester Corn Exchange new business plan prioritises higher-yielding and profit-generating bookings. This is driven by the ambition to make the venue a profit-generating operation and by a longer-term brand-building exercise, as prospective bookers' perceptions are influenced and changed for the better by the Corn Exchange being more focussed and selective in the types of events it accepts bookings for.
- 7.2. The business plan sets out its future focus on three core venue booking types: weddings, business & corporate events and celebration events.
- 7.3. With the £470,000 capital investment completed in early 2022, the venue has been successfully transformed, keeping its elegant characteristics and charm. The building has benefitted from updated audio visual and wi-fi provision, allowing the venue to compete with other business and meeting venues.
- 7.4. Performance of the venue is above that of expected, with bar revenue up by more than 200% compared to the same period in 2019/20.

- 7.5. The venue will start to work with an appointed PR agency to target areas of business and drive enquiries to the venue through its various media platforms.
- 7.6. Whilst the venue has seen a drop in small meeting hires, there has been a higher-than-expected increase in high value corporate dinners and award celebrations.
- 7.7. Investment in the venue continues, with three new ovens having now been fully installed into the venue's commercial kitchens and the Corn Exchange will be part of the de-carbonisation capital energy programme, Re:Fit, in the Summer of 2023.
- 7.8. The Rochester Corn Exchange was recently shortlisted for 'Wedding Venue of the Year – Heritage' at the recent Kent Wedding Awards and was awarded Highly Commended (South East) as 'Venue (Heritage)' at the national Wedding Industry Awards.

8. Culture Development

- 8.1. The Council's Culture Development Team facilitates, funds and enables our creative organisations, businesses and community to reach their full potential. By working in partnership with a range of organisations, the impact of creativity in Medway supports a vibrant local economy, reaches into communities to support better health and well-being and strives for artistic excellence with headlining programmes that deliver investment into Medway's strong culture-led regeneration ambition.
- 8.2. Medway was successful in a £14.4million bid to the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Levelling Up Fund (LUF) with its Chatham package on the strategic theme of 'Culture'. The three parts of the connected package are:
 - The full refurbishment of The Brook Theatre (£6.5m)
 - Fitting Rigging House (South) transformation into creative workspace hub (£2.2m)
 - The creation of The Docking Station as a new cultural and creative education and incubation hub (£5.7m)
- 8.3. These three cultural projects reinforce and align with each other and the stated priorities of the LUF:
 - The three key delivery bodies have a track record in delivering transformational cultural regeneration projects in Medway
 - Each project is positioned to support different segments of Medway's burgeoning creative industries sector, cumulatively reinforcing Chatham's position as a regionally important creative hub.
 - Collectively the projects will respond to Medway's socio-economic challenges of low income, low productivity and skills mismatch

- All three projects will creatively repurpose and enhance heritage assets delivering visible placemaking benefits
- Investing in existing heritage assets is an inherently sustainable approach to delivering regeneration, leveraging the benefit of embodied carbon.

8.4. Arts Council England Priority Place designation was awarded to Medway in October 2021. Medway received the joint highest 'Opportunity Rating' in the UK and, coupled with the growing confidence of the sector and evolving partnership work, the following bids have and are being applied for. This is not an exhaustive list but illustrates the scale of ambition permeating the sector.

Successful			
Creative Medway	Support for visibility, governance and action planning	ACE	£20,000
The Brook Theatres, Fitted Rigging House and The Docking Station	Capital refurbishment Investment Programme	DLUHC	£14.4M
Sun Pier House	Capital funding to improve access and increase studio space	ACE	£630,000
SparkedEcho	For Electric Medway	ACE	£70,000
Medway Makers	Cultural Volunteering programme	Spirit of 2012	£250,000
South East Create Growth	High value creative business growth programme	DCMS	£1.27M (Across the SE region)
Creative Careers	Information, advice and guidance about creative careers	DCMS	£950,000 (Nationally)

8.5. The Arts Council England National Portfolio (NPO) 2023 to 2026 Investment programme was announced on Friday, 4 November.

8.6. NPO investment gives organisations an agreed level of annual funding for the next three years. This competitive process saw over 1,700 organisations bid for NPO status and 990 organisations received a share of £446 million (each year).

- 8.7. From just 1.5 organisations receiving NPO funding in 2022, Medway now has seven. This incredible achievement is another strong indicator of the sector's growing confidence and brings a further £1.1million into Medway's creative economy each year for the next three years. This £4.8 million Arts Council England (ACE) investment over the next three years is a 43% increase, the largest seen in Kent.

ACE NPO 2018 to 2022	One year	Three years equivalent
Museums Partnership - Historic Dockyard/Guildhall Museum/Canterbury Museums/The Amelia Scott	249,508	748,524
UoK iCCI	278,806	836,418
	528,314	1,584,942

ACE NPO 2023 to 2026	One year	Three Years
CHDY/GH parntership	249,508	748,524
UoK iCCI	278,806	836,418
Ideas Test	316,667	950,001
Icon Theatre	263,000	789,000
Lyrici Arts	222,476	667,428
GEM - Group for Education in Museums	170,000	510,000
Emergency Exit Arts	120,094	360,282
	1,620,551	4,861,653

ACE NPO investment 2018 to 2022	528,314	1,584,942
ACE NPO Investment 2023 to 2026	1,620,551	4,861,653
Increase in ACE investment	1,092,237	3,276,711

- 8.8. Alongside this we have commitments from 14 non-Medway based NPO organisations to work in Medway including:
- [Attitude is Everything](#) – improving access to the arts for disabled people
 - [Cement Fields](#) – North Kent visual arts organisation who deliver Estuary Festival
 - [Applause Rural Touring](#) – Bringing culture and communities together in rural halls, pubs, village greens and libraries
 - [Cohesion Plus](#) – Bringing diverse communities together through the arts and festivals
- 8.9. Creative Medway is a partnership organisation that is leading on the delivery of Medway's Cultural Strategy.

- 8.10. Creative Medway's approach comes off the back of Medway's City of Culture bid and builds on strong local sector buy-in to forge new partnerships locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally to grow Medway's cultural reputation and place identity. It prioritises positive social and economic outcomes through culture-led innovation, realising the strategic vision to embed culture within our corporate delivery mechanisms and create new opportunities for cross-sector partnerships.
- 8.11. There is an undoubted new confidence in Medway's creative community. Because there is a clear vision for culture in Medway and out of the extensive engagement around cultural strategy and City of Culture, we have seen an increase in activity, in partnership working and in funding (capital and revenue) brought into Medway via the creative sector. This stronger creative community has built relationships and benefits from opportunities from regional and national programmes such as Creative Estuary, ACE, Creative People and Places and the national Cultural Compact network.
- 8.12. This has led to a growing set of strategic creative leaders with existing organisations such as University of Kent Institute of Cultural and Creative Industries (UoK iCCi) working more closely with Creative Medway, Medway Cultural Education Partnership (MCEP) and individual organisations to support the sector in skills and leadership development.
- 8.13. On 14 October, Creative Medway launched their new brand and website marking a significant moment in the development of the network.
- 8.14. www.creativemedway.co.uk is a new gateway for the creative sector and associated sectors to connect and build the compact and creative network across Medway. Still a work in progress, the site hosts an events calendar, blogs and news and will soon host an artist's directory, films and connect more fully to other organisations, projects and programmes. This work in raising the visibility of Creative Medway runs alongside their governance review. Creative Medway's plan is to achieve charitable status leveraging Medway's ACE Priority Place status to maximise investment and opportunity to benefit our communities as well as the wider cultural sector.
- 8.15. The Creative Medway Delivery Plan has been agreed and takes the form of a dynamic project matrix of forty plus partnership driven projects led by cultural sector organisations, commercial partners, Creative Medway, and Medway Council.
- 8.16. The Delivery Plan allows the Council and the sector to speak to funders with one voice, strengthening the case for support for major strategic collaborative projects including a major festival programme marking the Chatham Dockyard 2024 anniversary.
- 8.17. Progressing from our City of Culture bid, with the inception of the new cultural strategy and evolution of Creative Medway, Medway is now at a crucial point of its journey and has the chance to make a lasting change.

8.18. Creative Estuary - A region wide programme with the ambition to transform 60 miles of the Thames Estuary across Essex and Kent into one of the most exciting cultural hubs in the world.

8.19. Creative Estuary is part of the Government endorsed Thames Estuary Production Corridor (TEPC) project. A consortium of public sector and cultural organisations, working together to support the TEPC, they include the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP), Kent and Essex County Councils, the Greater London Authority, 11 local authority areas represented by Thames Gateway Kent Partnership and Opportunity South Essex, South East Creative Economy Network (SECEN), University of Kent, University of Essex, Locate in Kent, and cultural organisations Metal, and Cement Fields.

8.20. Successes to date include:

- Estuary Festival 2021 with 208,764 visits, digital audience of 107,584, commissioning 265 artists with 2,817 participants (1,081 of whom were young people), 248 students across eight universities, 24 schools & HE/FE partners took part in over 224 workshop sessions.
- Co-commissions with 28 organisations, delivering 44 commissions with 348 practitioners with live audiences of over 41,000. In Medway this included Ebb & Flow Festival led by Sun Pier House and Intra Arts, Electric Medway by SparkedEcho, Icon Theatre's site specific theatre production, Make Waves young producers programme led by Ideas Test, and a new Disability Arts Network led by Square Peg Arts.
- Re:Generation 2031 worked with over 40 practitioners, employing over 30 young people employed in 27 entry level opportunities and 73 young people took part in six training programmes.
- Estuary Place Promotion – a compelling new place brand for the Estuary that enables both stakeholders and residents to share the vision consistently, passionately and confidently and which Medway firmly sits within.
- Creative Asset Development - learning from international best practice they have developed a strategic model to identify and pool local authority assets to provide space for cultural production. This includes undertaking feasibility studies for a new creative digital hub, The Docking Station.

- We are working with the team on a joining the dots piece for Chatham, looking at how live and future public and developer led investment in Chatham can enhance the building of it as a creative centre and visitor destination.
- 8.21. The Docking Station – a strategic partnership led by University of Kent with Medway Council & Chatham Historic Dockyard Trust (CHDT). The Docking Station will transform the Police Section House located on the Interface Land at the CHDT, into an environmentally sustainable, innovative and dynamic ‘University of the Future’.
- 8.22. The catalyst to realise Medway’s 2030 cultural vision to ‘be internationally recognised for its creativity & culture, exemplifying the positive impacts on everyone’s lives’, The Docking Station will provide transformative cultural experiences, create new public realm, boost civic pride, drive economic & skills development and bring world class digital opportunities to Medway & changing perceptions of Chatham to be the South East’s new creative capital.
- 8.23. It will unite industry, creatives, students, academics and young people in state-of-the art digital facilities, co-working space and innovative research and development space. It will offer digital skills development, knowledge exchange, and drive innovation, fuelling the growth of the Medway creative economy.
- 8.24. Fundraising has been a major focus for this year on this £13million project. Off the back of the successful £5.7million from Levelling-Up Chatham Culture Package bid, two further major capital funding bids have been submitted to Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sports Culture Development Fund and National Lottery Heritage Fund.
- 8.25. Theatre 31 is a £1m, ACE Youth Performance Partnership Fund (YPPF) youth theatre project running across Medway and Sheppey until December 2022. Medway is one of only five places nationally to receive the funding and the programme is being delivered by Medway’s Icon Theatre.
- 8.26. Theatre31 focuses on authentically co-creating impactful youth-led performance projects with partners, introducing and exploring new writing. The programme started in June 2019 and finishes in December 2022 with interim data outstripping targets:

No. of live audiences engaged – Children & Young People	10,006
No. of live audiences engaged – adults	10,080
No. of artists/creative practitioners	189
No. of schools/youth groups engaged	61
No. of partners involved	50
No. of new partnerships established	34

- 8.27. The High Streets Heritage Action Zone Cultural Consortium (HSHAZ CC) has been very busy with a summer of events and projects funded by the Cultural Programme allocation of funding from Historic England, including:
- IntraFest – a three-day music festival produced by Live Music Now in hidden spaces and surprise places along Intra
 - Heritage Open Days - very successful with five venues taking part this year – Synagogue, Chatham House, Hospital of Sir John Hawkins, Unitarian Church and St John's Church
 - Festival of Chatham Reach
 - Medway Pride Fringe there was a 137% increase in footfall in Intra on the same evening in 2021
 - Electric Medway
- 8.28. The HSHAZ CC has commissioned a new 'sound-walk' by local artists, Jane Pitt and Kevin Grist, which allows people to interact with the Intra area as they pass through, listening to different sounds, stories and histories from the area via an interactive app.
- 8.29. Local artist Margherita Gramegna's ACE funded 'Medway Superstars' project, which creates a digital/film map of Medway, highlighting key artists and creative organisation across the area is also being supported by HSHAZ CC.
- 8.30. The HSHAZ CC is also committing time to considering life beyond the Historic England funding that comes to an end in March 2024. They are keen to develop sustainability, better strategic links, develop a funding strategy, using key events that happen in Intra as 'stepping-stones' aligned to their own plans, adding value through partnership.
- 8.31. Medway Cultural Education Partnership (MCEP), following a review by external consultants earlier in 2022, is now acting on the recommendations.
- 8.32. Membership is being diversified in order to be more reflective of the young people that MCEP serves, with the valuable addition of Heritage Team, Lyric Arts (specialists in Black theatre) and Square Pegs Arts (specialists in accessible arts for young people who are learning disabled or neuro-diverse). Equally the relationship with Child Friendly Medway is being better developed in order to draw in their expertise, pool resources, share goals and outcomes.
- A fundraising plan is being developed and Culture Team's match funds are being used as leverage.
 - A relationship between MCEP and The Docking Station is being developed.
 - MCEP is working with Creative Medway and the Culture Team to create a centralised directory of artists/practitioners/creative organisations.

- Steps are being taken to reach out to schools that are currently not engaging to ensure good links between schools and the cultural sector, upskilling teachers, ensuring culture and creativity is a priority and offering culture to children for whom there is little or no access to culture outside of school.

9. Greenspaces

9.1. Greenspace Development was successful again in securing eight Medway Green Flag Awards. The eight Green Flag sites are Hillyfields, Gillingham Park, Broomhill Park, The Vines, Capstone Farm Country Park, Great Lines Heritage Park, Riverside Country Park and Ranscombe Farm Reserve, which is managed by Plantlife. This year the judging was a mixture of direct judging and mystery shops.

9.2. Greenspace investments

9.2.1. Medway's Priority Play scheme continues to improve the provision of play across Medway. Five more sites are planned for improvements in 2022/23 and consultation and the procurement process is underway.

Playsite	Ward	Detail
Ballens Road	Lordswood & Capstone	Complete play area refurbishment (toddler & junior play areas combined into one play area), including fencing, and increase play value
Laburnum Recreation Ground	Strood South	Replace and refurbish selected equipment, including fencing, and increase play value
Perry Street	Chatham Central	Replace and refurbish selected equipment. Increase play value
Princes Avenue Open Space	Walderslade	Replace and refurbish selected equipment. Increase play value
Kingsfrith Recreation Ground	Wigmore	Replace and refurbish selected equipment (one toddler multi-play unit). Increase play value
Balmoral Gardens	Gillingham South	Replace all of the safety surfacing (being funded by s106 and Priority Play). Replace vandalised timber swings

9.2.2. Berengrave Local Nature Reserve improvement works are funded by S106. In the summer of 2022 a public event was held seeking views on access improvements to this local nature reserve. Work started on site in the autumn creating new all weather paths, viewing areas and steps that will improve access to this important old chalk pit.

9.3. As part of the Housing Infrastructure Fund scheme (HIF), an extensive public consultation was completed seeking further views on two more sites planned under the Strategic Environmental Management Scheme (SEMS). Proposals for Hoo Wetland Reserve and Lodge Hill were presented to the public at a

series of drop in events and on-line. A planning application for the Hoo Wetland Reserve was submitted in Oct 2022 another milestone in this important creation of site for nature and people's enjoyment of nature.

- 9.4. The Council submitted another application for the Forestry Commissions Urban Tree Challenge Fund and was successful bringing in funding for the planting of 300 mature trees over the next two years.
- 9.5. Wild About Capstone, now in its second year celebrates the countryside, wildlife, local produce and quiet informal recreation at our flagship greenspace Capstone Farm Countrypark. Over 3000 people enjoyed the event this year.
- 9.6. The Bird Wise project, funded by SAMMS contributions, continues to educate visitors to Medway's coastline on the importance of the area for migratory birds and other wildlife. Agreement was reached to employ rangers throughout the year rather than just the winter months. A successful recruitment drive has led to a three person team now reaching a far wider audience throughout the year.

10. Sport and Leisure

- 10.1. 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.
- 10.2. 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.
- 10.3. Construction work on the new family-friendly Splashes Sports Centre is scheduled to begin in Spring 2023, following the appointment through competitive tendering of Wilmott Dixon as the works contractor.
- 10.4. Once completed, the centre will provide a fun leisure pool including wave machine, flume and water features; a separate 25-metre swimming and learning pool; fitness gym; fitness classes; party rooms and café. It is anticipated that the new centre will serve not only residents in the east of Medway, but will attract visitors from outside the area.
- 10.5. The new centre is scheduled to open in summer 2024.
- 10.6. The new Splashes Sports Centre forms an integral part of Medway's child-friendly agenda, with the sports team working closely with internal and external partners to deliver a range of activities.
- 10.7. These have included the delivery of extensive parts of the holiday activity fund programme in conjunction with Public Health, a range of drop-in sessions and

fun nights in partnership with the Council's child-friendly team, and the popular primary schools Mini Youth Games competition. The Council also continues to offer free swimming to Medway residents under 16 and over 60.

- 10.8. More than 1500 participants across Medway took part in a wide range of free family-friendly sporting activities this summer, with funding support from Child-friendly Medway and Sport England. The activities began on Monday, 6 June and ran until Wednesday, 31 August, and included drop-in sessions of football, water sports, tennis, yoga, bootcamp in local parks and sports centres across Medway.
- 10.9. The Medway Daily School Mile continues to grow in popularity with six new schools signing up in November 2022. Schools are encouraged to create their own one-mile route around their school, supported by a Medway Sport resource pack and young leader training. The programme launched in 2018 with Fariview primary school and is now embedded in the school ethos and includes lunchtime running clubs and the Family Mile. This programme has now linked with the Medway Can campaign run by Public Health colleagues.
- 10.10. Medway Park continues to be a popular venue for national and international events, across a range of sports and physical activity.
- 10.11. In September, the International Dance Championships were held with competitors coming from countries including China, Ukraine and Italy and guest judges including Shirley Ballas (Strictly Come Dancing). Organisers have been so pleased with the venue and organisation they have already booked for a further two years.
- 10.12. In October the bi-annual international trampoline championships were hosted at Medway Park, with competitors from countries including Brazil, Finland and Denmark.
- 10.13. Also that month, the Australian Wheelchair Rugby League team used Medway Park as their training base prior to the World Cup. They went on to reach the semi-finals – the competition was won by England, coached by Tom Coyd from Medway and including in the team his brother Joe who was named in the team of the tournament.
- 10.14. Next month Medway Park will be hosting the world indoor archery championships. Countries represented include USA, New Zealand, Switzerland, Germany, South Africa, Brazil and the Netherlands. The event runs from February 13th-18th inclusive.

10.15. The Medway Sport team is working in partnership with Sporting Memories charity and social enterprise that uses the power of remembering and talking about sport – along with physical exercise – to tackle dementia, depression, and loneliness in older people. Currently there are more than 20 regular members at a weekly session at Strood sports centre. The project provides social and physical activities that allow older people as well as family members and carers to have fun while creating relationships and companionship with people in their local community.

10.16. Genesis Football Medway - this is an exciting collaborative project between:

- churches and Christian organisations in Medway
- Medway Night Shelter
- Medway Sport
- Anchorians Football Club
- Ambassadors Football

10.17. The aim is to engage with marginalised and vulnerable adults and those that are homeless and vulnerably housed to see an increase in fitness, aspiration, and positive relationships. This is through a weekly opportunity to play football at our new Watling Park 3G football facility, share a meal and for those interested, an opportunity to explore faith.

10.18. The scheme was named 2022 Kent FA community project of the year and has been nominated at the FA National Awards.

10.19. The new 10-year Medway sports strategy is scheduled for publication in Spring 2023, following consultation with national organisations and local community clubs as well as interested individuals. Previous strategies have covered a four-year cycle tied in with the Olympic Games, but the decision was taken to go for a longer-term vision which will also span three Olympics.

10.20. The stated mission of the strategy is:

- To work collaboratively to grow participation year on year in sport and physical activity in Medway
- To put young people at the heart of strategic planning and sports delivery in Medway
- To harness sport to celebrate and raise the profile of Medway, and to raise young people's aspirations
- To operate commercially sustainable, accessible community sports facilities

10.21. The guiding values include:

- We put children at the heart of what we do
- We promote inclusion and the levelling of the playing field
- We encourage sport as integral to positive mental health and wellbeing
- We promote the wider social and economic value of sport

- We work in partnership to create a more active Medway
- We communicate and engage with partners
- We upskill and support developing a workforce to achieve these goals
- We evaluate programmes and measure impact

11. Tourism and Heritage

- 11.1. Prior to the impact of the pandemic Medway's tourism sector had shown consistent growth for a number of years. The total visitor spend in 2019 was £358 million compared to £333 million in 2017. It is estimated there were approx. 5 million trips to Medway in 2019 and there were 7,000 tourism related jobs in Medway (Cambridge Economic Impact Study).
- 11.2. Visit Medway - extensive work has been devoted to Putting Medway On The Map for visitors, ranging from development of the extensive festivals programme as detailed above to the introduction of a new tourism brand for Medway.
- 11.3. Beyond Your Greatest Expectations has been developed in partnership with key Medway tourism attractions and organisations and is being used to highlight and focus Medway's extensive offer through a programme of campaigns targeting different audiences at specific times. It is supported by an extensive marketing and promotional campaign designed to attract visitors from across the region and out from London. Highlighted activity this Spring include Medway Light Nights and the Food and Drink Festival as well as events at partner organisations such as Rochester Cathedral. The Beyond Your Greatest Expectations campaign also links through the Visit Medway website to provide a coherent approach for visitors.
- 11.4. Aligned to this has seen the post-pandemic regeneration of the Medway Tourism Association, which held networking events in May and November supported by regular newsletters and a dedicated Business to Business (B2B) section on the Visit Medway website.
- 11.5. Summer trails – the introduction of the Beyond Your Greatest Expectations follows on from the highly successful summer trails initiative, which encouraged families to visit each of the Medway Council heritage attractions – Rochester Castle, Upnor Castle, Eastgate House, Temple Manor and the Guildhall Museum – over the summer to undertake the trails and collect specially-created badges. The trails were so successful they resulted in more than 7,000 visits over the eight weeks, including record one-day visitor numbers to Temple Manor.
- 11.6. In November 2022, The Guildhall Museum, along with its partners, received Arts Council National Portfolio Organisation status for a second term. This gives the museum funding for a full-time post to concentrate on improving the visitor experience as well as developing a programme to offer young people the opportunity to gain experience in the heritage sector, making them more employable in a sector they wish to have a career in.

- 11.7. In February 2022 The Making of Mr Dickens Gallery was officially opened by HRH Queen Camilla, then the Duchess of Cornwall. Housing the Museum's collection relating to Charles Dickens' life in Medway the interactive experience has welcomed more than 50,000 visitors since opening.
- 11.8. An exhibition telling the story of Strood-born Isaac Newell – the man credited with introducing football to Argentina – opened in November, to coincide with the World Cup. The club which bears his name, Newell's Old Boys, includes some of the game's greats such as Lionel Messi, and the exhibition attracted international attention. The exhibition was opened by one of Isaac's descendants who came over from Italy for the occasion.
- 11.9. An extensive programme to improve interpretation and activities at Rochester Castle began in the past year, with the objectives of increasing visitor dwell time and offering greater value for money. In addition to the summer trails detailed above, a new multimedia guide has been commissioned, improved dressing of the castle including new tapestries have been introduced, a new children's guide has been published and plans have been developed to transform two former stores within the Keep into new interpretation areas for 2023.
- 11.10. The improved interpretation will complement physical improvements to the castle, including new floodlighting, revarnished platforms, repainted handrails and repair of the flagpole.
- 11.11. As with Rochester Castle, Upnor Castle is undergoing a programme of physical improvements and enhanced interpretations. Physical improvements undertaken in the past year include repainting the barrack block, replacing missing storm poles, repairing brickwork on the tunnel, culvert and gatehouse door, new decking on the clocktower roof, new flagpole, and repairs to the barrack block parapet and entrance block as well as repainting of the sergeant's mess and toilets. Further works are scheduled in during this current closure period.
- 11.12. With physical improvements progressing, increasing attention is now being paid to developing interpretation of the multi-faceted castle. Priority is being given to a new multimedia guide, as well as new interpretation of the barrack block, together with a new orientation gallery.
- 11.13. Eastgate House has enjoyed a highly successful year, through both its activity programme and its growing popularity as a wedding venue. Activity has included a jubilee exhibition, its popular Hallowe'en and Christmas programmes and immersive theatre productions.
- 11.14. 2023 marks the 75th anniversary of Shorts Brothers leaving Medway and the heritage team is working with colleagues in the culture service to tell the story of the world's first commercial aircraft production company. Funding bids have been submitted to external organisations to support telling this story of national/international importance.

11.15. Medway has developed a ten-year strategy for developing tourism, deliberately aiming to take a long-term vision which enables the service to look beyond the post-Covid recovery period.

11.16. The stated vision is to transform Medway into a must-see, thriving short-break city destination with the aims that:

- Medway will be a well-known must-see visitor destination whose historic and cultural uniqueness will be understood and celebrated
- Medway will increase its share of higher spend cultural visitors who are staying for a city short break
- Medway will attract a larger share of younger, independent visitors as well as families
- Medway will offer visitors a unique and authentic experience, which cannot be found elsewhere

11.17. Following a period of development in consultation with partners, the strategy is scheduled to be published in Spring 2023.

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Appendices

None.

Background papers

None.