



SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL



Culture and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Committee

13 June 2023


Report of Councillor Paul Stokes,
Cabinet Member for Culture and
Leisure

Refreshed Cultural Strategy

To update the Committee on the work undertaken to develop a refreshed Cultural Strategy for the district.

Report Author

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Recommendations

In noting the work undertaken and consultation results, it is recommended the Culture and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

- 1. Considers the draft Cultural Strategy produced, making any suggestions of additions or amendments which should be considered.**
- 2. Following the incorporation of any additions or amendments, recommends to Cabinet that the Cultural Strategy is adopted to underpin the corporate priority of Healthy and Strong Communities.**
- 3. Following adoption of the Cultural Strategy by Cabinet, agrees to receive six monthly updates on the progress and delivery of the Action Plan within the Cultural Strategy.**

Decision Information

Does the report contain any exempt or confidential information not for publication?

No

What are the relevant corporate priorities?

- Healthy and Strong Communities
- High Performing Council

Which wards are impacted?

All Wards

1. Implications

Taking into consideration implications relating to finance and procurement, legal and governance, risk and mitigation, health and safety, diversity and inclusion, safeguarding, staffing, community safety, mental health and wellbeing and the impact on the Council's declaration of a climate change emergency, the following implications have been identified:

Finance and Procurement

- 1.1 During financial year 2022/23, a decision was made to utilise some of the savings resulting from the Arts and Cultural Services Manager post being vacant to fund external consultancy support to develop a refreshed Cultural Strategy for the district.
- 1.2 Red Quadrant were appointed to undertake this work via a competitive process in accordance with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules.
- 1.3 Given the Council's challenging financial outlook, it has been important to ensure that the refreshed Cultural Strategy and associated action plan, do not result in an increased budget allocation being required, or represent an ongoing financial burden to the Council.

Completed by: Richard Wyles, Deputy Chief Executive and S151 Officer.

Legal and Governance

- 1.4 It is within the remit of the Culture and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Committee to consider the draft Strategy and make recommendations to Cabinet on its adoption.

Completed by: Graham Watts, Assistant Director of Governance and Monitoring Officer.

Risk and Mitigation

- 1.5 Without the adoption of a clearly defined and articulated Cultural Strategy there remains a risk that the service could remain vulnerable to further reductions in funding.

Completed by: Tracey Elliot, Governance and Risk Officer

2. Background to the Report

- 2.1 The Corporate Plan 2020 to 2023 sets out the Council's ambition to be the best district in which to work, live and visit, with a key objective of building and celebrating the rich heritage and culture of the district. There is a commitment within the Corporate Plan to develop and adopt a refreshed Cultural Strategy, covering the provision of local arts and events across the district of South Kesteven.
- 2.2 The Council's current Cultural Strategy was adopted in 2020 (see background papers).
- 2.3 An independent arts review was carried out in 2021, as a result of which a range of actions were recommended to improve the performance and financial viability of the Council's Arts and Culture service. The review acknowledged the work that had gone into developing the current Cultural Strategy, but identified that it lacked clear objectives and a coherent action plan.
- 2.4 At a meeting of the Culture and Visitor Economy Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 6 September 2022, the Members present considered a report which proposed the development of a refreshed Cultural Strategy for the district, and the key themes to be included. In consideration, the Members present endorsed the commencement of a procurement exercise to appoint a suitably qualified consultant.
- 2.5 Following this decision Officers commenced an open procurement exercise to appoint a consultant. Initially the Council received 30 expressions of interest from interested parties, following the issue of the tender information a total of ten formal responses to tender were received.
- 2.6 The tenders were evaluated, both in terms of the price submitted, and the quality of responses provided to a series of questions which explored:
- Relevant skills, knowledge and experience
 - Examples of previous work undertaken
 - Curriculum Vitae of key personnel
 - An indicative project timeline and methodology
 - Details on what stakeholder engagement would be undertaken.

- 2.7 Following evaluation Red Quadrant were appointed to support the Council in the development of a refreshed Cultural Strategy for the district.

Research and Preparatory Work

- 2.8 Prior to commencing work on the development of the draft Strategy, Red Quadrant undertook a review of existing documentation and evidence. This included the research and consultation which had been undertaken to develop the current Cultural Strategy, and the results of the independent arts review undertaken in 2021.
- 2.9 In addition they undertook a review of recent culture related policy, both locally and nationally, identifying examples of best practice and current thinking in the cultural sector.
- 2.10 Representatives of Red Quadrant also visited the three Council owned artistic venues in Grantham, Stamford and Bourne to gain an understanding of the venues, the artistic offer, and the nature of the district.

Consultation and Stakeholder Engagement

- 2.11 At the outset of the work, supported by Officers, Red Quadrant undertook a stakeholder mapping exercise to identify key stakeholders, individuals and groups who had a vested interest in cultural activity within the district. As a result, a wide range of consultation activity was planned to support the development of the refreshed Cultural Strategy.
- 2.12 A publicly available survey was promoted across the District, its launch supported by a media release and regular reminders to fill in the survey on social media. Paper copies of the survey were made available to ensure all residents had the opportunity to participate and put forward their views.
- 2.13 A separate survey was circulated to Members seeking their views and opinions on the strategic direction of the Council's arts and cultural offer and key challenges.
- 2.14 Conversation Cafés were held in Grantham and Stamford. Responders to the surveys were invited to attend these events and provide feedback on a range of round table topics including:
- How the Council could strengthen partnership working and develop a collaborative approach to cultural provision across the district.
 - How the Council's arts and cultural service could recover from the impact of the pandemic and increase participation levels.

- What were the main considerations for the development of the Council’s cultural venues.
- 2.15 Two attempts were made to arrange a conversation café for Bourne. However, due to low take up, interested participants were invited to attend the meetings held in Grantham or Stamford. In consideration of this, and to ensure the Deepings area was also fully represented, conversations were held between Red Quadrant and the lead Members of the Culture and Visitor Economy Overview and Scrutiny Committee for Bourne and the Deepings.
- 2.16 A series of one-to-one discussions took place with key stakeholders which included the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council, the Portfolio Holder, Chief Executive, Strategic Director for Growth and the Chief Finance Officer.
- 2.17 All staff employed in the Council’s Arts and Cultural Services team were invited to attend an online focus group to share their views.
- 2.18 A workshop was held for Members of the Culture and Visitor Economy Overview and Scrutiny Committee on Thursday 19 January 2023. The workshop was hosted by Red Quadrant and supported by the Director for Growth and Culture and the Assistant Director for Culture and Leisure.
- 2.19 **Appendix One** to this report provides a summary of the consultation undertaken and the associated findings.

Draft Strategy

- 2.20 Considering the research and consultation undertaken, Red Quadrant have produced a draft Cultural Strategy for South Kesteven District Council. This is attached as **Appendix Two**.
- 2.21 Identified within the Strategy is the vision ‘South Kesteven is a place that people want to live, work and visit, where culture and creativity are valued, accessible to all and given the chance to flourish’. The Council’s mission being identified as ‘To enable culture to thrive across South Kesteven, to coordinate cultural activity, support a strong cultural network and ensure that all residents benefit’.
- 2.22 The draft Cultural Strategy is built upon the following seven key themes:
- Economy and Growth
 - Partnership and Collaboration
 - Equality and Inclusion
 - Placemaking
 - Health and Wellbeing
 - Value for Money
 - Cultural Venues and Programmes

- 2.23 For each key theme, priorities have been identified together with an explanation why these are important for the Council, residents and service users. An Action Plan has also been developed which, if supported, will form the basis of the Council's future work and activities.

3. Key Considerations

- 3.1 Spend on Arts and Cultural Services is discretionary for the Council and therefore it is important the service demonstrates value for money, and resources invested deliver the outcomes the Council is seeking. The refreshed Cultural Strategy aligns with the corporate vision and takes account of the Council's challenging financial situation. For example, moving away from the Council directly funding events and festivals to supporting communities to do so.

4. Other Options Considered

- 4.1 Within its Corporate Plan, the Council has committed to building on, and celebrating the rich heritage and culture of the District with a key priority to develop a refreshed Cultural Strategy. Therefore the 'do nothing' option was discounted.

5. Reasons for the Recommendations

- 5.1 Once adopted the Cultural Strategy will become the guiding principal document for the Council's Arts and Cultural Services Team. Therefore, it is important that Members assess the contents of the refreshed Cultural Strategy to ensure that it meets the Council's vision for the service, making any suggestions for amendments or additions.
- 5.2 A six monthly update on progress relating to the Action Plan will allow Members to assess the impact of the refreshed Cultural Strategy once adopted.

6. Appendices

- 8.1 **Appendix One** – Consultation Report
- 8.2 **Appendix Two** – Draft Cultural Strategy for South Kesteven

7. Background Papers

- 7.1 *South Kesteven District Council Cultural Strategy (2020 Draft)*
<https://moderngov.southkesteven.gov.uk/documents/s27348/Appendix%201%20-%20draft%20cultural%20strategy.pdf>

