



SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL



Culture and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Tuesday, 26 March 2024

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

Cultural Strategy Update – March 2024

Report Author

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Purpose of Report

To provide an update on the Cultural Strategy for South Kesteven, including progress with the accompanying Action Plan and the achievement of Key Performance Indicators previously agreed.

Recommendation-

That the Culture and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

1. **Provides suggestions on any additional information required for future updates in relation to the implementation of the Council's Cultural Strategy.**

Decision Information

Does the report contain any exempt or confidential information not for publication?	No
What are the relevant corporate priorities?	Connecting Communities
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 There are no specific financial implications arising from this report as the activity being undertaken is within the Council's agreed budget for financial year 2024/2025.
- 1.2 Should a bid to Arts Council England be successful then the grant terms and conditions will need to be assessed and the receipt of funding formally approved in line with the Council's Constitution and governance arrangements.

Completed by: Alison Hall-Wright, Deputy Director (Finance & ICT) and Deputy S151 Officer

Legal and Governance

- 1.3 The Committee agreed back in September 2023 to receive a 6 monthly review on the Cultural Strategy.
- 1.4 There are no further significant legal or governance implications arising from this report.

Completed by: James Welbourn, Democratic Services Manager and Deputy Monitoring Officer

2. Background to the Report

- 2.1 The Corporate Plan 2024 to 2027 sets out the Council's ambition of being "a thriving district in which to live, work and visit. The key priority of Connecting Communities identifies the key objectives of delivering and facilitating a sustainable leisure and cultural offer and celebrating and promoting the strong heritage and rich culture of South Kesteven.
- 2.2 The Council's Cultural Strategy 2023 to 2026 was developed during 2023. The draft Cultural Strategy was considered at a meeting of the Culture and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 13 June 2023 prior to it being formally adopted at a meeting of Cabinet held on 11 July 2023.
- 2.3 The Cultural Strategy 2023 to 2026 is the guiding document for the Council's Arts and Culture team and underpins cultural activity within the Council's three artistic venues, outreach activity across the district and how the team engage with the wider cultural sector.
- 2.4 At a further meeting of the Culture and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 5 September 2023, a suite of key performance indicators was agreed against the key themes in the Cultural Strategy. It was proposed these Key Performance Indicators could be used to assess the implementation and effectiveness of the Cultural Strategy.
- 2.5 Since the adoption of the Cultural Strategy there has been a significant amount of progress made. For ease of reading, an update of work undertaken has been split into sub sections and summarised below alongside the corresponding themes from the Cultural Strategy:
- A) Pay It Forward Scheme
 - B) Outreach Activity
 - C) Marketing
 - D) Venues – Use of Space
 - E) Venues – Coordinated Approach
 - F) Bid to Arts Council England
 - G) Update on Key Performance Indicators
- A) Pay It Forward Scheme**
Cultural Strategy Themes: Health and Wellbeing, Equality and Inclusion.
- 2.6 Since the introduction of the Pay it Forward Scheme in September 2023, over 600 contributions have been received from customers of the arts service. As of 1 March 2024, the contributions totalled £3,081.
- 2.7 The Pay it Forward Scheme has funded pupils from Harrowby Infants School in Grantham to attend the pantomime at Guildhall Arts Centre in Grantham and pupils

from St Augustine's School in Stamford to attend a children's performance at Stamford Arts Centre. Feedback has been received from both schools confirming the children enjoyed the performances, and more importantly, the initiative has allowed children to visit the theatres who would otherwise be unable to access such activity.

- 2.8 The Arts and Cultural Services team are very keen to widen the impact of the Pay it Forward Scheme to activity outside of the two traditional theatres in Grantham and Stamford. Discussions are currently ongoing with the Bourne charity Don't Lose Hope, who offer free professional counselling services to the local community for individuals receiving certain state benefits. Free tickets to an event at Bourne Corn Exchange, which is taking place in March 2024, are being offered to some of their clients.
- 2.9 In addition, investigations are being made as to how the fund can be utilised to hold a free to access event in Deepings for the local community.
- 2.10 Links have been established with the Lincolnshire Community and Voluntary Service to understand how free attendance to performances and activity can be offered via social prescribing organisations. The aim of this initiative will be to help patients and residents access arts and cultural activity to enhance their wellbeing, reduce social isolation, or alleviate the symptoms of health conditions.

B) Outreach Activity

Cultural Strategy Themes: Equality and Inclusion, Placemaking, Partnership and Collaboration

- 2.11 The Rural Touring Scheme, which is funded by Arts Council England, takes high quality live performances to rural spaces. Being operated by Live and Local, the Scheme continues to be extremely well supported in South Kesteven and the programme for 2024/2025 has recently been confirmed. The Council contributes just over £3,500 to the Scheme annually which has secured fourteen performances across the district in the coming financial year. The events planned include indoor ticketed events, outdoor events and performances in libraries.
- 2.12 The Music in Quiet Places programme is set to continue in 2024. The programme provides classical music events by international and local artists which are hosted by churches in rural areas. Historically these performances have been very well supported. Across the four performances during Summer 2023, a total of 355 tickets were sold which was an improvement on the previous year which yielded 297 ticket sales.

2.13 The Music in Quiet Places performances scheduled for 2024 are as follows:

30 May 2024	St Martin's Church, Barholm, North Stamford
13 June 2024	St Swithun's Church, Long Bennington, North of Grantham
11 July 2024	St James' Church, Aslackby, North of Bourne
25 July 2024	St Firmin's Church, Thurlby, near The Deepings

- 2.14 An outreach project is being planned and will be delivered by the Arts Team around Easter. This will see large wooden eggs being delivered to schools and community groups around the district. The schools and groups will be responsible for decorating the eggs which will then form part of a free Easter trail in each market town. In the Deepings, the trail will be delivered in association with Deepings Library to coincide with their Family Fun Day at the end of March. In the other towns, local businesses will host eggs to form part of a trail.
- 2.15 Discussions are ongoing with an artistic company Lumo, who specialise in community-led immersive arts experiences, with a view to developing an outreach project in Bourne and The Deepings. Further information will be provided once concepts and ideas have been developed.

C) Marketing

Cultural Strategy Themes: Equality and Inclusion, Placemaking, Partnership and Collaboration, Cultural Venues and Programmes and Value for Money

- 2.16 Ticket sales for the Guildhall Arts Centre and Stamford Arts Centre are supported by the software provider Spektrix. In addition to providing the centres with a face to face and online booking system, Spektrix is a highly functional customer relationship management system which provides data led insights and enables the Arts Team to undertake targeted marketing activity. This includes the ability to send marketing emails to customers who have subscribed to receive information on upcoming performances, and the ability to send targeted information to customers promoting performances which are similar to those they have previously attended.
- 2.17 There are two Marketing Officers employed within the service who work closely with the Council's Communications Team to ensure the buildings, events and services are effectively promoted. Recently the Marketing Officers have been assessing the effectiveness of various marketing activity to establish whether this provides value for money and is effective in terms of reach and attracting new customers.
- 2.18 In line with national best practice, and since the return of live performances post the COVID-19 pandemic, the What's On guides for Grantham and Stamford arts centres are no longer posted directly to customers. These are published online and emailed to subscribers, with hard copies being available in the arts centres. Utilising the Spektrix system, the team are identifying those customers who have not returned to the arts centres since the pandemic and encouraging them to sign up for the regular email alerts.

- 2.19 The What's On brochures are refreshed three times a year. To support the brochure launches, celebration events are being planned for the two arts centres in Grantham and Stamford. It is hoped these will encourage footfall into the venues and facilitate the early booking of tickets for events. If customers can be encouraged to book earlier for events, then marketing activity can be more focused on those events which may be harder to sell and require a more targeted approach.
- 2.20 The artistic venues make good use of social media to promote their services and events. Grantham Guildhall Arts Centre and Stamford Arts Centre utilise Facebook, X (formerly Twitter) and Instagram, and Bourne Corn Exchange currently uses Facebook.
- 2.21 The team are assessing which media marketing opportunities provide the best results in terms of reach and ticket sales. Advertising in the Village Link and Grantham Link magazines has proved to be particularly effective, and links are being made with Rutland and Stamford Sound for regular advertising opportunities to widen the reach of the service.
- 2.22 For Bourne Corn Exchange regular advertising was previously taking place with Bourne Local however, as the paper is due to stop printing, the team are liaising with the organisation around online campaigns.
- 2.23 The Marketing Officers have also secured other opportunities to promote events, including the use of bus shelters at Grantham Bus Station.

D) Venues – Use of Space

Themes: Cultural Venues and Programmes, Value for Money, Equality, and Inclusion

- 2.24 As well as providing artistic activity and events, the Council's three arts venues play an important part in hosting wider community activity and performances via room hire bookings. These events widen the footfall of the centres and the income generated, supplements the wider upkeep and maintenance of the facilities. Regular users and hires include:
- Ongoing participation by youth theatre groups at Stamford and Guildhall Arts Centres
 - Resident artist studios at Stamford Arts Centre
 - Dance, fitness and meditation classes across all three venues
 - Dementia support group at Bourne Corn Exchange
- 2.25 As part of the work undertaken to set the fees and charges for room hires for the financial year 2024/2025, a review of alternative facilities and prices was carried out to ensure the Council's arts facilities can remain attractive to hirers and community groups. If there is community benefit, and the activity aligns with the Council's

Cultural Strategy, then it is possible to offer small discounts for room hire bookings on an individual basis.

E) Venues – Coordinated Approach

Themes: Cultural Venues and Programmes, Value for Money, Equality, and Inclusion

- 2.26 Grantham Guildhall and Stamford Arts Centre share a Programming Officer whose role it is to attract professional touring productions including theatre, music, dance, poetry and workshops to the venues. Although there remains a distinct individual offer at each of the venues in Grantham and Stamford, this has enabled a co-ordinated approach to programming which is kept under constant review to identify trends, the effectiveness of the programme and assess value for money.
- 2.27 Ticket sales for Stamford and Grantham have increased year on year. Looking at January 2024, the number of tickets sold across the two venues increased by 1,290 which represents an increase of 35%.
- 2.28 Events and performances at Bourne Corn Exchange are arranged by the Bourne Corn Exchange Manager. The venue hosts a significant number of hires for events, celebrations and meetings. In addition, a smaller number of professional shows are hosted, where possible the team are ensuring tickets for these events are sold via the Spektrix system which ensures wider publicity and marketing for the events, as well as enabling data capture on attendance.

F) Bid to Arts Council England

Themes: Value for Money, Placemaking, Equality and Inclusion

- 2.29 The Arts Team are working on project bid to Arts Council England with the intention of establishing and improving the approach to artistic engagement in Bourne and The Deepings.
- 2.30 To support the development of the bid, consultation will be undertaken with residents and artistic practitioners with South Kesteven and further afield to establish what activity already exists, what activity residents currently travel to participate in, and what residents want to see more of in their local community. Artistic practitioners will be asked what they currently do, where they are based and what are the barriers to them undertaking cultural activity in Bourne or the Deepings.
- 2.31 The results of the consultation will be used to form the basis of a bid which will focus on mentoring for artistic practitioners to establish or develop their work in the identified areas, ensuring that this will continue beyond the scope of the project and funding period. It is envisaged the resulting activity will include workshops, regular sessions, and one-off events.

G) Update on Key Performance Indicators

- 2.32 An update on activity undertaken to support the Key Performance Indicators agreed at a meeting of the Culture and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 5 September 2023 is provided in **Table One** below:

Table One – KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS		
Key Theme	Key Performance Indicator	Progress Update
Partnership and Collaboration	Numbers of providers engaged with a Council established cultural network	This will be progressed in the coming months. There has been a slight delay due to team vacancies. The team is now fully resourced
Placemaking	Number of outreach events held or supported by the Arts and Cultural Services team	Outreach activity has taken place in Grantham and Stamford as part of Lincolnshire One Venues. The Evolve event saw schools working with a music practitioner which resulted in a performance. The pupils were then invited to a show and had a Q & A session with technical staff about backstage roles.
	Attendance numbers at venues	Tickets sold for performances April 2023 to March 2024: Guildhall Arts Centre – 29,459 Stamford Arts Centre – 34,650 There are additional attendances at each venue in relation to parties, weekly classes, lectures, private hires and rehearsals
Health and Wellbeing	Social prescribing service established and residents engaged	Work is being undertaken with Lincolnshire Community and Voluntary Service to establish social prescribing routes 21 service users from Don't Lose Hope in Bourne are being engaged through the Pay it Forward Scheme

Equality and Inclusion	Numbers of participants engaged with the arts service from target groups	21 service users engaged from Don't Lose Hope 40 students allocated tickets for children's show from St Augustine's School, Stamford 35 students allocated tickets for children's show from Harrowby Infants School, Grantham Programming continues to deliver diverse pieces across the venues including the re-introduction of subtitled and relaxed cinema screenings at Stamford Arts Centre
	Take up of Rural Touring programme across the district	A total of 17 events across 9 different communities and venues took place in 2023/2024 in South Kesteven via the Live and Local Scheme
Value for Money	Amount of external funding secured to support the service	Arts Council Transition funding has now ended. A project grant bid is being developed
	Amount of subsidy required to support the service	To be confirmed following financial year end
Cultural Venues and Programmes	Number of volunteering hours engaged in the delivery of Arts and Cultural events	Since August 2023 the total number of hours undertaken by volunteers is 1358

3. Key Considerations

- 3.1 The report provides an update on work being undertaken since the adoption of the Cultural Strategy and Key Performance Indicators.
- 3.2 The Council, as the largest public funder of culture in South Kesteven, is largely unconstrained by national regulations and requirements. This provides considerable scope to bid to organisations such as the Arts Council England and also work with cultural partners, community groups and residents to shape the local offer which truly meets local needs and aspirations.

4. Other Options Considered

- 4.1 It has previously been agreed by the Culture and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Committee, six monthly updates would be provided, therefore the 'do nothing' option was discounted.

5. Reasons for the Recommendations

- 5.1 As the Council strives to deliver best value and the widest engagement with culture, Members are requested to provide suggestions on any additional information required for future updates in relation to the implementation of the Council's Cultural Strategy.

6. Background Papers

- 6.1 *Cultural Strategy (2023-2026)* – Report to Cabinet, published 11 July 2023, available online at:
[http://moderngovsvr/documents/s38228/Cultural%20Strategy%202023%20to%202026.pdf?LO\\$=1](http://moderngovsvr/documents/s38228/Cultural%20Strategy%202023%20to%202026.pdf?LO$=1)
- 6.2 *Cultural Strategy Key Performance Indicators* – Report to Culture and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Committee, published 5 September 2023, available online at:
<https://moderngov.southkesteven.gov.uk/documents/s38848/Cultural%20Strategy%20KPIs.pdf>