

**Meeting** Executive  
**Portfolio Area** Children, Young People and Leisure  
**Date** 23 January 2017



## DRAFT STEVENAGE CULTURAL STRATEGY (A 10 YEAR STRATEGY FOR ARTS & HERITAGE)

### KEY DECISION

|                        |             |        |
|------------------------|-------------|--------|
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### 1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 The report outlines the development of a Cultural Strategy for the town and summarises a number of cultural ambitions over the next 10 years in order for Stevenage to become a destination creative town.

### 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the draft cultural strategy be approved and the final draft be developed through the Community Select Committee.
- 2.2 That this draft be subject to further cultural stakeholder consultation and the final draft be submitted to the Executive for approval in March 2018.

### 3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Council has been working with Arts Council England to develop an overall vision for the town as a cultural destination, building on both its unique heritage and the opportunities to further develop its cultural offer.

- 3.2 In August 2017 both organisations co-commissioned Arts Reach to assist in the development of a 10 year cultural strategy for the town. The creation of a dedicated strategy is recognised as a strong commitment to place-shaping and cultural regeneration. It recognises both the economic and social benefits a strong cultural offer brings to a place.
- 3.3 Arts Reach engaged with a range of cultural stakeholders and partner organisations as part of the process and captured the council's ambitions as part of the Future Town Future Council programme – particularly linked to Town Centre Regeneration and the opportunities to re-imagine Stevenage as a cultural destination.
- 3.4 As a consequence the strategy focuses on a number of key themes in order to build the profile of Stevenage as a destination creative town.
- Widening the Cultural Offer
  - Increasing Cultural Engagement
  - Connecting and Advocating Cultural Opportunities
  - Celebrating the Heritage of Stevenage
  - Developing Opportunities for Children and Young People
  - Improving Health and Wellbeing
- 3.5 Through stakeholder engagement the strategy outlines a number of cultural ambitions over the next 10 years. The draft strategy is attached to this report as an appendix. The ambitions are summarised below:
- Create an extensive new trail of public art, with a focus on interactive artwork, to draw residents and visitors to the cycle network and to Fairlands Valley Park and to enhance the regenerated town centre, also helping to revitalise the existing heritage sculpture trail
  - Facilitate new creative spaces for artists (studios), musicians (practice rooms/recording facilities) and creative/digital industry SMEs to build the local pool of artists, practitioners and creatives
  - Develop existing Outdoor Festivals and events to increase the cultural offer, and develop new Outdoor Arts and heritage offers that together create volunteering and other opportunities for local people and added value attraction for visitors
  - Maximise skills and personal development opportunities for Stevenage residents through engagement with cultural activity
  - Upgrade and improve the Gordon Craig Theatre offer and maximise other performance spaces to meet the 21st century needs of the Stevenage community
  - Relocate and revitalise the Stevenage Borough Museum to widen access and increase footfall, incorporating a USP as the First New Town Museum
  - Increase provision of music making, recording and performance facilities

- Support development of new focused Arts and Health initiatives and programmes (supporting the Borough Plan for Health and Well-Being)
  - Deliver the Cultural Education Challenge by supporting and enabling cultural entitlement for all children and young people
  - Create a Borough wide Arts and Heritage Forum to act as a platform for communication and cultural advocacy, encompassing professional, amateur and community sectors
- 3.6 The ambitions are underpinned by a strong emphasis on culture being accessible to and valued by everyone and as a key driver for economic development and the broader benefits of Stevenage as a cultural destination.

#### **4. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION AND OTHER OPTIONS**

- 4.1 In order to progress the finalisation of the Cultural Strategy Members' views are now sought to ascertain maximum buy-in for the ambitions outlined.
- 4.2 It is clear that the Council cannot deliver these cultural ambitions alone and further dialogue will continue with the Arts Council and other stakeholders as a delivery plan is developed.
- 4.3 A policy development session is due to be held with the Community Select Committee on 17<sup>th</sup> January 2018.

#### **5. IMPLICATIONS**

##### **5.1 Financial Implications**

- 5.1.1 At this stage there are no immediate financial implications to the council, although the delivery of key ambitions will require financial investment. The Council will seek to work with other co-investors such as Arts Council England, Heritage Lottery Fund and Hertfordshire LEP to help to realise these ambitions and resources will be required to help to facilitate and mobilise this. There may be some match-funding or pump priming requirements related to progressing certain initiatives. A clear and realistic delivery plan will be developed as part of the final strategy.

##### **5.2 Legal Implications**

- 5.2.1 There are no immediate legal implications highlighted through the draft strategy.

##### **5.3 Risk Implications**

- 5.3.1 The Council will need to consider associated risks in relation to key deliverables in the final strategy.

##### **5.4 Policy Implications**

- 5.4.1 The strategy links to the development of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy for the town in the recognition that engagement in arts and culture supports

wellbeing. The strategy will also link to the Capital Strategy with reference to physical cultural assets such as the Gordon Craig Theatre, Stevenage Museum and Stevenage Arts Centre.

## **5.5 Planning Implications**

- 5.5.1 Policies HC6 and HC7 of the Local Plan outline the council's commitment to protect existing and provide new cultural facilities.

## **5.6 Equalities and Diversity Implications**

- 5.6.1 The development of further cultural opportunities and initiatives through the strategy will consider equality and diversity implications with an underlying value that culture should be accessible to and valued by everyone.

## **5.7 Service Delivery Implications**

- 5.7.1 The strategy references aspirations to replace the Stevenage Museum and aspirations to improve the current Gordon Craig Theatre offer. Operational implications will be considered as these aspirations progress.

## **5.8 Safeguarding Children Implications**

- 5.8.1 The development of further cultural education opportunities for children and young people will need to include appropriate safeguarding considerations.

## **5.9 Other Corporate Implications**

- 5.9.1 The strategy will link to the Town Centre Regeneration and Co-operative Neighbourhood Management strands of the Future Town, Future Council programme.

## **BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

BD1 - Consultants Brief

## **APPENDICES**

Appendix A - Draft Stevenage Cultural Strategy