

11 December 2013		ITEM: 17 01104259
Cabinet		
Unleashing Creative Ambition - A Strategic role for Arts and Culture in Thurrock		
Report of: Councillor Lynn Worrall, Portfolio Holder for Transformation and Community		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: No	
Accountable Director: Steve Cox, Assistant Chief Executive		
This report is public		
Purpose of Report: To set out a strategic role for arts and culture to in relation to key priorities and future plans.		

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of highlighting a strategic role for arts and culture is to align the Council's involvement in this area more closely with the agreed vision and priorities for Thurrock; raising the aspirations and attainment of young people, diversifying the local economy to create a wider range of employment opportunities, increasing self-confidence and promoting a distinctive profile of Thurrock as a place. A strategic approach is particularly important at a time when competition for external investment and acumen has intensified. Arts and Culture is an integral element of Thurrock's 'offer' and its quality of place for existing and new communities.

1. RECOMMENDATIONS:

That Cabinet:

- 1.1 Endorses the strategic role for arts and culture in Thurrock and the three practical propositions set out in the paper, and;**
- 1.2 Agrees that the necessary steps are put in place to develop and deliver the strategic role and propositions for arts and culture to successfully implement a new brief for arts and culture.**

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND:

2.1 Earlier this year High House Production Park was commissioned to undertake a strategic review of arts and culture. The paper highlights opportunities for arts and culture to play a stronger role in Thurrock.

2.2 Unleashing Creative Ambition

A strategic role for arts and culture in Thurrock.

2.3 A community in the grip of exciting, challenging, fast paced and potentially game changing growth and regeneration, Thurrock is in transition. In this context, there is an appetite to do things differently, particularly in terms of education, training, economic and community development. The Council has eloquently characterised its leadership mission for successful growth:

“If Thurrock’s young people do not have access to the professional and managerial jobs and other opportunities from the regeneration programme, then we will have failed.”

2.4 Thurrock is effectively re-imagining its future place in the world; from revealing the incredible heritage and contemporary identity of its eighteen miles long riverscape, to unleashing the imagination of its young people through a bold commitment to a cultural entitlement, to forging new alliances with world class artists, cultural and education institutions who are compelled by Thurrock’s future possibilities.

2.5 Support for the growth of creative industries as an economic sector has been prioritised by the Council, it is a means of nurturing the creativity of young people, of attracting and retaining emerging talent looking for start-up opportunities and space to innovate, plus a great way to harness new ideas and acumen to increase the impact of regeneration.

2.6 Creative industries also have a key economic and social role within Thurrock’s town centres by enabling access to cultural venues and experiences for Thurrock’s residents and bringing added activity and vibrancy to the centres, especially in the evenings.

2.7 There will be a greater concerted effort by the Council to build strategic relationships with local, national and international players, in order to broker the collective ambition, acumen and resources that will result in a shared creative prospectus for growth. Key to this approach, is the role the council is playing to support the development of a business case for Creative Industries to be prioritised within the South East Local Enterprise Partnership area’s growth plan. (See Appendix one)

2.8 A clearer thematic focus will enable arts and culture to make a bigger impact and will offer arts and cultural providers opportunities to align their efforts in smart partnerships with the education, health and social care, community development and regeneration .The innovation here, is that the approach can

also generate a great cultural offer, reach new audiences and add value to what is currently available.

- 2.9 This is the context in which a strategic role for arts and culture can be advanced by the Council.
- 2.10 It is proposed that arts and cultural activity supported by the Council, will have a strong focus on inspiring creativity, particularly in young people, this will be demonstrated by the Council commissioning with its partners, a portfolio of long term signature programmes that together, can bring about transformational change .
- 2.11 What will success look like: greater levels of achievement at school, more young people pursuing further education and training, a wider range of employers able to recruit locally, and more young creative entrepreneurs who choose Thurrock to grow their globally connected businesses.
- 2.12 Thurrock will be a place where everyone has the opportunities and the self assurance to benefit from world class arts and culture on their doorstep. The Thurrock riverscape renaissance could forge a historic link with the City and the Sea, creating the UK's most evocative interpretation of industrial and natural heritage, that everyone can enjoy. This could be a real exemplar of place making innovation.
- 2.13 Thurrock's positive profile and reputation will increase, as it becomes known as rapidly changing place, where the Council uses its power to convene proactive leaders from business, education, culture and civic society, who have the quality of ideas and the know how to draw on the best opportunities to increase future prosperity and well being .
- 2.14 Its not words but actions that matter and Thurrock needs a set of practical propositions that the Council can consider directing its resources towards and work with its citizens and its key partners to advance:

1 A cultural entitlement programme that offers every young person in Thurrock regular opportunities to experience excellent arts and culture both inside and outside of school. Talent will be nurtured and there will be industry led careers advice and clear progression pathways for young people to learn, train and be employed in the creative industries sector and beyond.

This will be the bedrock of Thurrock's ambitions for arts and culture . Led by the Director of Children's Services, who has already commenced work to build a new alliance of key players from the cultural and education sectors to co devise a sustainable programme of opportunities. (See appendix two)

2 A creative enterprise and innovation programme that attracts and supports emerging creative talent to locate and start-up their globally connected businesses in Thurrock. High House Production Park will be developed as an international centre of excellence for creative industries education, training, enterprise and innovation. (See appendix three)

3 **A creative place making programme** that takes a culture led approach to engaging communities with the physical redevelopment and future use of key sites and buildings in Thurrock. The riverscape is the most compelling place to develop a new cultural offer for everyone; it will connect disparate ideas, events, resources and facilities into one creative vision including a new living museum, cycle path, open air gallery, festival and events venue. A necklace of cultural hubs will be planned as part of the riverscape renaissance, each able to offer a unique take on the life and times of the one of the world's most iconic rivers : Rainham Marshes, High House Production Park, The State Cinema , Tilbury Cruise Terminal, Tilbury Fort, Bata, Coal House Fort and London Gateway.

2.15 Next Steps:

The purpose of highlighting a strategic role for arts and culture is to align the Council's involvement in this area more closely with some of its top priorities; helping young people to raise aspirations and attainment, diversifying the local economy to create a wider range of employment opportunities, increasing self - confidence and promoting a distinctive profile of Thurrock, the place. As a result of clarifying its strategic role, there may be other areas of cultural activity the Council will not be directly involved in but which will be valued. This is about deciding where the Council's interventions can have the greatest impact on its top priorities and how it works with external partners to help support delivery.

Consequently the Council's efforts and resources will be directed to developing a focussed portfolio of excellent initiatives that substantially advance the agreed strategic role of arts and culture. The Council will seek out new relationships with key players in the cultural, education, funding and business sectors, who can add the greatest value and it will forge longer term, more influential partnerships that can deliver transformational change.

Implementing a strategic approach to the Council's involvement in arts and culture is particularly important at a time when competition for external investment and acumen has intensified. Potential funders have expressed their interest in Thurrock, they would welcome a clear and credible vision for arts and culture from the council and stronger capability to translate that vision into fundable projects. Alongside this, we must develop a strong and successful senior relationship with the Arts Council, Heritage Lottery Fund and other national and regional institutions.

It is proposed that resources are identified to develop these programmes and to develop strong partnerships to help generate new investment. This should include arts and culture becoming embedded across the Council in order to attract more funding into these areas from national and institutional funders. In this way the strategic leadership roles of the Council will deliver a stronger long-term commitment to the community that could be delivered by the council acting as influencer and deliverer.

3. ISSUES, OPTIONS AND ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS:

- 3.1 The paper sets-out a recommended approach to strengthening the role of arts and culture, informed by an overview of the current range of activity, the strategic priorities of the council, the emerging priorities of the local enterprise partnership and the priorities potential external funders.

4. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION:

- 4.1 The recommendations will increase the impact of the Council's strategic objectives for education, community and the economic regeneration of Thurrock as a whole

5. CONSULTATION (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

- 5.1 Discussions have taken place within the council, with cultural providers and potential funders.

6. IMPACT ON CORPORATE POLICIES, PRIORITIES, PERFORMANCE AND COMMUNITY IMPACT

- 6.1 The recommendations support the delivery of the council's economic, education objectives and the overall direction of the Community Strategy.

7. IMPLICATIONS

7.1 **Financial**

Implications verified by: **Tony Cutbush**
Telephone and email: **01375 652545**
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Following the agreement of the recommendations, a implementation plan will be prepared that will identify any future financial implications for future consideration by Cabinet.

7.2 **Legal**

Implications verified by: **Chris Pickering**
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None. Consultation has been referred to in the report.

7.3 **Diversity and Equality**

Implications verified by: **Samson DeAlyn**
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It is intended that implementing a strategic role for arts and culture will generate new audiences and more opportunities for engagement and participation. Furthermore, it is intended that strengthening the role of arts and culture will take account of Thurrock's diverse communities.

7.4 **Other implications (where significant) – i.e. Section 17, Risk Assessment, Health Impact Assessment, Sustainability, IT, Environmental**

None .

BACKGROUND PAPERS USED IN PREPARING THIS REPORT (include their location and identify whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

- None.

APPENDICES TO THIS REPORT:

Appendix 1 - Creative Industries in the South East

Appendix 2 - A Cultural Entitlement in Thurrock

Appendix 3 - Thurrock Creative Industries Innovation Hub

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