

16 September 2015		ITEM: 5
Planning, Transport and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee		
Heritage, Arts and Culture Ambitions in Thurrock		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Yes	
Report of: Stephen Taylor, Programmes and Projects Manager		
Accountable Head of Service: Matthew Essex, Head of Regeneration		
Accountable Director: Steve Cox, Assistant Chief Executive		
This report is public		

Executive Summary

Art, culture and heritage are a vital part of Thurrock's growth story. Access to great cultural and heritage assets is important in itself but also as a catalyst to improve health and wellbeing, to inspire, to raise educational attainment and improve quality of life.

Cabinet received the 'Unleashing Creative Ambition' report in December 2013 which re-aligned the approach to arts, culture and heritage with the Council's vision and priorities, placing the cultural agenda at the heart of the Growth Programme. Since then a number of initiatives have developed including the Thurrock Trailblazers Programme and the very successful Village Beach Festival held in July, celebrating the work of local artists, musicians and historians. The approach is now being formalised in an emerging Art, Culture and Heritage Strategy which is aligned with Council priorities and can be used to outline a clear direction of travel in the coming years to stakeholders and potential funders.

1. Recommendation(s)

1.1 Members are invited to review the emerging strategy, to approve the direction and the developing priorities.

2. Introduction and Background

2.1 Arts, culture and heritage matter. Our quality of life is improved immeasurably through access to a rich cultural life as the arts, culture and heritage allow individuals and communities to come together, to participate, to learn and to enjoy themselves. It is a fundamental cornerstone of social cohesion as our

sense of identity as individuals and communities is heavily influenced by the cultural activity we are exposed to.

2.2 Thurrock is in the grip of exciting, game-changing growth and regeneration which is improving the physical environment, generating new homes, business accommodation and job opportunities. In the midst of transformational change there is an appetite to do things differently and the Council has adopted a clear vision and priorities that drive strategic direction and the delivery of services.

2.3 In December 2013 Cabinet received a report aligning a new approach to arts, culture and heritage in the borough with the corporate vision and priorities. The 'Unleashing Creative Ambition' report outlined three propositions that together constitute a new arts, culture and heritage brief:

- A cultural entitlement programme for every young person in Thurrock
- An enterprise and innovation programme
- A creative place-making programme

Subsequent reports have explored this new approach and the relationship with other corporate priorities such as addressing the relationship between the borough and the riverfront. As a result a portfolio of projects and initiatives ranging from the on-going development of High House Production Park as an international centre for creativity to the successful Village Beach Festival of arts and culture, showcasing local talent, has emerged.

2.4 This report seeks to cement the role of art, culture and heritage in the borough by drawing together projects and initiatives into an emerging single, co-ordinated strategy and plan. The strategy aims to set out the overall strategic approach to the cultural agenda in the borough and the context in which new initiatives will be developed, highlighting the valuable role the arts, culture and heritage play in our plans to realise the potential of the people and the place of Thurrock.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

Unleashing Ambition

3.1 The emerging Unleashing Ambition Strategy (Appendix 1) takes the December 2013 'Unleashing Creative Ambition' Cabinet Report and subsequent reports as a base from which to articulate the Council's role and approach to Arts, Culture and Heritage. The strategy seeks to recognise the areas where the Council should lead, where creative businesses can play their part, where there are gaps to be filled and where the role of the Authority is to support and promote activities, events and initiatives undertaken by many clubs, groups and societies in the borough.

3.2 The Strategy comprises four ambitions: -

- Creating fantastic locations - Art, Culture and our heritage are at the heart of building a better Thurrock
- Developing the sector – supporting existing and emerging creative talent to locate and grow in Thurrock
- Exciting events and activities - local people continue to enjoy the many opportunities to experience great art and culture and to learn about the people and place of Thurrock
- Growing our appetite for culture and heritage - developing the audience for our cultural and heritage assets to its full potential

These four ambitions will be delivered through four programmes – a creative place making programme focussed on the growth hubs; a creative enterprise and innovation programme; an activities and events programme; and a cultural entitlement programme.

3.3 The creative place-making programme will deliver a series of hubs across the borough which will act as centres for performance, the visual arts and heritage activity. The hub approach is intended to de-centralise art, culture and heritage provision and to create access routes between these hubs, improving accessibility for everybody in the borough. It seeks to support but also maximise the value and benefits of our investment in these locations. In addition the programme contributes to the delivery of other Council priorities including the growth programme and the approach to re-defining the relationship with the riverfront through the creation or further development of destination locations.

3.4 The borough is already home to a number of performance, visual arts and heritage destinations such as Coalhouse Fort, Tilbury Fort, Bata Reminiscence Centre, Thurrock Museum, Thameside Theatre, Gunpowder Magazine and Proof House in Purfleet and High House Production Park. Through the Thameside Complex Options Appraisal Report in February 2015 Cabinet has already agreed in principle to exploring how the place-making programme can enhance the existing offer and develop new locations where visual arts, performance and stories about the people and place of Thurrock can be shared. Opportunities could include the Community Hubs, Healthcare facilities, Libraries, Schools, new buildings and the renovation of old buildings through private development alongside the Growth Programme.

3.5 The programme will be embedded in and take a lead from other corporate initiative including the Growth Hub Programme and the review of the Thameside Complex. A cross-Council approach to delivering the programme can take advantage of opportunities afforded through other initiatives, make better use of existing resources and attract external funders to support a co-ordinated investment programme.

- 3.6 A creative enterprise and innovation programme embeds arts, culture and heritage into the Council's approach to economic development, skills and employment. The value of the creative sector as a driver of growth and employment has been recognised in the Thurrock Economic Development Strategy and by the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP). Creative industries in SELEP employ over 32,000 people and generate approximately £2.5billion in Gross Value Added. SELEP recognise Creative, Cultural and Media and the Visitor Economy as one of four growth sectors.
- 3.7 Thurrock is ideally placed to benefit from the growth in the sector with a competitive market for business accommodation, proximity to London and an internationally recognised centre for the creative industries at High House Production Park. Opportunities on the horizon include:
- new jobs through proposals to create a film and television studio complex in Purfleet, and from the development of small business accommodation targeted at the creative sector at High House Production Park;
 - new training opportunities including the Costume Construction Degree offered by South Essex College and accredited by University of the Arts London, delivered in partnership with the Royal Opera House at High House Production Park;
 - building on the success of previous programmes new business support provision through the development of a SELEP wide bid for European Regional Development Fund money to provide business support for the creative and cultural industries.

By working with creative businesses, our partners and with departments across the Council in a co-ordinated approach the programme will help to encourage young people's understanding of the sector and equip local residents with the skills to find jobs, start businesses and grow in Thurrock.

- 3.8 Experiencing and participating in cultural activity has been shown to improve health and well-being, to support community cohesion and to inspire people in all aspects of their lives. Thurrock is home to a large number of creatives and historians who, as individuals or in groups, clubs and societies, organise and participate in cultural activity, often through performances and exhibitions seeking to engage the rest of the community. The borough is also home to a number of popular festivals and events such as the Orsett Show and the FUSED festival, which are an opportunity for residents to engage in the arts and to learn about Thurrock.
- 3.9 In 2015 arts organisation Metal, supported by the Council, Arts Council England and other partners produced the Village Beach Festival in Grays, attracting over 6,000 people to a showcase of local music, history, art and creative talent which celebrated the breadth and depth of the cultural sector in the borough. The festival sought to complement existing activities and events and to offer local creatives and historians an opportunity to showcase their interests and talents. Building on the success of the festival, the emerging

strategy proposes working with Metal to make Village Beach an annual showcase of local talent and history and a focal point of a wider celebration of the Thames Estuary which Metal are seeking to produce with performances, exhibitions, installations and explanations of the people and place of south Essex. If the approach is agreed, the Council will need to offer some financial support to the festival however sponsorship and external funding will be sought to minimise the cost.

- 3.10 Through developing and publicising the programme of events and activities delivered by groups across the borough, focussing on provision at the heritage, performance and visual arts hubs and focussing on an annual celebration of culture and history at Village Beach the residents, workers and visitors to Thurrock will have the opportunity to access great art and culture and to learn about the area.
- 3.11 While a cultural and historic events and activities programme will provide opportunities for residents, businesses and visitors to engage in cultural activity and to learn about Thurrock. These opportunities will only continue to grow and flourish if there is a demand for them. The fourth strand of the strategy focuses on building that demand to its full potential. It recognises the contribution the arts, culture and heritage agenda can make to other priorities such as health and well-being and seeks to build demand through projects such as delivery of the very successful Thurrock Trailblazers Pathfinder Programme and the web-based cultural development tool the Council has supported this year – IDEA13.
- 3.12 There has been a particular focus on developing a cultural entitlement programme for young people with the Cultural Entitlement Pathfinder Initiative - Thurrock Trailblazers - developed with partners including the Royal Opera House and creating a programme of activities to inspire and engage young people, to raise aspiration and educational attainment. Good progress has been made with the programme now being rolled out to all schools in the borough.
- 3.13 Coupled with the Village Beach festival, Metal established IDEA13 Thurrock – a web-based cultural development tool to promote artists, performers, musicians and events and activities across the borough. A promotional campaign aimed at local residents as well as providers of cultural and heritage activity could build use of the website as a single point of reference for events and activities in Thurrock.
- 3.14 A second aspect of this promotional campaign will seek to raise awareness of the value the art, culture and heritage agenda can add to activity that addresses other priorities such as social care and health and well-being. By raising awareness and co-ordinating the approach, opportunities for more projects will present themselves which will help deliver other service priorities for the Council and other partners.

Implementation

- 3.15 If the emerging strategy and priorities are to be delivered then clear governance arrangements will need to be put in place to ensure projects deliver the outputs, outcomes and ambitions set out in a co-ordinated and controlled manner. The Council uses Programme Boards to oversee other areas of work and it is proposed that a Board, chaired at Director level, is established and oversees the projects and activities in the portfolio from the Council's perspective, while recognising that many projects and activities will continue to be delivered by the many clubs, groups and societies in the area. The Board will need to be administered by a lead department however leadership of the Council's involvement in particular project strands will be spread across different Services. Alongside the Board, clear communication mechanisms will be required to engage with residents and work with performance, visual art and heritage groups, businesses, funders and other stakeholders.
- 3.16 A phased approach to delivering the four ambitions will be required. The emerging strategy identifies the initial thoughts on the priorities for the first phase of implementation however it is recognised that the activities undertaken will evolve. Initial priorities around mapping, researching and investing in the creation and enhancement of facilities and locations will give way to revenue funded activity seeking to animate spaces and facilities alongside longer term capital investment.

Conclusion

- 3.17 The arts, culture and heritage agenda is important in itself and for the opportunity it affords the council and partners to positively influence a number of other priorities – health, well-being, educational attainment and community cohesion to name a few. The strategy offers a positive context and direction of travel in which current initiatives and new ideas can be developed to deliver the strategic outcomes and delivering great art, culture and heritage for everyone.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

- 4.1 The Council has been reviewing its role in the arts, culture and heritage agenda since the approach was aligned with the council vision and priorities agreed by Cabinet in December 2013. The emerging strategy seeks to cement the role of arts, culture and heritage in the borough and to recognise the value of these activities for their own sakes and as a catalyst to support other priorities. It sets out some key projects that the Council could develop in the coming years, a framework which any new initiatives will need to contribute to and a methodology for implementation to oversee the programmes and monitor performance.

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

- 5.1 This report has been informed by the series of reports to Cabinet beginning in December 2013 with 'Unleashing Creative Ambition'. Each of these reports has been consulted on through discussion in the Council, with cultural providers and with potential funders.
- 5.2 Consultation on particular initiatives has also taken place. For example a series of informal consultation events engaged local artists, performers and community organisations with an interest in the creative sector to discuss both the Village Beach Festival and IDEA13. New initiatives will be subject to consultation within the Council, with stakeholders and local residents as appropriate.

6. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact

- 6.1 This strategy sets out the Council's priorities in relation to the art, culture and heritage agenda in Thurrock and will contribute to the delivery of other Council priorities such as economic development and raising educational attainment.

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Mike Jones**
Management Accountant

This report is for members to comment on the strategy and as such there are no direct financial implications. Any financial commitments resulting from the strategy will need to be met through existing budgets or addressed in the subsequent report to Cabinet.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **David Lawson**
Deputy Head of Legal and Governance

Members are being invited to review and comment on the strategy and the portfolio of projects and as such there are no direct legal implications at this stage

7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Natalie Warren**

Community Development and Equalities Manager

Consideration will need to be given to equality and diversity requirements at all stages of implementation. The lead for each project should consider the equality and diversity implications during project development and advice should be sought from relevant groups as appropriate. Projects will need to acknowledge our increasingly diverse local community and the need to ensure an inclusive cultural offer. Particular consideration will need to be given to physical access to facilities and events.

7.4 Other implications (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder)

None.

8. Background papers used in preparing the report (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

- 11th December 2013 Cabinet Report – Unleashing Creative Ambition – A Strategic Role for Arts and Culture in Thurrock
- 2nd July 2014 Cabinet Report – Celebrating the River Thames
- 17th December 2014 Cabinet Report – Thames Estuary Festival
- 11th February 2015 Cabinet Report – Thameside Complex - Options Appraisal (Stage One)
- 11th March 2015 Cabinet Report – High House Production Park

<http://democracy.thurrock.gov.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?CId=129&Year=0>

9. Appendices to the report

- (Appendix 1) Unleashing Ambition – Great Arts, Culture and Heritage for Everyone

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