

ARTS, CULTURE AND HERITAGE STRATEGY

Head of Service:	Victoria Potts, Interim Director of Environment, Housing and Regeneration
Wards affected:	(All Wards);
Urgent Decision?(yes/no)	No
If yes, reason urgent decision required:	
Appendices (attached):	Appendix 1 – Arts, Culture and Heritage Strategy 2023 - 2028 Appendix 2 – Arts, Culture and Heritage Strategy Action Plan for Year 1: 2023/2024 Appendix 3 – Draft Equality Impact Assessment

Summary

The Arts, Culture and Heritage Strategy for Epsom and Ewell sets out a vision and direction for the development of cultural services, facilities, and activities within the borough.

Recommendation (s)

The Committee is asked to:

- (1) Adopt the Arts, Culture and Heritage Strategy.**
- (2) Note that as part of implementing the strategy and action plan officers will:**
 - i) establish a Cultural Stakeholder Group,**
 - ii) plan, lead and deliver council-led projects and activities set out within the current and future action plans, and support and facilitate the activities of partners in delivering the strategy,**
 - iii) identify new arts, heritage and cultural partners and stakeholders and work on feasibility studies for future projects and initiatives as resources allow,**
 - iv) write and submit any grant funding requests that will support delivery of the Arts, Culture and Heritage Strategy.**

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- 1.1 To enable officers to deliver the Annual Plan 2023/2024 targets.

2 Background

- 2.1 High quality, sustainable and well-located arts, culture and heritage provision is an important component of successful communities and in defining and lending a distinctiveness and vibrancy to the places where we live.
- 2.2 The COVID-19 pandemic has underlined the shared human need for cultural engagement, and the opportunities for inspiration, resilience and healing offered through arts participation and creative expression.
- 2.3 The Arts, Culture and Heritage Strategy for Epsom & Ewell has been developed to take forward the ambitions associated with the 'cultural and creative' priority theme identified during the largest public consultation exercise conducted by the Council - Future40 - which resulted in *Our Vision for Epsom and Ewell*.
- 2.4 The strategy sets out a vision and direction for the development of arts, heritage and cultural services, facilities and activities within the borough. It seeks to ensure that our physical buildings, or 'cultural infrastructure', heritage and arts organisations can play an increasingly central role in the public life of the borough.
- 2.5 Drawing on the views of the 1000+ members of the public, private and voluntary organisations obtained during the Future40 consultation, development of the Arts, Culture and Heritage Strategy is also informed by ongoing consultation with key partners and cultural stakeholders.
- 2.6 Based on a thorough review of both national and local policy and data analysis, the strategy has been developed to sit within and complement the existing council wide policy framework.
- 2.7 Substantial evidence points to the many ways in which culture has a positive effect upon people and society. For example, the increase in physical and psychological health and wellbeing associated with participating in arts activities. The Arts, Culture and Heritage Strategy therefore considers the needs and requirements of the community, identified in the Council's existing Health & Wellbeing Strategy and Community Development Plan.
- 2.8 The strategy will be primarily web-based, supported by an action plan which is subject to periodic review as the opportunities to work with partners and stakeholders emerge and evolve. It will be a living document, in a state of constant monitoring, evaluation, review and updating. A summarised version of the strategy has been produced to aid clarity.

3 What do we mean by ‘Culture’?

- 3.1 Whether consciously or unconsciously, culture is a part of each of our days. Definitions of culture vary widely and often mean something different to each of us as individuals.
- 3.2 In the context of this strategy, ‘culture’ is defined as both tangible – embodied in historic building and areas of cultural significance, and intangible – experienced in painterly practices, craft, performing arts or music production.
- 3.3 Culture in the Epsom & Ewell context is experienced in historic buildings, landscapes and monuments, museums, libraries, archives and galleries, theatres and performance spaces, arts centres, arts organisations, festivals, carnivals and digital spaces.
- 3.4 Whatever ‘culture’ is to us as individuals, collectively it is a vivid asset to our community and a wider concern in our ongoing civic conversation.

4 Why an Arts, Culture and Heritage Strategy is important.

- 4.1 One of the key benefits to developing a focus on arts, culture and heritage is summarised succinctly by the Local Government Association:

“Used effectively, culture and the institutions and services of culture (museums, libraries, festivals and many other elements) can contribute toward the revitalisation of communities, the development of trust, improved health and wellbeing, and the possibility of a more positive future.”

- 4.2 Some of the more specific benefits that pursuing delivery of the borough’s first Arts, Culture and Heritage Strategy are intended to realise are suggested below. This should not be seen as an exhaustive list as new opportunities and benefits will reveal themselves as the Arts, Culture and Heritage Strategy matures:
- 4.3 A strong cultural sector and enriching cultural life can contribute to creating welcoming, distinctive and attractive places. This in turn can lead to increased inward investment, tourism and trade. Leveraging the arts, culture and heritage assets in the borough can contribute to regeneration and the place-making agenda, showcasing Epsom and Ewell as a place where people will want to live in, work in, do business in and visit.

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- 4.4 An adopted Arts, Culture and Heritage Strategy will demonstrate the borough council's commitment to the benefits and importance of developing culture within our communities. A focus on culture can help to promote equality and inclusion and increase opportunity for all to access cultural activities, engaging diverse communities in a wider civic conversation.
- 4.5 The strategy will provide a vehicle for coordinating an approach to arts, culture and heritage provision. Developing a shared vision with residents and partners which encourages and promotes partnership working and a pooling of resources to maximise opportunities, benefits, and reach.
- 4.6 Many arts, culture and heritage services already provided and supported by the council deliver a set of wider social and economic outcomes, such as improvements in the health and well-being of residents and enhancement of entrepreneurial skills and future employability.
- 4.7 Developing an Arts, Culture and Heritage Strategy demonstrates clearly how culture contributes to delivering the Annual Plan and Corporate Plan and other key policy agendas of the council and its partners.
- 4.8 Providing access to cultural activities gives people the opportunity actively to engage and participate in enjoyable and stimulating activities in their free time. This in turn, helps to identify and develop opportunities for learning and discovery about the local environment.
- 4.9 In a time when the pressure on public finances has never been greater, having an Arts, Culture and Heritage Strategy in place, as well as the necessary strategic partnerships, increases the likelihood of securing larger amounts of funding, such as from the Arts Council England.

5 Strategy Development

- 5.1 The Annual Plan 2023/ 2024 set out a priority under the 'cultural & creative' theme to 'promote Epsom & Ewell's identity as a centre for creative and cultural excellence', this is to be delivered by developing a 'a costed and resourced Arts, Culture and Heritage Strategy'. The presentation of the Cultural Strategy to this Committee therefore realises this important Annual Plan target.
- 5.2 The strategy began its development journey in 2022, with a stakeholder meeting hosted at The Horton (arts centre) and comprised of several the borough's key arts and cultural organisations and stakeholders.

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- 5.3 In February 2023, an Arts, Culture and Heritage Programme Officer was appointed on a fixed term basis to accelerate strategy development and begin collating a programme of projects and events to align with the Arts, Culture and Heritage Strategy and to 'promote the borough's rich history and heritage' - also an Annual Plan priority.
- 5.4 A follow up stakeholder consultation event was held in June 2023, hosted by the Friends of Nonsuch Museum and the Nonsuch Voles at Nonsuch Park.
- 5.5 Multiple meetings have been held with many of the organisations that make up the cultural ecosystem of the borough. A full list of all of the organisations who have contributed with feedback, offers of help, opinions and observations are included as an Appendix to the strategy.
- 5.6 Given the wealth of such organisations within the borough, officers recognise that not every organisation has been engaged with directly but will continue to forge new relationships and capture the details of organisations as we progress.
- 5.7 In preparing the Arts, Culture and Heritage Strategy, officers have:
- Conducted consultation events and meetings as referred to above.
 - Researched and prepared a synopsis of the current policy landscape for culture and the wider funding context.
 - Begun mapping Epsom and Ewell's existing cultural infrastructure and resources.
 - Reviewed Epsom and Ewell's adopted strategies and that of key partner organisations to identify overlapping priorities.
 - Begun to identify current need and future demand for arts, culture and heritage service provision.
 - Reviewed demographic and audience data.
 - Worked with colleagues to assess the sustainability of existing (Council owned) cultural infrastructure and activities to identify opportunities for enhancement and future development.

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- 5.8 Whilst most of the feedback received has been very positive, a small number (two) stakeholders have expressed some concerns or made some observations that have either been incorporated into the Arts, Culture and Heritage Strategy or will need to be developed jointly with other Cultural stakeholders as delivery of the strategy proceeds. A summary of the main issues are as follows:

Issue/ Observation	Proposed Solution
<p>'The Council needs to do more to promote The Horton'.</p> <p>'The Horton doesn't appear anywhere on the Council's website'.</p>	<p>An Arts, Culture and Heritage webpage will be costed for inclusion on the Council's own website to provide information on the strategy and its attributed commitment to the borough's community.</p> <p>In the meantime, there is already an established and very active 'What's On' webpage on the EEBC website which is free for all to access and upload information to. This page allows the community of Epsom and Ewell to share information about events/performances - both paid for and free.</p> <p>The Borough Boards are also available for community stakeholders to use to promote their own programme of events.</p> <p>Both EEBC's Arts, Culture and Heritage and Communication teams have met with The Horton earlier this year to share this information and encourage The Horton to use these channels.</p> <p>Whilst the Council are not obligated to promote/endorse The Horton either on or offline and there is no formal agreement to do so, the Arts, Culture and Heritage Strategy does offer the opportunity to explore with all members of the cultural community, engaging ways of promoting the entire cultural offering within the borough.</p>
<p>'More needs to be made of the borough's historic associations as a Spa Town'</p>	<p>Practical ways of achieving this to be progressed with the Cultural Stakeholder Group.</p>

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<p>'The Strategy should not be about generating income from council (cultural) venues'.</p> <p>'Economic growth should be a byproduct of a Cultural Strategy, not a driver'.</p>	<p>The 'Economic Growth' theme or 'pillar' is about cultivating economic growth within the borough through cultural outputs. Without a clear strategy imperative this will be difficult to secure.</p> <p>The reference to council cultural infrastructure venues generating income, relates to achieving a self-sustaining financial position, good and sustainable business practice for any organisation whether they are public, private or charitable sector. The wording of the strategy has been made clearer for the avoidance of doubt.</p>
<p>'The Council should not be running cultural events and activities, there are organisations out there who will be able to do this'.</p>	<p>The Council is the borough's biggest single funder and provider of (physical) cultural infrastructure, responsible for the operation a 450-seat theatre, museum, the marketplaces and numerous parks and open spaces.</p> <p>There is a place for the Council to act in numerous capacities to support and enhance the cultural offering in the borough, sometimes acting as an enabler or facilitator, sometimes a commissioner or funder, or sometimes delivering events, activities and projects itself or with partners.</p> <p>The Future40 consultation made it clear that residents want to live in a borough where there is always something happening and plentiful opportunities for engagement in heritage and the arts.</p> <p>Other adopted council strategies indicate a clear role for cultural provision in helping to meet other priorities such as the Health & Wellbeing strategy.</p>

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<p>‘The relationship between the impact of arts participation and culture and improved health and wellbeing isn’t clear enough (from the pillars)’.</p>	<p>This has been made clearer in the wording of the strategy.</p>
<p>‘This is all fantastic news, to see the arts, culture and heritage agenda progressing, but what about resources to keep up the momentum?’</p>	<p>The Arts, Culture and Heritage Officer is on a fixed term contract until the end of January 2024.</p> <p>A UKSPF funding allocation of £31, 211 means that the first year of the Arts, Culture and Heritage Strategy action plan is fully funded.</p> <p>Beyond January 2024 (staff resources) and March 2024 (project funding), there is no dedicated staff or future budget allocation.</p> <p>The staff resource issue will be the subject of a forthcoming paper to the Strategy & Resources Committee.</p> <p>The opportunity to allocate some of the anticipated funds from the UKSPF funding allocation for Epsom & Ewell in Year 3 (2024/2025), would mean that the resources were in place for continued development the annual action plans for the Arts, Culture and Heritage Strategy to have the greatest possible impact.</p> <p>As a team, the Programmes team (including the Arts, Culture and Heritage Programme Officer) will also pursue every viable opportunity to secure staff resource via work experience placements, providing volunteering opportunities and apprenticeships.</p>

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6 Strategic Priorities & Next Steps

6.1 A number of clear priorities have emerged in the process of developing the strategy. These priorities form the three strategic pillars, underpinning the strategy and were consulted on both during and following, the most recent stakeholder consultation event which took place in June 2023. They are:

6.2 **Nurturing Talent**

6.3 *To strengthen the creative and cultural identity of Epsom and Ewell by championing the talent within our community.*

6.4 To achieve this, we will work with partners to:

- Showcase the diversity of cultural and creative outputs (in the borough).
- Curate arts, cultural and heritage projects that build pride.
- Develop trust and confidence.
- Celebrate avenues of co-curation as a catalyst for bold programming.
- 'Access markets' will be created for new starters or established talents already working within Epsom and Ewell.
- Develop opportunities for local creative, cultural and heritage practitioners to lead projects locally and provide opportunities.
- Create opportunities for internships and work experience placements.
- Provide local talent with affordable workspace, fabrication, exhibition and performance space.

6.5 **Inclusivity and Access for All**

6.6 *To create a thriving and inclusive creative and cultural outreach programme – for all to enjoy and benefit from, near and far.*

6.7 To do this we will work with partners to:

- Develop a programme of events and activities with partners and within the Council's own infrastructure.

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- Ensure that cultural programming is relevant, relatable, and carried out for our community as well as by them.
- Widen access to the rich heritage and histories within our borough through the digitalisation of archival information and creation of interactive and engaging digital tools.
- Work with external stakeholders on collaborative and/or complimentary projects to achieve a wider reach, and clearer message.

6.8 Economic Growth

6.9 *To cultivate economic growth within the borough through cultural outputs.*

6.10 To achieve this, we will work with partners to:

- Establish a Cultural Stakeholder Group comprised of cultural leaders who will champion the cultural, creative and heritage sectors alongside the Council and work together to raise the profile of the sector as a whole and the identity and brand of Epsom & Ewell as a centre for cultural, creative and heritage excellence.
- Investigate, facilitate and promote opportunities for local creative, cultural and heritage practitioners to access 'Meanwhile use' – using vacant spaces within the borough for cultural, commercial and economic gain and growth.
- Work with external stakeholders to create a robust, collaborative, economically quantifiable offering for visitors.
- By making culture more visible we can establish clear markers of inclusive growth, with resulting uplift in financial revenue generation within the borough.
- Create an awareness that some elements of cultural-led growth will take long-term planning and sustained commitment by the Council and its partners.

6.11 The action plan in the first year of the Arts, Culture and Heritage Strategy, will be structured around delivery of these strategic pillars and reviewed annually.

6.12 Officers will work to develop an informative set of key performance indicators to support monitoring of the impact of the strategy and the associated action plan.

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- 6.13 The intention is to produce a colourful and engaging copy of the strategy for publication on the Council's website, the opportunity to design the graphics and lead on the overall presentation of the document will be offered to a local creative agency to showcase established talent in the borough, or to help an establishing creative(s) to boost their portfolio with a 'live' project.
- 6.14 Having established a network of culture sector contacts in the process of establishing the strategy, a Cultural Stakeholder Group will be formed to review the strategy and action plan and to share opportunities for collaborative working.

7 Risk Assessment

Legal or other duties

- 7.1 Equality Impact Assessment
 - 7.1.1 A separate Equality Impact Assessment has been prepared and is being shared with the Council's Diversity and Equality Group for consideration. The draft is attached for reference, a final copy will be published alongside the adopted Arts, Culture and Heritage Strategy and reviewed annually.
- 7.2 Crime & Disorder
 - 7.2.1 No implications associated with this report.
- 7.3 Safeguarding
 - 7.3.1 No implications associated with this report.
- 7.4 Dependencies – availability of staff and funding
 - 7.4.1 Delivery of the Arts, Culture and Heritage Strategy and the associated action plan(s) is dependent on the availability of resources. The Arts, Culture and Heritage Programme Officer is currently on a fixed term, contract, due to terminate in January 2024 a report on this matter will be presented to Strategy & Resources Committee shortly.
 - 7.4.2 The programme of events and activities in Year 1, is being delivered using funding obtained for this purpose through the council's allocation of UKSPF (Levelling Up) funding. There is an opportunity for a further allocation to be made from the forthcoming (notional) allocation of UKSPF funding for the delivery of the Arts, Culture and Heritage Strategy Action Plan for Year 2 of the strategy and beyond.

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7.4.3 Delivering a programme of cultural events and activities as set out in the Annual Plan 2023/2024 and carried through to the Arts, Culture and Heritage Strategy, relies on the availability of space to facilitate them.

7.4.4 As the Council itself is one of the largest owners of publicly accessible space in the borough, it may be necessary to balance delivering the events, activities and projects associated with the Arts, Culture and Heritage Strategy with a loss of income in venue hire on occasion. This contribution to delivery of the strategy can be recorded and captured and officers are developing approaches to measuring the impact on 'spill over' income associated with holding cultural events, for example in increased café or parking income.

7.5 Other

7.5.1 None arising.

8 Financial Implications

8.1 Year 1, of the Arts, Culture and Heritage Strategy Action Plan is fully funded using the allocation of £31,211 UK Shared Prosperity Fund – Levelling Up funding allocated for this purpose.

8.2 Work will progress to identify funding to enable delivery of subsequent years of the strategy.

8.3 **Section 151 Officer's comments:** Delivery of subsequent years of the strategy will depend on the Committee being able to identify the necessary funding or resources.

9 Legal Implications

9.1 The powers under section 145, Local Government Act 1972 underpin the legal basis for developing a Cultural Strategy. This provision permits the Council to arrange or contribute towards the expenses of anything necessary or expedient for any of the following:- (a) the provision of an entertainment of any nature or of facilities for dancing; (b) the provision of a theatre, concert hall, dance hall or other premises suitable for the giving of entertainments or the holding of dances; (c) the maintenance of a band or orchestra; (d) the development and improvement of the knowledge, understanding and practice of the arts and the crafts which serve the arts; (e) any purpose incidental to the matters aforesaid, including the provision of refreshments or programmes and the advertising of any entertainment given or dance or exhibition of arts or crafts held by them

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9.2 Any collaboration or delivery model to achieve the objectives set out in the strategy with outside bodies (including with funding bodies) will need to comply with relevant legislative requirements and the Council's Constitution including its Contract Standing Orders

9.3 **Legal Officer's comments:** As above

10 Policies, Plans & Partnerships

10.1 **Council's Key Priorities:** The following Key Priorities are engaged: Cultural and Creative.

10.2 **Service Plans:** The matter is included within the current Service Delivery Plan.

10.3 **Climate & Environmental Impact of recommendations:**

10.4 Dissemination of the Strategy will be by digital means to reduce the potential impact on the environment. The strategy prioritises creating digital access to heritage and cultural assets which along with widening access and participation, will have the benefit of reducing some journeys to venues.

10.5 **Sustainability Policy & Community Safety Implications:**

10.6 One of the first projects to be delivered under the strategy is a Community Mural project. Officers are investigating the value of public art in creating civic pride and will evaluate this first project for potential scalability.

10.7 **Partnerships:**

10.8 A substantial amount of input has been obtained from partners in preparing the Arts, Culture and Heritage Strategy. It is proposed that a Cultural Stakeholder Group is established to capitalise on the positive relationships established in this process.

11 Background papers

11.1 The documents referred to in compiling this report are as follows:

Previous reports:

- [Annual Plan 2023/24](#) – Strategy and Resources Committee, 28 March 2023

Other papers:

- [Our Vision Epsom and Ewell](#)