

Wiltshire Council

Cabinet

15 July 2024

Subject: Wiltshire Cultural Strategy

Cabinet Member: Cllr Richard Clewer – Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Military-Civilian Integration, Heritage, Arts, Tourism, Health and Wellbeing

Key Decision: Key

Executive Summary

Wiltshire is a thriving county with rich and diverse arts culture and heritage.

The council provides grant funding support to four strategic arts partners who operate in the county as well as operating both the Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre and the Young Gallery in Salisbury through a trust model. Many of our 20 leisure centres and 31 libraries also provide spaces for arts and cultural activity. It also provides additional support to heritage organisations and museums and has either delivered or supported a broad array of arts and cultural events, activities and programmes, as well as investigating in related infrastructure, which has ensured arts and culture enriches the lives of residents.

The development of the Wiltshire Cultural Strategy 2024-2030 has been commissioned by Wiltshire Council (WC), with financial support from the Arts Council England (ACE).

The ambition for the Strategy is for it to be an enabling framework built around five pillars: Economy, Identity, Tourism, Health and Wellbeing and Community.

The strategy has been developed over a five-month period. In that time extensive research was undertaken including reviewing strategies, data and management plans, benchmarking, and national case studies. There was a detailed mapping exercise to identify key cultural assets. This was combined with a multi-layered consultation and engagement programme.

There are three core principles embedded across the Strategy:

- **Empower others:** Take an enabling approach, working in partnership, co-creating and making things easier for independent action
- **Environment:** Be ambitious in caring for, and enhancing the natural environment and addressing climate change
- **Access:** Work towards universal 'cultural entitlement' and ensure all opportunities are designed to be inclusive and accessible to all.

The strategy includes the core objectives:

- Increase the number of people experiencing and creating culture in Wiltshire
- Increase engagement in arts and cultural activities by diverse audiences, including those who face engagement barriers
- Enable places to shape their own cultural identity
- Support good physical and mental health and wellbeing and community resilience

- Use art and culture as a vehicle to revitalise town centres and increase footfall
- Use art and culture as a mechanism to support economic growth in Wiltshire
- Enable the creation of a diverse creative workforce for the future
- Use art and culture to attract greater visitor numbers to Wiltshire and increase tourism
- Increase engagement with nature and the environment through culture and reduce the environmental impact of cultural activity

The Strategy:

- identifies the ambitions and actions for each of the key themes. The strategy includes a detailed action plan that outlines how Wiltshire Council will deliver on this strategy over the short, medium and long term.
- includes an Evaluation plan detailing how progress will be measured
- proposes a governance structure that will drive the delivery of the Strategy.

Proposals

That Cabinet

- 1) Endorse the proposed Wiltshire Cultural Strategy
- 2) Recommends that Full Council adopt the Cultural Strategy and add it to Part 3B Paragraph 1.2 as a Policy Framework item.

Reason for Proposals

The Wiltshire Cultural Strategy 2024-2030 supports the delivery of key priorities set out in Wiltshire Council's 2022-32 Business Plan. It seeks to address key challenges outlined above through a better connected, stronger creative and cultural sector and a more vibrant and diverse cultural offer, delivered through collaboration with strategic partners, the cultural and creative sector and communities.

Parvis Khansari

Corporate Director, Place

Wiltshire Council

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Key Decision: Key

Purpose of Report

- 1. To adopt the Wiltshire Cultural Strategy 2024-2030

Relevance to the Council’s Business Plan

- 2. The Strategy will support good access to culture which forms part of Wiltshire Council’s Business Plan under its mission of wanting “Wiltshire to be a place where we all live well together.” (p.4)
- 3. The Strategy will ‘Support for community-based cultural activities, linking major arts organisations, museums and community groups.’ (Resilient Society: We live well together p.15)
- 4. The development of ‘New strategies for regeneration, visitor economy and cultural offers...’ is included in the Business Plan. (‘Thriving Economy: We have vibrant, well-connected communities. p.26).
- 5. The Wiltshire Cultural Strategy supports the business plan mission priorities as follows:

Council business plan

The people of Wiltshire are empowered to live full, healthy and enriched lives.

Our communities continue to be beautiful and exciting places to live.

We lead the way in how councils and counties mitigate climate challenges ahead.

Cultural strategy

The strategy supports the development of a thriving cultural sector will enable residents developing their creativity and engage in sociable cultural activity for the benefit of their mental wellbeing.

The strategy connects people to the natural landscape through culture, and where the rich diversity of its different towns, villages, cities and landscapes encourages creativity, curiosity, and discovery.

It will support cultural communities with distinctive, sustainable cultural hubs and vibrant high streets. There is a year-round calendar of festivals and events that attract people from across the county and beyond and which operate in an environmentally responsible way

Council business plan

Our local economy thrives and is supported by a skilled workforce.

Cultural strategy

The strategy supports the development of the tourist economy highlighting the county's interesting and exciting contemporary culture and rich cultural heritage and demonstrates that Wiltshire offers something for residents and visitors alike.

It provides multi-faceted support for arts and cultural organisation that in turn provide a rich source of employment opportunities in creative industries.

Background

6. Wiltshire Council has not previously developed a Council Cultural Strategy since its formation in 2009.
7. The development of the Wiltshire Cultural Strategy 2024-2030 has been commissioned by Wiltshire Council (WC), with financial support from the Arts Council England (ACE).
8. The council provides grant funding support to four strategic arts partners who operate in the county as well as operating both the Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre and the Young Gallery in Salisbury through a trust model. Many of our 20 leisure centres and 31 libraries also provide spaces for arts and cultural activity.
9. Wiltshire Council provides additional support to heritage organisations and museums and has either delivered or supported a broad array of arts and cultural events, activities and programmes, as well as investing in related infrastructure, which has ensured arts and culture enriches the lives of residents.
10. The county has a rich contemporary culture with three Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisations along with a variety of other arts organisations it has several recognised creative clusters in Trowbridge, Salisbury, Malmesbury and Marlborough and specialisms in createch, architecture, publishing and the creative arts.
11. The county has long been a magnet and inspiration for visual artists, writers and musicians, and a place that inspires people to get involved in culture as volunteers.
12. The county is animated year-round by a rich and diverse range of festivals and events that together tell Wiltshire's collective story of cultural tradition and contemporary interests.
13. The strategy places culture and creativity at the heart of Wiltshire's economic and social future and ensure community engagement and ownership. And acts as a vehicle to support the delivery of key priorities set out in Wiltshire Council's 2022-2032 Business Plan.

Main Considerations for the Council

14. Culture is a difficult concept to define, and it means different things to different people. For some, culture is about preserving and sharing customs, beliefs, and a way of life, protecting heritage and history, and preserving it for future generations. For others, culture is a way to reconnect people with the places they live, providing a sense of

belonging and sharing our passions and traditions with visitors. Culture attracts visitors and inspires reactions. It contributes to our health and wellbeing, it stimulates growth, employment, and development, and it grounds us in our communities, making our city, towns, and villages, places where people want to live, work, and raise a family.

15. For Wiltshire Council, culture is a multifaceted concept. The strategy was built around five key themes.

- **Economy** - Culture is a central pillar of our approach to economic development, regeneration, and the development of vibrant local communities. It helps us re-imagine the way in which people engage with their towns and encourages long-term and sustainable businesses on our high streets.
- **Identity** - Culture connects people with the places they live. It helps us discover more about our environment, its history, and its heritage. It also teaches us about ourselves, and our connection with our County.
- **Tourism** - Culture is also a key component of our offer to visitors, both from the UK, and further afield.
- **Health and wellbeing** - Culture contributes to both mental and physical health. It helps people get active. It stimulates minds, and encourages healthy, active, and engaged lifestyles.
- **Community**: Culture brings communities together, whether it's through village fetes, community fairs and festivals.

16. It is intended for it to be a co-created County-level strategy reflecting the views and input of the sector, relevant partners and communities. It includes a detailed action plan that outlines how Wiltshire Council will deliver the strategy.

17. However, despite the main positive cultural aspects of the county, there are cultural challenges that the strategy and action plan seeks to address including:

- There are social and health inequalities in some communities and access to cultural opportunities depends on where you live
- the scale and geography of the county can make communication and knowledge exchange difficult.
- The creative and cultural sector is fragmented and fragile and levels of engagement and visitor numbers have not returned to pre-pandemic levels.
- There are issues around raising the aspiration and attainment of young people and the need to ensure that there is more in the cultural offer to inspire and empower them.
- Wiltshire's identity, economy and future is intrinsically linked with the natural environment and the county is committed to taking an ambitious approach to addressing climate change and enhancing the natural environment in all it does.

18. Development of the strategy was underpinned by five phases:

- **Phase 1**: Carry out research that will highlight the challenges and opportunities for developing culture across Wiltshire.
- **Phase 2**: Establish a governance model to oversee both the development of the strategy and its implementation
- **Phase 3**: Create an engagement plan and consult with relevant stakeholders to establish local priorities, opportunities and challenges

- **Phase 4:** Support the Project Steering Group to develop the Cultural Strategy – helping to identify a vision and create an action plan, including determining what success will look like and how this will be measured.
- **Phase 5:** development of the Cultural Strategy.

19. Extensive research was undertaken including reviewing strategies, data and management plans, benchmarking, and national case studies. There was a detailed mapping exercise to identify key cultural assets. This was combined with a multi-layered consultation and engagement programme that included in 22 key stakeholder discussions, 3 workshops (2 face to face and 1 online) and an online survey.

- 772 local people were consulted as part of this process
- 639 assets were identified and mapped
- 50+ strategic documents and data sources were reviewed and analysed

20. As well as gathering information, the process aimed to raise awareness of the new Cultural Strategy; build trust with local residents, creative and cultural practitioners and other stakeholders; embed local ownership of the nascent ideas and develop or strengthen strategic partnerships that will help drive forward the Strategy.

21. The Evidence Base and SWOT revealed several key aspects that the Strategy addresses:

- The importance of the natural landscape and the level of ambition around environmental action
- Balancing the unique identities, needs and independence of each place with the need to work together on shared initiatives that transcend any one organisation
- A generally high quality of life but with pockets of social and health inequalities in particular communities
- A vibrant cultural sector that drives health and wellbeing and placemaking, but which is fragmented and fragile. Strong clusters around festivals and events, cultural hubs and visual arts
- A relatively hidden creative sector which needs support to grow
- A patchy cultural education offer for children and young people with unclear talent pathways into the creative sector
- Low value of tourism with numbers that have not returned to pre-pandemic levels.
- Lots of good practice and activity which is not effectively joined up or celebrated
- A hugely diverse range of partners and people involved in culture with different capacities, resources and objectives and which will require a multi-layered approach
- Culture cuts across many different council teams, policy areas and partnerships with no central co-ordination
- Extreme pressures on resources which makes it essential to find ways of working with others to deliver shared goals.

22. The strategy has been developed upon on the seven pillars of Identity, Health and wellbeing, Community, Economy, Tourism, Communicate and Connect, with each pillar having an outcome for 2030 beyond.

23. The strategy's vision states that Wiltshire will be:

- a vibrant beacon of culture
- a place of creativity, celebration and connection
- a place where culture supports health and happiness
- a place where young people and creative enterprise can flourish
- a place where economic growth is stimulated through distinctive and vibrant places where people want to visit, live, work, and raise a family
- a better-connected place where culture is the heartbeat of every village, town, city and landscape.

24. There are three core principles embedded across the Strategy:

- **Empower others:** Take an enabling approach, working in partnership, co-creating and making things easier for independent action
- **Environment:** Be ambitious in caring for, and enhancing the natural environment and addressing climate change
- **Access:** Work towards universal 'cultural entitlement' and ensure all opportunities are designed to be inclusive and accessible to all.

25. The strategy's core objectives include:

- Increase the number of people experiencing and creating culture in Wiltshire
- Increase engagement in arts and cultural activities by diverse audiences, including those who face engagement barriers
- Enable places to shape their own cultural identity
- Support good physical and mental health and wellbeing and community resilience
- Use art and culture as a vehicle to revitalise town centres and increase footfall
- Use art and culture as a mechanism to support economic growth in Wiltshire
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Safeguarding Implications

26. Any projects linked to the Wiltshire Cultural Strategy will be delivered under Wiltshire Council's policies and procedures on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults.

Public Health Implications

27. Health and wellbeing is one of the seven pillars upon which the strategy has been developed. With an ambition for people in Wiltshire to live full, healthy and enriched lives through developing their creativity and taking part in sociable cultural activity.

28. The Public Health team were included on the Key Stakeholders 1-2-1 meetings and have been involved in the follow up stakeholder workshop.

29. People in Wiltshire have a great quality of life, but health inequalities exist between different groups of people and between those living in our most and least deprived areas. Encouraging, supporting and inspiring people to get active and connect with

others through arts and culture has been shown to have a transformative effect on health and happiness.

30. There is evidence to support that those who engaged in crafts during middle and old age were 45% less likely to develop mild cognitive impairment. (reference <https://www.thebestofhealth.co.uk/health-conditions/dementia/arts-crafts-prevent-memory-loss/>)

31. The strategy action plan for health and wellbeing aims to:

- Increase engagement and awareness of Creative Health through briefing sessions, workshops and advocacy
- Support social prescribing working with GPs and cultural partners from across the county
- Harness our key assets in the natural environment, heritage and libraries to support universal access to creative health opportunities.

Procurement Implications

32. Any procurement linked to the Cultural Strategy will be implemented under Wiltshire Council's policies and procedures on procurement.

Equalities Impact of the Proposal

33. The research undertaken as part of the development of the Cultural Strategy has indicated that there are gaps in the accessibility of arts and culture. Therefore, one of the underpinning principles is to 'Work towards universal 'cultural entitlement' and ensure all opportunities are designed to be inclusive and accessible to all'

34. The Strategy seeks to:

- increase engagement in arts and cultural activities by diverse audiences, including those who face engagement barriers.
- Use arts and culture to address issues of health inequalities faced by certain residents
- Support the placing shaping agenda that help to foster a sense of collective identity.
- Support aspirations and attainment of young people related to the cultural sector. With the potential to focus on the young military population and families in the Tidworth area.

35. Any project arising directly from the Cultural Strategy will follow the Wiltshire Council's guidance on Equality Impact assessments (EqIA) to considering how decisions made and services delivered affect people who share protected characteristics and will implement accordingly.

36. Equalities Impact Assessment for projects linked to the delivery of the Strategy will be evolving and developed to ensure projects address these key issues.

Environmental and Climate Change Considerations

37. The Climate Change team were included on the Key Stakeholders 1-2-1 meetings and have been involved in the follow up stakeholder workshop.

38. The environment and climate change consideration are embedded in the strategy via one of the three core principles of Environment: Be ambitious in caring for, and enhancing the natural environment and addressing climate change

39. The Cultural Strategy will support how arts and cultural activity can be delivered in a sustainable and environmentally responsible way.

Workforce Implications

40. The Cultural Strategy action plan seeks to increase the council's resources for culture through the creation of 1 FTE post to cover public art as part of a wider Cultural Development Officer post.

Risks that may arise if the proposed decision and related work is not taken

41. There is likely to be reputational damage to the Council in the event the Cultural Strategy is not approved and taken forward given that its development is included in the Business Plan. There could also potentially be public outcry from the arts and cultural sector.

Risks that may arise if the proposed decision is taken and actions that will be taken to manage these risks

42. The Strategy Action plan that has been developed will need a One Council approach to ensure its successful delivery. Therefore, services will need to be fully onboarded.
43. It will be essential to monitor how the council's finances and priorities may affect the ability to successfully deliver the aims and outcomes.

Financial Implications

44. Wiltshire Council has developed the strategy with the assistance of consultants FEI who have been funded by financial assistance from Arts Council England and the Wiltshire Towns Programme.
45. Future delivery of the Strategy will initially include primarily Leisure, Culture and Communities officers time and use of Arts service budget to deliver elements such as the Cultural Assembly until the Cultural Strategic Partnership has been established.
46. Key members of the Cultural Strategic Partnership will include the Council's four Arts Partners who received annual funding from the Arts Service budget.
47. Projects indicated on the action plan will be assessed on a project-by-project basis to assess whether it could be funded through council budget or will need to be external grant funded before any project proceeds.
48. The Action Plan indicates the creation of a full-time post for of a Cultural Development officer whose role will include deliver of the public art programme and as such will be part funded by the public art contribution as indicated in the [Public Art and Design in the Public Realm – 2024 Guidance](#).

Legal Implications

49. The development of the Strategy has included a varied consultation that includes 772 people from council services, arts and cultural organisations and individuals, schools and residents.
50. Approval of the Cultural Strategy is being sought in line with the Council's constitution including budget and policy framework, the Financial Regulations and the procurement and contract regulations and in accordance with any statutory requirements imposed on the Council.
51. Legal advice will be sought to ensure compliance with Subsidy Control and grant funding conditions, where appropriate.

Overview and Scrutiny Engagement

52. The Cultural Strategy will be presented to the Environment Select Committee at its meeting on 18 July 2024.

Conclusions

53. The Wiltshire Culture Strategy places culture and creativity at the heart of Wiltshire's economic and social future and ensure community engagement and ownership. And acts as a vehicle to support the delivery of key priorities set out in Wiltshire Council's 2022-2032 Business Plan.

David Redfern – Director of Leisure, Culture, and Communities

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Appendices

Appendix A – Wiltshire Cultural Strategy 2024-2030

Appendix B – Wiltshire Cultural Strategy Action plan

Appendix C – Wiltshire Cultural Strategy Evaluation plan