Wiltshire Council

Environment Select Committee

18 July 2024

Subject:	**Wiltshire Cultural Strategy 2024 - 2030**
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:	**No**

Executive Summary

1. Wiltshire is a thriving county with rich and diverse arts culture and heritage.
2. 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.
3. 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).
4. 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.
5. 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.
6. 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.
7. 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

8. 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.

Proposal

It is recommended that the Committee:

(i)   endorse the Wiltshire Cultural Strategy 2024-2030.

(ii)   acknowledge the Action Plan that is being proposed.

(iii)   request a report on the delivery of the Strategy in 18 month's time.

Reason for proposal

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.

David Redfern
Director Leisure, Culture and Communities

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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: **No**

Purpose of report

1.   To provide the Committee oversight of the Wiltshire Cultural Strategy 2024-2030

Background

2.   Wiltshire Council has not previously developed a Council Cultural Strategy since its formation in 2009.

3.   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).

4.   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.

5.   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.

6.   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.

7.   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.

8.   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.

9.   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 committee

10.   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.

11.   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.

12.   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.

13.   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.

14.   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.

15. 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

16. 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.

17. 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.

18. 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.

19. 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.

20. 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.

21. 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
- 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.

Environmental impact of the proposal

22. The Climate Change team were included on the Key Stakeholders 1-2-1 meetings and have been involved in the follow up stakeholder workshop.
23. 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
24. The Cultural Strategy will support how arts and cultural activity can be delivered in a sustainable and environmentally responsible way.

Equality and diversity impact of the proposal

25. 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'
26. 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.

27. 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.

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

Risk assessment

29. 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.

30. 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.

31. 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

32. 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.

33. 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.

34. Key members of the Cultural Strategic Partnership will include the Council's four Arts Partners who received annual funding from the Arts Service budget.

35. 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.

Legal implications

36. 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.

37. 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.

38. Legal advice will be sought to ensure compliance with Subsidy Control and grant funding conditions, where appropriate.

Conclusion

39. 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.

40. The Strategy will be reviewed for endorsement by Cabinet on 15 July 2024.

41. Following this Environment Select committee it will then proceed to Full Council on 24 July 2024 for formal adoption.

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Director Leisure, Culture and Communities

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8 July 2024

Background papers

Wiltshire Cultural Strategy 2024-2030

Appendices
Appendix B – Wiltshire Cultural Strategy Action plan
Appendix C – Wiltshire Cultural Strategy Evaluation plan