

To: Communities Policy Overview & Scrutiny Committee

By: Mike Hill, Cabinet Member for Community Services and
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Directorate

Date: 9 July 2010

Subject: Unlocking Kent's Cultural Potential: A Cultural Strategy for Kent

Classification: *Unrestricted*

Summary:

A draft Cultural Strategy for Kent has been developed by KCC's Arts Development Unit following a consultation process that has involved members of this Committee, officers and members of all local authorities; other partners and stakeholders. It will form one of the delivery mechanisms for Kent's Regeneration Framework and is attached for members comment and endorsement.

FOR COMMENT AND ENDORSEMENT

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Kent County Council's response to the DCMS' ***Culture at the Heart of Regeneration*** established its aim to be a cultural leader and to develop regional, national and international partnerships to realise that. The subsequent ***Kent Cultural Vitality*** report, prepared by ABL Cultural Consulting, laid the foundations for the development of a cultural strategy for the county. The Kent Arts Development Unit has worked since then with a range of partners to establish a strategy to transform the future impact of culture in Kent – in terms of creativity and innovation, cultural heritage, reach into Kent's wide-ranging communities, and empowering social and economic development.
- 1.2 Following a widely attended initial 'summit' event in February 2009 this Committee was consulted on the proposed shape of the strategy and method of development in July 2009. This report now reiterates the approach that has been taken and seeks members endorsement of the final draft Strategy (attached at Appendix One) for approval at Cabinet and subsequently the Kent Partnership.
- 1.3 For the purposes of the strategy 'culture' is defined as *'The arts, entertainment and events, museums, heritage and our oral and built*

heritage, media, publishing, the knowledge economy and the cultural and creative industries. This includes the provision of professional work for people's enjoyment and opportunities for participation and creativity. It includes libraries and also culture within the education sector at all levels.' This is based on the Department of Culture Media and Sport's working definition.

2. Context

2.1 Kent's regeneration framework *Unlocking Kent's Potential*, (published 2009), promotes the value and potential impact of the cultural economy. The Kent Cultural Strategy is identified as a key underpinning strategy that will help realise the aspirations for the county's future development.

2.2 Across Kent, culture is now reflected in local frameworks: Ashford, Canterbury, Dover, Gravesham, Maidstone, Shepway, Swale, Thanet and Tonbridge and Malling have an arts or cultural plan, framework or strategy, while cultural priorities for Dartford are incorporated within the Kent Thameside cultural strategy, for Sevenoaks within its community strategy, and for Tunbridge Wells within a Community Strategy and a Strategy for Leisure.

2.3 The Cultural Strategy for Kent aims to do what a local cultural strategy cannot do and does not attempt to do what a local cultural strategy can do. It is a light touch strategic framework, which informs but does not dictate other strategic plans. It recognises that partners have, and will further develop their own strategies and plans. It aims to provide a county wide context for these individual plans and to inform local decision making by setting out the direction of travel for Kent in the context of the South East and UK.

2.4 The aim of the strategy is to promote a shared understanding of how the county's cultural offer can enhance the lives of people who live in Kent; and to demonstrate how culture can be used to strengthen the individual, collective and economic wellbeing of the county. It also sets out three core intentions/aspirations and actions to deliver these over the next five years, and these aspirations are summarised below: -

- ***Intention 1. To grow Kent's creative economy by being welcoming and co-operative hosts to the creative workforce***

To achieve this we will:

- Attract and retain creative businesses
- Unlock creative talent to support the Kent creative economy
- Reveal, support and grow our existing creative businesses

- ***Intention 2. To protect Kent's existing strengths by being passionate and responsible stewards of Kent's built and natural environment***

To achieve this we will:

- Protect the past and plan for the future
- Encourage people to enjoy their built and natural environment
- Inform and manage innovation creatively

▪ ***Intention 3. To increase Kent's potential by being ambitious and resourceful planners***

To achieve this we will:

- Ensure participation is possible for all
- Plan, not hope
- Grow the confidence and skills of Kent's cultural sector to make Kent a place that offers excellent cultural experiences

3. Process for the Development of the Strategy

- 3.1 For the effective development of a partnership-based Cultural Strategy for Kent, it was essential that structured opportunities were put in place for the partners to engage in the strategy development process and inform its content. This was achieved through a series of three Cultural Summits. Partners from across Kent were drawn together to achieve consensus, engagement and ownership of a strategy that genuinely reflects the unique and complex cultural planning landscape of Kent.
- 3.2 The first Cultural Summit took place in February 2009, and drew together 130 influencers and decision makers from Kent and the wider South East region including officers and members from all tiers of local government, regional and local development organisations and partnerships, representatives of youth, equalities and voluntary organisations, and arts and cultural organisations. The Summit aimed to create a commitment to a cultural strategy, provide opportunity for reflection on existing cultural provision, and share opportunities and challenges. The event successfully achieved a consensus about the value of cultural planning and of the importance of establishing a Cultural Strategy for Kent.
- 3.3 The second Summit took place in September 2009, and as had been agreed at the first Summit, delegates for the second were mainly drawn from the standing cohort of delegates who attended the first. This was in order to ensure rounded engagement and continuity. This event had a strong focus on the economic and social dimensions of the cultural sector in Kent and tested the strategy development work so far.
- 3.4 The third and final Summit event took place in April 2010, after a further draft of the Cultural Strategy had been shared with the partners for comments. The event was an opportunity to test the three main intentions and stimulate further thought by inviting reflections on culture from internationally recognised and highly respected figures in the field of cultural development. The approach and the three intentions were broadly

accepted and the event launched a further consultation period which has informed the development of the attached final draft.

4. Future Plans

- 4.1 Kent County Council has been given a clear mandate by the partners who have helped to develop this strategy to take a leadership role in ensuring that the vision for culture in Kent is delivered. We will do this by convening an annual cultural conference and use this as a platform for an evolving and responsive action plan. We want to remain open for business with regard to how we deliver this plan, and believe that as our confidence in this field grows so too will our ambitions. The action plan will therefore be reviewed regularly to reflect the sectors role in the county.

5. Resource Implications

- 5.1 None in the short to medium term.

6. Recommendations

- 6.1 Members of the Communities Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committee are asked to endorse the attached draft Cultural Strategy for approval at Cabinet and subsequently the Kent Partnership.

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Background Documents:

"Kent's cultural vitality". ABL consulting

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APPENDIX ONE