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To: Cabinet – 11 October 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 officers and members of local authorities; other partners and stakeholders. It will form one of the delivery mechanisms for Kent's Regeneration Framework and is attached at Appendix One. CABINET is asked to endorse the Strategy and recommend it to the Kent Partnership for final approval.

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 This report summarises the process undertaken to develop the draft strategy which is attached at Appendix 1. It seeks Cabinet endorsement and recommendation to the Kent Partnership for approval.
- 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 aims to be 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.

3. The Key Regeneration Opportunities

- 3.1** This strategy is being prepared in the wake of an economic downturn, at a time when the public sector must seek imaginative ways to assist in revitalising the economy. *Unlocking Kent's Potential* recognises that the creative industry sector is one of the economy's most robust sectors and this strategy sets out how Kent will grow this part of its economy. This will be a long term strategy and the positive impact on the Kent economy is likely to be seen in a five to ten year period if the right investment is made during the life time of this strategy.
- 3.2** The UK has the largest creative sector in the European Union and relative to GDP probably the largest in the world. The creative industries account for 6.4% of UK GDP and grew at 5% per year between 1997 and 2007, compared to 3% for the rest of the economy. In the digital sector (Software, Computer Games and Electronic Publishing) growth has been even greater at 9% over the same period. Exports grew even faster and contribute 4.3% of the country's overseas sales. According to DCMS statistics at January 2009 (Creative Employment – Great Britain, DCMS Creative Industries Economics Estimates Stats Bulletin Jan 2009), 1,978,200 people are employed in the Creative Industries in the UK. Art consumption (eg theatre and cinema ticket sales) are, despite the current downturn, reported to be thriving as are exports of cultural product such as music, film and computer games. In 2008 the film industry alone earned £1.34 billion in exports and television exports rose by 25% reaching £980million.

- 3.3** Creative industries are identified as an important source of innovation, and research shows that innovation can create new markets, productivity growth, spillovers and improved efficiency. Kent already has a substantial creative industry sector¹ and as a county it is already a creator of culture, a purveyor of culture and a cultural destination but it does not have a critical mass that is of national significance yet. The strategy proposes that in the next five years we must aim to secure and grow a strong position which will rank nationally by increasing the number of creative industries in the county; developing the right infrastructure to enable a Kent workforce to enter the sector; and supporting our existing creative industries so that we will be regarded as a creative region.
- 3.4** Research shows that there is a inequity and inequality in the creative workforce. Overall the sector is 93% white (this is improving). Entry into the sector is opaque and fragmented, and skills profiles of those aspiring to enter do not always match industry needs. There is a need for better information on and signposting of opportunities. There is also a need for better support for the retention and progression of new entrants after joining the sector workforce.² Kent must ensure that in developing its sector it addresses the causes of this and works to correct it. If we don't, we will be ignoring the contribution that a wide and diverse potential workforce could make.
- 3.5** The UK's manufacturing economy is shrinking and the skills required of young people coming into employment will increasingly be knowledge based. Creativity affects the way people perform in life and in business, and is recognised as the likely most in-demand attribute for the workforce in the growing knowledge economy. Creativity is multi-sectoral (all products require marketing for instance), and the strategy recognises the importance of a co-ordinated approach in order to maximise development of these transferrable skills and help signpost people into work.

4. The Strategy's intentions

- 4.1** 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 as follows: -
- ***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;

¹ 'Cultural Vitality in Kent' report (2005), by ABL Cultural Consulting

² 'Creative and Cultural Industries Footprint' (2008-09) and 'Creative Blueprint' workforce profiles: Creative and Cultural Skills, the UK sector skills council for craft, heritage, design, literature, music, performing arts and visual arts

- Unlock creative talent to support the Kent creative economy; and
- Reveal, support and grow our existing creative businesses.
- ***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; and
 - Inform and manage innovation creatively.
- ***Increase Kent's potential by being ambitious and resourceful planners***
To achieve this we will:
 - Ensure participation is possible for all;
 - Plan, not hope; and
 - Grow the confidence and skills of Kent's cultural sector to make Kent a place that offers excellent cultural experiences.

5. Process for the Development of the Strategy

- 5.1** 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 done by 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
- 5.2** 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.
- 5.3** 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.

- 5.4** 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 draft strategy and its three intentions were broadly accepted. The event launched a further consultation period which has informed the development of the attached final draft.

6. Future plans

- 6.1** 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.
- 6.2** A first version of that action plan, by which the early stages of this strategy will be achieved, is in development, and is the subject of an ongoing dialogue with KCC colleagues and external partners.
- 6.3** 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. In addition to consultation that has taken place on the Creative Opportunities for Growth sector strategy, there will be further discussions with creative sector business representatives as part of a series of sector conversations taking place in the context of wider Sector Strategy work over the next 6 months. The action plan will therefore be reviewed regularly to ensure that it reflects the sector's role in the county.

7. Resource implications

- 7.1** The strategy will respond to current financial constraints in the following ways:
- The action plan will be renewed annually thus ensuring that during its lifetime it can grow more ambitious as the economy recovers.
 - The strategy identifies many actions that involve:
 - better networking of existing activity/organisations;
 - greater recognition of the significance and reach of existing initiatives in order to better support them and increase their chances of success;
 - identifying shared needs and working more closely together in the spirit of Total Place.

We can therefore say with confidence that progress can be made on delivering this strategy despite current constraints.

8. Recommendations

8.1 Cabinet is asked to:

Endorse the Strategy attached at Appendix One and recommend it to the Kent Partnership for final approval .

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Background Documents:

Unlocking Kent's Cultural Potential - A Cultural Strategy for Kent