

**Classification:** Public

**Key Decision:** NO

## Gravesham Borough Council

**Report to:** Community and Leisure Committee

**Date:** 11<sup>th</sup> March 2024

**Reporting officer:** Cultural Manager

**Subject:** Arts and Culture Update

### **Purpose and summary of report:**

This is an information paper reflecting the work of the Arts and Culture team in 23/24 and outlining the plans and aspirations for 24/25

### **Recommendations:**

1. That this paper is recognised as a reflection of the activity that has taken place and that the plans for 24/25 are approved.

<b>Key Implications:</b>	
<b>Item</b>	<b>Implications</b>
<b>Legal</b>	There are no legal implications in this report
<b>Finance and Value for Money</b>	The arts and culture activity and that which is planned is met through existing budgets.
<b>Corporate Plan</b>	#onecommunity – an active, engaged and culturally enriched population.
<b>Climate Change</b>	The Cultural Strategy and Action plan supports the climate change agenda through developing alternative platforms for delivery and by putting sustainability and climate criteria in the forefront of our activity both in house and supported.

## **1. Context and Reflection**

- 1.1 The plans for 23/24 were agreed in March 23 and have delivered on our aspirations based on our Cultural Strategy which identified the following priorities.
  - 1.1.1 Delivering a cultural and creative community
  - 1.1.2 Supporting and developing artists and creatives
  - 1.1.3 Establishing a vibrant and aspirational arts and cultural events programme

- 1.1.4 Enhancing and promoting our assets and heritage
- 1.1.5 Developing our children and young people creatively.
- 1.2 Each priority has identified activities and outcomes that reflect our aspirations for Arts and Culture in Gravesham.
- 1.3 The Arts and Culture team have delivered across all priority areas in our strategy. The highlights of that delivery are identified below:
  - 1.3.1 Delivering a cultural and creative community
    - The St George's Shopping centre, through negotiation, has made space available to artists and council to develop pop up spaces for specific events eg Light Festival, Fringe. Pop up artist studio and selling space – Art is for All established in vacant unit. This has animated the spaces and provided the benefit of an active frontage to otherwise empty spaces.
    - We have actively been exploring other creative making spaces, working with other creative organisations within the sector. This is in addition to maximising the use of our existing spaces including St George's Arts Centre, St Andrew's Arts Centre and the Woodville. Examples include Clubbs Yard studio spaces due to open in early 2024.
    - We have been identifying the ways that Arts and Culture can underpin the health and wellbeing agenda. Initial highlights include the WOW Bus visit for International Girls Day supporting resilience and good mental health for young women. Core membership of the Kent Creative Health and Wellbeing working group. Working with Moving Memory Dance company to support older women to stay active and creative through dance.
    - We have reinforced our ongoing conversations with national partners to ensure that they are fully aware of our aspirations for the future. This includes engaging with them to secure future funding opportunities. In addition to our regular funding partners we have also been in discussion with Heritage Fund with regards to funding a larger scale Franklin Festival in 2024.
    - We have actively supported the LUF bid and working with Economic development and relevant departments to ensure that the arts, culture and heritage agenda is relevant and supports wider levelling up agenda.
    - Developing a work stream with Tilbury to encourage cross river activity within the next 3 years starting with the Light Festival in 2024. Light Festival 24 had activity on the Tilbury side around the ferry terminal including workshops and installations funded through the Creative People and Places project, StART Thurrock.
  - 1.3.2 Supporting and Developing Artists and Creatives
    - We have been actively increasing match funding bids that chime with our Arts & Culture strategy criteria ensuring that our support is relevant and always brings additional funds into the borough. Successful bids this year have been Moving Memory Dance, Wow Bus for International

Girls Festival, Loop Dance Company, Gravesham Fringe Festival and Gravesham Light Festival. Total amount of matched funding awarded by Gravesham Borough Council totalled £14,400, resulting in £124,028 of additional funding coming into the borough through external funding bids.

- We have offered 8 artists commissions throughout the year to enhance our programme. 5 of which were externally funded through successful grant applications.
- Supporting and organising funding surgeries for artists in the borough. Arts Council England have made several visits and have actively engaged with local artists to build confidence around making funding applications. These sessions directly deliver against our objective to support skills development amongst creatives. Several of our local artists have subsequently applied for recent rounds of Developing your Creative Practise funding through discussions with ACE.
- Since receiving funding in 2021 we have been supporting Clubbs Yard Studios development in Northfleet– the new artists studios are nearly complete and expected to open in the next couple of months. The owner has included a studio specifically for emerging artists to work for 3 months rent free to gain experience and the opportunity to learn from colleagues. The first of these placements have been offered to Gravesham Arts Salon and a local artist, MUD, who lives and makes work in Northfleet, and who will be the first artist to receive this free studio space residency.
- As part of Arts Council England’s Local Cultural Education Partnership, we ensure that schools and youth groups are aware of those artists who are working locally, in what genre and how they can be contacted. The Local Cultural Education Partnerships are designed to unite and improve cultural education [Local Cultural Education Partnerships \(LCEPs\) | Arts Council England](#)
- The Gravesham Grapevine [Gravesham Grapevine](#) (delivered through the GAS partnership) has become the cultural diary website for the Borough. Grapevine is now produced monthly and has a breadth of offers and information about the activity that is taking place in the borough. It also highlights the work of a local creative every month.
- The GAS network has grown and now numbers 120 members.

### 1.3.3 Establishing a vibrant and aspirational arts and cultural events programme

- We have been working with music artists and venues to broaden the scope of this activity within the borough. Great strides have been made this year with local musicians playing a pivotal role in our activities. The fringe festival included a commission to encourage greater music activity resulting in events taking place on all 10 days of the festival. Introducing monthly Smooth Sunday Session in St George’s arts Centre.
- We have also been engaging with more venues to diversify our offer in terms of available spaces.

- We have worked with more diverse groups to enhance and sustain their arts and culture work within the borough. Greater links have been made with the Gurdwara in 2023 and they will be taking part in the Light Festival in 2024. We have been working to increase the breadth and diversity of our activity as well as holding ongoing conversations with community groups regarding our cultural programming. Our workshop programme reflects our community more accurately and we have taken advice from residents and broadened our network to include new artists. The new workshop activity that we have introduced has been positively received.
- We have developed other strands of work to reflect the vibrancy of the borough including the one off Halloween event, Ghoulish Gravesham, and the first Franklin Festival for which a new piece of theatre about Lady Jane Franklin was developed and the first 20 minutes performed to an enthusiastic audience in September.

#### 1.3.4 Enhancing and Promoting our assets and heritage

- We have been engaging with local heritage groups to develop a programme across the heritage portfolio we have worked with Gravesham Historical Society through our Fort Tunnels Halloween event.
- Enhancing and updating the Discover Gravesham Website.
- £98,000 funding achieved from National Highways to conserve and re-display the Roman collection at Milton Chantry and the famous A2 bronzes. Some artefacts were displayed in the Blake Gallery with a conservator in situ educating on the artefacts whilst assessing their condition. The exhibition then moved to St George's shopping centre for a further month long window exhibition. This work is ongoing and includes rehousing of artefacts, purchase of appropriate cabinets and outreach work in the community. This funding also allows us to create a meaningful catalogue of our collection across all sites, enabling us to create exhibitions and present the work more effectively.
- An additional £98,000 funding achieved from National Highways for work on New Tavern Fort. This work will include a condition survey, consultant fees for an HLF application, public consultations, gun condition surveys and remedial works.

#### 1.3.5 Developing our Young People Creatively

- We have been developing specific funding for young people up to the age of 25. We created commission in the fringe festival for young people to access Arts Council funds. The successful applicant was a young clown called Dru Cripps who had been born locally. He returned to make and develop his show which was then part of the fringe festival drawing a 60% capacity audience.
- Our work with Arts Council England's Local Cultural Education Partnership [Local Cultural Education Partnerships \(LCEPs\)](#) has developed and we have strong links with our local schools. They are actively engaging with our programme and informing us of the work that they would like to access.

- We have embedded learning opportunities into funding and matched funding criteria. All matched funding and commission opportunities now have a specific requirement to deliver age appropriate workshops.
- Our open calls have had age focussed requirements which has resulted in exhibitions that have had a 60/40 mix of work – 40% from young people.

#### 1.3.6 Attendance Figures.

- Number of workshops 60
- Workshops achieved on average 64% capacity.
- Footfall in St George's Arts Centre 15135
- Total attendance 16035
- Total Fringe Festival attendance 2023: 4194 (in person) 23000 (digitally)
- Total Light Festival attendance 2023: 31570 (in person) 5000 (digitally)

## 2. Plans for 24/25

2.1 The landscape for all council services is challenging and our community is still beset by the cost of living crisis affecting all expenditure considerations. The Arts and Culture team aim to ensure that we can deliver on the priorities identified in the strategy in the most efficient way for both council and community. The service is embedded in the plans for regeneration and growth and has a vital part to play in developing and strengthening our community and achieving a culturally enriched population. The current cultural strategy reaches the end of its term in 2025 and, although the context has been flexible to allow for development and creative growth throughout its span the new Arts and Culture Strategy will be being prepared in 2024/25. The current plans for 24/25 include:

2.2 Delivering a cultural and creative community.

2.2.1 Focus on the Creative prescribing agenda to ensure that we are reinforcing the links between creative activity and better health outcomes. We will be actively involved in developing policy for the Kent Creative Health and Wellbeing Group as well as embedding this agenda into our commission criteria going forward.

2.2.2 Legacy plans for St Andrew's Arts Centre to be developed to ensure that we build on the good foundation of having the building more accessible with longer opening hours. This in turn will make a stronger case for possible Heritage funding in the future.

2.2.3 Ensure early conversations with the new market operator to develop coherent and joined up plans for the spaces to be used creatively.

2.2.4 More strategic work to develop the volunteer cohort over the whole sector. The Woodville volunteers will be key to that in the first instance. However, we will aim to have volunteers to support activity in other areas by the end of the year.

- 2.2.5 Creating a network of venues for activity to enhance the portfolio of opportunities for work to be delivered, including in the digital landscape. Gravesham Fringe 2024 is focussing support for new venues to create or present work - there are 3 commissions available for physical venues and 1 commission for making work in the digital space.
- 2.2.6 Working with regeneration team on culture led activity at the Coach House project in Northfleet.
- 2.3 Supporting and Developing Artists and Creatives
  - 2.3.1 Art is for All Co-op is already oversubscribed in the existing unit with many artists on the waiting list. Exploration of opportunities to expand this way of working to enable artists to create work and develop their practise.
  - 2.3.2 Encouraging more artists to both relocate and make work in the borough. We hope to achieve this by the ongoing expansion of our networks including Gravesham Arts Salon as well as reaching out to visiting artists and creatives through our partner networks. Within this aspiration however it is essential that we continue to support our strong foundation of experienced and valuable artists.
  - 2.3.3 Work with music artists and venues to broaden the scope of this activity within the borough. Supporting applications from local venues to the Grassroots music programme
  - 2.3.4 Working with Estuary 25 on the festival to ensure that our artists and creatives are engaged and fully aware of the opportunities.
  - 2.3.5 Develop the Meet the Maker programme inviting diverse range of artists in to St George's Arts Centre in April to work in the community providing a spotlight on to the artistic process.
- 2.4 Establishing a vibrant and aspirational arts and cultural events programme
  - 2.4.1 Three year application for Gravesham Fringe Festival and the Light Festival to establish annual festivals in the borough that can be sustainable
  - 2.4.2 Positively engage with more diverse groups to enhance and sustain their arts and culture work within the borough. This requires a proactive approach and one that is joined up across the sector.
  - 2.4.3 The success of the small scale Franklin Festival last year has created enthusiasm for a larger scale event in 2024. We will be developing both a Heritage Fund bid for the festival and an Arts Council bid through Play on Words theatre company to develop the Lady Jane Franklin piece into a touring work in the autumn.
  - 2.4.4 Enhance the summer outdoor programme to include a small festival of events in August to include weekly family shows and two evening events, music and Shakespeare.
  - 2.4.5 Working with the tourism team to build the new Visit Gravesend and locate Arts and Culture events on this site – signposting here and developing a recognisable identity.
- 2.5 Enhancing and promoting our assets and heritage.

- 2.5.1 Engage with local heritage groups and develop a programme across the heritage portfolio.
  - 2.5.2 Developing the stories around our heritage assets building on the Fear in the Fort project to bring local heritage to life in other spaces for example the cemetery
  - 2.5.3 Building on the work on the collection – curating exhibitions around specific artefacts in appropriate locations.
  - 2.5.4 Work with local groups and National Highways on the New Tavern Fort condition surveys, and development of the HLF funding bid.
  - 2.5.5 Delivery of the Good Great Gravesham event at Gads Hill supporting the local groups and the council to celebrate significant anniversaries.
- 2.6 Developing our children and young people creatively:
- 2.6.1 Using the Creative Schools Network and the Local Education Partnership bring more creatives in to talk to schools about their needs.
  - 2.6.2 Promote our workshop schedule more effectively to build on existing numbers of attendances.
  - 2.6.3 Tailor outreach and workshop programme to reflect our ongoing programme at St George’s Arts Centre and other venues.

### 3. Background Documents

- 3.1 A Creative Gravesham Arts and Culture Strategy

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Secondary Implications	
<b>Risk Assessment</b>	GBC has committed to the Cultural Strategy and this report reflects that strategy and the priorities identified. There is a risk that the aspirations identified in the strategy would not be achieved if the plans for 24/25 are not ratified.
<b>Data Protection Impact Assessment</b>	<i>A data protection impact assessment (DPIA) should be carried out at the start of any major project involving the use of personal data or if you are making a significant change to an existing process.</i>
	<p>a. Does the project/change being recommended through this paper involve the processing of <a href="#">personal data</a> or <a href="#">special category data</a> or <a href="#">criminal offence data</a>?</p> <p>A definition of each type of data can be found on the Information Commissioner’s Office website via the above links.</p> <p>There is no processing of personal data or special category data or criminal offence data</p>

	<p>b. If yes to question a, have you completed and attached a DPIA including Data Protection Officer advice?</p> <p>Not applicable as there is no processing as detailed abovep</p>
	<p>c. If no to question b, please seek advice from your nominated DPIA assessor or the Information Governance Team at <a href="mailto:gdpr@medway.gov.uk">gdpr@medway.gov.uk</a>.</p> <p>Not applicable</p>
<b>Equality Impact Assessment</b>	<p>a. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have potential to cause adverse impact or discriminate against different groups in the community? If yes, please explain answer.</p> <p>no</p>
	<p>b. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper make a positive contribution to promoting equality? If yes, please explain answer.</p> <p>yes - enhanced partnership working with diverse groups built into the report</p>
	<p><i>In submitting this report, the Chief Officer doing so is confirming that they have given due regard to the equality impacts of the decision being considered, as noted in the table above</i></p>
<b>Crime and Disorder</b>	<p>The activity and performance programmes encourage engagement from the community and can reduce antisocial behaviours</p>
<b>Digital and website implications</b>	<p>There are no specific digital and website implications beyond the new Visit Gravesend site and the focus on digital output for commissions. However, consideration should be given to greater support for culture within the councils digital output including on the website</p>
<b>Safeguarding children and vulnerable adults</b>	<p>There are no specific implications.</p>