



Committee and Date

Cabinet- 30<sup>th</sup> June 2021

Item

Public

**Vibrant Shropshire; Shropshire's Cultural Strategy 2021-31.**

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**1. Summary**

- 1.1 "Vibrant Shropshire; Independent by Nature" is a new 10-year cultural strategy for the Unitary area of Shropshire, which sets out the ambition and strategic priorities for the cultural sector for the next 10 years (appendix A, which includes appendices 1-5). These will be available on the Council website once approved.
- 1.2 **Our Vision**  
By 2030, Shropshire's vibrant culture will be inspiring more people – both local communities and visitors alike - to explore, create, be active and enjoy themselves. It will enhance lives and nurture the environment for all our futures.
- 1.3 **Our Ambition**  
In 10 years, our ambition is to create a place where extraordinary and everyday cultural experiences are a source of inspiration for all. The importance of culture to quality of life, health and wellbeing and the economy is reflected in happier and healthier communities and cultural venues and activities lead the way for climate and environmental change mitigation.
- 1.4 The Cultural Strategy was developed in partnership with a range of stakeholders, through the Cultural Strategy Working Group; the membership of which is shown at the end of the document. It follows one to one consultation with sector leaders and three workshops with individuals representing the wider cultural sector.
- 1.5 The draft Cultural Strategy was made available for public consultation for 12 weeks between October and beginning January 2021. There were 87 survey responses and 12 written responses, with some very detailed and helpful feedback, which has informed the final document. Of the 87 survey respondents 63% strongly agree or agree with the draft strategy. There was considerable enthusiasm for the strategy, with many of the comments relating to how it will be implemented and funded, which will be dealt with in the next phase.
- 1.6 Over the same period, specific engagement with representatives of Protected Characteristics groupings and children and young people was conducted and the Equality and Social Inclusion Assessment has been updated accordingly.

- 1.7 The final strategy has been adapted to take the consultation and engagement into account, and a section specifically relating to the Coronavirus pandemic has been added.
- 1.8 If the strategy is approved, work will begin on the development of an independent Cultural Partnership for Shropshire and/or a Cultural Compact, supported by Arts Council England. The partnership will be responsible for creating a three-year Implementation Plan and identifying sources of funding to deliver the strategy.

## **2. Recommendations**

That Cabinet approves “Vibrant Shropshire: Cultural Strategy 2021-31” (Appendix A) and the appendices associated with the strategy (appendices 1-5) and agree to these being published on the Shropshire Council website in July 2021.

## **REPORT**

### **3. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal**

- 3.1 The public sector has seen significant change since the last Cultural Strategy was produced in 2010; in particular, the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, current economic climate and associated budget pressures, economic growth aspirations aiming to significantly increase the population and business base of Shropshire, and the growing need for cultural activities for health and wellbeing. This is also having an impact on the voluntary and private sectors and there is now even greater need to have a clear, evidence-based, prioritised plan to target limited resources whilst giving the greatest public benefit. A new approach is needed, delivering across multiple policy areas and integrating activity across local authority services, partner organisations and businesses.
- 3.2 Vibrant Shropshire raises the profile of the exceptional cultural assets that we have in Shropshire, identifies gaps, clarifies the opportunities to improve health, wellbeing and community cohesion, the local economy and the environment, and brings together partner organisations with similar goals, encouraging more co-ordinated, cost-effective approaches. It does not attempt to duplicate other plans and strategies but will link to them where appropriate.
- 3.3 The Equality and Social Inclusion Impact Assessment (ESIIA) is attached as appendix 5 of the Cultural Strategy. The Strategy sets out to have a positive impact across all the Protected Characteristic groupings, particularly the groupings for Age, with regard to children and young people, and Disability, with regard to all ages and with regard to seen and unseen disabilities. This will itself then include older people, given the ageing demographic profile of the county. A positive impact is also anticipated for groupings including people with caring responsibilities, as well as those at risk of social exclusion, whether people are participants or audiences/customers
- 3.4 Efforts were made during consultation on the draft Strategy to seek views from communities as well as from stakeholders. Specific engagement was carried out

with children and young people, SEMA (Shropshire Ethnic Minority Alliance), OMEGA, Shropshire Supports Refugees, DASH (Disability Arts Shropshire) and Age UK.

- 3.5 The public consultation was over a twelve week period and garnered 99 responses, 47 of which were from members of the public; whilst there was a good gender balance from those who answered a question on this, views were articulated that the Strategy needed to better serve women and young women. It will be important to keep the gender profile of participants and audiences under review and assess where further positive action may usefully be taken in this regard.
- 3.6 The age profile of respondents was that 77% were 45 or older, meaning that further ongoing engagement with younger age groups is desirable to complement the work that has been carried out with stakeholder representatives. The spread of the responses was good, and serves to indicate that, alongside the extensive stakeholder consultation work, the views may be taken as indicative of views across the county as a whole
- 3.7 The final version of the strategy has been updated to reflect feedback from the survey and other groups. A detailed review of the feedback is shown in appendix 3.
- 3.8 Changes have included:
- Adding a section on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, which has been disproportionate in equality terms across groupings
  - Expanding the definition to include play
  - Changing some of the language to make it more easily understandable, for example changing 'Cross-Cutting Themes' to 'Overarching Themes'
  - Diversity and inequality better addressed
  - Innovation priority broadened
- 3.9 Much of the feedback will be relevant to the Implementation Plan and Cultural Partnership, which will be developed as Stage 2.

#### **4. Financial Implications**

- 4.1 Funding for the Culture, Leisure and Tourism service areas will follow the usual budget process and the delivery of this strategy does not change this, although any significant reduction in these budgets would impinge on the deliverability of "Vibrant Shropshire".
- 4.2 Improvements to cultural assets and activities highlighted in the priorities will mostly be funded outside core public sector funds. Increasingly, external funding will need to be found and this could include:
- Earned income from parks and sites, events and commercial activities
  - Project funding from external sources such as the Heritage Lottery Fund, Sport England, Arts Council and other charities and trusts
  - Countryside Stewardship or alternatives following the introduction of the new schemes
  - Business support or sponsorship

- Funding associated with new housing and commercial developments, the provision of greenspace and developer contributions to canal towpaths and other access
- Memberships, donations and legacies

4.3 Major funding organisations, such as Arts Council England and National Lottery had raised concerns about the lack of strategic direction for the Cultural sector and had previously called for a partnership approach to clarifying priorities for the county. The strategy addresses this and evidences the need for further investment in cultural activities and venues, which will help secure external funding.

4.4 External funding is becoming increasingly competitive and joint working between partners will be key although match funding will need to be considered. The development of an independent Cultural Partnership for Shropshire will be central to this.

## 5. Climate Change Appraisal

5.1 Climate change mitigation needs to be considered across all activities. One of the cross-cutting themes of the draft strategy is:  
*“Climate and environmental change mitigation – Everyone needs to do their bit to address the climate and environment emergency to ensure a happier and healthier future for all. Culture can help us engage with these challenges creatively together”*

5.2 This could be in the form of encouraging active travel, introducing energy efficiency measures in buildings or tree planting and habitat conservation for nature recovery and carbon off-setting. Activities would also be encouraged that increase public awareness or interpret climate change through cultural activities.

## 6. Background

6.1 The previous Cultural Strategy for Shropshire was published in 2010 for a five-year period. The priorities have changed over this period and this is no longer relevant.

### 6.2 Summary of Vibrant Shropshire priorities

6.2.1 Several key priorities have emerged as instrumental to the development of a vibrant, healthy, prosperous culture for residents and visitors to Shropshire. Their implementation will be phased over the next 10 years.

- Create *Culture better supports the growth of the local economy and creates more opportunities to earn a living*
- Explore *Delighting and surprising visitors and residents with independent, authentic experiences*
- Enjoy *Using culture to support people to be active, happy, healthy and connected*
- Live *Harnessing ‘ownership’ and pride in local places for the benefit of all*
- Nurture *Shropshire’s high-quality natural landscapes are valued and enhanced for future generations*
- Innovate *Driving digital development to enhance cultural experiences, improve physical and intellectual access and tackle social isolation*
- Connect *Forge strong partnerships to drive forward our shared cultural ambition*

### **6.3 Overarching themes**

6.3.1 We developed several overarching themes to help ensure that the priorities address Shropshire's core challenges:

- Climate and environmental change mitigation – *Everyone needs to do their bit to address the climate and environment emergency to ensure a happier and healthier future for all. Culture can help us engage with these challenges creatively together*
- Developing volunteers – *Supporting volunteers through promoting good practice, providing opportunities for training and development and recognising their achievements*
- Young people's skills and learning – *Engaging young people in all of our priority areas and providing clear pathways into all of the cultural sector*
- Marketing and communication – *Ensuring that there is a joined-up marketing and communication strategy to promote greater joint working and reach new audiences*

### **6.4 Strategic links**

6.4.1 The priorities outlined in Vibrant Shropshire are in line with national thinking and will help deliver against a range of national, regional and local strategies, including:

- The Cultural White Paper, DCMS - maximising the opportunities to transform communities through culture; everyone should enjoy the opportunities culture offers, no matter where they start in life, the riches of our culture should benefit communities across the country and the power of culture can increase our international standing
- Everyone Active Every Day, Public Health England - encouraging regular physical activity.
- The Industrial Strategy, Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy - strengthening cultural assets and developing skills.
- The 25 Year Environment Plan, Defra - better connecting people, health and the outdoors, especially for young people and to benefit those with mental health issues; improving the delivery of biodiversity and greenspace gains through the planning process and raising awareness of the economic benefits of the outdoors.
- Strategic Enterprise Plan, Marches LEP - promoting Shropshire as a business investment opportunity, building on individuals' quality of life, staff wellbeing and company reputation.
- Marches Visitor Economy Strategy- developing the visitor economy of the county
- Shropshire's Economic Growth Strategy - developing the visitor economy, agricultural support following exit from the EU, developing skills, improving quality of life and ensuring attractive environments.
- Shropshire's Local Plan - better planning of meaningful greenspace and non-motorised access, protecting environmentally and culturally sensitive sites.
- Shropshire's Health and Wellbeing Strategy - harnessing the power of the culture to increase physical activity, address mental health issues, and help people to stay independent for longer.
- Shropshire Council Corporate Plan - helping to deliver care for those in need at any age, a good place to do business, a healthy environment, sustainable places and communities, embracing our rurality.

- Shropshire's Great Outdoors Strategy
- Shropshire Hills AONB Management Plan
- Shropshire Museums Service Strategy- helping develop museums and collections for the benefit of all
- Shropshire Library Strategy
- Shropshire Leisure Strategy
- Actively Improving Lives – Energize Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin Active Partnership- helping to improve lives and empower communities through the power of physical activity and sport
- Shrewsbury Big Town Plan
- Shrewsbury and Oswestry BID business plans

6.4.2 The strategic review used to inform the development of the strategy is attached as appendix 4.

## **6.5 Evidence Base**

6.5.1 The Evidence Base (appendix 1) was developed by the Information, Intelligence & Insight Team and has been updated with an additional section on the coronavirus pandemic, as this is having a more significant impact than initially assumed and is likely to continue to impact over the life of the strategy.

6.5.2 It includes national data from:

- [Visit Britain](#) - Day visits and overnight stays
- [MENE data](#) - Visits to the natural environment and environmental attitudes
- [Active Lives survey](#) - Children and adult engagement with arts and culture, sport and volunteering
- [Lottery investment](#) - Amount of funding invested in the county
- [Health profile](#) - Health of the population
- [ONS survey](#) - Levels of Wellbeing and Life Satisfaction.

6.5.3 We will monitor local data held by Shropshire Council including:

- Numbers of unused/underused buildings
- Energy and water monitoring.

6.5.4 We will conduct local research on progress to date including the numbers and locations of:

- Creative businesses and cultural enterprises, including charities and CICs
- Cultural Venues and workspaces
- Festivals.

6.5.5 We will also aim to work with partners to develop a local framework of indicators to include:

- Investment in environmental change mitigation projects
- Visitor numbers to key destinations
- Number of volunteers
- Number of children and young people involved
- Customer satisfaction surveys
- Investment and finance metrics

## **7.0 Additional Information**

### **7.1 Delivery and Ownership**

7.1.1 This Strategy has been facilitated by Shropshire Council and is supported by a range of strategic partners through the Cultural Strategy Working Group.

7.1.2 A new independent Cultural Partnership/ Compact will be set up to guide the delivery of this Strategy, supported by Arts Council England. Compacts are partnerships designed to support the local cultural sector and enhance its contribution to development, with a special emphasis on cross-sector engagement beyond the cultural sector itself and the local authority.

7.1.3 The purpose of the partnership/ compact will be to:

- Facilitate the co-delivery of “Vibrant Shropshire: Cultural Strategy 2021-31”.
- Lead a step-change in the sustainability and contribution of culture to the life of Shropshire
- Defined by the ambition of developing the local cultural sector and boosting its engagement with health agencies, business, universities and other sectors.

7.1.4 Compacts are not intended to support existing partnership arrangements but rather to widen the support base for culture around a compelling vision for the role of culture in Shropshire.

7.1.2 The Strategy will work alongside the individual business plans and artistic ambitions of the cultural sectors, the strategic plans of key stakeholders such as Arts Council England and Historic England, and Shropshire Council’s Corporate Plan.

7.1.3 Delivery of the Strategy will adapt and respond to local, regional, national and international policies to ensure the vision and priorities remain valid.

## **8. Timescales**

8.1 **Following approval from Cabinet**, the strategy will be published in July 2021, and will apply until June 2031.

8.2 Discussions with Arts Council England on the development of the Cultural Partnership/ Compact have started and will continue following publication. The aim is to have a new Partnership in place by December 2021. The Cultural Partnership will set out a rolling, three-year implementation plan, which details activity under each of the high-level priorities. The plan will be published online and will be a live document.

8.3 Culture, Leisure and Tourism services at Shropshire Council have completed a new Service Plan, which outlines the Council’s role in the delivery of the Strategy.

8.4 The strategy will be evaluated and reviewed after five years. A new 10-year plan will be published, following a full evaluation of Vibrant Shropshire in 2031.

## 9. Conclusion

- 9.1 Vibrant Shropshire is a partnership Cultural Strategy, which clarifies the priorities for the cultural sector in Shropshire for the next 10 years. Following approval from Cabinet, it is due to be published in July 2021.
- 9.2 Once published, a new independent Cultural Partnership/ Compact will be formed who will co-produce the three-year Implementation Plan.

### List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)

#### Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder)

Cllr Cecilia Motley

#### Local Members

#### Appendices (attached separately)

- Appendix A: Vibrant Shropshire; Independent by Nature. Cultural 2021-31
  - Appendix 1- Vibrant Shropshire Evidence Base March 2021
  - Appendix 2- Vibrant Shropshire Community Engagement Results
  - Appendix 3- Vibrant Shropshire Public Consultation Report
  - Appendix 4- Vibrant Shropshire Strategic Review
  - Appendix 5- Vibrant Shropshire Equality and Inclusion Impact Assessment

NB- Appendices 1-5 are part of the Cultural Strategy