

Redditch Borough Council

Arts and Culture Strategy

A report by Strategic Leisure Limited

September 2022



Table of Contents

| | |
|---|-----------|
| 1. Case for The Arts | 1 |
| 2. Strategic Context | 3 |
| Redditch Borough Council Corporate Plan to 2024 | 5 |
| 3. Issues and Challenges | 6 |
| Co-ordination, prioritisation and managing the successful delivery of strategic initiatives | 6 |
| Heritage Corridor North Worcestershire | 6 |
| Cultural Compact | 8 |
| Reimagine Redditch: Community Engagement | 8 |
| Reimagine Redditch: Creative People and Places | 9 |
| Levelling up for Culture Places | 10 |
| Towns Fund | 11 |
| Management and co-ordination of Initiatives | 11 |
| 4. Issues and Challenges | 13 |
| Community consultation | 13 |
| Awareness and accessibility of arts facilities, activities and organisations | 14 |
| Facilities | 15 |
| Palace Theatre and Forge Mill Museum | 15 |
| Conclusion | 16 |
| 5. Recommendations | 19 |
| Disclaimer | 21 |

1. Case for The Arts

- 1.1. The provision of arts facilities, activities and opportunities by local authorities is a non-statutory service which Councils, including Redditch Borough provide and incur expenditure on under their discretionary powers.
- 1.2. It is generally accepted that networks of accessible arts facilities together with a range of sometimes challenging arts activities and opportunities contribute to the quality of life of the residents of an area including:
 - Physical and mental health improvement.
 - Community cohesion.
 - Lifelong learning.
 - Economic development and regeneration.
 - Biodiversity and nature conservation; and
 - Climate change reduction.
- 1.3. This view is borne out by the feedback received in relation to arts and cultural provision in the Community Survey undertaken by Redditch Borough Council in 2021 and encapsulated in the Councils' Vision for the services:
 - To inspire everyone to celebrate our historic past and participate in building a brighter future through access to parks and open spaces, sports, physical activity, arts, heritage, culture, and everyday activity. This will inspire our communities to lead longer, happier, healthier, and more prosperous lives.
- 1.4. In addition, the arts are being increasingly recognised as key drivers of recovery following the covid pandemic as evidenced by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) 'Levelling Up For Culture Places' initiative.
- 1.5. A number of studies have identified and quantified the benefits from investment in the arts. Whilst the benefits that accrue from arts activities may be indirect or supportive of other services, the outcomes of studies support the provision of and investment in the arts. Examples are:
- 1.6. **The 2019 Arts Council England report 'Contribution of the Arts & Culture Industry to the UK Economy' produced by the Centre for Economics and Business Research** concluded that, amongst other things, the sector:
 - Contributes £10.8 billion per year to the UK economy.
 - Contributes £2.8 billion per year to the Treasury through taxation.
 - Supports 363,700 jobs.

Redditch Borough Council

Arts and Culture Strategy

- 1.7. Whilst these levels of benefit were not achieved in 2020 and 2021 due to Covid-19, evidence indicates that, given the lifting of covid related restrictions by the Government and society 'learning to live with the virus' levels of engagement with the arts are increasing.
- 1.8. **In 2020 the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport commissioned University College London (UCL) to respond to the 2019 World Health Organisation's report 'What is the Evidence on the Arts Improving Health and Wellbeing?'**. The UCL study reviewed and synthesised the findings of over 3,500 studies on the role of arts in improving health and wellbeing. In summary, the study concluded that evidence that can be trusted, or trusted in most situations, to guide policy exists for:
- The use of music to support infant social development.
 - The use of book reading to support child social development.
 - The use of music or reading for speech and language development amongst infants and children.
 - The use of the arts to support social cohesion.
 - The use of the arts to support wellbeing in adults.
 - The use of the arts (other than reading) to support child social development.
 - The use of the arts to support wellbeing in children and young people.
 - The use of the arts to support cognition in older age.
- 1.9. The outcomes of these and other studies demonstrate the benefits of and justify investment in the arts by local authorities and other organisations.
- 1.10. However, given the current context for the public sector, as well as the wider economy, of budget constraints and increasing costs it is becoming increasingly necessary for expenditure on discretionary services, including the arts, to be objectively justified & developed and delivered against a strategic framework.

2. Strategic Context

2.1. **Arts Council England (ACE)** invests money from the **Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS)** and the **National Lottery** in the arts and currently has six Areas of Focus to guide that investment:

- Children and young people;
- Diversity;
- Leadership and governance;
- Resilience and sustainability;
- Developing a digital culture;
- Working with local authorities;

together with four Investment Principles:

- Ambition and quality;
- Dynamism;
- Environmental responsibility; and
- Inclusivity and relevance.

2.2. ACE invests public funds in support of its '**Let's Create**' vision and strategy, through which it wants England to be a country in which the creativity of all is valued and given the chance to flourish and where all have access to a range of high quality cultural experiences. 'Let's Create' has three target outcomes:

- Creative people;
- Cultural communities; and
- A creative cultural community.

2.3. ACE is also tasked with distributing additional funds arising from the recently announced DCMS **Levelling Up for Culture Places** initiative which will commence in **2023**.

Redditch Borough Council

Arts and Culture Strategy

- 2.4. Further funding and support for projects and initiatives in excess of £300m annually is distributed by the National Lottery Heritage Fund against its current priorities of:
- Dynamic Collections.
 - Digital Skills for Heritage.
 - Thriving Places; and
 - Business Support and Enterprise Development.
- 2.5. Local authorities support and incur expenditure on arts activities according to their local circumstances, priorities and need. Consequently, local authority arts provision and support differs from area to area: including, amongst other things, theatres, museums, heritage properties, public art, street theatre and events/festivals. Differing provision reflects the differing needs and priorities of individual areas and their residents.
- 2.6. Given constraints on local authority resources there is increasing reliance on ACE and other third party support for local initiatives which may not be led by local authorities but, rather, by community based, charitable or commercial organisations; or multi-sectoral partnerships. Within this model, local authorities are not eligible for a number of sources of ACE and other funding for the arts.
- 2.7. The reduced ability of local authorities to directly fund arts activities coupled with their ineligibility to directly access a number of funding sources signifies a shift in their role in arts provision from provider to **strategist, co-ordinator, enabler** and **commissioner**, working to ensure the roll out of arts activities and opportunities in their areas which will support the realisation of locally agreed visions, aims and objectives.
- 2.8. Redditch Borough Council has a clear vision for its wider leisure and cultural provision: including the arts. From the vision, the Council clearly sees leisure and cultural provision supporting the health and well-being in the widest sense of their communities and providing opportunities for community development and volunteering. It should be noted that engagement by residents and visitors with arts and cultural provision is not dependant solely on location, but as much on the nature of the facility or attraction engaged with. In this context, borne out by user survey work facilities and attractions in the Redditch area draw users from the adjacent Bromsgrove District Council area and further afield. This also works in reverse as Redditch residents attend activities, attractions and facilities in Bromsgrove. It should be noted that the Bromsgrove District Council has developed a similar vision for its leisure and cultural provision as that of Redditch; facilitating opportunities for collaborative working between the Councils.
- 2.9. The strategy, once completed, will assist Redditch Borough Council in developing its arts and cultural provision to ensure that provision contributes to the development and delivery of its Vision for Leisure and Culture services and its Corporate Plan priorities: - .

Redditch Borough Council Corporate Plan to 2024

Redditch Borough Council will 'strengthen the vibrancy and viability of our town and district centres' and will measure progress by increased engagement with arts and cultural opportunities in town and district centres; including creative digital activities.

Priorities

- Economic development and regeneration;
- Skills;
- Housing growth;
- Improved health and wellbeing;
- Community safety and anti-social behaviour.

2.10. The Redditch Borough Council Corporate Plan recognises the contribution that leisure and culture can make to the realisation of its corporate and community priorities and the Council has committed to apply such services to drive community health and wellbeing. The future planning and delivery of these services should take these corporate/community plan priorities into account: either if Council only initiatives or initiatives that the Council is working up in partnership with other organisations. In this regard, arts and cultural services planning and delivery should focus on the delivery of activities and opportunities which will contribute to the delivery of the following corporate and community priorities: -

- Economic development and regeneration, including skills development.
- Improving physical, emotional, and mental health and wellbeing.
- Reducing crime and disorder.
- Improved community safety and responding to anti-social behaviour.
- High quality services.
- Sustainability.

2.11. There are, however, a number of challenges that the Redditch Borough Council will have to meet when maximising the benefits to its area from the planning and delivery of arts and cultural services.

3. Issues and Challenges

Co-ordination, prioritisation and managing the successful delivery of strategic initiatives

- 3.1. Redditch Borough Council has embarked upon, or is developing, a number of arts and cultural initiatives in partnership with local community organisations and ACE, as well as, in some cases Bromsgrove District Council. These initiatives have local community support and are attracting considerable funding. Consequently, they are influencing the development and delivery of arts and cultural activities in the two Council areas and are examples of the changing role of local authorities from direct provider to strategist, co-ordinator, enabler and commissioner. Given their level of support and their delivery of significant funding these initiatives have been taken into account in the development of the Arts and Cultural Strategy for the Council.
- 3.2. The initiatives are:

Heritage Corridor North Worcestershire

- 3.3. Work has progressed and Redditch Borough Council has engaged with the development of the Heritage Corridor North Worcestershire: one of the Key Projects that emerged from the Tell Me What You Want (TMWYW) community consultation undertaken by the Bromsgrove Arts and Culture Consortium in 2019/2020. The project is described as:-

‘Creating a heritage corridor – forging new connections between physical, intangible and environmental heritage:

- Create a physical network of pathways and trails connecting Bromsgrove’s heritage sites;
- Explore opportunities to extend and re-evaluate heritage via, for instance, new public art commissions of site specific participatory and temporary work in response to Bromsgrove’s heritage; and
- Key sites (e.g. Hewell Grange, Lickey Incline, Tardebigge Locks) to be curated and updated on an ongoing basis by heritage lead and key partners.

- 3.4. In March 2020 a partnership between key organisations in the public, community and private sectors in the Bromsgrove and Redditch districts, supported and encouraged by the Bromsgrove District and Redditch Borough Councils was set up to assess the feasibility and economic impact of building on the Bromsgrove District’s Heritage Corridor proposal by creating a **Heritage Corridor for North Worcestershire** : a wider area than proposed in the TMWYW action plan and incorporating both the Redditch Borough and Bromsgrove District Council areas.

Redditch Borough Council

Arts and Culture Strategy

- 3.5. In January 2021 with support and funding from the Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership Cultural Capacity Fund consultants were appointed to develop the Heritage Corridor concept. In summary, the consultants concluded, amongst other things, that the HCNW had the potential to provide residents and visitors with the opportunity of enjoying outstanding natural beauty, participating in recreational activities and feeling part of a vibrant area. The protected areas, public open spaces, rights of way network, heritage buildings, historic sites and attractive towns and villages all provide opportunities for not only attracting day visitors and increasing overnight stays but also for current and potential residents to enhance their well-being.
- 3.6. The consultants also commented on the potential 'fit' between the HCNW, the National Trust's 8 Hills Initiative, and the proposed West Midlands National Park, which was conceived by the Birmingham City University and, in 2020, formally adopted by the West Midlands Combined Authority as a' key component of a post-Covid green economic recovery. Also, that Bromsgrove District and Redditch Borough Councils could follow suit with the HCNW which, it is anticipated, will:
- Promote and encourage participation in heritage, cultural, leisure, creative and natural world activities;
 - Celebrate and increase awareness of the heritage, cultural, leisure, creative and natural world resources within the area among residents, visitors and potential visitors;
 - Increase participation and use of open spaces and the leisure, cultural and heritage built environment;
 - Increase footfall and revenue at heritage and cultural sites and events;
 - Promote the area and its resources to the wider region;
 - Be a vehicle for seeking funding for individual sites, events and initiatives;
 - Emphasise the need for long term sustainability in all activities ;
 - Promote partnering;
 - Strengthen local, regional, national and international links: building on existing relationships for the benefit of residents, businesses and voluntary sectors within the area; and
 - Support Covid recovery plans and activities.
- 3.7. The consultants proposed next steps for the HCNW are:
- Agree the premise of HCNW with key sponsors;
 - Scope out the management/organisational structure to take the initiative forward; possibly within the context of an ACE inspired Cultural Compact;
 - Establish initial budget;
 - Set up formal advisory group;
 - Continue advocacy and stakeholder engagement;
 - Set up conference to promote the HCNW and generate further 'buy in' from partners and stakeholders;
 - Identify future resources needed for the initiative and expected return on investment;
 - Establish a memorable brand for the HCNW;

Redditch Borough Council

Arts and Culture Strategy

- Develop and refine existing projects to maximise impact;
- Build on existing and establish new key players, partners and supporters of the initiative; and
- Develop detailed implementation plan.

Cultural Compact

- 3.8. In 2019 Core Cities UK and ACE launched the independent UK Cultural Cities Enquiry into the cultural resources of Britain’s cities. The enquiry aimed at developing new models that will help culture thrive in our cities.
- 3.9. The Enquiry Board considered the recommendation of setting up Cultural Compacts to help places make a step-change in the strategic governance of culture and help more people and more places benefit from engaging with cultural opportunities.
- 3.10. Also in 2019 DCMS and ACE supported the creation of an initial 20 Cultural Compacts: 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. The purpose of a Compact is to facilitate the co-creation and co-delivery of an ambitious vision for culture in a place.
- 3.11. Within this model, ACE is considered to have a vital role in the evolution of Compacts and the presence of Local Government that is available to engage with the opportunity is considered to be of central importance.
- 3.12. The initial phase of the programme although slowed by Covid was considered to be sufficiently successful enough for additional Compacts to be supported and funded and, in late 2021, ACE agreed funding of £20,000.00 towards the establishment of a Cultural Compact across the Redditch Borough and Bromsgrove District Council areas. The National Trust, Canals & Rivers Trust, ACE, Heritage Lottery, Artrix Holding Trust and Rubicon Leisure have also joined the compact and it is understood that a number of additional organisations have expressed an interest in joining.

Reimagine Redditch: Community Engagement

- 3.13. Concurrent with TMWYW, during 2020 and 2021, a consortium of organisations in Redditch (including Redditch Borough Council) successfully prepared for and then applied to join Arts Council England’s National Portfolio of Creative People and Places schemes. The consortium entitled the project “Reimagine Redditch”
- 3.14. The consortium is made up of the Bromsgrove and Redditch Network (BARN) who serve as the accountable body for the funds, Redditch Borough Council, Arts in Redditch, Forthright Arts and Severn Arts. The consortium has a long term vision of embedding artistic and cultural experiences into the heart of the community and worked together to obtain the views of people in Redditch

Redditch Borough Council

Arts and Culture Strategy

- 3.15. The outcome of the Reimagine Redditch community engagement was used as the basis for the successful bid to ACE for inclusion within the Creative People and Places (CPP) programme. Whilst focusing on the Redditch area, the Reimagine Redditch programme whose consortium members include the Bromsgrove and Redditch Network will undoubtedly develop opportunities that will have an onward impact upon a wider geographical area than just Redditch (including Bromsgrove)

Reimagine Redditch: Creative People and Places

- 3.16. Creative People & Places (CPP) is an Arts Council England (ACE) programme which focuses on parts of the country where involvement in Arts and Culture is significantly below the national average as is the case with Redditch. ACE believes that everyone has the right to experience and be inspired by Art. Consequently it wants to transform the opportunities open to people in those places to access and be inspired by a range of high quality cultural experiences.
- 3.17. Within the CPP bid, Reimagine Redditch is described as:

“A launch pad – inviting residents to think big and, if they wish, propose a new name. Supporting Redditch’s cultural recovery from COVID-19, we want to make sure that everyone who lives here has the chance to participate in building back better, using digital to enhance an amazing and much-needed physical offer, rather than as a substitute for it. We envisage a 10-year programme of activity, themed around interlinked strands. These strands reflect our knowledge of Redditch and its demography, as well as engagement with hundreds of people on-line and in person. Each strand reflects Redditch’s 100+ languages.

- 3.18. The interlinked strands on which the submission is based are:

- 100 Spaces;
- 100 Moments;
- 100 Voices;
- 100 Vocations; and
- 100 Futures;

With ‘Digital’ as the cross-cutting theme.

- 3.19. Reimagine Redditch will be a 10 year programme of activity with regard to which the initial 3 year planning, set up and delivery phase commenced on 01 April 2022.

- 3.20. The Reimagine Redditch submission includes, subject to ongoing action research and community engagement, a detailed schedule of the activities to be undertaken and delivered over its three year life. The key stages in the detailed schedule are summarised:
- Setting up & recruiting to the initial organisation to deliver the programme;
 - Developing & delivering projects & activities during the three years of the programme's life;
 - Developing projects & activities for delivery during year 4 and future years of the programme's life;
 - Developing a financially sustainable model for the future of the programme following cessation of ACE support on 31 March 2025; and
 - Setting up & recruiting to the longer term, sustainable organisation to deliver the programme from 01 April 2025 onwards.
- 3.21. This initial phase which is also required to identify the business model, governance structure and funding for the subsequent 7 years of the programme has an anticipated budget of £1,369,212.00; of which £852,513.00 will be funded from the ACE Creative People & Places programme with the remaining funding to be contributed either as cash or value contributions by consortium members, partners identified or yet to be identified and income from charged for activities.
- 3.22. Of the non- ACE funding, the Reimagine Redditch budget assumes annual value and cash contributions of £56,984.00 and £2,000.00 respectively from Redditch Borough Council: totalling £170,952.00 and £6,000.00 over the initial 3 years of the programme.

Levelling up for Culture Places

- 3.23. In February 2022 the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport announced a new initiative that will prioritise 109 locations, including Redditch, for new arts funding and support for cultural organisations in London to expand their operations beyond the capital so more communities benefit from their work.
- 3.24. ACE will oversee the distribution of Levelling Up for Culture Places funding which will become available to be bid for in 2023 and which aims to:
- Provide an additional £75M of funding by 2025 to make sure places which have been culturally under-served in the past get a better distribution of arts funding;
 - Transform access to arts and culture across the country with plans to increase and better distribute funding for the sector to previously overlooked or neglected areas; and
 - Generate more opportunities for people in the regions, with more arts jobs on offer and better access to cultural activities so people do not have to travel so far to see world-class art.

Redditch Borough Council

Arts and Culture Strategy

3.25. Key objectives of the Government's Levelling Up White Paper are by, 2030:

- Pride in place, such as people's satisfaction with their town centre and engagement with local culture and community, will have risen in every area of the UK with the gap between top performing and other areas closing;
- Well-being will have improved in every area of the UK, with the gap between top performing and other areas closing;
- The gap in healthy life expectancy between local areas where it is highest and lowest will have narrowed; and
- The Government, through the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities announced, in March 2022, additional funding totalling £4.8 billion and invited bids against that fund for levelling up projects to be undertaken in 2024/2025.

Towns Fund

3.26. The Towns Fund is a Department of Housing, Communities and Local Government scheme to which 101 towns, including Redditch, were invited to bid for funding of up to £25M to develop and deliver programmes to improve their local economies.

3.27. The Redditch proposal is led by a Towns Deal Board which represents public, private and voluntary sectors and wider stakeholders in the local community. It represents the future vision and ambition for Redditch of transforming a traditional New Town to a New Smart Town fit for the 21st century which will be a great place to work and an investment and visitor destination. There is a role for the arts and culture to play in the realisation of the New Town vision for Redditch. which should be reflected in the arts and cultural strategy for the area.

Management and co-ordination of Initiatives

3.28. Redditch Borough Council has benefitted from, and will continue to benefit from, Government, ACE and third party partnership support and funding for the above programmes which, together, have the potential to revolutionise the arts infrastructure of the area together with the adjacent Bromsgrove District Council area. This partnership support and funding will increase the contribution that the arts and culture make to the achievement of other corporate and community objectives such as Health Improvement and Community Cohesion. It is also sensible for the Council to bid for further, appropriate, funding sources such as the Levelling Up Fund to further support current and new initiatives. However, it is unclear whether the Council's involvement with and support for the programmes to date has been undertaken on an individual service basis or as part of a wider corporate programme with defined objectives and outcomes linked to the Council's Corporate Plan priorities and objectives. Given the 'reach' of arts and cultural programmes and the breadth of the benefits they deliver, the realisation of the current and future strategic arts and cultural initiatives to which this draft strategy relates should be undertaken on a corporate basis with the delivery of the strategic arts and cultural initiatives being incorporated into the Council's Corporate Plan.

Redditch Borough Council

Arts and Culture Strategy

- 3.29. Given the benefits that could accrue to the area it is sensible for the Council to continue to support the various initiatives already embarked upon and briefly described above, subject to the Council continuing to be able to continue to support or resource those initiatives in which it is a partner. Given that the initiatives are partnership led, the Council should put management and monitoring processes in place to ensure that appropriate contributions are made to the delivery of their corporate and community priorities. It will be in the Council's best interest for them to regard the various initiatives as an integrated and corporate programme of activities to be developed and delivered according to programme management principles and overseen, on the Council's part, by an appropriately skilled and experienced project manager. Developing the initiatives as a co-ordinated programme will:
- Ensure positive contributions to the planning and delivery of initiatives to deliver corporate and community priorities;
 - Deliver economies from a single governance and oversight structure;
 - Ensure the involvement of all partners and stakeholders;
 - Avoid duplication of effort and outcomes;
 - Ensure consideration of outcomes from all the initiatives;
 - Ensure prioritisation and co-ordination of delivery; and
 - Facilitate integrated marketing and raising awareness of the programme.
- 3.30. This approach, together with the change in the wider strategic context for funding and support of the arts result in the Council becoming a commissioner of arts services for its area from a variety of partnerships and organisations and project managing their delivery.
- 3.31. The initiatives already in place and being considered by the Council have planning and lead-in times of up to three years and, given the scale of the initiatives when taken together and their collective 'reach' argue for the new project management approach to be put into place as a matter of priority for the initial period up to 31 March 2025, at which point it should be reviewed.

4. Issues and Challenges

- 4.1. The aim is for Redditch Borough Council to achieve increased engagement with arts and cultural provision across the community, whether as a participant or volunteer. Given this outcome, it is a priority to facilitate sustainable, community-based, arts and cultural activities which provide opportunities for involvement as a participant or volunteer, together with skills development and training.

Community consultation

- 4.2. Considerable community consultation was undertaken during the Reimagine Redditch project which clearly identified residents' opinions on arts and cultural provision in the area and the barriers to accessing activities and opportunities.
- 4.3. Additional community and stakeholder consultation was undertaken within Redditch as part of this study, the outcome of which is broadly in line with the findings of the earlier work and key points are summarised:
- 4.4. The majority of respondents felt that the arts, cultural and heritage facilities are very valuable but that their views are not actively sought on the operation of, or the activities undertaken within, those facilities. Overall, respondents are satisfied with the facilities on offer.
- 4.5. Respondents in Redditch described access to arts culture and heritage as good, with heritage attractions being the most visited. A number of barriers were identified to engagement with arts, culture and heritage facilities:
- Lack of time;
 - Poor programmes of activities;
 - Residents do not restrict their engagement with the arts and culture to the Redditch Borough area;
 - Difficulty in obtaining information about the programmes of activities;
 - Expense;
 - Poor transport links;
 - COVID 19; and
 - Parking, access and fees.
- 4.6. Most respondents travel to arts, culture and heritage facilities by car/motorcycle.
- 4.7. The top five venues visited in each category are:

Redditch Borough Council

Arts and Culture Strategy

Table 1: Top five venues visited in Redditch

| Arts | Culture | Heritage |
|--------------------------------------|---|---|
| Artrix (before it closed) | National Trust properties (no venues specified) | National Trust properties (no venues specified) |
| Birmingham Museums and Art Galleries | Artrix (before it closed) | Swan Theatre, Worcester |
| Palace Theatre | Symphony Hall, Birmingham | Forge Mill Museum |
| Pop up art galleries | Birmingham Hippodrome | Arrow Valley Park |
| Town Centre Bandstand | London West End Theatres | N/A |

4.8. Key findings from the consultation:

- Issues with car parking and car park fees;
- More publicity/marketing is required to raise awareness of what is on offer;
- Respondents feel disconnected from the Council and what is available;
- A feeling that increased investment is needed in arts, culture and heritage ‘without cutting corners’;
- There is a need for more and greater diversity of local community events and for the Council to work more closely with communities and groups;
- Better, more reliable and more affordable public transport links to assist travel to facilities and events;
- There are concerns about not feeling safe in and around the town when travelling to facilities;
- A feeling that the town is being neglected and frustration at ‘missed opportunities’; and
- Recognition that the Covid pandemic has had a huge impact on services.

Awareness and accessibility of arts facilities, activities and organisations

- 4.9. The outcome of the community, internal and stakeholder consultations undertaken in developing Reimagine Redditch, other strategic initiatives and this strategy has consistently indicated a need for improved marketing and raising awareness of opportunities to engage with the arts in Redditch.
- 4.10. The outcome of the consultation also indicated that individuals felt distant from arts venues and delivery and would engage more with the arts if there were more, and more diverse, community events undertaken in neighbourhoods and localities; obviating the need to travel as public transport was seen as a barrier – due to both cost and infrequency of service.

Redditch Borough Council

Arts and Culture Strategy

- 4.11. A common response to the consultation was that residents do not feel listened to in the planning of arts activities and opportunities. Also, there is a feeling that arts provision is mostly traditional and does not recognise the diversity of individuals and communities. Neither does current provision recognise the shift, accelerated by the recent lockdown, to digital access to and engagement with the arts.

Facilities

- 4.12. Redditch Borough Council owns the Palace Theatre and the Forge Mill Needle Museum and Bordesley Abbey Visitor Centre which, together with Abbey Stadium Sports Centre, Pitcheroak Golf Course, Arrow Valley Visitor Centre and a number of Community Centres, are managed on its behalf by Rubicon Leisure Limited, the Council's wholly owned trading company (LatCo).
- 4.13. Redditch has an established multi-sectoral arts infrastructure including, in addition to community and voluntary organisations, a number of built facilities; the most significant being:
- Town Centre Bandstand,
 - Paolozzi Mosaics; and
 - Redditch and Woodrow Libraries provided by Worcestershire County Council.

Palace Theatre and Forge Mill Museum

- 4.14. It is unclear what appraisal of options for their operation and management was undertaken prior to the inclusion of these two arts facilities in what is, effectively, a leisure management contract and the placing of that contract with Rubicon Leisure Limited.
- 4.15. The structure of the Rubicon Leisure contract is such that buy-back of central services from the Council is required: denying the contractor the opportunity to engage with different providers and, possibly, reduce costs whilst increasing flexibility. The facilities are also dependent on the Council, through the management board, for the availability of capital to fund improvements and invest to save initiatives.
- 4.16. Having said that, from statistics collected by the Society of London Theatres, the occupancy and income levels of the 420 seat Palace Theatre compare favourably with those of other venues of similar size resulting for 2019/2020 in a deficit of £131,947.
- 4.17. The Forge Mill Museum is a unique piece of the country's industrial history which is managed with the adjacent Bordesley Abbey with a relatively low attendance rate, resulting for 2019/2020 in a deficit of £146,265.
- 4.18. Rubicon Leisure Limited has identified improvements to both the theatre and the museum which would result in increased net income. It is understood that these proposals have been put forward for capital funding from the Council but that a response is awaited.

Redditch Borough Council

Arts and Culture Strategy

- 4.19. Although currently managed within the Rubicon contract, there may be alternative options for the operation of the theatre and the museum given the development of the range of strategic initiatives described earlier in this paper. Such options may be identified by ongoing market engagement or soft market testing as the strategic initiatives develop. To some extent, any future consideration of the future operation of the Theatre and the Museum is dependent on decisions that may be taken regarding the future of the wider Rubicon Leisure contract. However, the consideration of the future of the Theatre and the Museum facilities should be undertaken in the context of the heritage and performance venues (including the Artrix in Bromsgrove) in the wider area and region.
- 4.20. The contract between Redditch Borough Council and Rubicon Leisure Limited relates to the provision of sports, leisure and cultural services within the Borough. Despite being a service contract, its management is not placed with the Development Services team. Rather it is managed as a facilities contract within the Legal/Estates service of the Council. In this arrangement, the Development Services team has little ability, other than through informal links, to influence the service specification and outcomes required of the theatre and museum.

Conclusion

- 4.21. Redditch Borough Council has embarked upon a number of new and significant arts and cultural initiatives. These initiatives, whilst supported by the Council but led by multi-disciplinary teams, clearly demonstrate the change in the role of local authorities from direct provider of arts and cultural activities to that of strategist, co-ordinator, enabler and commissioner; as does the requirement to investigate future models for the operation of Palace Theatre and the Forge Mill Museum.
- 4.22. The various arts and cultural projects under development in Redditch Borough have the potential to make significant contributions to the Council's corporate and community strategy priorities such as health improvement and community cohesion. As part of its commissioner role, the Council should ensure that the arts and cultural initiatives under development make contributions to the realisation of Community and Corporate Strategy priorities.
- 4.23. Arts and cultural initiatives that the Council can embark upon to address its community priorities have already been identified by the strategic projects embarked upon and described above. Future arts and cultural activity to assist in the delivery of the priorities should include:
- Whilst the Redditch area may not be currently regarded as culturally vibrant, having below the England average levels of resident engagement with the arts, it does include a number of organisations that are committed to and active in arts and cultural activities. This local arts and cultural capital should be supported and developed by regarding the Redditch Borough and, where appropriate, the adjoining Bromsgrove District areas, as a unique cultural asset in its own right; harnessing the energy and motivation demonstrated by the responses to Reimagine Redditch and other projects;
 - Building a distinct arts and cultural offer based on what already exists but which also includes ambitious plans for improved or new arts and cultural facilities to assist with the success of the town centres and also to ensure the availability of community arts and cultural facilities within localities so as to be accessible to communities;

Redditch Borough Council

Arts and Culture Strategy

- The development of the Redditch area, together with the adjoining Bromsgrove area as a heritage destination, with associated economic benefits from increased visitor footfall and spend;
 - The development of the Reimagine Redditch programme in partnership with the various communities of the Borough; involving individual members of the community and community organisations in the design and delivery of activities and programmes to overcome the feeling of exclusion felt by some;
 - Capitalise on the prioritisation of Redditch by the DCMS as a location for new arts funding by bidding for Levelling Up funding that will become available in 2023 and, possibly, future years.
- 4.24. The development of these and the other strategic initiatives already embarked upon has been supported by significant engagement with the various communities of Redditch and these relationships should be maintained by developing an awareness raising/marketing programme which involves community representatives in addition to stakeholders and potential funders such as ACE. This awareness raising process should include opportunities for individuals and community groups to propose and manage, with appropriate support if appropriate, arts based activities and programmes designed to address issues of importance to the communities such as addressing loneliness in older people and creating opportunities for different groups and communities to work together on projects.
- 4.25. The Council may also consider working with the CCG and other agencies on a Social Prescribing scheme, similar to “Exercise on Prescription” Schemes, extending the offer to address non-physical health and well-being issues by increasing the capacity of health professionals to meet the non-clinical needs of individuals with long-term complex conditions.
- 4.26. Currently the various arts and cultural components dealt with in this strategy are disparately managed, with no obvious point of co-ordination. This is reinforced by the Council’s organisational culture which allows the existence of vertical barriers between individual parts of the organisation and their teams. The successful delivery of the various arts and cultural initiatives require a shift to a more cohesive and strategic operational model based on a Programme/Project Management approach; with accountability for delivery of the programme being placed with the service department, with support and assistance as required from other parts of the organisation.
- 4.27. Community consultation has identified a number of areas, especially lack of input into the planning of activities and a need for improved marketing and awareness raising of the arts and cultural offer in the areas, which require improvement.
- 4.28. The nature and the patterns of use of the arts and cultural facilities and activities in the Redditch Borough Council area are such that they provide services across both the Bromsgrove District and Redditch Borough Council areas. Residents do not restrict their engagement with the arts and culture to the facilities and opportunities in the Council area in which they live. For example, Bromsgrove residents patronise the Palace Theatre in Redditch and Redditch residents patronised the Artrix in Bromsgrove when it was open.

Redditch Borough Council

Arts and Culture Strategy

- 4.29. Given this pattern of use and possible economies of scale that could be achieved, whilst recognising that Bromsgrove District and Redditch are separate and independent organisations, it is recommended that the planning and delivery of Arts and Cultural services in Bromsgrove District and Redditch Borough are undertaken jointly and in partnership where appropriate.
- 4.30. In addition, residents avail themselves of Arts and Cultural opportunities in areas outside Bromsgrove and Redditch. Conversely, residents of areas external to Bromsgrove and Redditch may avail themselves of arts and cultural facilities within the two Councils' areas. Developing the Bromsgrove District and Redditch Borough Councils' Arts and Cultural offers jointly and in partnership will assist in developing the visibility and marketability of the services in a region that includes a number of alternatives: a number of which, such as Birmingham, are significant in size and well established.
- 4.31. This draft strategy has been subject to consultation with a number of key stakeholders in the arts and cultural field. The responses received are broadly supportive of its direction and aims and have included references to specific issues and activities and these will be referred to the appropriate strategic partnership/initiative for consideration.

5. Recommendations

- 5.1 That the Redditch Borough Council considers and adopts the draft Arts and Cultural Strategy for Redditch attached as the appendix to this report; and, in adopting the draft strategy notes and agrees:
- a) In addition to their intrinsic value, the contributions that the arts and culture can make to corporate and community objectives: including Health Improvement, Community Cohesion and Economic Development & Regeneration;
 - b) Priorities for the planning and delivery of arts and cultural services by the Council:-
 - Economic Development and Regeneration; including skills development;
 - Improving physical, emotional and mental health & wellbeing;
 - Reducing crime & disorder;
 - Improved community safety and responding to anti-social behaviour;
 - Sustainability;
 - High quality services.
 - c) Engagement with and support for the strategic arts & cultural initiatives detailed in the draft strategy; including, as appropriate, partnership working with Bromsgrove District Council:
 - Reimagine Redditch: Creative People & Places Programme;
 - Bromsgrove and Redditch Cultural Compact;
 - Redditch Towns Fund Bid;
 - Heritage Corridor North Worcestershire;
 - Levelling Up Fund;
 - Levelling Up for Culture Places;
 - Tell Me What You Want.
- 5.2 That the Head of Planning Regeneration & Leisure is instructed to develop:
- A detailed Programme Management Plan, including i) outline timetable, ii) resource requirements, together with iii) outcomes and milestones, for the delivery of the strategic initiatives for incorporation into the Council's Corporate and Community Plan.
 - Reimagine Redditch: Creative People & Places Programme;
 - Bromsgrove and Redditch Cultural Compact
 - Heritage Corridor North Worcestershire;
 - Levelling Up for Culture Places;

Redditch Borough Council

Arts and Culture Strategy

- Tell Me What You Want.
- 5.3 These Programme Management Plans to be regularly monitored and updated to reflect completion of initiatives and any additional initiatives embarked upon
- 5.4 In partnership with other providers deliver strategies to respond to the key outcomes from Reimagine Redditch and other community consultations:-
- A wish for greater diversity of and community involvement with arts and cultural provision;
 - A wish for increased delivery of arts and cultural provision in neighbourhoods;
 - A wish for greater community involvement in the commissioning and choice of arts and cultural activities;
 - A wish for improved marketing and awareness raising of arts and cultural activities and opportunities.
- 5.5 That the Leisure and Culture Services team work closely with the Legal Services team on an ongoing basis to contribute to setting out future strategy and direction of travel for the Palace Theatre and Forge Mill Needle Museum/Bordesley Abbey Visitor Centre and in so doing deliver all key priorities as set out in this Arts and Culture Strategy.
- 5.6 That the Head of Planning Regeneration and Leisure reviews the suitability of the current staffing structure of her service area in the context of the of the Arts and Cultural Strategy for Redditch and identifies and implements any changes required to ensure successful and efficient delivery of the strategy.

Disclaimer

Forecasts and recommendations in any proposal, report, appendices or letter produced by Strategic Leisure Limited or their sub consultants are made in good faith and on the basis of the information before the Company at the time. Their achievement must depend, among other things, on effective cooperation of the Client and the Client's staff. In any consequence, no statement in any proposal, report, appendix or letter is to be deemed to be in any circumstances a representation, undertaking, warranty or contractual condition.

© 2022 Strategic Leisure Limited
All rights reserved