**EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL**

# Minutes of the meeting of Arts and Culture Forum held at online via Zoom on 15 June 2022

**Attendance list at end of document**
The meeting started at 2.00 pm and ended at 3.30 pm

## 1 Public speaking

There were no members of the public wishing to speak.

## 2 Appointment of Vice Chair

**RECOMMENDED:** that the recommendation that Councillor Nick Hookway be appointed Vice Chair of the Arts and Culture East Devon Network be passed for approval.

## 3 Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 20 January 2022 were agreed.

## 4 Declarations of interest

**EDDC Forum Members**
Cllr Whibley – Item 7 – Affects NRI – Member of Exmouth Town Council
Cllr Davey – Item 7 – Affects NRI – Member of Exmouth Town Council
Cllr De Saram – Item 7 – Affects NRI – Member of Exmouth Town Council
Cllr Arnott – Item 7 – Affects NRI –Member of Colyton Parish Council
Cllr Rixson – Item 7 – Affects NRI – Member of Sidmouth Town Council
Cllr Faithfull – Item 7 – Affects NRI – Member of Ottery St Mary Town Council

**Non-EDDC Forum Members**
Cllr Johns – Personal interest – Works at SW Academy of Applied & Fine Arts based at Kennaway House, and the SW Academy of Applied & Fine Arts charity does work alongside the Thelma Hulbert Gallery.
Cllr Brown – Personal interest - Member of Honiton Town Council, Honiton Town Council representative and Director of the Honiton Community Complex known as The Beehive.
Cllr Burrough – Personal interest - Member of Axminster Town Council, volunteers with Light Up Axminster, Rotary Member, runs the Yarty Party Festival.
Cllr Steven – Personal interest - Member of Seaton Town Council.
Cllr Farrow – Personal interest - Member of Axminster Town Council.

## 5 East Devon Culture Strategy 2022-2031

The Country and Leisure Service Lead's report provided the final draft of a Culture Strategy and Action Plan for East Devon for the future development and enhancement of the Council's ambitions for cultural development. The Culture Strategy was a ten year statement of intent that sought to build on the existing work of the Council focussed mainly around the Thelma Hulbert Gallery (THG), as a cultural hub and the Arts & Culture Forum through a more cohesive and strategic approach to arts and culture and also sought to add capacity and resource into meeting these ambitions.

The Strategy clearly identified the need for additional resource to enable delivery on the many actions identified and recommended the appointment of a Cultural Producer role. The Cultural Producer would sit within the THG team and be focussed on developing funding applications to the Arts Council and Cultural Development Fund as well as developing new cultural partnerships, projects and activities with East Devon's artist and cultural community.

The Countryside and Leisure Service Lead's report also recognised how an enhanced cultural programme could help to support and link into the District's distinctive cultural tourism offer through better promotion and marketing of the Council's work on the emerging Tourism Strategy. This was linked directly to the social and economic recovery of the district. The Culture Strategy also through its five themes encompassed *what* it wants to achieve and three themes related to *how* it would deliver making it an effective strategy. There were also a developed set of objectives and actions within the Strategy to enable implementation.

The Culture Strategy presented an opportunity to place culture at the heart of the Council's recovery planning (both economically and socially) and along with the planned Leisure and Tourism Strategies provided the strategic decision making framework for these areas in the Council Plan.

The Chair introduced and welcomed Hollie Smith-Charles, lead consultant FEI, to the meeting and she presented the draft culture strategy to the Forum. FEI had been appointed by EDDC to develop a shared 10-year vision for culture in East Devon, with a cultural strategy that set out goals, principles and objectives that reflected local needs and ambitions, and a practical delivery plan. Evidence was gathered in February/March 2022 to help shape the strategy and included research, mapping and consultation, creating a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis. The strategy would be aligned with the new tourism strategy and reviewed by the EDDC Climate Change Officer.

The vision was for East Devon to be a vibrant cultural ecosystem whose distinctive communities and outstanding natural environment were enhance and enriched through creativity, curiosity and collaboration. The values underpinning the strategy were to be:

- Resilient.
- Collaborative.
- Diverse.
- Connected with nature.

The strategy had eight themes. The first five were 'what we would do, and the last three were 'how we will do it'. There was also a set of indicators to measure impact.

1. Strengthen and support the 'people that do': to support the unique, community led cultural organisations whose efforts enhanced the high quality of life and wellbeing in East Devon's towns and villages.
2. Protect and enhance the natural environment: to establish East Devon as an innovator and regional beacon of culture-led environmental protection, enhancement and activism.
3. Cultural tourism: to establish new cultural products, partnerships and promotional activity, to mutually benefit and grow the creative and visitor economies.
4. Creative enterprise and skills: to build inspiring talent development pathways for the current and next generation of East Devon creatives.
5. New places for culture: to ensure all East Devon residents, especially children and young people, could experience high quality culture and creativity in their local areas.
6. Connectivity: to support the sector to connect, work collectively, share best practice and lever investment through greater joint working.

7. Cultural leadership: to be ambitious and enable change by bringing together a diverse range of partners to drive forward and advocate for the Cultural Strategy and secure inward investment.
8. Capture value: to ensure continuous learning and improvement by monitoring and evaluating the change that creativity and culture has on people and place.

On behalf of those present the Chair thanked Hollie Smith-Charles for presenting a clear and easy to understand strategy.

**RECOMMENDED:** that the Arts and Culture Forum recommend that Cabinet:

1. Notes the significance of culture to the District and the importance of supporting recovery from the impact of the pandemic.
2. Endorses the Culture Strategy 2022-31 to reflect the new ambitions and opportunities to expand the arts and cultural offer of East Devon with a view that it supersedes the Culture Strategy 2017-21.

## 6 Steering the development of the Culture Strategy

The Service Lead – Countryside and Leisure thanked the Chair and the FEI Consultant for their support. He went on to outline the Cultural Strategy Steering Group terms of reference. The Steering Group was chaired by the Leader of EDDC and members were drawn from a wide group within and outside the Council. Membership included the Portfolio Holder for Leisure, Sport and Tourism and the Culture Champion, as well as representatives from the arts, museums, community engagement, Arts Council England, tourism, natural environment and economic development. It was hoped that the terms of reference would reassure members that due diligence was being adhered to. The Steering group had met twice to feedback on the evidence and emerging themes report and to take part in a visioning workshop, and to review the draft cultural strategy.

## 7 Resourcing the Culture Strategy

The Service Lead – Countryside and Leisure explained that the culture strategy had identified through its action plan a number of new activities with resourcing implications and outlined a number of funding avenues, as well as the need for discussions with Arts Council England:

1. Funding from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund: Focussing on theme 1 of the strategy, communities and places.
2. Cultural development fund.
3. EDDC budgets.

Subject to funding and Council approval, it was proposed that a new Cultural Producer role be created to take forward the action plans ambitions and act as a conduit and enabler between EDDC's various services, and also to seek out fundraising opportunities to help support the wider ambitions outlined in the action plan. The Cultural Producer post would be tasked with developing new cultural partnerships, developing funding bids, and taking responsibility for overseeing the monitoring and reviewing the progress in delivering the strategy.

The Cultural Producer would provide a central hub for advocacy, communications and development of the strategy, and would be situated within the Thelma Hulbert Gallery/ACED team who would support the post by utilising existing networks, resources and shared expertise in cultural engagement, marketing and programming. It was noted there was not capacity in the current THG team to take on the tasks required of this post.

The ACED network would be developed into a supportive, consultative resource, operating internally and externally, supporting fundraising, education and outreach, cultural tourism and partnership building.

Those present welcomed and agreed the need for a Cultural Producer to bring forward the ambitions of the culture strategy. It was crucial to unlock opportunities in other areas and to deliver the aims and visions of the strategy.

The Chair commented that going forward the terms of reference of the Arts and Culture would be reviewed to make it more of an active forum, with its pivotal role to play in implementing the new strategy.

**RECOMMENDED:** that the Arts and Culture recommends that Cabinet endorses the Culture Strategy's proposal to provide additional resources to support the delivery of the Strategy's Action Plan and that Cabinet recommend to Council the funding for a Cultural Producer role

## 8 Arts and Culture East Devon update

The Forum received a verbal update on the work of ACED and the role of the Thelma Hulbert Gallery (THG) from the Arts Development Manager. The THG operated on less than three full time members of staff. The cultural plan would underpin the THG's developing business plan and its next Arts Council application. The THG was utilised as the engine for EDDC's cultural offer and by positioning the Cultural Producer in the THG would be the most efficient way for the deliverable of the plan to be met.

The work of the THG was district wide, with public art commissions across the district. The Arts Development Manager outlined some of the THG highlights:

- Public Art Commissioning: Exmouth, Honiton, Clyst Valley
    - ACED
    - Exhibitions DAN at THG and Ocean, then Pollard
- Creative Cabin and Clyst Valley – collaboration with Simon Bates and *Roots for Routes* to expand the reach of the mobile creative space touring programme, Creative Cabin, into the Pinhoe, Broadclyst and Cranbrook communities.
    - Public Art commissions, Pinhoe, Honiton, Exmouth
- Secret Garden: part of Climate Conversations - This will be a space for reflection, creativity, engagement, sustainability; contributing to the nation's goal to become net zero by 2050. The appointed Garden Designer is Jenny Jones ABOUT | Jenny Jones Gardens The aims were:
    - Greater sense of community, purpose and wellbeing.
    - Through the relationship with In In My Back Yard (Local East Devon Growers) provide enhanced access to local ethical food and knowledge about the availability of high welfare, organic, biodynamic and agro-ecological produce and plant-based diets.
    - Learning space for activities, events and workshops to profile artists and growers and support themes around the environment and sustainability.
    - Outdoor selling area for the craft shop and In My Back Yard (supporting local industry).
- Ingrid Pollard in Devon exhibition: 8 August 2022 – Ingrid Pollard had recently been selected for the Turner Prize. The Turner Prize exhibition at Tate Liverpool would run concurrently.
- 2023 exhibitions included:
    - Leonie Hampton: Seeds of Change: 11 January – 4 March
    - Paradise Found: Modern art in the Blackdown Hills, past and present: 18 March – 3 June.

- Corrina Wagner: University of Exeter: 17 June – 12 August.

The ACED (Arts & Culture East Devon) was network connecting the artistic communities of East Devon and providing a central platform to engage, network, promote and talk about arts and culture across the region. The THG and ACED were two separate entities, but complimented each other. The post of Cultural Producer was considered vital to take work forward and grow the ACED. At present there were three network meetings per year and two meetings of the Arts and Culture Forum.

## Attendance List

**EDDC Councillors present:**
J Whibley (Chair)
O Davey
B De Saram
N Hookway

**Community representatives:**

**Town Representatives**
K Burrough, Axminster Town Council
C Buchan, Cranbrook Town Council
J Brown, Honiton Town Council
M Steven, Seaton Town Council

**Officers in attendance:**
Ruth Gooding, Arts Development Manager/Curator THG
Charles Plowden, Service Lead Countryside and Leisure
John Golding, Strategic Lead Housing, Health and Environment
Sarah James, Democratic Services Officer
Alethea Thompson, Democratic Services Officer
Anita Williams, Principal Solicitor (and Deputy Monitoring Officer)

**Also Present**
Cllr P Arnott
P Faithfull
M Rixson
Hollie Smith-Charles FEIUK Consultant

**Apologies:**
B Norris, Community Representative
E Pang, Ottery St Mary Town Council
J Loudoun, Sidmouth Town Council
Eileen, Exmouth Town Council

Chair ..... Date: .....