

Report to: Cabinet

Date of Meeting 13 July 2022

Document classification: Part A Public Document

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## Culture Strategy and Action Plan for East Devon 2022-2031

### Report summary:

The report provides the 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 is a ten year statement of intent that seeks to build on the existing work of the Council focussed mainly around the THG, as a cultural hub and the Arts & Culture Forum through a more cohesive and strategic approach to arts and culture and also seeking to add capacity and resource into meeting these ambitions. The Strategy has clearly identified the need for additional resource to enable delivery on the many actions identified and the recommendation is the appointment of a Cultural Producer role. The Cultural Producer will 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 report also recognises how an enhanced cultural programme can 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 is linked directly to the social and economic recovery of the district. The Culture Strategy also through its five themes encompass *what* it wants to achieve and three themes related to *how* it will deliver making it an effective strategy. There are also a developed set of objectives and actions within the Strategy to enable implementation.

The Culture Strategy presents 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 provide the strategic decision making framework for these areas in the Council Plan.

### Is the proposed decision in accordance with:

Budget Yes  No

Policy Framework Yes  No

### Recommendation:

That Cabinet recommends to Council:

- The adoption of the Culture Strategy 2022-31 to reflect the new ambitions and opportunities to expand the arts and cultural offer of East Devon;
- Endorses the Culture Strategy's proposal to provide funding for a Cultural Producer role to enable the delivery of the Culture Strategy and Action Plan 2022-2031. A request is made to Council for a budget of £38,000 per annum; to be funded initially (3 years) from the Transformation Fund.

### Reason for recommendation:

To be able to deliver the corporate ambitions identified within the Council Plan to develop and enhance the arts and cultural offer as an essential part of the Council's recovery planning work post COVID19 that will enable a social and economic recovery in the district's communities. The

Culture Strategy and Action Plan provides the strategic framework to support East Devon's arts and cultural sector and to help support the Council's ambitions for a scaling up of its cultural activities that support and synergise with the planned Tourism Strategy and Leisure Strategy. The Culture Strategy seeks to act on East Devon DC's climate change emergency response targets, recognises the value of the district's outstanding natural environment and supporting the district-wide cultural network (ACED) to engage with East Devon's creative arts sector.

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Portfolio(s) (check which apply):

- Climate Action and Emergency Response
- Coast, Country and Environment
- Council and Corporate Co-ordination
- Democracy, Transparency and Communications
- Economy and Assets
- Finance
- Strategic Planning
- Sustainable Homes and Communities
- Tourism, Sports, Leisure and Culture

**Equalities impact** Low Impact

**Climate change** Medium Impact

**Risk:** Medium Risk; The report scopes out the strategic framework for scaling up the Council's stated ambitions within its Council Plan for its cultural work linking into tourism, communities, the environment and our events programme. The risk issues are centred around the current capacity of the Council's arts development team and budget being unable to deliver on these ambitions without further resourcing to enable delivery on the recommendations within the report.

**Links to background information** [Cultural Strategy 2022-2031](#)

**Link to [Council Plan](#):**

Priorities (check which apply)

- Better homes and communities for all
- A greener East Devon
- A resilient economy

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## Report in full

### 1. The value of culture

1.1 In the Arts Council England report - 'The Value of Arts & Culture to People and Society' there are five key ways arts and culture can boost local economies:

- Attracting visitors;
- Creating jobs and developing skills;
- Attracting and retaining businesses;
- Revitalising places;
- Developing talent.

1.2 Those who had attended a cultural place or event in the previous 12 months were almost 60% more likely to report good health compared to those who had not, and theatre goers were almost 25% more likely to report good health. Research has shown that high frequency of engagement with arts and culture is generally associated with a higher level of subjective wellbeing as well as improve the cognitive abilities of children and young people. There is also strong evidence that participation in the arts can contribute to community cohesion, reduce social exclusion and isolation, and make communities feel safer and stronger

1.3 The arts and culture industry has grown by £390 million in a year and now contributes £10.8 billion a year to the UK economy. The sector contributes £2.8 billion a year to the Treasury via taxation, and generates a further £23 billion a year and 363,700 jobs.

1.4 Cultural Tourism also plays a crucial role in today's economy. In 2018 it represented 37% of the total tourism sector, with an annual growth of approximately 15%.

- With the COVID-19 pandemic, it is estimated that international tourism fell by around 80% in 2020.
- There is an opportunity to build a more resilient tourism economy, promoting digital transition and rethinking a more sustainable tourism system.
- East Devon has a high cultural, social and environmental potential.

1.5 The LGA refer to the 'pulling power' of arts and culture: visitors to a theatre, museum, or festival spend money on their ticket or entrance fee, meals in local restaurants, spending in local shops, or perhaps hotel bookings as part of their visit. The value of arts and culture to society has long been debated. We know that arts and culture play an important role in promoting social and economic goals through local regeneration, attracting tourists, developing talent and innovation, improving health and wellbeing, and contributing to the delivery of public services. These benefits are 'instrumental' because art and culture can be a means to achieve ends beyond the immediate intrinsic experience and value of the art itself.

## 2. Impact of the Pandemic

2.1 In its report - *LGA local.gov.uk: The impact of COVID-19 on culture, leisure tourism and sport* it has clearly evidenced the following relevant issues:

- the explosion of culture, sport and leisure consumption and participation during lockdown has demonstrated that these are among the services that really matter to residents. Their value is far greater than the entertainment they provide: they are essential to people's mental and physical health.
- Secondly, councils will have a crucial role to play in delivering economic recovery. Prior to the pandemic, the creative industries were the fastest growing part of the economy, along with tourism. These businesses are integral to our recovery and part of a complex ecosystem which includes the services funded and delivered by councils.
- Lastly as this research has shown, the impact of COVID-19 on culture, leisure, tourism and sport has been severe and this position is likely to remain challenging in the foreseeable future. Nevertheless, this sector has a vital role to play in the nation's recovery. Expenditure on culture and leisure organisations is not a sunk cost; it is an investment in the health and wellbeing of a place and its residents.

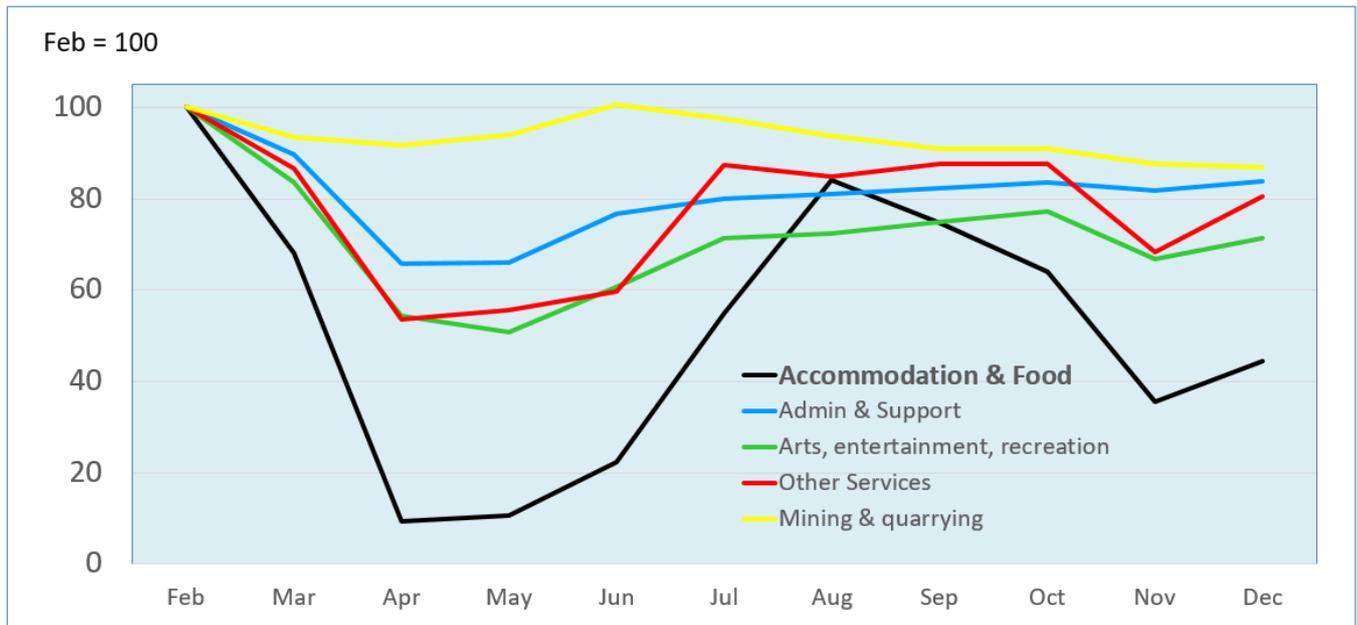
2.2 The Arts Council England (ACE) Strategy 2020-2030 'Let's Create' has set out an ambition to achieve by 2030, that England is a country in which "the creativity of each of us is valued and given the chance to flourish, and where every one of us has access to a remarkable range of high quality cultural experiences". To be achieved through;

- **Creative People:** Everyone can develop and express creativity throughout their life.

- **Cultural Communities:** Villages, towns and cities thrive through a collaborative approach to culture.
- **A creative and cultural country:** England’s cultural sector is innovative, collaborative and international.

2.3 It is through this ACE Strategy ambition and also the LGA’s ‘Creative Places: Supporting your local creative economy’ 2020 document that this report will seek to establish how the Council can put in place various programmes, resources and partnerships to build on its existing commitments within the arts and cultural sectors and also establish a clear “roadmap” to how this can further support the development of East Devon’s cultural visitor economy.

There is no doubt that the sector has been heavily impacted by the pandemic. The following graph shows the five most impacted sectors in the UK in terms of GVA during 2020.



### 3. What role can the Council play in supporting the cultural tourism sector?

3.1 Devon has one of the largest visitor economies in Britain, drawing in visitor spend of almost £2.5bn per year, primarily driven by the quality of the natural environment. The County attracted 24 million overnight stays from visitors from across the UK and the world in 2016, contributing £2.5bn to its economy and employing 12% of the County’s workforce. There are twice as many tourism business in Devon than the national average

3.2 In 2015 East Devon attracted over 500,000 domestic and international trips. This resulted in over 2m night stays and spend of £117m. This was combined with nearly 4m day trips with associated spend of over £135m.

3.3 The tourism sector is clearly of significant economic importance to the District. It is relatively diverse and there are a number of leading private businesses providing everything from accommodation to attractions. The District Council’s role in relation to supporting tourism has shifted over time from funding large scale marketing and promotion activity and supporting the operation of Tourist Information Centres to bringing forward physical regeneration projects, such as Seaton Jurassic and Queen’s Drive space, designed to improve the offer of specific places.

3.4 The easing of restrictions has meant there is the opportunity to consider the Council’s role going forward and how this can help to support recovery and add value to the cultural tourism sector.

Specific dimensions to this could include the following;

- Harnessing the potential to promote culture-led tourism – for example by leveraging the programmes of the Thelma Hulbert Gallery and the Manor Pavilion Theatre within the context of the cultural strategy and the Arts & Culture East Devon partnership
- Spreading the geographic focus across the District – for example by working with the AONB partnership and to bring forward initiatives such as the Clyst Valley Regional Park in conjunction with partners such as the National Trust
- Promoting green and eco-tourism – the ability to also support tourism through the provision of EV charging points in our car parks was highlighted recently. Also around 70% of all visitors to Devon are attracted by the quality of the environment which turn speaks to the stewardship role of the farming and forestry sectors as well as to our own role in providing natural attractions such as Seaton Wetlands
- Supporting private sector-led initiatives such as East Devon Excellence – this brings together a range of leading businesses in the District with the potential to support wider industries such as in relation to food and drink.
- Ensuring a thriving festival and events scene – including linking to our own events strategy
- Place making – including utilising the Council’s own assets to further develop the offer of specific places. This could range from public realm improvements through to the development of improved facilities.
- Supporting investment - the government recently confirmed details of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund as well as the Levelling Up Fund.

#### **4. EDDC’s cultural programme**

4.1 The majority of the creative arts and cultural work undertaken by the Council is through the Thelma Hulbert Gallery and its Out & About programme which delivers the most high profile projects and PR campaigns that brings a focus to the importance and value of arts and culture within our district. Other important cultural providers are The Manor Pavilion Theatre, Sidmouth which has a popular and successful programme of dance, musicals, drama, comedy and ballet performances throughout the year and is an award winning community theatre.

4.2 The EDDC Countryside and AONB teams also deliver programmes which connect culture with our outstanding environment and promote the value of our rich cultural heritage. LED through the Exmouth Pavilion also supports a popular programme of entertainment and finally more recently the work of the Events Officer has started to explore opportunities for enabling new events activities such as music festivals and outdoor theatre.

4.3 There is no clearly defined cultural or tourism service within the Council and it is through these services along with our Economic Development team which provide the majority of the advice, support and outputs that help to support our visitor economy and provide a diverse and exciting programme of creative arts and cultural activities

4.4 Following recent discussions within the Leadership Group, Portfolio Holders and Culture Champion and the recent Arts and Culture Forum there is a clear ambition to develop on the work of the THG and the Arts & Culture Forum to provide Cultural Leadership and a district wide role for arts development and also supporting our creative arts and cultural sector. This is articulated within the Council Plan.

## 5. Arts and Culture East Devon (ACED) network

5.1 Against the context of Covid19, THG took the initiative to develop a public network to support the cultural and creative sector in its recovery from the pandemic. All cultural services such as local arts, theatres, museums and galleries, festivals, music events, public art, those working with local social, wellbeing, inclusion and economic development agendas, and creative businesses are all invited to participate in a supportive network developing a creative economy and stabilising the cultural ecology of the district.



5.2 The benefits of such a platform are clearly evidenced in other local authorities such as Exeter, Torbay, Taunton & West Somerset, Cornwall etc. where the joining up cross all the creative arts sectors has brought exciting new initiatives, funding, long lasting social and economic benefits into communities and towns as well as inspiring the next generation of cultural providers.

### ACED network aims:

- Embed the role of the arts in the cultural, social, educational, environmental and economic life of the district by providing a **supportive network**
- Support advocacy work for local arts and culture services and identify areas for **collaboration**
- Share news, **best practice**, plans and ambitions- aiding **communication** between arts practitioners, arts organisations, non-arts organisations, local government and regional and national bodies
- Develop and **promote** local authority arts and culture-led economic growth initiatives
- Support an increase in **engagement** in cultural activity in the District, developing a healthy social and cultural ecology which **enriches communities and visitors**

It is the intention of ACED to help deliver the cultural ambitions stated within the Culture Strategy and also the Council Plan and also meet the Arts Council England vision in their 'Let's Create' 2020-30 strategy which will help East Devon DC to align its cultural ambitions with the Government's cultural priorities and secure support and funding for future programmes

## 6. Resourcing the cultural ambitions

6.1 It is this expanded cross district portfolio of programmes, activities and events that is now driving the cultural development within the Council. It is clear that the importance of the THG team has grown in the last 2 years, supporting the Council in wider strategic corporate priorities and

also through adopted plans such as the Public Health Plan, Climate Change Strategy and Events Strategy. The THG can be used as a “cultural engine”, coordinating with Council teams who engage with art and culture.

6.2 The need for additional resources has been identified within the Culture Strategy with the Action Plan’s identification of projects and activities. To enable the delivery of these the “ask” is to create a dedicated role to spearhead this – a Cultural Producer role. This post would be tasked with developing new cultural partnerships, develop funding bids and take responsibility for overseeing the monitoring and review of progress in delivering the Strategy.

6.3 The Cultural Producer’s role is outlined in Appendix 1 of the Culture Strategy and would be located within the THG team. Without a dedicated role to take forward the Strategy it will prove very challenging to deliver on the Action Plan and the ambitions stated within the Council Plan. The existing resources within the Council for delivering cultural activities have remained static for many years with the focus being on supporting the Manor Pavilion theatre, the THG, Villages in Action and the South West museums Partnership with the latter two receiving a modest grant to support their activities district-wide.

6.4 The Culture Strategy has identified five themes which outline a “roadmap” for cultural activities to help influence, support and scale up areas such as cultural tourism, promoting a collaborative events programme linking culture and the natural environment, providing targeted support for east devon’s “cultural” volunteers, supporting the next generation of creative artists with an apprenticeship scheme team and shaping our place-making schemes through cultural regeneration. These ambitions will require additional capacity to be brought into the Council to enable delivery.

## **7. A way forward for East Devon DC’s cultural ambitions**

7.1 Alongside a newly commissioned Cultural Strategy will be the Leisure Strategy and a Tourism Strategy for the district which will help to provide the strategic framework for the Council’s ambitions in these three important sectors both economically, socially and environmentally. The linkage of all three will help deliver the Council’s priorities for public health, climate change and supporting our communities as we recover from COVID19. There are potentially significant opportunities to develop the cultural tourism offer in East Devon that has a focus primarily on our rural hinterland area as our coastal areas have a well marketed and thriving visitor offer.

7.2 The developing role of ACED will also provide an important “voice” for the district’s grassroots cultural and creative arts sector that can help to create new opportunities to market, promote and support the sector as well as link into the cultural tourism offer. This network will require support and over the next 6 months it will be supported through the THG team leading to a longer term solution with a proposed new funding application to the Arts Council England to fully fund this role.

## **8. Summary**

8.1 The Culture Strategy has sought to reflect the creative arts and cultural ambitions within the Council Plan into a coherent and exciting programme of projects, activities and new platforms. The THG has and is showing that it can also be the Council’s lead for delivering this Council-wide arts and cultural development programme by integrating into other Council priorities. The creation of a Cultural Producer role will enable the delivery of the ten year Strategy working alongside East Devon’s cultural sector and drawing in funding from external sources to help underpin the programme of activities identified within the Action Plan.

8.2 The challenge has now been presented in the ten year Culture Strategy and the opportunity to take the next steps is evidenced in the report to showcase the intrinsic value of culture to our district and also place culture at the heart of delivering and enabling many of the Council’s ambitions outlined in its Council Plan.

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**Financial implications:**

The recommendation to Council is for the approval of a new post of "Cultural Producer" this is estimated at a cost of £38k per annum with on costs. It is proposed initially for a 3 year period the cost is met from the Transformation Fund. Other actions identified within the Culture Strategy at this stage have not been highlighted as a request for additional funding, as actions are worked through in more detail if additional resources are required then these will have to be considered by Cabinet and Council as a specific request to consider approval..

**Legal implications:**

The adoption of the Culture Strategy and budget requests are appropriately matters for Council to agree. Otherwise the report does not identify any legal implications requiring comment'