



Cabinet

27 January 2021

Report Title:	St Helens Borough Arts Strategy
Cabinet Portfolio	Wellbeing, Culture and Heritage
Cabinet Member	Councillor Anthony Burns
Exempt Report	No
Reason for Exemption	N/A
Key Decision	Yes
Public Notice issued	23 December 2020
Wards Affected	All Wards
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Borough priorities	Ensure children and young people have a positive start in life	X
	Promote good health, independence and care across our communities	
	Create safe and strong communities for our residents	X
	Support a strong, diverse and well-connected local economy	
	Create a green, thriving and vibrant place to be proud of	X
	Be a modern, efficient and effective Council	

1. Summary

- 1.1 In January 2020, the Council commissioned Counterculture LLP to help develop and produce an overarching 10-year Arts Strategy for the Borough.
- 1.2 The St Helens Borough Arts Strategy sets out the strategic direction of the arts for the next 10 years, including the opportunities for the arts to continue to support the development and regeneration of the Borough.
- 1.3 Co-produced with the Arts Sector, the Strategy is based around an agreed set of key priorities which are aligned to national and regional arts strategies and the Council's ambitions and wider priorities for the Borough. It provides a clear and ambitious vision which supports St Helens Borough's post Covid-19 recovery plans. Responsibility for delivery of the Strategy will be a shared responsibility between the Council and its partners in the Arts Sector delivered through a Culture Partnership Board.

2. Recommendations for Decision

Cabinet is recommended to:

- i) **Approve the St Helens Borough Arts Strategy attached at Appendix 1 for public consultation for a period of six weeks.**

3. Purpose of this Report

- 3.1 This report seeks approval of an Arts Strategy for the Borough. It is a place-based Strategy which presents an ambitious and energising vision for the arts and establishes a sustainable, pragmatic and engaged framework for delivering, promoting and inspiring the arts and culture in the Borough.
- 3.2 This is a St Helens Borough Arts Strategy and not solely a Council Strategy and is co-owned with the Arts Sector. This has resulted in a shared recognition of the challenges and opportunities ahead and a shared commitment to the Strategy's vision and priorities for the arts in St Helens as well as a recognition of the role of the arts in supporting the wider regeneration of the Borough.

3.3 It reflects that the ambitions and priorities for the Arts should not be planned and delivered in isolation, but rather that delivery of the Strategy will be progressed as part of a coordinated place-based approach bringing together the recommendations of the Heritage Opportunities document and linking to the regeneration work of the Town Centre Deal and the Council's Covid-19 reset and recovery plans.

4. Background /Reasons for the recommendations

4.1 In January 2020, the Council commissioned Counterculture LLP to produce an Arts Strategy for St Helens Borough that will set the strategic direction of the arts up to 2026 maximise the opportunities and resources available, develop creative talent and recognise the contribution that the arts and creativity can make to delivering the Council's wider ambitions for the Borough.

4.2 The development of the St Helens Borough Arts Strategy has been supported and overseen by a Steering Group consisting of representatives from arts organisations, including the amateur arts sector, the wider culture and education sector and officers of St Helens Borough Council. The Steering Group have played a pivotal role in determining the approach of the Strategy, undertaking extensive consultation and research, agreeing the recommendations and developing a Delivery Plan based on a clear set of principles and an agreed methodology.

4.3 The Strategy has been developed at a pivotal time for St Helens in terms of its arts and cultural development. In 2023, St Helens will again be the Borough of Culture for the Liverpool City Region. This will be a significant opportunity for St Helens to showcase its organisations and artists and to demonstrate that it is at the vanguard of socially engaged arts practice.

4.4 The aim of the Strategy is to help each and every St Helens resident have the opportunity to learn, experience and "emerge" through the arts, creativity and culture so that every resident can contribute to, experience and benefit from an uplifting cultural encounter. This is an Arts Strategy for everyone in the Borough.

4.5 The Strategy has as its core vision the theme of Emergence. St Helens has always been a place where things emerge – coal from the earth, canals from brooks, glass from sand. As St Helens begins to emerge from lockdown, new forms of art and culture will begin to emerge and will support the wider regeneration of the Borough.

4.6 Based around this vision, the Strategy identifies seven priorities for action:

- to deliver a successful year in 2023 when St Helens is the Liverpool City Region Borough of Culture
- to align the priorities of the St Helens Borough Arts Strategy and the Cultural and Heritage component of the Town Deal
- to align the St Helens Borough Arts Strategy to national and Liverpool City Region arts priorities and timescales
- to identify and promote the role of arts and culture in the Borough and the City Region skills development programmes
- to maximise the physical assets available for arts provision

- to align with the Liverpool City Region and Liverpool Biennial proposals for public arts to a) develop 'Dream' as an asset and b) develop an approach to public realm changes in St Helens; and
- to align the Arts and Heritage Strategies with the voluntary sector.

4.7 These priorities are pragmatic and seek to embed strategically aligned thinking, decision-making and sustainable borough-wide delivery. The Strategy has a Delivery Plan which identifies how these shared priorities will be delivered.

4.8 It is proposed, following the approval of the Strategy, that the role of the Arts Strategy Steering Group is reviewed and amended and that a Culture Partnership Board is established with additional members, as appropriate. The role of this group will be to oversee the implementation of the St Helens Borough Arts Strategy and to act as the forum aligning the Arts Strategy with other strategies to develop a place-based approach to arts and culture in the Borough.

4.9 The St Helens Borough Arts Strategy provides the framework for delivering, promoting and inspiring the arts. It is realistic in its priorities and deliberately seeks to align national, regional and local priorities and to promote a working ecology that is focused, collegiate and transparent. The Strategy sets out the change we want to achieve over the next decade and will help to put in place the conditions that will enable creative practitioners and organisations to respond to what lies ahead and highlight the role of the arts and culture in supporting the Council's ambition and aspiration to develop St Helens as an inspiring place to live, work and visit.

5. Community Impact Assessment

The Community Impact Assessment identified the following key implications:

5.1 The St Helens Borough Arts Strategy aims to strengthen our arts offer and make it more inclusive and accessible. It is explicit in identifying that the Strategy is for everyone and that it will provide opportunities for everyone to contribute to, and benefit from, the arts.

5.2 There are clearly identified priorities in the Strategy and the implications arising from these will continue to be considered as programmes are developed for their implementation.

6. Consideration of Alternatives

6.1 There is currently no Arts Strategy for the Borough. As a result, activities and initiatives relating to the arts are not coordinated or aligned around either a strategic vision or an agreed set of priorities.

The St Helens Borough Arts Strategy provides a strategic framework to align activity in the Borough with national, regional and local priorities. This will maximise the opportunities available to access available resources and support from partner organisations.

7. Conclusions

7.1 The St Helens Borough Arts Strategy provides an approach and framework to deliver, communicate and resource ambitions for the arts in the Borough and to use the arts and culture to support the drive for change and improvement to support the Council's wider ambitions for the Borough.

8. Implications

8.1 Legal Implications

8.1.1 Any legal implications arising out of the priorities of the Strategy will be considered as part of the Delivery Plan for this Strategy.

8.2 Community Impact Assessment (CIA) Implications

8.2.1 Social Value

8.2.1.1 The Strategy identifies opportunities for the arts sector to promote the role of the arts and culture in the Chamber of Commerce skills plans and through the Town Deal to increase skills and employment opportunities.

8.2.1.2 One of the priorities of the Strategy is to align the Arts and Heritage Strategies with the work of the voluntary sector. This will provide options for increasing volunteering opportunities through the arts and culture sectors.

8.2.2 Sustainability and Environment

8.2.2.1 The Strategy proposes an independent audit of physical and other assets available for art provision to inform the need for future provision. This may involve decommissioning some current provision pending the outcome of the audit.

8.2.3 Health and Wellbeing

8.2.3.1 The arts can play a significant role in improving the physical and mental health wellbeing of residents and in addressing social isolation. The arts can help to develop self-esteem and contribute to practical skills achievements.

8.2.4 Equality and Human Rights

8.2.4.1 There are no implications arising from this report.

8.3 Customers and Resident

8.3.1 The Strategy will present opportunities for all residents to benefit from and take part in arts activities which can improve skills and knowledge.

8.4 Asset and Property

8.4.1 The Strategy identifies that an assessment of the physical assets available to the sector is undertaken to ensure that assets are maximised and are aligned to the priorities of the Strategy. This may result in the decommissioning of some assets.

8.5 Staffing and Human Resource

8.5.1 The Strategy proposes that a review of the Council's Arts Service is undertaken to provide the capacity to support the delivery of the Strategy. This review will be undertaken in accordance with the Council's HR processes and procedures.

8.6 Risks

8.6.1 The needs assessment, that has been undertaken to develop the Strategy, has identified a number of defects in St Helens Borough's current approach. The Strategy addresses these issues, identifies a clear set of priorities for the next 10 years and has a Delivery Plan to support the implementation of the priorities.

8.7 Finance

8.7.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

8.8 Policy Framework Implications

8.8.1 The priorities identified in the St Helens Borough Art Strategy are intended to support the delivery of the Council's wider strategic priorities.

9. Background papers

9.1 None.

10. Appendices

10.1 St Helens Borough Arts Strategy