


Agenda Item No:	7	
Committee:	Overview and Scrutiny Panel	
Date:	9 May 2022	
Report Title:	Culture and Creativity - Progress report	

1 Purpose / Summary

This paper covers the progress made in developing a Creativity and Culture Strategy and further progress since adoption of the Strategy.

2 Key issues

The Council recognises the importance of creativity and culture for our local communities. This is a broad area of activity and includes the heritage of Fenland and the communities living here. Developing a vibrant creative and culture sector in the district will ensure that Fenland continues to be a great place to live, attracts more inward and intra-District tourism, generates jobs and supports the local economy, creates strong and cohesive communities and supports people's mental health.

Creativity and Culture in Fenland has been identified by the Arts Council England (ACE) as an area requiring more support and funding. Following initial financial support to develop a Fenland Creativity and Culture Strategy, ACE has more recently part funded a two-year Creativity and Culture Development Officer role.

3 Recommendations

For the Overview and Scrutiny Panel to note progress in developing capacity and support for creativity and culture in Fenland and expected future support that is anticipated from Arts Council England.

Wards Affected	All
Forward Plan Reference	
Portfolio Holders	Cllr Chris Seaton - Portfolio Holder for Social Mobility & Heritage
Report Originators	<div>Phil Hughes Acting Assistant Director</div> <div>Jaime-Lea Taylor Creativity and Culture Development Officer (CCDO)</div>
Contact Officer	<div>Phil Hughes</div> <div>Email: phughes@fenland.gov.uk</div>

Report:

1 Creativity and Culture Strategy for Fenland

- 1.1 As highlighted to members previously, the adopted Strategy highlights four key outcomes to aspire to:

Connections

- Assets in the cultural sector will be well networked, both within Fenland and further afield, in order to build partnerships that can lever in funding and build infrastructure across the district.
- Networks share skills and support volunteers.
- Opportunities to access cultural opportunities is addressed in order to make cultural activity in Fenland more accessible.

Communication

- A focused communications campaign celebrates the culture of Fenland, and key people and their achievements.
- Marketing shows Fenland as a cultural destination, linking it to the strong heritage and unique nature of Fenland traditions and natural landscapes.
- Information about cultural activity in Fenland will be centralised, creating an information Hub with a dedicated coordinator to promote Fenland's culture and join up marketing of culture into a multi-faceted offer across the district.

Empowerment

- Community Connectors will be identified and supported to work with communities in order to develop their skills and confidence in creating cultural opportunities.
- Young people are supported to be heard within cultural plans, as well as supported to achieve their own cultural ambitions.
- Address the skills gap within Fenland's cultural sector, identifying opportunities to support young people to train in the sector and gain experience and skills as well as uplifting the skills of existing practitioners and cultural sector workers in Fenland.

Inspiration

- Inspiring events and activities will take place in Fenland on a regular basis, bringing high quality arts to the district, co-programmed with communities and appropriate for the different towns, and drawing larger audiences from further afield to engage with it. Fenland has great potential for outdoor events, such as festivals, with its market places, fields and green open spaces.
- A Creative Hub will be developed, perhaps making use of an existing venue to become an arts centre, hosting regular activities and attracting creative people to work and programme there.

2 Delivering the Strategy

- 2.1 To move forwards the delivery of any of the strategy objectives, staff capacity is required. FDC applied to the Arts Council for part funding to employ a creativity and culture development officer (CCDO). This funding was successful and, following a recruitment process with the Arts Council involved, FDC appointed Jaime-Lea Taylor to the role.

Over the past few months the Fenland CCDO has been carrying out the following work:

- 2.2 Although a local resident, understanding the 'cultural landscape' in Fenland takes some time. Jaime-Lea has been building up a network of people to help her understand what is happening and who to call on for information and support. Additionally, a close relationship with an Arts Council mentor has been developed.
- 2.3 Developing a core culture group: This group consists of the CCDO and other professionals linked to the creative and culture industry representing different skills, backgrounds, and areas within the culture sector in Fenland. The group is working together to develop an action plan to deliver against the Culture Strategy. This action plan will be agreed with Arts Council and should allow further funding bids as it progresses. The small team has enabled efficient, productive conversations working through plans, whilst ensuring any decisions to have been informed by multiple perspectives.
- 2.4 Wider Culture Group: Alongside the core group, a broader culture group has been formed. This group will work to increase networking in the culture and creativity sector to further develop capacity improve communication and networking. Much of the emerging action plan delivery will be organised by the broader group.
- 2.5 The CCDO is working very closely with the Arts Council. The Arts council is committed to advocating for Creativity and Culture in Fenland. This has culminated in making Fenland a Priority Place for Arts Council support. This should mean that Arts Council funding applications from creative groups across the district are viewed favourably and are more likely to be successful. The close relationship with the Arts council has recently led to a visit by an Arts Council Director and colleagues to Fenland. Discussions took place with Wisbech town Council, FDC Portfolio Holder and creatives in the district.

Discussions included:

- Consideration of a locally managed micro-grant scheme to encourage local creative groups
 - A discussion regarding capital funding for culture, art and heritage facilities in the district
 - Arts Council to continue advocacy work for creativity in Fenland District Council
 - Discussions regarding the potential of art and culture for social prescribing to tackle issues such as mental and physical wellbeing
- 2.6 The Arts Council colleagues agreed that a future All Member Seminar would be useful once the Action plan is fully developed to ensure Member are made aware of what is taking place across the district - from some of the creatives directly involved in this work.

The CCDO has been working with the High Streets Project Officer to deliver the remaining activities programme as part of the National Lottery Heritage Fund Wisbech High Street Project. Online talks have been taking place monthly and are well-attended. There are plans for increased collaborative working with local organisations to partner with, either by running activities or hosting events, as well as hopes to plan more activities directly aimed for children, young people and families. The 2022 Activity Plan has been rewritten and valuable feedback has been appreciated, whilst navigating the NLHF approval process.

3 Considerations

- 3.1 As mentioned previously the Culture Strategy is not an FDC strategy. It is a Strategy for Fenland that should be led by a group of people involved in the creative, culture and heritage sector within Fenland, not an FDC group. This leadership approach, that the CCDO has set up, will strengthen the possibilities that the Strategy can offer, ensuring community ownership to effect positive change within the sector in Fenland.

4 Conclusions

- 4.1 The appointment of the CCDO and the development of a culture strategy action plan will lead to more effective and joined up opportunities for the Fenland community to take part in creative, cultural and heritage activities.