

## Results of the Cultural Strategy Public Engagement Exercise, November 2020

*Note: The results presented below have been considered during the production of the final draft. The resulting amendments to the earlier draft are summarised in the Executive report.*

### 1. Overall vision for the Cultural Strategy

	Total responses	Of which, agree with this ambition?
Agree with the proposed vision identified for this strategy – yes or no?	49	86%

#### Free text comments in response to this question.

Emergent theme	Comments
<b><i>Ambition is unclear</i></b> – 5 comments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It's not very clear to me what you are trying to achieve, what is your ambition for culture in the district, what you will invest in or facilitate external investment and how you will help everyone to take part. I don't think that vision really does anything other than create a sense of it all being about events.</li> <li>• A vision needs to feel active, aspirational. It needs to express what will change, what difference will be made. At present the ambition is a set of aspirational words which could apply to almost anywhere.</li> <li>• The wording is over the top, posturing nonsense.</li> <li>• Statement has no basis. There is no cultural industry or creative industry or any industry in Bishop's Stortford.</li> <li>• Unlikely. Most non-woke people will not even understand what any of these 11 questions mean. Need to put into plain English for normal people. What is a creative industry?</li> </ul>
<b><i>Concerns about lack of ownership</i></b> – 4 comments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I feel it needs to reference the unique communities, be they rural, poor socio economic, digitally deprived, poor transport infrastructure, and the challenges they face. Sustainability is only viable if communities feel they can be part of the strategy and can be empowered to make change.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This can only happen with people with an 'Arts' background who have an understanding of what is needed in the Arts lead the way, good communication where people answer emails and funding which does start and/or is confirmed half way through the year.</li> <li>• As a relative newcomer to the area there appears to be very little cultural leadership or ambition in this area, very few people know what culture and heritage there is in East Herts and very little collaboration.</li> </ul>
<b>Doubts about consultation</b> – 1 comment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I don't believe residents are ever listened to</li> </ul>

## 2. Cultural Strategy ambitions

Is the Strategy on right track to achieve the following ambitions?	Total responses	Of which, 'yes, 'on right track'
Strong partnerships result in a resilient cultural infrastructure	48	92%
Investment in arts and culture contributes to tangible gains	48	90%
Interested parties support each other to encourage entrepreneurial and innovative cultural practitioners to invest in East Herts	47	85%
Truly extraordinary things happen throughout the district	48	83%
Sustainability is at the heart of our cultural infrastructure and activities	47	70%
Our achievements are recognised beyond boundaries	47	68%

### Free text comments in response to this question.

Emergent theme	Comments
Positive about breadth of ambition – 7 comments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I love the ambition and the sense of energy behind it. I love the 'pursuit of excellence' feel. That 'excellence' must apply to the quality of work in the arts which excites and supports and conveys a sense of worth to those who engage but may not yet produce work of excellence themselves but benefit from and enjoy the journey.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We employ many local artists who provide wonderful creative entertainment to enhance the health and wellbeing of our service users. Our group also have the opportunity to have new artistic and cultural experiences enhancing their quality of life and enabling them to make informed choices about how they would like to spend their leisure time.</li> <li>• As a social enterprise providing services for adults with learning disabilities, local art centres and artists are vital to our projects.</li> <li>• Encouraging residents to get involved in their community, will help enormously when there are times of stress or hardship for their local area. A network of contacts will have been built up.</li> <li>• People want to do arts and cultural activities themselves. The council needs to focus on facilitating these things, not just selecting the ones it wants. To foster good arts and culture the council needs to provide more community places (for example The Drill Hall in Ware is fantastic) and make them available at reasonable cost. As the population of East Herts grows these spaces, indoor and outdoor, have been staying the same or reducing.</li> <li>• Please please please continue with the Old River Lane project. Town centre regeneration via a landmark cultural venue will do wonders for our town.</li> <li>• While I do agree with all of the above questions, it would have been helpful to have been able to have had a range of answer options from which to choose, from Strongly Agree through to Agree, Neutral, Disagree and Strongly Disagree.</li> </ul>
<p>Concerns about the deliverability of the Strategy – 6 comments</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agree completely with the strategy but past experience would suggest that the response by EHC will be less, far less, than suggested. In particular for tourism the three layers of council have worked independently and without an agreed strategy. Hopefully this might be different but I wait to be convinced.</li> <li>• I think the approach is very applaudable, however, I have concerns as to how achievable this is given the consistent decrease of investment in the arts over the last 15 years, particularly in the heritage sector. East Herts is home to several exciting and creative museums however since 2005 when EHDC withdrew core funding and over the</li> </ul>

	<p>next few years with the reduction of hours of the museums officer until the post was finally cut, we have seen little in the way of financial support.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The objectives are interesting but achieving something special is the challenge.</li> <li>• Whilst I applaud the big ideas and vision of this strategy it does read a bit 'off the peg'. I'll reserve judgement until I've read more of it.</li> <li>• Sorry but I don't really know what you are on about. I may have answered no, when I mean yes, or vice versa. What is investment in culture? Does this only happen in Hertford? Please don't blow our money there, as most of us rarely go there. Does anyone know what an innovative cultural opportunity or an innovative cultural practitioner is.</li> <li>• The first ambition seems to be very scatter gun and event focussed rather than really nurturing our culture and heritage assets to be accessible, sustainable and to deliver wider social goals and impact for example on learning.</li> </ul>
<p>Negative comments questioning the need for the Strategy – 3 comments</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Neither think it is needed nor appropriate. There are far more important things the council should be focusing on in the current times. Hertfordshire is has much to offer already, promote what exists and leave the rest alone.</li> <li>• What achievements?? (recognised far beyond boundaries) Sustainability? Does this mean profit? Actual investment in health and welfare would be more constructive than 'arts'. Residents getting support? Only developers and the council get the support. Never seen any truly extraordinary things happening. Strong partnerships between council and developers can run roughshod over public opinion!"</li> <li>• If truly extraordinary things were to happen all year round then, by definition, they wouldn't be extraordinary...this sort of statement is complete and utter nonsense. East Herts council should concern itself primarily with providing essential services to its residents rather than trying to impress people outside of the district. Posturing doesn't provide the basic services that residents want.</li> </ul>
<p>Concerns about environmental sustainability</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If sustainable means being surrounded by wind turbines and solar farms then it's a No from me.</li> <li>• Can't think of any extraordinary things the council has</li> </ul>

<p>goals of the Strategy – 3 comments</p>	<p>done ever. No cultural partnerships I am aware of. Almost everyone who lives in Bishop’s Stortford works elsewhere. If you want to improve environmental sustainability. Reduce dependence on cars. One way system half the road for cyclists. Can’t think of anyone who recognises Bishop’s Stortford’s achievements.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I feel sustainability is one of the areas we are all working on but I don't think we are quite there yet. Our achievements are most recognised beyond our boundaries; people travel from across the country to attend some of our events in Ware.</li> </ul>
<p>Need for more reference on diversity and access – 3 comments</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I would like to see something in the Ambitions section about "Celebrating Diversity and difference". It talks about diverse communities but it is not clear what that means, for example it could mean town or rural or blocks of flats or luxury private estates.</li> <li>• Wider recognition is mainly desirable in that it encourages people to invest, live and work in East Herts. I suggest this ambition is not given the same prominence as the others. I suspect most people don't actually want 'truly extraordinary things constantly happening', they want a pleasant place to live and work, and diverse social events on a year round schedule.</li> <li>• The ambitions also need to state it will be inclusive enabling opportunity for people and children of all abilities and circumstances to have access to and participate in enriching experiences.</li> </ul>

### 3. Priority issues for the Cultural Strategy

<b>Do you agree that a new cultural strategy should focus on the following issues/actions?</b>	Total responses	Of which, 'should be prioritised'
Ensure digital delivery is accessible to all residents	46	98%
Provide opportunities for engagement in cultural activity that extend across our communities	48	94%
Support all partners to develop cultural opportunities in all corners of our district	48	94%
East Herts' population is changing	48	92%
Provide affordable access to cultural opportunities	48	92%
Encourage cultural activities that foster physical activity	46	91%
Work with young people and educational institutions in the district to encourage participation in cultural activities	47	91%
Enable the cultural sector to find ways to reduce its carbon footprint and encourage more environmentally sustainable actions	46	89%
Arts and culture can alleviate loneliness	48	88%
Embed arts and culture within new neighbourhoods and garden towns	47	87%
Harness the potential of digital media to deliver cultural activities and opportunities through a blend of digital and physical platforms.	45	87%
Produce an approach to communications so all partners can publicise opportunities through both digital and traditional methods	46	85%
Identify how the potential of the district's assets can be maximised to achieve its cultural vision	45	84%
Design and implement different methodologies for collecting and evaluating information throughout the life of the Strategy	45	82%
Arts and culture can promote community safety and civic pride	48	81%
Support the Hertford at Night Community Voice initiative	47	79%

**Free text comments in response to two questions – views on the ambitions and additional issues to cover.**

<b>Emergent theme</b>	<b>Views on ambitions in the draft Strategy</b>	<b>Any additional things the Strategy should focus on?</b>
<p>Diversity, access and wider choices – 15 comments across the two questions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The approach fits our wonderfully wide and diverse District. I wonder if there should be a reference to the celebration and learning possible through paying attention to the faith and cultural traditions of many who are first or second generation ethnic minority individuals and families?</li> <li>• There are very many excellent ideas here. I particularly support those enabling equality of access and working with communities</li> <li>• Health and wellbeing are not predicated solely on physical activity - mental stimulation is equally valuable. I do not object to you encouraging activities that foster physical activity but I do object to you concentrating resources solely on them.</li> <li>• I think it should be for all ages! Not singling out the ones above? What is the strategy for that, parents would not fall in those categories and they are the ones setting an example.</li> <li>• It looks brilliant. There are many feasible actions that</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paying attention to the faith and cultural traditions of many who are first or second generation ethnic minority individuals and families.</li> <li>• Mention of cultural diversity, socio economic diversity, seem to be scarce in the goals.</li> <li>• I feel it's important to provide affordable access to cultural activities for adults with disabilities as they tend to have less disposable income and less opportunities to gain paid employment and therefore have more time at home. There are many lonely and isolated people with disabilities who have really struggled with their mental health through the COVID19 pandemic.</li> <li>• Supporting variety.</li> <li>• Diversity. Engaging minorities. Education. Environment. Doing the right thing.</li> <li>• Single parent families.</li> <li>• Promote small art, comedy clubs, local plays and theatre, walking clubs, photography and nature clubs improve footpaths, make more use of the</li> </ul>

	<p>can provide tangible results, ensuring the local community has more opportunities to access cultural activities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engagement in cultural activity that extend across our communities including our more deprived areas: Encourage cultural activities that foster physical activity 'by stealth', for example photography clubs that promote walking. As stated above, this is in our plan to deliver once covid restrictions allow. We have much experience in delivering stealth initiatives.</li> </ul>	<p>stort, major xmas market, winter lights shows, improve rail, massive increase in secure cycle racks, increased parking charges, cycle lanes, one way systems, 20mph around most of the town, spring garden shows, more allotments, drama and arts workshops in schools.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Just do more for all people - don't be ageist. Do much more for the existing villages and not new communities and garden villages (whatever they are).</li> <li>• Ensuring there is a clear information hub to signpost people to the rich variety of community arts organisations across the district. Your website seems to give very little reference to any arts activity at all. How do local residents find out about what is available to them in their local community?</li> </ul>
<p>Local lead, ownership and use of local venues – 11 comments across the two questions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sustainability should be a given, but not divert the focus of the cultural strategy. The council needs to facilitate the local development of culture, not create it.</li> <li>• Provide theatres and venues and let local and commercial groups use them at reasonable cost.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make use of the venues we have.</li> <li>• Use privately run venues offering a variety of opportunities to local community.</li> <li>• Supporting Hertford Arts Hub; utilising the splendid old library building in Old Cross, Hertford, as an art gallery worthy of a County</li> </ul>

	<p>Don't try to dictate what you want the culture to be. Maintain the libraries. Support things like the Medieval night and Dickensian evening rather than being an obstacle to those things.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide affordable access to cultural opportunities for East Herts residents especially the over 50s. We would like to work with the social prescribing team at EHC along with other partners to strengthen the process and provide further services at the hub, ensuring those that cannot travel still have access to opportunities.</li> <li>• Arts-related programmes can prove to be key ways of tackling anti-social behaviour. We are looking to provide a Youth Club at the former scout hut as requested by local residents and looking to work with Volunteer it Yourself to provide local teens the opportunity to gain qualifications by helping with decorating and other tasks/activities.</li> </ul>	<p>Town; stop Hertfordshire County Council selling off its art heritage.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Listening to people with much experience in this field, supporting them and funding them.</li> <li>• There is a very considerable volunteer effort and input that is here now, but this must be allowed to continue without trying to shoehorn it into bureaucracy as has happened in the past. I have been involved in a number of past initiatives which seemed to point towards volunteers becoming unpaid council officers.</li> <li>• Many of our cultural organisations already have strong community ties and support and have produced creative activities to increase engagement. EHDC need to talk to these organisations who can help identify engagement methods and opportunities.</li> <li>• The strategy should encourage local champions. I feel people respond to someone they know rather than communications from the council.</li> </ul>
<p>Concerns that there are too</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The danger of the strategy is that it tries to be all things</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It feels like there is too much to focus on and</li> </ul>

<p>many actions – 6 comments across the two questions</p>	<p>to all people, all policies and all agendas. As you know it needs to become SMART in its objectives, which need to be honed down. It seems odd to include specifics around crime for instance.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide affordable access to cultural opportunities for East Herts residents especially the over 50s and 12-24 year old young people': Art is there to be enjoyed by everyone, regardless of their age 'Engage with residents and communities to safeguard people, property and individuals'; 'Support the Hertford at Night Community Voice initiative to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour within the Night Time Economy': I think you are laying too many objectives onto the shoulders of a Cultural strategy</li> <li>• Saying yes is the easy bit but the outcomes will be harder and possibly frustrating.</li> </ul>	<p>there is a danger of spreading focus too widely. I would suggest taking a narrower range of priorities and really consolidating action to make an impact and building greater infrastructure to help support the sector to improve.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Too many objectives.</li> <li>• We're a bit lacking a definition of what you ( we) mean by culture.</li> </ul>
<p>Digital access and delivery – 5 comments across the two questions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is difficult to reach those without technology. During this pandemic there will be a lot of people, not necessarily just the older population that do not have devices. It will be interesting to find out how the people that were shielding can be reached safely so they feel part of the community.</li> </ul>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some of these ideas are good such as digital delivery, but this should not be limited to culture and arts.</li> <li>• Increase investment in the library as a digital hub,</li> <li>• We must also ensure our residents who are not comfortable with computers have the same opportunities to receive information on what is going on</li> <li>• Build on what we've all learnt from the Covid 19 pandemic so that we can harness the potential of digital media to deliver both existing and new cultural activities and opportunities through an invigorating blend delivery of digital and physical platforms. We will continue to deliver our online calendar of health and wellbeing opportunities for local residents, this will come in the form of a calendar showcasing online opportunities as well as a calendar highlighting the physical offering once covid restrictions allow.</li> </ul>	
<p>Financial aspects of delivering arts and culture – 5 comments across the two questions</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Value for money.</li> <li>• Everything must endeavour to be self-financing.</li> <li>• Consider extending rates relief to cultural venues to aid with COVID-19 recovery for the duration</li> </ul>

		<p>of the strategy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teaching of the arts and culture - subsidized perhaps - music lessons or art lessons - evening classes in community halls - or the new arts centre. I think the covid 19 pandemic will have impacted badly on the arts, and therefore people need some kind of incentive to return to them. *There is a lack of music provision in Bishop's Stortford for example. *Incentives for music (learning and appreciating)?</li> <li>Building greater infrastructure to help support the sector to improve.</li> </ul>
Transport – 3 comments across the two questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Transportation is a challenge in rural areas to get to any cultural event - this needs to be a priority.</li> <li>On getting to a venue this will present challenges. Car use is being discouraged, bus services are not available after e.g. a theatre evening performance, walking or cycling is not practical for over 70s. How will this be solved?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensuring that the public transport connections which serve East Herts' cultural venues operate at times that enable trips to be made before and after activities occur to enable sustainable journeys to be made.</li> </ul>
Concerns about the overall need for this Strategy – 2 comments		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This is a waste of my money. Please go back to basics and look as focusing on social care for example which his badly in need of resource/funds.</li> </ul>

across the two questions		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Something totally different.</li> </ul>
Environmental sustainability – 1 comment across the two questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce climate change and fitness by promoting cycling and walking, introduce one way system on all major roads with the other carriageway for walking and cycling, Promote industry not building houses and a dormitory town. Stop building houses on green belt.</li> </ul>	
Rural focus – 1 comment across the two questions		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Although rural and villages are mentioned once I think, the Strategy needs to reflect the fact that the district is 75% farmland and there is a rich agricultural, historical and architectural heritage which is danger of getting overlooked and lost. This is where Village Halls and Churches can contribute but I think they will need support and encouragement.</li> </ul>

#### 4. Barriers to and assistance with delivery of the Cultural Strategy

<b>What main the main barriers to your organisation or club assisting in achieving the Strategy's ambition? (up to three)</b>	<b>29 responded, of whom identified this issue</b>
Lack of funding	34%
Not enough staff or volunteers	28%
Individuals are anxious about returning to group activities	28%
Some individuals are at high risk of infection so we are not considering group activities at the moment	24%
Difficult to reach out to audiences	24%
Lack of suitable venues	21%
Lack of knowledge on how to deliver activities for this audience	17%
Difficulties arranging transport	17%
No one willing to take the lead	14%
Covid restrictions	14%
Difficulty in motivating volunteers to get involved in new projects	14%
Delivery of cultural activities not a priority at this time	10%
High costs of this type of delivery	10%
Unsure how to make activities appealing to audiences	10%
Limited experience on how to run public events	7%
No green agenda	3%
Lack of awareness	3%

<b>What main factors does your organisation or club need to assist in achieving the Strategy's ambition? (up to three)</b>	<b>30 responded, of whom identified this issue</b>
Financial support or grant funding	50%
Increased members, users or participants	47%
Increased volunteers with the right skills	37%
Improved/new facilities for training, rehearsing, playing or performing	33%
More people with "creative" ideas	20%
A partnership with like-minded organisations	13%
Increased knowledge on how to generate income and become self-reliant	13%
Improved digital connectivity	13%
Resources and time to work in the community	3%
Information on how to maintain our core services	3%
More knowledge on business planning or marketing	3%
Digital resources and technical support	3%
Increased opportunities for promotion and publicity	3%

The free text questions asked respondents to raise their own organisation's specific goals, ambitions and priorities. The responses contain financial and other information specific to those organisations and so is not listed here. It will be followed with the organisations concerned.