

Council 2 March 2021

Public Questions

Question 1 from Jill Goldsmith, as below

Ms Jill Goldsmith to ask Cllr Eric Buckmaster, Executive Member for Wellbeing:

I note the proposed Cultural Strategy references on page 67 a number of partners involved in the development of the strategy and that more are being signed up all the time. Could the Councillor responsible for this Strategy confirm:

- a) Whether and when the team developing the strategy had contact with arts organisations in Bishop's Stortford to seek their engagement;
- b) What responses the Strategy group got from Bishop's Stortford arts organisations to feed into the strategy;
- c) Which Bishop's Stortford arts organisations the Strategy team are now in contact with

Response from Cllr Buckmaster

Thank you for the question Jill. I need to address the points more broadly than how they are asked in order to explain our approach. For the first part of your question 2020 was the designated Year of Culture (YOC). We sent 200 invitations to organisations across the District for the launch and around 35 attended. Like everything else YOC was impacted by Covid. We then set up a year of culture support group which had representatives from around the District and including Bishop's Stortford Town Council and BS Library, Clarion Housing and an artist and a sculptor from Bishop's Stortford, along with some East Herts members. I can forward the list of attendees from other parts of the District over that period. Over

many months I worked with our officers towards achieving the basic framework of the draft cultural strategy which was always intended to be inclusive, open to all regardless of setting, location or ability. To reach those for whom it may be difficult to participate or engage.

The survey was therefore aimed at the whole of East Herts, It is a strategy to inspire, connect and - above all - create great cultural experiences for all, and was an early sense check of the basic principles

The survey was published on our website, went out through our communications team to social media channels and I asked every member of the council to share the link to the survey with their local networks. The point is that organisations that are not specifically involved in the arts are still able to deliver art and culture and we wanted as broad a view as possible along with those already operating.

You can see from the list of partners so far on page 67 there are many community based organisations.

For the second part of your question we received a total of 51 responses

The responses were as follows

Of the 51 responses on the consultation

There were three named organisations from Bishop's Stortford

- Parsonage Resident Association
- Mondo Comico
- Bishop's Stortford Library
- There were 16 anonymous responses and 8 named individuals with no contact details. It is not clear whom they represented and where they are from.

- 3 Village Hall & Community Buildings
- Bishop's Stortford Town Council – we also requested them to forward it to their local contacts/groups
- 8 via the Community Grants Alert group
- 6 Arts and Cultural organisations
- 15 organisations through a Health and Wellbeing group list - Quite a few of these organisations cover Bishop's Stortford in terms of their outreach and client contact
- there were 7 or 8 Organisations that have an office or are directly based in Bishop's Stortford.

In answer to the third part of your question we are partnering with organisations that can give us links to further groups, so again, Bishop's Stortford Town Council, The Dementia Friendly Action Group, South Mill Arts Centre, and Bishop's Stortford Library are examples.

As I said in my introduction to the Cultural Strategy document this is just the beginning. With members agreement this evening we'll now be setting up the actual mechanisms needed to engage further and deliver the strategy.

We'll work through the list of organisations we have on our database to update them, engage with new partners and seek opportunities to enhance the arts and cultural offering across the District. Our door will remain open to all who wish to enter from wherever they hail, whether already working in the arts or intending to in the future. We encourage Bishop's Stortford organisations to work with us as we do others across East Herts. It is going to be an exciting journey.

Supplementary Question from Ms Goldsmith

It is an interesting time in Bishop's Stortford with the South Mill Arts Centre, the potential closure of the United Reform Church to arts groups and questioning whether the Old River Lane project is worth

having as a cinema. I urge the Executive Member to engage with a wide variety of organisations in Bishop's Stortford and if there is a need to have a collective view outside of the town council, that you could work with people within the town.

Response from Cllr Buckmaster

I agree and I would be happy for anyone to contact the team. We will be setting up a Strategy Group and a Delivery Group and anyone is welcome to join in if there are interested or involved in the arts. I urge Jill Goldsmith to stay in touch and the Cultural Strategy is the start of a very exciting period.

Question 2 from Chris Dunham, on behalf of Bishops Stortford Climate Group

Mr Dunham to ask Cllr Jan Goodeve, Executive Member for Planning and Growth

The government's official advisory body on climate matters, the Committee on Climate Change, reported in 2019 that it costs between £16,000 and £25,000 to retrofit a new semi-detached house to be compatible with net zero carbon, whereas it costs between £3,000-£5000 to build in compatibility at the point of construction.

The government recently announced, in its consultation decision on the Future Homes Standard, that it does not after all intend to prevent local authorities from setting higher environmental/energy standards through planning policy than are required by national Building Regulations.

In light of this, can EHDC confirm that, if this is reinforced by a similar decision in relation to the Planning White Paper, that it will immediately move to implement a revision to the district plan to

require new buildings to achieve net zero carbon in operation - and in doing so end the perverse situation where in order to allow developers to avoid £4,000 of cost we impose £20,000 of cost on society?

Response from Cllr Jan Goodeve

This is a really important question and I welcome the fact that the government has now set out its plans and timeframe for its new Future Homes Standard which aims to radically improve the energy performance of new homes, making them 'zero carbon ready' by 2025.

In terms of the specific question raised the government has indicated that it has - for now - backed down on its proposal to prevent local authorities from setting tougher energy efficiency standards for new homes in their area. The government has said that its planning reforms will 'clarify the longer-term role of local planning authorities in determining local energy efficiency standards'.

I would welcome the ability for this Council to be able to set and justify higher standards of energy efficiency. As colleagues are aware the Council has agreed a climate change motion, and in order to reach a position of net zero carbon by 2030 it needs the tools to be able to achieve this.

I therefore agree that climate change needs a strong response at a local level and as such this Council will be fully committed, once the government's position has been clarified through its planning reforms, to reviewing its District Plan in a timely manner, including updating its evidence base to be able to justify higher standards of energy efficiency.

Supplementary question from Mr Dunham

I welcome the response from Cllr Goodeve but wonder what 'timely manner' means in practice. New homes are being built all the time and are the council ready to move quickly to limit any damage that is currently being allowed by not imposing strict standards?

Response from Cllr Jan Goodeve

I agree and it is in our own interests and our children's and the Council will move as fast as we are able to.