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| Report title: Devolution, the Arts Heritage and Culture Performance Measures Update | |
| Report to: Place and Sustainable Economic Growth Scrutiny Board | |
| Report author: Councillor Graham Butland, Cabinet Member for Devolution, the Arts Heritage and Culture | |
| Date: 25 November 2021 | For: Information |
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| County Divisions affected: All | |

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to provide Members with a short overview of the plans that the services which comprise the Devolution, the Arts, Heritage and Culture Portfolio are delivering which contribute towards the Performance Measures identified in Everyone's Essex.

Please note that this update, the first on the Everyone's Essex performance measures, is relatively high-level as it is proposed that officers will be attending on the 10 January to discuss Visit Essex and Green Infrastructure in more detail. It is also planned that the Culture and Green Spaces Team will attend in early 2022 to discuss the improvement in the culture and arts offer along with the country parks. This will give members an opportunity to discuss their plans in more detail. This portfolio, in addition to the specific outcomes outlined below, has a role to play in Essex County Council's (ECC) ambitions around levelling up for all our residents.

Everyone's Essex Performance Measures

Within Everyone's Essex there are four strategic aims and 20 commitments overall. The commitments against which the Devolution, the Arts, Heritage and Culture portfolio is delivering are:

| Strategic Aim | Commitment | Performance Measure |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|---|
| Strong, Inclusive & Stable Economy | 4. Future Growth and investment | Improvement in the Culture & Arts Offer in Essex |
| Strong, Inclusive & Stable Economy | 4. Future Growth and investment | Impact of tourism |
| High Quality Environment | 9. Levelling up the Environment | Number of trees planted by the Essex Forrest Initiative |
| High Quality Environment | 9. Levelling up the Environment | Visitor number to Country Parks |

This paper focuses on the outcomes outlined above, but there is a role for the arts, heritage, and culture across all four strategic outcomes including health and wellbeing and children and families.

Improvement in the Culture and Arts Offer in Essex County Council

ECC has recognised that more can be done to support the arts and culture sector in Essex. In the East of England there are six National Portfolio Organisations, (NPOs) funded by the Arts Council England to develop arts and culture across the regions. For information, this paper includes organisations in Greater Essex.

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|-------------------------|---------------|-----------------|--|
| Colchester Arts Centre | Combined arts | Colchester | www.colchesterartscentre.com |
| Mercury Theatre | Theatre | Colchester | www.mercurytheatre.co.uk |
| Focal Point Gallery | Visual arts | Southend-on-Sea | www.focalpoint.org.uk |
| Kinetika People | Combined arts | Thurrock | www.kinetikaonline.co.uk |
| Metal Culture Ltd | Combined arts | Southend-on-Sea | www.metalculture.com |
| National Skills Academy | Not specific | Thurrock | www.nsa-ccskills.co.uk |

Over the coming months, we will be learning more about the cultural organisations across Essex including the NPOs, Arts Council England, National Lottery Heritage Fund as well as the organisations and groups which city, district and borough councils work with to identify what ECC could usefully support. Measurement will be against activity, investment and growth in the arts and cultural sector where ECC has had direct intervention either financially or substantively.

People who live in deprived areas are those who are least likely to access culture. People in deprived areas are not uninterested in culture, but there can be a lack of opportunity and the perception that to participate in the arts you must visit a gallery or museum perpetuates the myth that culture and the arts is not for everyone. The success of the world-famous Notting Hill Carnival which grew from a small local event to one that is recognised across the world is proof that it is lack of opportunity which is the biggest barrier to participation rather than poverty itself.

Culture, heritage, and the arts have been used to drive physical and social regeneration, build cohesive communities, and change the way that places are perceived. Large scale initiatives such as being City of Culture alongside micro projects where for example, a local community might be involved in designing and looking after a play area, commissioning a public art project, or rejuvenating a library plays a role in changing the way an area is seen and in building local confidence and social capital. Towns with opportunities for people to enjoy themselves and participate in cultural activities will attract visitors and inspire a sense of pride in the community, encourage strong community bonds, active citizenship, and attract people to live in the area.

Impact of Tourism

The [LGA](#) refers 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 and shops and perhaps hotel bookings as part of their visit. The arts and culture industry contribute £10.8 billion a year to the UK economy, provides 363,700 jobs and £2.8 billion a year to the

Treasury via taxation. Tourism is worth £3+ billion to Essex. [Visit Essex](#) is already working to try to change people's perceptions of Essex and to support the tourism and hospitality industry, providing resources, advice and signposting to enable their members to attract people to invest, live, work and study in Essex.

The COVID pandemic has had a huge impact on travel and tourism throughout 2020, and while we have supported our members throughout the pandemic, helping them to apply for funding and signposting them to campaigns like the good to go kitemark so that visitors could still visit and be safe, we anticipate the value of tourism in 2020/21 to be lower than the 2019/2018 baselines. The team are planning to use the 2020/2021 figures once released to set a baseline from which to work. The Visit Essex team sit within ECC's Sustainable Economic Growth team, ensuring that the work Visit Essex is doing to position Essex as a place for tourists to visit complements the wider place-marketing activities to promote Essex as a place to work, study, invest and live in. Many of our tourist destinations are coastal areas which have limited employment opportunities. Jobs within the tourism industry are often seasonal and lower paid and so our support to these areas will continue to be important as we support them, along with colleagues from the economic development team to recover.

Number of trees planted by the [Essex Forrest Initiative](#)

In October 2019, we committed to plant 375,000 trees over the next five years. The primary reason is to lock up carbon, offsetting the carbon produced which is contributing to ongoing climate change. The trees will be planted across Essex, including on our own and other council land and land from partners in voluntary sectors. The first year's planting target was 25,000 trees with 38,615 planted. Essex County Council was successful in securing a £300,000 grant from the Forestry Commission called the Local Authority Treescape Fund, which is designed to support tree planting outside of woodlands. As such, work has been undertaken with borough and district partners to deliver the planting and maintenance of 5,595 trees. Tree planting this year will commence between November and February.

Visitor number to Country Parks

ECC has several [Country Parks](#) which have welcomed more visitors than ever throughout the pandemic and green spaces (both urban and rural) continue to be important for residents' wellbeing and physical health. For the 3 years 2017 - 2020 annual visitor numbers were between 892k and 971k. Last year saw 1.4m visitors, the highest number of visitors to the Country Parks and the team are working to try to maintain these numbers, although the higher number will reflect fewer places being open and available for residents to visit.