

COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
13 JUNE 2024

DARLINGTON CULTURAL STRATEGY ACTION PLAN FOR 2024/2025

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To update members on progress delivering the priorities in the Darlington Cultural Strategy 2022-2026 and the 2023/24 Action Plan.
2. For members to consider the Action Plan for 2024/25.

Summary

3. In the Darlington Cultural Strategy 2022-2026 (Appendix 1) there is a commitment to submit annual Action Plans for consideration by Scrutiny Members. This report presents a summary of progress for 2023/24 alongside the Action Plan for 2024/25.

Recommendation

4. It is recommended that:
 - (a) Members note the update on progress on the 2023/24 Action Plan
 - (b) Members consider the Action Plan for 2024/25.

Dave Winstanley
Group Director of Services

Background Papers

Darlington Cultural Strategy 2022-2026

Darlington Cultural Strategy Action Plan delivery for 2023 to 2024 and Action Plan for 2024 to 2025.

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S17 Crime and Disorder	Cultural activities can have a positive impact on crime and disorder by engaging individuals in positive activity.
Health and Wellbeing	Culture can have a positive impact on Health and Wellbeing.
Carbon Impact and Climate Change	This report has no significant impact on Carbon Impact and Climate Change.
Diversity	One of the priorities within Darlington's Cultural Strategy 2022-2026 is for Darlington to have an accessible, diverse and vibrant culture.
Wards Affected	Darlington Cultural Strategy 2022-2026 covers all wards in Darlington Borough.
Groups Affected	Darlington Cultural Strategy 2022-2026 is focused on the population of Darlington Borough, and also considers those working in, visiting or considering establishing or relocating business within Darlington Borough.
Budget and Policy Framework	There is no impact on the budget or policy framework.
Key Decision	This report is not a Key Decision.
Urgent Decision	This is not an Urgent Decision.
Council Plan	Darlington Cultural Strategy 2022-2026 has set out how the Council will deliver its cultural ambitions.
Efficiency	There is no impact on the Council's efficiency agenda.
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	Darlington Cultural Strategy 2022 – 2026 and associated Action Plan for 2024/25 considers cultural access for Looked After Children and Care Leavers. Cultural services routinely work with colleagues in Children's Services to support Looked After Children and Care Leavers access to cultural provision through the Holiday Activities and Food programme, the In2 programme and programmes involving the Virtual School.

MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

5. The Darlington Cultural Strategy 2022-2026 was approved in 2022/23 and is attached at **Appendix 1**. The strategy was informed by research, including the previous Darlington focused Arts Enquiry report, development work since that date and discussion with stakeholders including: Arts Council England, Tees Valley Combined Authority and the Creative Darlington Board.
6. The main drivers for Darlington Cultural Strategy 2022-2026 are to focus our cultural vision and assist advocacy and fundraising to take forward cultural priorities within the timespan of the document.
7. The strategy uses a definition of Culture as set out by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport which covers the following areas:
 - (a) Arts (including visual arts, literature, music, theatre and dance)
 - (b) Architecture
 - (c) Crafts
 - (d) Creative Industries
 - (e) Design
 - (f) Heritage
 - (g) Historic Environment
 - (h) Museums and Galleries
 - (i) Libraries
 - (j) Archives
 - (k) Film
 - (l) Broadcasting and Media
8. The vision of Darlington Cultural Strategy 2022-2026 is that Darlington will be a place in 2026 and beyond where culture enriches lives, involves people and is central to identity and prosperity.
9. The five priorities which Darlington Cultural Strategy seeks to address between 2022 and 2026 are:
 - (a) To creatively celebrate Darlington's contribution to the birth of the modern passenger railway.
 - (b) For Darlington to have an accessible, diverse and vibrant culture, encouraging economic growth.
 - (c) For Darlington to champion engagement with culture, particularly amongst children and young people.
 - (d) For culture to thrive within Darlington Borough and attract visitors to the Town Centre.

- (e) For Darlington to have a thriving theatre offer involving people of all ages.
10. Numerous council services and partners contribute to taking the vision and these priorities forward, including Darlington Hippodrome, the Heritage and Culture Fund (Creative Darlington) budget, the Library Service, the Museums Service, Town Centre Partnership and Events Service alongside additional services for adults (e.g. The Community Arts Project) and children (e.g. The Virtual School's longstanding support for cultural engagement), as do programmes which the Council contributes to and/or manages (e.g. Stockton and Darlington Railway Heritage Action Zone).
 11. The majority of cultural provision delivered or supported by the Council contributes to council priorities of economic and/or social concerns including place promotion, community cohesion, education and well-being, and the Council frequently works in partnership with different enterprises, groups and organisations to take things forward. Darlington Cultural Strategy 2022-2026 clarifies our priorities and is helpful in identifying opportunities for joint working with other agencies.
 12. Within Darlington Cultural Strategy 2022-2026 a commitment was made to present detailed annual Action Plans to Members on an annual basis, and to share annual reports on progress.
 13. Attached at **Appendix 2**, is an update on progress on the 2023/24 Action Plan and the Action Plan for 2024 to 2025.
 14. Considerable progress was made in 2023/24 in addressing particular priorities.
 - (a) The launch of the Stockton and Darlington Railway Heritage Action Zone Community Grants Fund, significant progress in realising the Hopetown Darlington capital programme and progress in developing an ambitious S&DR Bicentenary Festival programme.
 - (b) The reopening of Darlington Library post restoration in September 2023 offering excellent facilities and services to people in Darlington borough and additional Library Service users.
 - (c) A diverse programme of Town Centre events and festivals delivered.
 - (d) In2 Project delivery led by Darlington Hippodrome.
 - (e) The Holiday Activities and Food Programme and our Virtual School supporting cultural opportunities for children and young people in the borough.