



**Borough of Telford and Wrekin**

**Cabinet**

**Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> July 2025**

**Culture & Communities**

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<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Cllr Angela McClements - Cabinet Member for Leisure, Tourism, Culture & the Arts
<b>Lead Director:</b>	Katherine Kynaston – Director – Housing, Commercial and Customer Services
<b>Service Area:</b>	Housing, Commercial & Customer Services
<b>Report Author:</b>	Jon Bielstein – Group Manager Culture & Events
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<b>Wards Affected:</b>	All Wards
<b>Key Decision:</b>	Not Key Decision
<b>Forward Plan:</b>	Not Applicable
<b>Report considered by:</b>	SMT – 17 June 2025 Business Briefing – 26 June 2025 Cabinet – 17 July 2025

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**1. Recommendations for decision/noting:**

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- 1.1 Approves plans to expand the Council's Theatre on Tour and Headline Events Programmes noting the positive impact these are having across communities
- 1.2 Approves the development and submission of a funding bid to develop the Town Park Amphitheatre to provide a new outdoor performance space
- 1.3 Notes the progress being made with the development of the new Telford Theatre.
- 1.4 Approves the draft Vision and priorities for the Borough's first Culture Strategy and endorses proposals for stakeholder engagement in the Strategy's further development

## **2. Purpose of Report**

- 2.1 Culture is about how we live – our heritage, behaviours, values and beliefs – and how these are expressed. This includes through dance, music, theatre, craft, visual & digital arts, poetry and the creative businesses that make them. It is about how we tell and celebrate Telford's unique stories.
- 2.2 Investing in cultural activity benefits everyone, providing time out for enjoyment and relaxation, supporting health and wellbeing, building ties and understanding across communities, creating jobs, attracting visitors and investment, and building a sense of pride and belonging.
- 2.3 The Council are committed to enabling residents, visitors and businesses to have access to and benefit from cultural activity. The Council's free headline events programme, and Theatre on Tour, is attracting audiences in excess of 100,000 each year – 75% of these local. It is also a key attraction for the 3.2m visitor trips made to the Borough pa which in 2022 generated £220m direct economic impact. Every £1 invested in arts and culture is estimated to return £4 in economic value including through job creation and visitor spend.
- 2.4 The reputation and profile this investment has built and our vision and ambition has attracted in excess of £25m of Levelling Up Funding to develop our cultural offer. This is set to deliver not only a new Theatre but also support the growth of community arts and events spaces in the heart of our Borough Towns including the regeneration of Wellington Market and the Orbit and the creation of new public event space in Station Quarter and Oakengates. This compliments the investment being made into our High Streets through Pride in Our High Street.
- 2.5 The report sets out plans to grow the Council's annual calendar of free community festivals and events, and the Theatre on Tour programme. Central to this is working with funders to regenerate the Amphitheatre in the Town Park providing an exciting, new outdoor event space delivering a programme of dance, theatre, music and fashion shows in a unique and beautiful park setting.
- 2.6 Due to open in 2027, the report highlights progress with the development of the new Telford Theatre. This will provide a larger auditorium to attract a wider variety of shows, a Theatre Studio for developing local talent and showcasing community performance, and a range of other front and back of house improvements increasing access for all and significantly reduce the carbon footprint of the original theatre.
- 2.7 Setting out our ambition for everyone to have access to cultural and artistic activity in their community the report sets out our draft vision and priorities for a new Culture Strategy ahead of further public and partner consultation.

## **3. Background**

- 3.1 Telford & Wrekin is a vibrant, contemporary destination built on a unique heritage as an industrial powerhouse, a blend of old and new, with a network of distinct and individual borough towns bringing a rich diversity of cultures, faiths and communities. It is a centre of creativity and home to a wealth of greenspaces and

beautiful landscapes. All of these elements shape a hugely diverse culture and arts scene.

- 3.1 97% of the more than 1500 respondents to the last theatre customer survey agreed that taking part in arts and cultural activity benefits the local community (74% strongly agreeing). Comments made by stakeholders and members of the public involved in the 2023 Peer Review of the Culture service further illustrated this with quotes including – ‘*culture is a fundamental part of everyone’s DNA ...*’ ‘*its about belonging ...*’ ‘*we’ve got a big story to tell*’.
- 3.2 A vibrant cultural scene can play a significant part in attracting investment - creating a draw to visit, live or work - establishing a reputation and excitement about a Town – and attracting funding.
- 3.3 Cultural activity can change perceptions, connect and revitalise communities, increase access to education, attract and retain young people and bring footfall to our High Streets. It is cross cutting supporting many of the Council’s strategies including Health and Wellbeing, Equality, Diversity & Inclusion, Children & Young People, the celebration of our green heritage as well as our Investment and Visitor Management Plans.
- 3.4 It is at the heart of our Corporate Priorities and Telford’s Vision 2032 –
  - Creating a place where all residents prosper regardless of their background, knowledge, skills, needs or experience – by ensuring cultural initiatives are accessible and representative of our diverse population
  - Supporting collaboration – developing partnerships that will leverage investment for cultural projects
  - Celebrating our heritage and innovation – telling the story of Telford’s historical significance from the Industrial Revolution to a hub for advanced manufacturing while promoting innovation in the arts and cultural sector
  - Enhancing quality of life for all residents – integrating cultural activities and spaces into communities that provides new ways of tackling challenges around health and wellbeing by improving mental and physical health and addressing social isolation

#### **4. Festivals, Events & Theatre on Tour**

##### **Festival & Events Programme**

- 4.1 Telford & Wrekin Council runs an established, vibrant, affordable Festival and Events Programme. The LGA Culture Peer Review emphasised that ‘*Telford & Wrekin has real strength in delivery of free events and some inspirational projects.*’ They quoted those they’d interviewed – ‘*the events team are brilliant*’... ‘*Las Vegas mind(set) on a Telford budget*’.
- 4.2 The Headline Events Programme includes –
  - **Spring into St Georges** – a free family fun day in Telford Town Park featuring jousting by Knights of Nottingham, birds of prey, opportunities to try traditional crafts and many other attractions

- **Telford Walking Week** – a 7 day celebration of walking and the great outdoors with something for all ages and abilities promoting health and wellbeing, tackling social isolation and providing family fun
- **Armed Forces Day** – a popular free annual event at Broadoaks, Donnington celebrating our Armed Forces community with sports, live music and family friendly military displays.
- **Balloon Fiesta** (3 days) – run over August Bank Holiday the much-loved night glow includes illuminated balloons set to music with the daytime including balloon launches, parachute and stunt display teams alongside staged entertainment
- **Telford Carnival** – held on the final day of Balloon Fiesta this is a celebration of the diversity and culture of Telford's communities with a carnival parade featuring groups and organisations celebrating different faiths, nationalities, disability and diversity
- **World Heritage Festival** (fortnight) – a fortnight of events in and around the Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage site with a street market, heritage open days and a coracle regatta
- **Remembrance Day** – held at the War Memorial in the Town Park this marks Armistice Day and regularly attracts a significant community attendance including schools and young people.
- **Christmas Programme of Events** including annual Festive Gardens with a light show trail set to music through the Chelsea Gardens which attracted over 10,000 visitors in 2024 – a c.20% increase on the previous year and feedback such as '*very family orientated and very affordable*' and '*the lights, band and atmosphere were fantastic*'





Social media quotes from those attending Headline events in the last 12 months included

*'a fabulous free family day enjoyed by thousands including my family and a great way to showcase Telford' and 'wow, just wow – that was the best experience we have ever had! (Balloon Fiesta)*

*'Fabulous day, my grandson loved the knights' (Spring into St Georges)*



*'Thank you for having us Kin-Collective Wellbeing Play and Family Wellbeing tent – a smashing event' (Spring into St Georges)*

*'Enjoyed last year so came back this year – was even better' 'Amazing value for money, Loved the light trail and all the technology' (Festive Gardens)*

- 4.3 **VE80** was a week-long commemoration including a public remembrance event in the Town Centre with young people, veterans and cadet groups, and a display of the work of the Armed Forces Network supporting veterans and their families in the Borough. The Council also provided £50k of grant funding to Telford & Wrekin community groups to mark VE80. This supported 43 community events across the Borough including tea dances, family fun days, beacon lighting, film screenings, Veterans lunches and the installation of memorial benches. Events celebrated diversity with a tea party by the Parents Opening Doors Groups welcoming pre-school and SEND young people and their families, events for those with Dementia and a number hosted by different faith and cultural groups including ChineseKind and Hadley Community Cultural Centre. Many were supported by Town & Parish Councils and with additional funding through the Councillors Pride Fund.
- 4.4 In addition to the core programme every year many other events are delivered or supported by the Council including big screening of sport e.g. the Men's Euros final screened in the QE2 Arena. We were also pleased to support AFC Telford by enabling a big screen at their ground for the play-off final which marked the Club's promotion. Other events include Poetry Slams, fairgrounds in Southwater, Wellington Late Night Market and work with community organisations including Interfaith Council, to deliver local events e.g. the Lantern Festival (Bowring Park) delivered with funding from the Inclusive Communities Fund.



- 4.5 Wellington Market is a historic landmark and well loved market which following the Council's acquisition is set to provide an even more vibrant retail, entertainment and food and drink destination for the whole Borough. The popular late Night Market has continued to attract record attendance with live music, entertainment acts and food and drink. During the period of the works at Wellington market we will be continuing to support events through our Wellfest initiative that will co-ordinate and support a range of cultural activities across Wellington. The investment being made through the Council will transform the market safeguarding the historic building, redesigning the layout to create more usable space, increasing accessibility including toilet provision, creating a new covered outdoor space allowing for an increasing range of music, dance and entertainment. This will compliment the

programme already delivered by the Council and partners including the Town Council in the Market Square and local parks and the Pride in Our High Street (PiOHS) programme. This has seen £7.6m investment to date maintaining footfall through start up grants, investment into facades and supporting entertainment on the High Streets – creating more opportunities for residents to enjoy cultural activity on their doorstep.



## Supporting Community Events

- 4.6 The Council Events Team also provide significant support to Town & Parish Councils, local community organisations, artists and individuals looking to put on events on council-owned land. Support can include advice, guidance, funding, links to acts and promotion. This is important in ensuring a thriving calendar of activity across the year in the heart of communities and High Streets.
- 4.7 The Culture Team also work to access funding and commission new pieces of public art for the Town. A recent commission was the covid memorial sculpture in the Town Park.

## Growing the Programme

### Restoring the Telford Town Park Amphitheatre

- 4.8 In its heyday, the Telford Town Park Amphitheatre was a vibrant cultural hub, hosting regular live band gigs and a diverse array of performances, including drama, dance, and classical music, often culminating in spectacular fireworks finales. Telford & Wrekin Council (T&WC) is actively committing funds and pursuing

additional grant funding to restore the amphitheatre to its former glory. This initiative aims to complement the Telford Theatre on Tour's programme of outdoor shows in the borough parks.

The project envisions the refurbishment of the 400-seater venue, nestled in a picturesque corner of the national award-winning Telford Town Park, with the stunning backdrop of Randlay Pool. Subject to work with funders our aspirations for this project include:

- **Revitalising the Local Arts Scene:** By providing a dedicated space for a wide range of performances, we aim to foster local talent and bring diverse cultural experiences to the community.
- **Enhancing Community Engagement:** The amphitheatre will serve as a venue for residents and visitors of all ages and cultures, promoting community spirit and access for all.
- **Boosting Tourism:** With its scenic location and varied programming, the refurbished amphitheatre is expected to attract tourists and add the Town Park offer, contributing to the local economy.
- **Sustainability and Innovation:** We plan to incorporate sustainable practices in the refurbishment process, ensuring the venue is environmentally friendly
- **Health & Wellbeing:** By creating new outdoor performance spaces we will encourage residents to spend more time exploring the Borough's Town and Borough Parks and greenspaces boosting health and wellbeing
- **Educational Opportunities:** The amphitheatre will also be a venue for educational programs and workshops, providing learning opportunities for all ages.

We are excited about the potential of this project to not only restore a beloved venue but also to create a dynamic cultural landmark that will benefit the community for years to come.



4.9 The Council is committed to making its Event Programme inclusive and accessible to all. A focus for 2025/26 is to provide more activity for teens and young people with a dedicated teen zone including graffiti art, basketball and DJing starting at Balloon/Carnival over the August Bank Holiday weekend.

4.10 We have also worked with the Making it Real Board to increase accessibility for all. We already provide dedicated green mat areas for wheelchair users at Balloon, and



this year will add a bespoke trailer based bed/shower unit providing full changing and enhanced accessible toilet provision for all ages. Our Events are also attended by a range of internal services and partners who provide health and wellbeing information and signposting including blood pressure checks, representation from Adult Social Care and mental health services and dedicated calm spaces.

- 4.11 In collaboration with our Pride in Our High Street programme, events including Spring into St Georges and Balloon Fiesta will this year incorporate Makers Markets showcasing local creative businesses drawn from Telford & Wrekin High Streets and Markets. We already work with local businesses to add value with packages for Panto featuring deals with Southwater and Town Park venues.
- 4.12 Christmas 2025 will kick off with a launch event planned for 29<sup>th</sup> November featuring an exciting lantern installation around the Town Park Lake celebrating and telling stories of the unique history and character of Telford, together with a new family carol-oke in the Square, Festive Gardens (this year themed The North Pole) and a new Christmas Market featuring local makers drawn from our High Streets and markets.
- 4.13 We are continually seeking external funding to bring new and exciting content to the Programme. We are exploring with funders potential to develop a new Telford Festival weekend in 2026 including events in our Borough Towns and Town Centre.

#### **Telford Theatre on Tour**

- 4.14 Telford Theatre on Tour aims to provide a wide range of cultural experiences for residents and visitors, in the heart of our Borough Towns, maintaining and building theatre audiences whilst the Telford Theatre is being redeveloped.
- 4.15 In the last year 20,000 tickets have been sold for shows held in venues including the Firefly in Oakengates, the Anstice in Madeley, Bowring and Hartshill Park and the International Centre. Performances have included music, comedy, children's shows, Shakespeare and Panto with 3 outdoor family performances taking place over the Summer.
- 4.16 Panto 24 took place at the Telford International Centre due to the refurbishment of the Telford Theatre. Goldilocks and the Three Bears attracted a 5 star rating from Chris Eldon of What's On who described it as '*loud and proud*' with a '*unique blend of Pantomime and Circus ... a Panto-cus*' ... '*with more than a nod to the Greatest Showman*'. Audience capacity and ticket sales exceeded targets with more than 18,000 attending the 14 day run.



*'We hope the 5 families that visited the theatre this Christmas with the Kindness Tickets we donated had a wonderful time making magical memories at the pantomime'*

*'It was brilliant'*

- 4.17 Panto 25 is Cinderella opening on 16<sup>th</sup> December in a larger auditorium space at the International Centre with more seating and enhanced staging. Building on 2024 theatre goers can again benefit from Xmas package tickets including the Ice Rink and other town centre venues.
- 4.18 Increasing cultural activity throughout the Borough and offering a more diverse programme in venues that people are familiar with is attracting new audiences. It also enables new types of performance to be tested e.g. with a view to increasing participation of young people or culturally specific activities to be celebrated.
- 4.19 Working with Arts Alive and Flicks in the Sticks the Theatre on Tour programme will expand in 25/26 to more venues including Belmont Hall, Wellington, Cosy Hall, Newport, Dawley Town Hall and the Little Theatre, Donnington – alongside our existing partners.
- 4.20 The community focus is increasing footfall and encouraging people to visit other Borough Towns and venues and supporting local creative talent. We will be working further to encourage local cafes and bars to benefit providing pre or post theatre deals and packages. Working with partners we are exploring an exciting programme – Are You Dancing - bringing entertainment into the High Street and celebrating the stories of the music and dance venues in our Borough towns.
- 4.21 We also have a wealth of parks and greenspaces and our programme features outdoor theatre, music and family fun days showcasing these, attracting new audiences and encouraging people to get out in the fresh air improving health and wellbeing.



ODDSOCKS – Julius Ceasar July 2024 – Bowring Park.

### Going Forward

- 4.22 Providing accessible, inclusive and affordable arts and entertainment opportunities for all is at the heart of our approach to culture. Theatre on Tour is proving a huge success bringing theatre to resident's doorstep. It is proposed to continue and build on the touring programme through the growing Telford Venues Network once the new Telford Theatre is open. Developing the New Theatre programme with representatives from the Network will help to establish a popular community led programme for the new Studio Theatre. The new Theatre will sit at the centre of the culture and arts scene branching out through our Borough Town venues and parks, into our communities. Through the Council's Tickets Telford platform, we can provide the network with a ticketing facility and central listing place – a one stop shop promoting the diverse offer across the Borough.



- 4.23 We continue to engage with more partners and funders. This includes linking with English Heritage to explore the potential of hosting outdoor shows at Lilleshall Abbey and working with Arts Alive and neighbouring venues including, The Courtyard Hereford, Wolverhampton Art Gallery, and Theatre Severn to develop



touring and collaborative opportunities. This could open up options to host London touring shows that would not come to Telford alone. We are also working with partners to develop genre specific programme such as new writing, spoken word, folk, jazz, original music, visual arts, and work that reflects our diverse communities and their cultures.

- 4.24 The extent, diversity and community based offer – with the new Theatre providing a new cultural hub – is a huge asset for Telford. We are working to build our communications and marketing plan to extend reach but also to strengthen our engagement with the Arts Council to attract further funding and bid for National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) status when the next Arts Council bid round opens. NPO are arts and culture organisations who receive core funding from Arts Council England and are recognised as leaders in the sector with a responsibility to support the development of the national arts and culture sector. This would enable us to sustain and grow the programme and maximise on the community and inward investment opportunities.

## **5. New Telford Theatre**

- 5.1 Oakengates has been the home of Telford's Theatre – The Place – since the 1980s – attracting local and regional audiences to enjoy a diverse and popular theatre and music programme with over 200 shows per year. Recognised by theatre promoters and audiences *'The Telford venue puts some of the big city centre theatres to shame, the whole team have a real passion...it is the personal touch and welcome that keeps shows, artistes and audience returning.'*
- 5.2 In 2023 the Council won £15.5m of Levelling Up Funding to support the delivery of a new state-of-the-art theatre. The majority of the theatre is set to be demolished and rebuilt transforming the exterior and interior of the building. New facilities include a larger main auditorium with increased balcony seating capacity, a second studio-theatre, a community/art room with outdoor space, new fully accessible facilities and the expansion of the front of house including bar and dining offer.
- 5.3 The new Telford Theatre will be able to offer a more diverse cultural programme, attracting larger shows benefitting existing theatre goers and audiences both local and beyond.
- 5.4 A key priority for the Council is to support the regeneration of town centres, increasing footfall and diversifying the High Street and revitalising the visitor economy. The transformation of the Theatre and Limes Walk, creating a new theatre quarter, with its new retail units, public square linking through to the High Street and town centre apartments, provides an anchor to the regeneration of this area whose catchment includes some of the most deprived communities in the Borough.
- 5.5 Inclusion of a community performance arts studio in the Theatre will provide learning space in the community for Telford College and local schools, creating critical 'out-reach' to inspire young people including those disengaged from study to continue their education and achieve employment. The studio theatre will provide a development space for new shows and creative talent linked with the Community

Venues Network supporting and growing the Borough-wide culture and arts activity and its accessibility.

- 5.6 The new facility will also reduce the theatre's carbon footprint with an estimated 90% reduction and support the local economy by delivering c.12 new jobs and at least 5 new volunteering opportunities each year at the theatre.
- 5.7 The plans which received planning permission in 2024 have been shaped following extensive consultations with residents, businesses, stakeholders and theatre patrons.

Some key headline results were:

- 99% agreed that it was important to have a Theatre/performance venue
- 37% said that The Place Theatre is their most visited venue
- 70% said that if there was a wider choice of things to do in or near the Theatre before or after shows they would be more likely to visit

- 5.8 Works have started on site with the main demolition and rebuild due to begin this Summer. An exciting, new programme of events will start to be announced in Spring 2026 with the Theatre due to re-open in 2027.



## 6. Culture & Communities – T&W Culture Strategy 2025-2030

- 6.1 The Council recognises the importance of culture and events to the Borough and our existing investment shows our commitment to enabling residents, visitors and businesses to have access to and benefit from cultural activity.
- 6.2 We need however to continue to build on this and to maximise how we use our resources and leadership role to leverage investment particularly linked with the new Theatre, strengthen the sector and support community organisations and venues to deliver more cultural activity themselves.

- 6.3 The new Strategy will pick up on the findings of the LGA Culture Peer Review. This made a number of recommendations including being clear on the role of the new Theatre and using time before opening to test, develop and build consensus. It emphasised the need to deepen cultural partnerships and being targeted in where we invest. The latter to be based on a data-led approach linked to understanding local participation levels and types of activity, barriers to engagement and gaps in provision and identifying routes to reach more residents and effectively align the roles of the theatre, events and grassroots development.
- 6.4 The Strategy also needs to align us with the priorities of major funders including Arts Council and their *Let's Create* Strategy recognising that Telford to date has not benefitted from major, sustained external funding to the extent of other areas.
- 6.5 *Let's Create* centres around three objectives:
- **Creative People** – everyone can develop and express creativity throughout their lives
  - **Cultural Communities** – places thrive through a collaborative approach to culture
  - **A Creative and Cultural Country** – England's cultural sector is innovative, collaborative and international
- 6.6 Work has already begun to develop the strategy with a number of facilitated workshops involving 65 partners, a new Culture Club of creative organisations and the growing Community Venues Network. Some of the messages to date include:
- *What's missing is the glue – the connection between us all and what we're doing*
  - *Connecting with people through creative activity keeps your brain active, reduces depression and makes you more positive – it is preventative medicine*
  - *Just by giving a space to creative people you could see some amazing things come from it*
  - *The smaller towns are like the spokes of the wheel with Telford (Theatre) at the hub*
  - *Can we come up with messaging that tells people we're a place where you have a creative career – Telford you can make it here!*
- 6.7 Telford has a rich creative sector with a network of freelance artists and performance arts organisations and a thriving heritage craft sector – it is entrepreneurial – but the feedback is that it is grassroots and can feel fragmented and hidden.
- 6.8 The Borough has strengths in dance and music but also a wide diversity of cultural activity reflecting the increasing diversity in our communities - alongside our industrial heritage and continued economic strength in innovation and advanced manufacturing – a place of makers and shapers.
- 6.9 As a business sector, production and arts are often at the forefront of new technology with local companies engaged in AI, immersive technology, robotics, graphic design and digital marketing. This sector has many crossovers into advanced manufacturing making its growth a benefit to the wider economy. A key



element of the next stage of work will be to map and understand the barriers and potential for growing the creative business sector.

- 6.10 Looking to neighbouring authorities with similar backgrounds including Stoke and its distinctive 6 town structure and history in the Potteries, they have used culture to maximise investment, channelling this to meet the needs of the City, transforming communities and bringing pride of place and regeneration opportunities. Other areas including Milton Keynes have built and capitalised on now internationally renowned Festivals and Events to attract visitors. They have been able to leverage the value of creative assets including their Theatre, Gallery and historic venues like Bletchley Park to attract significant ongoing Arts Council funding.
- 6.11 We have a strong foundation to build on and a real opportunity with the new Theatre and the success of Theatre on Tour to be ambitious and use the new Strategy to be clear on shared priorities as a context for greater collaboration and investment.
- 6.12 Our draft vision is to ***'grow, connect and unlock the potential of our cultural sector, increasing access to arts and culture for all as a meaningful part of people's everyday lives'***
- 6.13 We see our scene as remaining diverse and 'grassroots' but with Telford Theatre as the toolbox of creativity, the central hub of a cultural web of Telford venues, allowing us to increase collaboration and promotion of Telford's rich creative offer. Partners want to see more cultural placemaking celebrating the diversity of our communities and Borough towns, support for growing the creative economy and to develop our success with Festivals and Events as a way to put Telford on the map. Potential cross cutting themes identified to date include a focus on culture and health/wellbeing and the engagement and opportunities for young people.
- 6.14 In this context 5 draft priorities are proposed as the basis for the strategy's development and engagement with partners over the coming months:
- **Fostering collaboration to strengthen the sector and potential for growth**
  - **Expanding our creative offer through a hub and spoke model centred on the new Theatre and reaching out into our communities**
  - **Nurturing talent and our creative business sector**
  - **Maximising economic benefit through securing new arts funding, inward investment and visitor spend**
  - **Widening our audience reach and championing inclusivity and accessibility for all**

## **7. Next Steps**

- 7.1 We will continue to work with our Communications Team to strengthen how we showcase and package what is already happening in Telford and to pursue immediate funding opportunities to grow content for our 25/26 and 26/27 Event programmes.
- 7.2 Subject to Cabinet approval, it is proposed to undertake public and stakeholder engagement in the development of the new Strategy. A communications plan will

be in place to promote this. The engagement will include further discussions with the Culture Club and Venues Network, creative businesses, internal services including Business Support, Visitor Economy, Public Health, Children's Services and Adult Social Care, Town and Parish Councils and local residents and community groups. The latter will include survey work at our major 2025 events as well as working with community organisations to extend reach. We are already working with the Employee-led EDI Groups and the Making it Real Board to understand barriers to participation.

7.3 We will continue to engage with the Arts Council and other funders to align priorities and raise Telford's profile. We are also linking with other venues and authorities including those who have had success achieving NPO status. This will provide learning and also opportunities for collaboration.

7.4 It is proposed that the final strategy is brought back to Cabinet for final approval and adoption.

## **8. Alternative Options**

8.1 It is not a statutory requirement for the Council to have a Cultural Strategy, so Cabinet could decide not to proceed. To do so would however mean that the Council would not capitalise on the social, economic and environmental benefits of expanding the Borough's culture and arts offer. This would adversely impact on meeting the needs of our residents and attracting new investment to support the regeneration of our Borough.

## **9. Key Risks**

9.1 In carrying out the consultation, there is a risk that this will not reach enough people, and feedback is not representative of all residents and stakeholders. To mitigate this, we will be working with colleagues including Business Support, Visit, Education and Public Health and key partners through our Culture Club and Venues Network and Town & Parish Councils to maximise our reach. To address the risk that our Strategy will not have impact in attracting external funding we will work with key agencies such as Arts Council, National Trust and Heritage Lottery to align with their priorities.

## **10. Key Council Priorities**

10.1 This strategy will build on existing initiatives and support the Council's plan to protect, care and invest to create a better Borough, and all our priorities:

- All neighbourhoods are a great place to live
- A community-focussed, innovative Council providing efficient, effective and quality services
- Everyone benefits from a thriving economy
- Our natural environment is protected and the Council has a leading role in addressing the climate emergency
- Every child, young person and adult lives well in their community

- 10.2 The strategy also links closely with the priorities identified in the Health and Wellbeing Board vision – happier, healthier fulfilled lives.

## **11. Financial Implications**

- 11.1 The Council's capital programme includes investment which supports the T&W Culture Strategy, such as funding for the new theatre, the Orbit and public realm, which is financed from Grants (including Levelling Up Grant and Capital Regeneration Projects Grant mentioned earlier in the report), External Funding and Council resources. The Finance Team will provide support, advice and monitoring in relation to capital projects and required grant returns.

The costs associated with Theatre on Tour and Event Programmes are funded from ticket sales income along with a budget approved within the 2025/26 MTFS.

## **12. Legal and HR Implications**

- 12.1 There are no direct legal or HR implications arising from this report, but legal advice will be provided if required on any policy amendments in future.

## **13. Ward Implications**

- 13.1 All wards will be impacted by these proposals.

## **14. Health, Social and Economic Implications**

- 14.1 It is intended that this programme of work will contribute to improving health and wellbeing outcomes across the Borough. Significant inequalities continue to exist between communities and the new Strategy will support and join up with community-centred approaches to improving wellbeing and engaging diverse communities.

## **15. Equality and Diversity Implications**

- 15.1 Increasing participation and social inclusion are central to the Arts Council '*Let's Create*' Strategy and our Strategy will align setting out how we can strengthen support for these priorities to benefit communities and maximise external funding. This strategy is about how we can work to deliver opportunities for everyone to participate and benefit from cultural and artistic activity.
- 15.2 All our proposals will pay due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty, ensuring that equality considerations have been embedded throughout the engagement process. We have and will actively consider how our decisions and actions will affect people with different protected characteristics, and seek to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations within the communities we serve in line with our statutory responsibilities under s149 Equality Act 2010.

## **16. Climate Change and Environmental Implications**

- 16.1 The Theatre redevelopment will reduce the carbon footprint of this facility contributing to our commitment to be Carbon Neutral as an Authority by 2030. All our events consider ways to reduce carbon impact e.g. through use of venues and locations accessible by public transport.



16.2 The Arts Council Strategy also includes an investment principle around environmental responsibility stating that cultural organisations should lead the way in responding to the climate emergency. Creative bodies are well placed to innovate and provide solutions to environmental impacts as well as to educate and inform through their art.

## **17. Background Papers**

- 1 Cultural Peer Review – Report to Cabinet April 2024  
LGA Culture Peer Challenge Report – November 2023

## **18. Appendices**

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## **19. Report Sign Off**

<b>Signed off by</b>	<b>Date sent</b>	<b>Date signed off</b>	<b>Initials</b>
<b>Finance</b>	<b>08/06/25</b>	<b>11/06/25</b>	<b>AM</b>
<b>Legal</b>	<b>08/06/25</b>	<b>11/06/25</b>	<b>EH</b>
<b>Director</b>	<b>11/06/25</b>	<b>12/06/25</b>	<b>KK</b>