



Culture peer challenge report

Telford and Wrekin Council

22 and 23 November 2023

Contents

Culture peer challenge report.....	1
1. Executive Summary	3
2. Key recommendations	5
3. Summary of the Peer Challenge approach.....	9
3.1 The peer team.....	9
3.2 Scope and focus	9
3.3 Context.....	10
3.4 The peer challenge process	12
4. Feedback.....	13
4.1 How can the Council broaden participation in culture across Telford & Wrekin using the investment that is being made such as Levelling Up Funding?	13
4.2 In its leadership role, how can the Council work effectively with partners and local communities to develop their cultural capabilities and to support more community-led cultural activity	13
4.3 How effective is the culture service in contributing to the key strategic objectives of the Council?	15
5. Next steps.....	16
5.1 Immediate next steps	16

1. Executive Summary

Telford & Wrekin Council is in a strong position to use the opportunity of having secured significant investment for culturally-led regeneration to address its strategic priorities. This peer challenge revealed a level of energy, optimism and increasing confidence in Telford & Wrekin's future which is a solid foundation on which to build an effective partnership for cultural development.

The Council and its strategic partners have developed a Telford & Wrekin Vision 2032 which sets high level ambitions for inclusive development and brings the key bodies responsible for health, education and economic growth together. Partnership will be key to developing a coherent strategy, and to resourcing and delivery.

To lever greater investment from partners and funders, and build further success, it will be important to set a long term strategy for culture, sited in the broader vision for the place, and capable of delivering the strategic needs and ambitions of both the Council and its partners. The cultural sector is a complex eco-system of professional and voluntary operators, stretching across arts, heritage, libraries and leisure and incorporating organisations of different scales and resources, freelancers and the community sector. While the investment that has been secured is welcomed, its purpose is not yet necessarily well understood by this wider group of stakeholders.

The Council's current priorities for cultural development are to ensure the successful redevelopment of the Telford Theatre in Oakengates, the sustainability of the large-scale free events programme and capacity building of the grassroots arts and cultural organisations. The recommendations in this report reflect the peer team's view that the Council could use the time that is available now, while the theatre project is refined and delivered, to good effect. The Council should consider how to bring its partners into an inclusive dialogue and ensure a jointly owned and robust evidence-based plan for culture that addresses these aims.

Resources are available to support the Council to optimise the value of the Levelling Up Fund (LUF) award, and there is good practice in other authorities that could be useful in informing Telford & Wrekin's approach. Investment in the theatre should be positioned in the context of the broader cultural needs of Telford & Wrekin. The issues raised by the challenge included balancing provision in the six town centres with the promotion of Telford as a centre for events, support for arts development across the Borough and identifying the priorities for increasing engagement by particular population groups (for example, in the deprived areas of South Telford).

Telford & Wrekin has real strength in delivery of free events and some inspirational projects that it can build on through open dialogue. While the strategic dialogue is under way, the Council could consider implementing some short term wins that build on proven models. At the same time it might respond to feedback from partners concerning the rich and varied local cultural activities that are driven by other organisations, and that they stand ready and willing to collaborate. This could include creating a local data framework to improve insight, capturing and promoting the full range of local cultural activities and local operators who could be part of future delivery, testing the effectiveness of different cultural activities in the target communities, and developing an operating model for the theatre's future that defines its unique role in the Borough's infrastructure.

The peer team would like to thank the Councillors and officers at Telford & Wrekin Council for all their contributions to the process and for their work in ensuring that the on-site visit was organised efficiently and provided a good range of input into the challenge. Participants in the meetings were generous with their time and open in their views of the Council. Some representative quotes gathered during the two days are below.

- * Culture is a fundamental part of everyone's DNA
- * It's about belonging
- * The events team are brilliant!
- * People in Telford really like free events
- * Las Vegas mind on a Telford budget
- * We have some decisions to make!
- * In the Council, we consult on what we want, not asking you what you can contribute
- * We can feel left out
- * We've got a big story to tell
- * The Council shouldn't feel burdened to do everything
- * We are not just working for the Council, we live here
- * I want to support Telford to help it get even more things right
- * If we do things together well, we will all benefit

2. Key recommendations

Six key recommendations developed from the feedback gathered through the peer challenge process respond to the issues identified by Telford & Wrekin Council for this Culture Peer Challenge. The recommendations are inter-related and supported by further detail in the feedback section below.

Recommendation 1

Develop your strategy for culture within your broader strategic Telford & Wrekin Vision 2032

Strategic partnerships in Telford & Wrekin are less developed than in some places but recent work has enabled a dialogue about shared aims and a Telford & Wrekin Vision 2032 that articulates ambitions for the future. This relatively new place partnership includes several key partners for whom culture can be a route to delivery of their objectives, for example to support health and wellbeing, skills and education, economic growth and tourism outcomes. For a place-based partnership to plan, resource and deliver cultural development to be effective, it will be important to situate the cultural strategy in the context of the wider vision for Telford & Wrekin.

Recommendation 2

Develop a strong cultural partnership which reflects the strategic partners, cultural sector, Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS), Town and Parish Councils, Destination Management Partnership (DMP), any future Business Improvement District (BID) etc, and is derived from an evidence base

Once there is a clear and shared position between strategic partners, a functioning partnership for cultural development should be considered as a mechanism for collaborating on a workable longer term cultural strategy. Several models are in use around the country and Telford & Wrekin should consider the kind of model that is best suited to its circumstances, taking into account the scale and range of sector partners, the maturity of partnership relationships and the capacity for supporting partnership governance. The partnership will need access to good quality relevant data to inform an evidence-based approach that supports decision-making and provides a clear rationale for policy choices and prioritisation.

The LGA provides support for elected Members through its Culture & Sport team <https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/culture-and-sport-improvement> and support is available for lead officers through membership of the Chief Cultural & Leisure Officers Association (CLOA) <https://cloa.org.uk>. The LGA offers improvement support programmes for cultural and library services [Arts, culture and libraries 2023 | Local Government Association](#). Guidance on developing a cultural strategy is available on the LGA website, including the Cultural Strategy in a Box and the good practice resources gathered through the national Commission on Culture & Local Government – Cornerstones of Culture. <https://www.local.gov.uk/cultural-strategy-box> <https://www.local.gov.uk/topics/culture-tourism-leisure-and-sport/commission-culture-and-local-government/culture-commission>.

In order to ensure that the ambitions for culture are shared with the cultural sector of Telford & Wrekin and with the wider local community, the Council might like to

explore examples from other places of innovative and inclusive models which support partnership arrangements that include stakeholders in developing strategy.

Winchester could be a useful comparator case study to review, as the district is currently developing a new strategy and more information can be found [here](#). [Wakefield](#) is a further good example. Additional place-making resources relating to culture are available on the [LGA](#) publications pages.

Cultural Compacts are locally based partnerships, which enable the cultural sector and key stakeholders and partners to come together and create capacity to develop shared vision and ambitions, to foster the partnerships necessary for delivery and to find ways to include more voices. Compacts have been set up across the country, and are proving to be an effective way for councils to work with the local cultural sector and to engage them in developing strategy. Membership and leadership within Compacts can come from a range of people and sectors. Some rely on council support to get going, but then go on with leadership from the private sector, other public services (eg education or health) or the sector itself. It might be valuable to consider the leadership of partnership or compact arrangements from the perspective of the sectors or communities it wishes to engage. More information is available from [Review of Compacts Initiative](#).

Arts Council England is developing an approach to a Joint Cultural Needs Assessment, building on data driven methodologies which help identify cultural opportunity and need in place. A number of councils have taken this approach, including Coventry, Wandsworth and Lewisham, and Arts Council England is working to refine the methodology. Arts Council England also supports a network of cultural partnerships, sharing good practice through Arts Council England Place Based Peer Learning Network: <https://placebasedpeerlearning.org.uk/>.

Recommendation 3

Be clear about the role of the Levelling Up Fund and the theatre development within the wider cultural strategy

The process of bidding for central government funds often requires a rapid turnaround of applications to meet specific criteria and Telford & Wrekin has successfully achieved significant investment for the theatre. However, to drive the greatest impact from this, it needs now to define this project more clearly. This will help its partners to understand the role of the theatre in meeting the wider cultural needs of the Borough and to plan to address the remaining priorities effectively. The DCMS arm's length bodies have established a service to support Levelling Up Projects which can be contacted at levellingupsupport@historicengland.org.uk and more information is available on the [Historic England LUF webpages](#).

Recommendation 4

Use the time available now to test and discuss, build consensus

The theatre will need to be closed between March 2024 and Winter 2026 for the project. This provides time to develop the broader approach, including the space for the strategic discussion with the Vision 2032 partners, bringing together a new partnership for culture and testing the viability and impact of interventions before

deciding how to integrate the new models into the strategy. Importantly, it enables a consensus view to be formed with potential investment and delivery partners and the opportunity to clarify the relationship between the theatre, the large-scale events programme and the broader cultural development needs of the Borough. During this period, the business model for the theatre can be explored, including its governance, its programme and its potential for outreach.

Your Arts Council England key contact is given at the end of this report for a conversation about further similar facilities and projects, and can connect you to them to share learning.

Recommendation 5

Create an inclusive model for dialogue with the sector that makes use of the total resources available for culture across Telford & Wrekin (eg map assets, activities, audiences)

During the time on-site, the peer team met many and varied stakeholders and it was clear that there is an abundance of locally delivered cultural activities across the Borough and that these are valued by residents. While the Council's cultural services team was praised for its expertise and support of the safe delivery of events in the various towns, the capacity of the team is limited and sector partners indicated a degree of frustration in the current level of engagement and an appetite to be involved and work more closely together.

The process of developing a cultural strategy that can deliver on the Vision 2032 ambitions for an inclusive carbon neutral economy, inclusive healthy independent lives and inclusive communities that are vibrant safe and clean, will take time. Meanwhile, greater understanding and better promotion of the diversity and richness of the local offer, along with better communicating the opportunities for participation and the benefits that can be delivered, would help to inform discussions.

Recommendation 6

Don't try to do everything but explain your vision and how your choices have been made

It was apparent that the Council has built a strong track record in the delivery of key initiatives including its major free events, and signature initiatives such as the 10 x 10 children's promise scheme, the High Street Markets initiative and the 50th birthday programme. The free events programme was an established strength in Telford & Wrekin's cultural programme. However, it was less clear how the focus on free to access activities and ticket pricing initiatives at the theatre resulted from in-depth understanding of the barriers to participation. This was reflected in the finding that the policy of driving attendance volume rather than targeted impact had contributed to some people feeling left out. The Council may wish to work with disability access groups, or engage an organisation to do an access audit for major events or key cultural sites, to assess the needs of disabled people in particular, as this was raised in interviews with the peer team.

The Council, even in collaboration with its partners, has limited resources and cannot address all the cultural needs or suggestions of its residents. To avoid raising expectations beyond what is achievable, it needs to communicate its priorities

clearly.

For example, in considering how to broaden participation, the Council should articulate where it intends to focus its attention (for example, in specific neighbourhoods, or with ethnically diverse residents, or with socially isolated older people, or people living in socio-economically deprived postcodes) and why. Strengthening a data-led approach to identifying strategic priorities will help to target action. In shaping its cultural strategy, it could then identify the most effective approaches to reach these residents, and distinguish the roles of the theatre project, free events and grassroots development (together with the part played by other actors in the sector including town and parish councils and the voluntary sector) in achieving its objectives.

Some resources for supporting the strengthening of cultural opportunity in places where engagement is low are available on Arts Council England's Creative People & Places web pages [here](#) and include case studies and evidence such as the [Community Engagement Playbook](#).

3. Summary of the Peer Challenge approach

3.1 The peer team

The peer team comprised:

Jill Dickinson

Assistant Director - Community Services

Central Bedfordshire Council

Cllr Sarah Courtney

Lead Member for Towns, Tourism & the Voluntary Sector

Calderdale MBC

Paul Bristow

Director – Strategic Partnerships and Place Policy

Arts Council England

Val Birchall

Peer Challenge Manager

Local Government Association

The team was joined on the final day by

James Millington

Adviser - Local Government Support (West Midlands)

Local Government Association

3.2 Scope and focus

Telford & Wrekin Council's vision to 'protect, care and invest to create a better borough' provides the rationale for continued investment in cultural assets and events in the context of increasingly challenging public sector finances. The Council has identified that cultural activities bring people into its towns and High Streets, build community pride and a feel-good factor. It seeks to make culture as accessible as possible, which is supported by its established programme of free events, its community grant schemes, and 'kindness tickets', which enable families on low incomes to come to Telford Theatre.

In 2023 the Council secured more than £25m of levelling up funding to add to £22m secured in 2021 for the Telford & Wrekin Town Deal. Part of this regeneration funding is to be used to broaden participation in culture, including creation of a new cultural quarter in Oakengates comprising a remodelled Telford Theatre and a new

enlarged outdoor events space, and a refurbishment of the Orbit, a community arts centre in Wellington. The focus for this peer challenge was to help the Council to reflect on how it can maximise the impact of this funding.

The questions asked of this review were to consider:

- How can the Council broaden participation in culture across Telford & Wrekin using the investment that is being made such as Levelling Up Funding?
- In its leadership role, how can the Council work effectively with partners and local communities to develop their cultural capabilities and to support more community-led cultural activity?
- To what extent do cultural services contribute effectively to wider Council strategic objectives?

3.3 Context

At the heart of Telford Town Centre is Southwater, which was developed through a public/private partnership led by the Council to create a civic space and to develop a night-time economy. Southwater adjoins the award-winning Town Park, and together these areas host a wide variety of cultural activities and events throughout the year. The Headline Events programme of large scale outdoor events attracts around 100,000 people per year to a calendar of established events plus one-off additional events as required.

The wider borough is made up of a number of communities that existed before the designation of Telford New Town in 1968, including the towns of Madeley, Oakengates, Wellington, Newport and Dawley. Telford & Wrekin has nine public libraries, four run by the Council itself and the other five community managed by local partner organisations. Across Telford & Wrekin are 200 green guarantee sites, including parks, open spaces and nature reserves, which provide venues for local cultural events. The borough also includes the Ironbridge Gorge UNESCO World Heritage Site (WHS), the birthplace of the industrial revolution, celebrated in an annual cultural festival. Tourism brings 3.5 million visitors each year with a £350m economic benefit.

Telford & Wrekin is one of the fastest growing areas in England. By 2032 the population is projected to increase to just over 200,000 (from 185,482 in January 2023) with a 9% increase in the 16-64 age group, and a 40% increase in residents aged over 65. It is a place of contrasts. On the one hand, the Borough has a successful growing economy with 'Gross Value Added' (GVA) growing significantly faster than the England and West Midlands rates. On the other hand, there remain inequalities. The Borough has 18 neighbourhoods ranked amongst the 10% most deprived nationally for health, skills, employment and housing and this is reflected in participation in culture.

A unitary Council of 32 wards with 54 Councillors, the last full Council elections were in May 2023, with the next election due in 2027. The current political make-up is 38 Labour Councillors, 8 Conservative Councillors, 8 Liberal Democrat Councillors and 2 Independent Councillors. The lead Member for Culture is Councillor Carolyn Healy, Cabinet Member for Climate Action, Green Spaces, Heritage & Leisure.

The Council and its partners recently published their Vision, setting out ambitions for Telford & Wrekin over the next 10 years:

- Ambition 1 - Inclusive, carbon neutral economy
- Ambition 2 - Inclusive communities that are vibrant, safe and clean
- Ambition 2 - Inclusive healthy, independent lives

Ambition 2 specifically refers to the future development of Oakengates as the 'home of a thriving performing arts sector centred around the Telford Theatre', and to 'all parts of our increasingly diverse community are visible and celebrated through a variety of events'.

Cultural Services are part of the Communities, Customer and Commercial Services Directorate, which has the following aims:

- Inspire our residents by more people taking part in world class arts and culture and developing local talent
- Create pride of place amongst residents and retain the Telford £ through cultural events and itineraries that encourage more local people to explore the Borough
- Deliver the best possible customer experience through high quality, value for money and safe services and facilities that are accessible to all

Cultural Services in Telford and Wrekin are made up of a 640-seat theatre, outdoor events programme and the visitor economy service. The focus is on developing participation levels, improving access to cultural events, supporting the health and wellbeing of residents, as well as promoting the Borough as a great place to live, work and visit. The arts development team was restructured into the health and wellbeing advisory service in 2018 and the Telford Music Service was moved into the education portfolio in 2019.

As well as running a programme of major events, the culture team offers significant support in the form of advice, guidance, funding and promotion to town and parish councils, local community organisations and individuals seeking to put on events on Council-owned land. It also commissions public art, continuing the legacy of the Telford Development Corporation.

2000 Primary school age children are registered for the 10 x 10 scheme which gives them the opportunity to take part in activities including the Summer Reading Challenge and Community Library programme, learning an instrument and singing organised by the Telford Music Service, developing oracy skills, Ironbridge UNESCO heritage site visits, special offers provided by National Heritage Organisations and the Council's swimming and holiday leisure offer.

Telford's award-winning Town Park, adjacent to the town centre, with its Town Park QEII Arena, provides the location for the headline events programme and hosts a range of other commercial and business events and leisure businesses including Wonderland, Exotic Zoo, Sky Reach (high ropes) and the Bike Hub.

The wider cultural assets in Telford & Wrekin include Telford International Centre (one of the top 10 conference and event spaces in the UK), Ironbridge Gorge Museums Trust World heritage Site (home to 10 museum spaces in the care of the Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust), The Orbit in Wellington (opened as a cinema in 2019 and will be redeveloped as an arts centre) and a large number of locally-led events and festivals, local theatre groups and amateur dramatic groups.

A key priority for the next 12 months is to develop a new Cultural Strategy, reflecting the varied linkages that Culture has to other key strategies and plans, including:

- Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2023
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2022
- Customer Strategy (updated 2022)
- Becoming Carbon Neutral Action Plan (updated 2023)
- Invest Telford (Economic Development) Strategy (in development)
- Visit Telford Strategy and Destination Management Plan (in development)
- World Heritage Site Management Plan (in development)

3.4 The peer challenge process

It is important to stress that the peer challenge was not an inspection. Peer challenges are improvement focussed and tailored to meet individual councils' needs. They are designed to complement and add value to a council's own performance and improvement. The process is not designed to provide an in-depth or technical assessment of plans and proposals. The peer team used their experience and knowledge of local government to reflect on the information presented to them by people they met and material that they read.

The peer team prepared for the peer challenge by reviewing a range of documents and information in order to ensure they were familiar with the Council and the challenges it is facing. The team then spent 2 days meeting people from Telford & Wrekin, during which they:

- Spoke to 34 people including a range of Council and cultural services staff and volunteers together with councillors and external partners.
- Gathered information and views from more than 11 meetings and additional research and reading.
- Collectively spent more than 72 hours to determine their findings – the equivalent of 1 person spending nearly 2 weeks in Telford and Wrekin.

This report provides a summary of the peer team's findings. It builds on the feedback presentation provided by the peer team at the end of the visit on 23rd November 2023. In presenting feedback to you, they have done so as fellow local government officers and Members and bringing Arts Council England experience, and not as professional consultants or inspectors. By its nature, the peer challenge is a snapshot in time. The peer team appreciate that some of the feedback may be about things you are already addressing and progressing.

This peer challenge was funded by Arts Council England in partnership with the LGA.

4. Feedback

4.1 How can the Council broaden participation in culture across Telford & Wrekin using the investment that is being made such as Levelling Up Funding?

The peer team was struck by the positive foundations on which to build. Large parts of the organisation were already bought into the concept of the theatre project and customer satisfaction (both audiences and artists/promoters) is high. The environment, too, had a positive air with energy levels high inside and outside the Council and confidence in the town increasing. There was a strong feeling that Telford is on the up.

There is a real opportunity here and in coming months it will be important to take the time to consider how to create clarity about the role of the theatre in the wider strategic landscape, to link to Telford Vision 2032 and the development of a new Cultural Strategy. The Council should consider how to communicate the story as part of this work; sector representatives want to contribute to the cultural development of Telford & Wrekin and have the appetite to work together but they do not currently feel that they are fully engaged or have a comprehensive understanding of how the LUF investment in the theatre connects to the wider cultural development of the place.

The capital investment in facilities will upgrade an important asset and has the potential to generate more pride in the place but there is a need to explore how best to activate the capital investment fully by using the project period and strategic partnership dialogue to explore how it can lever revenue resources to support a broader programme of activities. This could be through philanthropy or a relationship with any future Business Improvement District or similar, or by developing applications for public funding to support education or outreach.

The closure period offers the chance to better understand the aspirations and barriers of those residents who are considered the priority for increasing cultural participation. The savings on operational costs during closure could be used for a programme of cultural activities with and for South Telford, that builds appetite, extends horizons and deepens knowledge of the cultural needs of residents there and their capacity to influence, co-produce and promote a cultural programme relevant to them.

The staff team is small and may not have capacity at present to take full advantage of the opportunities created. The Council should consider how best to establish the capacity for developing the business model of the theatre, to ensure the operating model follows the vision for its purpose – 5-10 year horizon, future-casting of customer behaviour, changing context etc.

Dedicated support, resources and guidance are available to the authority from the DCMS sponsored bodies, as a result of its success in the LUF scheme.

4.2 In its leadership role, how can the Council work effectively with partners and local communities to develop their cultural capabilities and to support more community-led cultural activity

There was a clear and consistent political view expressed to the peer team about the

importance of culture to Telford & Wrekin. This was manifested in the Council's support for the delivery of local events, fundraising and health & safety advice, in its provision of grant funding to the voluntary and community sector for culture, and its bursaries for emerging talent and creative entrepreneurs, and acknowledged by those the peer team spoke to.

There is also a demonstrable local appetite for cultural activities as a public benefit (97% of residents citing this in a recent survey) and the Council is committed to a Co-operative Council model which is evidenced in the already rich and diverse programme of culture in communities – largely organised and delivered by town/parish councils and local groups. Local ward Members are well connected in neighbourhoods and enthusiastic champions of their communities, and in some cases are also town/parish Councillors, giving them an in-depth knowledge of local cultural ecosystems. This is a firm basis for developing a stronger offer across communities.

Some of the contributors to the peer challenge raised the identity of Telford as a place and the relationship of this to the six towns that pre-date the new town as a source of potential tension. This included a perception amongst some of inconsistent support for cultural activities in the different towns by the Council. Some of this was explained as a lack of awareness of how community events are organised by the different town councils, which lead this work.

The Council could consider how to gather and share information about the wealth of the current community-led cultural activity – eg asset mapping/ what's on section on website/communication of activities. This would raise the profile and awareness of these activities in order to increase involvement locally and to make more explicit the basis of the local voluntary sector leadership.

There is potential to use Telford & Wrekin's strengths in events and public art to help build on the distinctive nature of the six towns whilst also creating a sense of identity across the Borough. For example, the Council could consider how a programme could be created involving the distinctive contributions of each of the six towns and culminate in a central event that brings people from across the Borough together, or a programme of public art interventions that are distinct but linked, and form a Telford & Wrekin-wide trail. Consideration should also be given to how the cultural sector sits within the local economy of town centres and whether it could be better connected to opportunities eg high street voids.

The balance between local and Borough-wide activities, and between inbound visitors and activities primarily for residents could be addressed through the development of the cultural strategy, and it might be helpful to include representatives from each of the towns on the cultural partnership to ensure a range of voices are heard.

Arts development is the term commonly used to cover activity to encourage, support and facilitate participation in the arts locally, for artists, audiences, participants and local cultural organisations and to realise the possibilities of the arts in a range of contexts (health, communities, education and regeneration). In common with some other councils who have reduced their specialist arts development staff, Telford & Wrekin no longer has a dedicated function. This may constrain the delivery of the Council's ambition to develop and grow grassroots cultural delivery. Arts development skills and resources do not need to be provided from within the local

authority, but the Council should give consideration to the capacity to provide them from other sources (eg voluntary or cultural sector) in order to fulfil this objective.

Some examples of how other Councils deliver Arts Development are below.

[Newcastle](#)

[Hinckley & Bosworth](#)

[Derby](#)

Communication was raised in several of the sessions forming part of the challenge and runs through the recommendations in this report. A communications plan (including a stakeholder management plan to outline the steps which the Council plans to take and the timescales and the mechanisms for engagement available to those working in the sector) might help to harness the willingness to work collectively that was observed throughout this peer challenge.

4.3 How effective is the culture service in contributing to the key strategic objectives of the Council?

The consistent political view from Members provides clear direction for officers and shapes the service. There is good collaboration between Cabinet Members that supports the role of culture in delivering other priorities for the Council. The role of culture in visitor economy, health, cohesion, civic pride is valued and the potential of culture as a contributor to other agendas is well understood by senior officers within the authority.

The Place partnership for the Telford & Wrekin Vision 2032 is established and connects to key players in education, business, health etc. However, the partnership is relatively new and not all the relationships are fully matured at this stage. It would be helpful to explore how best to build on the early work of the Vision Board to help site the development of the cultural strategy in the context of that partnership and use cultural investment to deliver for all partners. The changing role of the Council, as public funds diminish, and how that might change the role and responsibilities of partners in place leadership, might be more strongly articulated in order to give life to the Co-operative Council model in the context of culture.

The Council has had good success with inspirational/signature initiatives in education (10x10 scheme), events (Telford 50) and economy (High Street Markets). It has also worked collaboratively with internal and external partners on a new destination strategy. The cultural services team is experienced, motivated and skilled and (together with other staff across the Council) prepared to work flexibly to deliver across disciplines. This is demonstrated in the joined up working around events. It is important to build on these achievements and strengths and to reflect on the impact of the previous cultural strategy in order to achieve incremental improvements.

Telford & Wrekin has attracted significant investment – for regeneration and culture – through the Levelling Up Fund and the Towns Fund in particular, and has the potential to attract further resources through applications to Arts Council England, Historic England and National Lottery Heritage Fund for future delivery. The Council has recently developed strategies for health, equality and carbon neutrality, and is currently developing a strategy for the economy. It might consider how to increase the integration of these different sector strategies and, in particular, to reflect the

contribution of culture to achieving their objectives and test the potential for investment from other service areas/sectors – eg UK Shared Prosperity Fund, Public Health, Business Sector and the Voluntary and Community Sector.

5. Next steps

5.1 Immediate next steps

The peer team appreciate the senior managerial and political leadership will want to reflect on these findings and suggestions in order to determine how the organisation wishes to take things forward.

As part of the peer challenge process, there is an offer of further activity to support the Council. The LGA is well placed to provide additional support, advice and guidance on a number of the areas for development and improvement and we would be happy to discuss this. Helen Murray, Principal Adviser, is the main contact between your authority and the LGA. Helen can be contacted by email at Helen.Murray@local.gov.uk or by mobile on 07884312235.

Arts Council England Relationship Manager, Harinder Matharu, can be contacted by email at harinder.Matharu@artsCouncil.org.uk

Additional programmes of support become available on a regular basis. We encourage you to sign up to the LGA Culture, Tourism and Sport [e-bulletin and visit the LGA's Arts, culture and libraries web page](#) to keep up to date with our latest support offer. You can review our existing programmes of support, including leadership programmes for [councillors](#) and [senior officers](#), advice on [productivity](#), [asset management](#), and [benchmarking data](#) on the [LGA website](#).