

**Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting**

Cabinet – 19 December 2022

**Report Title**

Scrutiny Review Recommendations – Cultural Strategy

**Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan?**

No, but it has been included on the Forward Plan

**Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report**

Jo Brown, Assistant Chief Executive

**Report Author(s)**

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**Ward(s) Affected**

Borough-Wide

**Report Summary**

To receive a summary of findings and recommendations from a scrutiny spotlight review undertaken jointly by Improving Places Select Commission and Improving Lives Select Commission. The aim of the review was to obtain assurances that, following the isolation associated with the pandemic and growing financial pressures on families, the Council's Cultural Strategy is responsive to these challenges. Furthermore, the review aimed to ensure the Council is delivering on its 2022-25 Council Plan objectives that local people have access to libraries, cultural activities, parks and green spaces and that children and young people have fun things to do and safe places to go.

**Recommendations**

1. That the following recommendations from the review be received:
  - a) That the range of available activities tailored for young residents of the Borough be prioritised for expansion.
  - b) That consideration be given to how best to expand access, especially for young people, to recreational swimming in the Borough, whilst protecting against hazards.

- c) That the service liaise with Children and Young People's Services to develop a system to help young carers more easily access opportunities for leisure and culture-related respite.
  - d) With a view to expanding access, that consideration be given to hosting cultural events at alternating and varied locations and venues throughout the Borough where appropriate.
2. That Cabinet formally consider its response to the above recommendations by February 2022, in accordance with the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules.

**List of Appendices Included**

None

**Background Papers**

Rotherham's Cultural Strategy 2019-2026 – Cabinet 10/06/2019

Cultural Strategy Implementation – Improving Places Select Commission 08/12/2020

Minutes of Improving Lives Select Commission – 03/05/2022

Minutes of Overview and Scrutiny Management Board – 12/10/2022

**Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel**

Overview and Scrutiny Management Board – 12 October 2022

Improving Lives Select Commission – 03 May 2022

**Council Approval Required**

No

**Exempt from the Press and Public**

No

## **Scrutiny Review Recommendations – Cultural Strategy**

### **1. Background**

- 1.1 Rotherham's Cultural Strategy was agreed by Cabinet on 10 June 2019, and various aspects of the delivery of the Strategy have returned to Scrutiny for monitoring of implementation progress on several occasions. On 12 August 2020, the most recent progress on the implementation of the Strategy was scrutinised at Improving Places Select Commission, and it was agreed by Members of Improving Places Select Commission in July 2021 that, in view of the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic on the cultural offer in the Borough, progress on the implementation of the Strategy would be prioritised for a spotlight review.
- 1.2 Acknowledging the significance of events and culture in wellbeing and education, the purpose of the review was to obtain assurances that the local offer was responsive to changing needs of communities and promoted inclusive access to cultural activities in the Borough. This review examined elements which intersect three objectives included in the Council Plan 2022-23: local people have access to libraries, cultural activities, parks and green spaces; children and young people have fun things to do and safe places to go; and inequalities are addressed, and nobody is left behind. Members of Improving Places Select Commission and Improving Lives Select Commission met with Culture, Sport and Tourism Service Leads, and the Cabinet Member for Social Inclusion. The review was undertaken by Councillors Pitchley, Atkin, Cooksey, Keenan, Griffin, Havard, McNeely, and Sansome. The resulting recommendations were endorsed by Improving Lives Select Commission on 3 May 2022 on behalf of both scrutiny commissions which conducted the spotlight. The recommendations were subsequently endorsed by Overview and Scrutiny Management Board on 12 October 2022.

### **2. Key Issues**

- 2.1 Consideration was given to specific areas of work which comprised part of the current offer. Members considered these examples in determining whether there was enough evidence to provide assurances in two areas:
1. that there was sufficient variety and availability of cultural events to cater to diverse interests and respond to the changing needs of communities.
  2. whether inclusive access to a variety of events across the Borough was sufficient to ensure that young people have fun things to do and safe places to go and that local people have access to cultural activities close to where they live.
- 2.2 **Responsiveness of Cultural Offer**  
The Cabinet Member and officers described examples of recent events such as Civic Sound Week, a free-of-charge event. Dozens of free activities take place every day across the library network, which are designed for all ages and demographics. Examples given at the time of reporting included two recent Harry Potter events in Swinton and Rawmarsh. Members considered the teamwork involved in bringing such events to fruition. A further example, The

Rotherham Show, was noted as the biggest free-to-access event in the region, which was made possible through external funds.

2.3 Members stressed the importance of offering activities that matter to young people and communities. As part of a discussion of the recreational offer, Members discussed at length the subject of recreational swimming in the Borough, noting the popularity of recreational swimming. Members also discussed open water swimming as a rewarding activity that can also be hazardous. Members discussed ways the service might mitigate risks associated with swimming, whilst providing safe ways for residents safely to enjoy Rotherham's natural resources and facilities for swimming. Lessons in swimming, water safety, and First Aid were suggested as part of an overall expansion in activities targeted for young people and young adults. The response from officers noted that arrangements were in motion for safe open water swimming programmes for summer 2022 and beyond.

#### 2.4 **Access to Recreational Activities and Cultural Events**

As part of the broader discussion around access, Members sought further information around current work to simplify discounts for culture and leisure activities in the Borough. The Cabinet Member for Social Inclusion provided additional information around this focus of work to determine eligibility for RotherCard incentives and discounts. The motivation behind this work was to get more people involved and make activities accessible to everyone. Members expressed great interest in observing the evolution and clarification of RotherCard incentives and discounts in further updates to Scrutiny.

2.5 Specific consideration was given to designing an enhanced recreation offer for young carers to enable greater access to healthy respite. The response from officers noted that currently carers may accompany the person they care for to a range of events for free, and that in view of the importance of respite for young carers, arrangements were in progress with Children and Young People's Services to expand this offer.

2.6 Regarding access to safe and fun activities, Members found that many young people in the Borough would benefit from having the opportunity to participate in more safe activities and events that are of interest to them as young people. It was noted that libraries remain a powerful resource within communities that may be even further utilised and promoted, especially in respect of awareness of young people's interests and coordination of responsive and innovative events and activities.

#### 2.7 **Areas for Further Development**

Having considered the body of evidence around the offer of cultural events and activities in the Borough, Members found that diversifying the location of events, improving signage, and expanding engagement with community organisations could further promote access. As the library network works within communities all over the Borough, it was suggested that the expertise of the library network be consulted in diversifying the location of activities and events in accessible ways. Members are keen to see it become easier for local people to access activities near them. For example, the Grin & Tonic comedy events could be hosted at alternating, accessible venues if this is found to

promote access for residents who may not be able to travel from various areas of the Borough.

2.8 Members also noted the importance of ensuring clear signage is posted at venues. Clear Signage helps aid publicity and access and gives new attendees greater ease and confidence in finding the destination venue and feeling welcome at the event. Grim & Co was offered as an example of one such venue that stood to benefit from better signage.

2.9 Prioritising engagement with schools, ecumenical organisations such as Churches Together, Parish Councils, and funding programmes like Active Dearne was also suggested. Members hope to see enhanced relationships with community organisations stimulate interest and access among patrons of cultural events.

### **3. Options considered and recommended proposal**

3.1 The recommendation is that Cabinet receive the report and provide a response to the recommendations in accordance with the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules.

### **4. Consultation on proposal**

4.1 As this is the report of Scrutiny Members, feedback from contributing Members is incorporated in the final report. Members have regard to the expressed views of Rotherham residents in undertaking the review and in formulating recommendations.

### **5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision**

5.1 The timetable and accountability for implementing recommendations arising from this report will sit with Cabinet and officers. The Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules require Cabinet to consider and respond to recommendations made by scrutiny within two months.

### **6. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications**

6.1 There are no financial or procurement implications directly arising from this report.

### **7. Legal Advice and Implications**

7.1 There are no legal implications directly arising from this report.

### **8. Human Resources Advice and Implications**

8.1 There are no Human Resources implications directly arising from this report.

## **9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults**

9.1 Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults are set out in the main sections of the report.

## **10. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications**

10.1 Furthering equalities and human rights are key objectives in undertaking scrutiny activity; therefore, Members have considered equalities implications in the development of scrutiny work programmes, lines of enquiry and in their derivation of recommendations designed to improve the delivery of council services for residents.

## **11. Implications for CO2 Emissions and Climate Change**

11.1 There are no emissions or climate change implications directly arising from this report.

## **12. Implications for Partners**

12.1 There are no implications for partners directly arising from this report.

## **13. Risks and Mitigation**

13.1 There are no risks directly arising from this report.

## **14. Accountable Officers**

Emma Hill, Head of Democratic Services and Statutory Scrutiny Officer

Approvals obtained on behalf of Statutory Officers: -

	<b>Named Officer</b>	<b>Date</b>
Chief Executive	Sharon Kemp	02/12/22
Strategic Director of Finance & Customer Services (S.151 Officer)	Judith Badger	29/11/22
Assistant Director, Legal Services (Monitoring Officer)	Phillip Horsfield	29/11/22

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