

**Community, Cultural, and Corporate Services Scrutiny Committee**  
Meeting to be held on Tuesday, 6 February 2024

Electoral Division affected:  
(All Divisions);

**Corporate Priorities:**  
Delivering better services;

**Culture Review: What it is, Impact in terms of Place / Economy and Engaging with Young People and Cultural Strategy Refresh**

Contact for further information:

Julie Bell, 01772 536727, Interim Director of Education, Culture and Skills,  
[Julie.Bell@lancashire.gov.uk](mailto:Julie.Bell@lancashire.gov.uk), Steve Lloyd, 07876 452678, Head of Cultural Services, [Steve.lloyd@lancashire.gov.uk](mailto:Steve.lloyd@lancashire.gov.uk)

**Brief Summary**

The purpose of the report is to respond to the questions asked by this Committee around the role of culture and its impact and present the draft Cultural Services Strategy 2024-2028 which expands on these themes.

**Recommendation**

The Community, Cultural and Corporate Services Scrutiny Committee is asked to consider and reflect on the content of this report, its accompanying appendices and presentation.

The Community, Cultural and Corporate Services Scrutiny Committee is asked to consider and reflect on the draft Cultural Services Strategy 2024-2028.

**Detail**

In July 2023 at the Annual Portfolio and Service Area Update the Community, Cultural and Corporate Services Scrutiny Committee asked for a report to be brought to the committee which considered Culture: What it is and the impact in terms of place / economy and engaging with young people. It was also requested that Cultural Services present the draft Cultural Services Strategy to refresh the existing document which runs to April 2024.

**Culture Review: What it is, the Impact in terms of Place / Economy and Engaging Young People**

Culture plays an important role in the health, happiness and economy of Lancashire. It is key to Lancashire's places and communities. Within Lancashire County Council Cultural Services, we think of culture being central to how we all live and learn – the



creativity, knowledge, traditions and passions of our communities. Culture improves our quality of life, wellbeing, and sense of place. It drives our economy. It cannot easily be defined within a familiar list, but it has the combined influence of creativity, the arts, physical activity, museums, galleries, collections, libraries, archives and heritage upon all our lives.

Culture is shared, creative experiences where we express, learn and reflect on our history, place, social issues and personal lives. These experiences can improve wellbeing, strengthen communities, and develop vital life skills for employment and a better quality of life.

For the purpose of this report, we are taking a broad view of culture which includes, but is not limited to the following:

- Performing arts including dance, music, comedy, and theatre
- Visual arts, design, craft, and makers
- Digital media and film
- Museums, collections, and archives
- Libraries, literature, writing, reading, and publishing
- The natural, historic, and built environment
- Cultural tourism
- Creative learning
- Arts & health
- Physical activity
- Creative Industries

Our work in Cultural Services is aligned to that of the County Council's priorities, Arts Council England, Libraries Connected and Lancashire 2050 Strategic Framework with important linkages across Lancashire County Council's strategies for education, participation, economic development, health and wellbeing as well as our valued colleagues across the independent cultural sector including Arts Lancashire, Active Lancashire, Lancashire Museums Forum, Lancashire Cultural Network and the Lancashire Culture and Physical Activity Network.

Other parts of Lancashire County Council also contribute to the impact culture has on place, economy and young people including colleagues in Economic Development and Creative Lancashire who worked with the Lancashire Economic Partnership to commission a Cultural Investment Strategy for Lancashire (see **Appendix 'C'**).

### **Impact on Place**

Cultural Services plays a key role in sense of place helping make our neighbourhoods understand the past, live in the present and plan for the future. Culture is the glue that brings our communities together. Lancashire County Council Cultural Services is comprised of libraries, museums, conservation and collections, archives, music service, heritage learning, outdoor education, cultural development, school library service, information development and support teams. Together we offer, support, develop and enable a wide range of positive cultural opportunities and



through this we support the Lancashire 2050 strategy working to the Communities and Place priority.

Across Lancashire there are libraries, mobile libraries, outdoor education centres, music centres, the archives, and museums located in the heart of communities which enable people to come together, to share stories, to learn and to enjoy life enriching experiences. Our cultural offers are at the heart of Lancashire's places and communities and our venues are some of the few places people can come together, learn and grow together. We join in national and local events, collaborate with partners and build projects of our own which are informed by local need. For example – We work with Lancashire Adult Learning to provide a range of free courses within our libraries to support people with important skills as well as support their health and wellbeing.

Fun Palaces is a national campaign with an annual weekend of events where arts, crafts, science, technology, and digital themes are used as a catalyst for community engagement and fun participation for everyone. In October 2023, 150 Fun Palaces took place across the UK, and we held 23 in Lancashire Cultural Services venues, including libraries, museums, and Lancashire Archives. We invited local communities and organisations to help plan and run sessions that were free to visitors, offering a chance to learn something new or try something a bit different whilst sharing the space as a community. We had a diverse range of activities on offer with a wide variety of partners involved. We welcomed 8,756 visitors during our 2023 Fun Palaces.

All our libraries are designated as Libraries of Sanctuary providing an important welcome to communities settling into Lancashire. Often libraries are the only place to go to for free, be warm, welcome, learn and enjoy, and become valued citizens of our villages, town and cities. Libraries of Sanctuary is a national initiative to recognise the good practice of libraries which welcome people seeking sanctuary and other new arrivals into their community. It aims to foster a culture of welcome and inclusivity. The commitment is underpinned by 3 processes: Learn, Embed and Share. In April 2022 Cultural Services formally pledged a commitment for Lancashire Libraries to have designated Library of Sanctuary status. Examples of activities and resources we are providing includes tours of library buildings, language resources with a variety of foreign language books available in libraries, Quick Reads, audio books in different mediums, and Transparent Language Online which is a part of our Digital Library. English language development includes activities hosted by ESOL volunteers (ESOL stands for English for Speakers of Other Languages), English conversation groups, and a variety of different reading groups.

Our museums enable people to explore the history of Lancashire. We operate 6 public museums and attractions, plus our headquarters site at Stanley Street in Preston. These include Judges' Lodgings in Lancaster, Queen Street Mill in Burnley, Helmshore Mills in Rossendale, Lancaster Castle Shire Hall, Gawthorpe Hall in Padiham and Clitheroe Castle Museum on behalf of Ribble Valley Borough Council.

Linking colleagues from across Cultural Services and external partners, Lancashire Archives and Local History are spearheading Clarets Collected. A new project bringing together a fan-led Burnley Football Club Archive at Burnley Library. The project is supported by the Friends of Lancashire Archives with a grant of £20,000,



private donations and funding from the Know Your Neighbourhood Fund. Working closely with the National Football Museum and Burnley Football Club in the Community, the scheme will catalogue and growing the collection, work with volunteers, create a new gallery space with exhibitions and a family events programme engaging communities with the collection and deliver innovative cross-curriculum school sessions.

Cultural Services also ensure that people who can't access our offers within our buildings can still access cultural provision. Our Home Library Service regularly visits over 700 people who benefit from books that are chosen specific to the interests of those customers.

Our five Mobile Library vans make sure people who do not live close to a public library in Lancashire can still access our great service. Based across the county they cover routes on a three-weekly basis. Covering over 700 stops the Mobiles provide customers with access to a wide variety of stock including books and audio books which are changed regularly. Customers can also order items and are supported to access our digital offers giving guidance and support to customers on Borrowbox, Libby and PressReader apps, and also signpost customers to the Digital Library. We have five prison libraries across Lancashire delivering a library service to the prison community. The prisons have differing numbers of prisoners, security levels and needs. Prison Reading groups, Storybook Dads, bedtime stories, Raising Readers, Reading Ahead, author visits and Shannon Trust are just some of the many initiatives we provide.

Lancashire Libraries digital issues have continued to rise with last year reaching 2,014,414 e-downloads issued including eBooks, eAudiobooks, newspapers and magazines.

The Cultural Development Team run a series of competitions and awards aimed at bringing people together to celebrate music, art and reading across Lancashire. In 2022 Lancashire Choir of the Year was launched as an annual competition aiming to encourage and showcase singing talent in Lancashire. The competition is open to any Lancashire based choir (including Blackpool and Blackburn with Darwen). Alongside the winning choirs, a people's choice award is made for the choir with the highest number of online votes.

A similar competition was launched in 2023 to celebrate the artistic talents of Lancashire's residents. Lancashire Artist of the Year invited both amateur and professional artists of all ages to paint or draw their favourite Lancashire places. Lancashire Book of the Year competition, now in its 38<sup>th</sup> year, aims to engage young people to read for pleasure. It is delivered in over 20 Lancashire secondary schools each year, giving young people a voice, developing critical thinking, and encouraging debate. It is one of the most established book awards in the country and only one of a few where young people discuss and decide the best recently published fiction books. The team delivers a series of workshops with the student judges before hosting a celebration event at UCLAN each summer, attended by the shortlisted authors and around 300 young people.

Our libraries have supported the corporate Cost of Living campaign by offering advice sessions and by signposting citizens enquiring about support with fuel, food



and energy bills. Alongside this, from November 2022 to April 2023, our libraries became Warm and Welcome spaces. We provided complimentary warm drinks, free charging points to enable citizens to work or study from our libraries, and a selection of jigsaws and games were available for those interested.

## **Impact on Economy**

Cultural Services contribute to the economy of Lancashire's cities, towns and villages. Reading and language development are necessary skills supported with bespoke offers from pre-birth to adulthood are core offers throughout Lancashire's 64 public libraries. These offers take account of geographical and social factors providing much needed skills which improve life chances, qualifications and work opportunities.

Reading Heroes is Lancashire Libraries new summer reading programme, delivered in all 64 static libraries, 5 mobile libraries, and supported by the county's museum service. The scheme is devised by Cultural Services responding to local need and intelligence. The aim of Reading Heroes is to encourage children aged 4-12 to continue reading over the summer holidays, thus addressing the summer reading gap, whilst also providing activities for them and their families to complete. There is national evidence that children who don't read over the Summer can have a reduction in reading level by the time they return to school in September. Over 9400 children took part in Reading Heroes during 2023 with 86% of parents surveyed responding that their child read more over the summer because of Reading Heroes. Helping to embed a love of reading supports children to achieve better life outcomes improving communication, literacy and knowledge of the world we live in.

The Lancashire Schools Storytelling Festival, delivered by Heritage Learning Lancashire, is now an annual event for Lancashire County Council primary schools. The festival encourages literacy and the joy of creativity. It connects oral storytelling, literacy, cultural heritage and culminates in an exciting finale. The project will allow us to examine local history and folklore, to investigate the stories themselves and to devise a way to tell those stories in a style that will engage and entertain the audience. It also actively encourages young people to create their own stories and develop a love of oracy. The festival has been particularly effective in engaging children who sometimes struggle within curriculum-based literacy activities. It has also helped build confidence. The festival draws upon our diverse cultural heritage and examine stories born elsewhere that have now become part of the very fabric of our society.

Cultural Services help upskill people through lifelong learning opportunities, volunteering, placements, apprenticeships and working with partners to offer training which help people get paid work. Building on the government's Kickstart programme which provided an opportunity for 16–24 year olds to experience a real work environment and learn new skills, the Conservation and Collections team developed a Heritage Skills Programme. Open to all over 18 these practical sessions over 12 weeks provide an opportunity for individuals to learn new skills, understand where their own transferable skills lie and increase their confidence. The team also deliver specialist museum training to heritage staff and volunteers in partnership with Arts Council England and Museum Development North. These programmes are in



addition to the many volunteering, placements and apprenticeships provided across Cultural Services.

Libraries support students and agile-workers with touch down facilities -public network computers, Wi-Fi, printing, scanning and copying.

Our museums and archives contribute to the local cultural tourism economy attracting visitors to and across Lancashire. In 2022/3 just under 120,000 people enjoyed our historical collections through visits to our museums and the Lancashire Archives.

The Harris Re-imagined project will continue during 2024 and into 2025 with the County Council taking a prominent role in this significant project both in its development and in terms of financial contribution. The central Preston library function is being successfully delivered from a temporary location within Preston Guild Hall whilst the Harris is closed. The library function will be a key part of the 'blended' offer that will be delivered from the Harris when it re-opens offering a significant offer for Lancashire residents and visitors to the county.

All the service applies for external funding to support new activities driven by the needs of the community. Over the last few years funding applications have been supported by Arts Council England, National Lottery Heritage Fund, Department for Education, Department for Culture, Media and Sport, Youth Music, Music Mark, Peters Social Fund, Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music, Reading Agency, Brass Bands England and the Stocks Massey Fund. At the Judges Lodgings In Lancaster the Art Fund supported a new permanent Gillow Gallery and with a grant from the Association of Independent Museums contributed to Facing the Past Project including commissioning 4 portraits of black slaves which allowed us to reinterpret our museum collections highlighting links to Lancaster and the Slave Trade. Our specialist skills and services were used by a number of other authorities and organisations subsequent to successful tendering by Cultural Service Staff. In addition to this Friends organisation support additional activities and equipment responding to local interests and needs.

We work with the 12 district councils, and the unitary authorities of Blackpool and Blackburn with Darwen as well as leisure trusts, Arts Lancashire and Lancashire's independent cultural sector to collaborate, train and support, attract external funding and develop activity within the county thus enabling more cultural opportunities for the people of Lancashire and a positive impact on our villages, towns and cities. Working with Arts Lancashire, the County Council supported training with cultural organisations across the pan-Lancashire area which contributed to the number of Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisations rising from 10 to 18 for the period 2023-26 with a 59.1% increase in funding to £10.1million across the 3 years. The Cultural Development team provides help for individuals and organisations applying for funding via Crowdfund Lancashire and the Lancashire Culture & Sport Fund. As a crowdfund opportunity project creators can raise the profile of their project and gain support and additional investment from individuals, organisations and businesses to make those projects happen. Lancashire Culture & Sport Fund enables communities to make great things happen in their localities and improve the cultural offer and wellbeing of their communities including tackling social isolation,



supporting those living with dementia and supporting the mental health and wellbeing of Lancashire residents.

Cultural Services supports wellbeing through access to trusted information and activities which enable people to make positive choices around their own health and help people stay active, working, and leading enriched lives for longer.

Lancashire's network of libraries, museums, archives, and outdoor education centres offer quality of life experiences that help attract people to visit, live, work and study in the county.

## **Engaging Young People**

Cultural Services support a wide range of life enhancing experiences for young people across all its service areas.

The Cultural Development Team support children and their families to develop a love of books and reading through a partnership with the BookTrust for delivery of the national BookStart scheme. The annual agreement with BookTrust ensures free reading resources are secured for Lancashire and delivered to children aged 0-5 working with libraries and other partners such as registrars, nurseries, childminders, schools, social care, refugee integration and portage teams to ensure that children and families across Lancashire have access to quality, up-to date and free reading materials. Each year around 20,000 packs are delivered with a value of over £250,000 each year.

The Little Steps programme was developed for pre-school children in collaboration with colleagues across the County Council and introduced to libraries in Lancashire in February 2023. Through the programme we encourage children and families to read together, develop speech and language and use books to introduce children to important topics, such as discovering emotions, making friends and boosting self-esteem.

Lancashire School Library Service offers a complete range of reading and library services to primary, special, academy and independent schools as well as to early years settings. During 2022-23 we issued 89,886 books to primary, special and nursery schools, and 14,853 pupils were engaged in our reading and learning activities. The workshop offer to schools has been enhanced with seasonal story time sessions for Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1. Our new BookBus visits each subscribing school annually, offering a unique reader experience for both teachers and pupils to select stock for their school libraries and classrooms.

The Key Stage 1 Brilliant Book Award (BBA) and the Key Stage 2 Fantastic Book Awards (FBA) promote independent reading and motivate pupils to read widely. The awards enable pupils to meet informally, discuss and share views about reading. Pupils vote for their favourite stories and get the opportunity to meet the winning authors and illustrators at the annual celebration event.

The Music Service provides support to over 60,000 pupils a week. Extensive academic research has shown that participating in musical activities can improve cognitive skills as well as improving health and wellbeing. The music service piloted



a nurture group last year to support pupils who are facing emotional challenges. The success of this pilot has been documented and we are looking to increase teacher capacity and roll these groups out to more schools and venues in the future. The local music centres, county bands and orchestras provide the opportunity for young people to rehearse and perform in venues across the county. These concerts can range from informal events to large scale concerts with over 450 young people performing. These events help to build confidence for many pupils and give them an outlet for their work and sense of pride in their achievements. The music service employs over 130 teachers, who live locally and support the local economy. Many of these teachers are also performing musicians sharing their talents in local venues.

Across Cultural Services we offer volunteering opportunities for young people aged 11 to 24 years as Culture Hacks. We offer young people the chance to use their skills and ideas to develop their own projects and they also support our regular offers and activities such as our children's reading programmes and Lego and coding clubs. We recognise the contribution Culture Hacks make by arranging visits and cultural activities for them to participate in, as well as awards. Young people tell us how valuable this offer is to their confidence, in building friendships, in being part of a community and in contributing to university and employment prospects. We work in partnership Lancashire Volunteer Partnership to promote, recruit and support Culture Hacks alongside our wider adult volunteering offers.

Hope Streets was a 5-year youth-led project delivered by the Heritage Learning Team aimed at improving how heritage sites work with and for young people; amplifying youth voices and changing policy across our museum sites. During the project, the team worked with several groups of young people across Lancashire, facilitating them in many activities, including the creation of a lockdown film during Covid (now housed in the Archives as part of the Red Rose Collection), development of a multi-use space at Judges' Lodgings, a young people's guided tour of Gawthorpe, and production of interactive elements to the tour at Queen Street Mill via a series of short films, written and directed by our current ongoing group. The project has led to the creation of new policies around working with young people, and changes to existing policies. It enabled the establishment of new recruitment practices for engaging young applicants, resulting in establishing new work placement and apprenticeship roles.

Lancashire Outdoor Education provides a breadth of outdoor experiences for young people and other generations of Lancashire, with the opportunity to learn about themselves others and the environment, try new things outside their comfort zones, reach their potential and make lifelong memories. 217 schools have visited our centres as part of their year, engaging in an outdoor residential experience. Inclusivity is at the heart of we do, for example, the service has supported the Break Time offer successfully for three consecutive years, providing activity during school holidays and half terms to young people, with special education needs and/or disabilities. In addition, the service has been able to provide outdoor experiences for children and young people who receive short breaks through a child's plan following a Child and Family assessment of need (up to the age of 18) through the Break Time Plus offer.

Across our Cultural Services we offer a wide range of information, support and life enhancing experiences. In addition to the themes identified by Scrutiny committee





our teams work to support communities with learning, trusted information, health and wellbeing, digital inclusivity, cohesion and tackling social isolation. Whilst the breadth of teams within Cultural Services is wide-ranging, all team work together to achieve positive outcomes for Lancashire's residents with common goals. The service has worked together to review the existing strategy and develop a draft Cultural Services Strategy for 2024-2028 attached as **Appendix 'A'**. Key Achievements over the last 5 years are also provided in **Appendix 'B'**.

## Appendices

Appendices 'A' – 'C' are attached to this report. For clarification they are summarised below and referenced at relevant points within this report.

Appendix	Title
Appendix A	Draft Cultural Service Strategy 2024-28
Appendix B	Key Achievements over the last 5 years
Appendix C	LEP Cultural Investment Strategy

## Consultations

N/A

## Implications:

This item has the following implications, as indicated:

## Risk management

N/A

## Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

### List of Background Papers

Paper	Date	Contact/Tel
-------	------	-------------

N/A

Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate

N/A

