

# Vibrant Shropshire Cultural Strategy Consultation 2020 Survey Report

FULL REPORT January 2021



## 1. Background and Methodology

Shropshire Council’s consultation on the draft Cultural Strategy ‘Vibrant Shropshire, Independent by Nature’ was open for 12 weeks from the 12 October 2020 to the 5 January 2021. The draft Strategy sets out the ambition and strategic priorities for the cultural sector for the next 10 years. The draft Strategy was developed in partnership with a range of stakeholders. A Cultural Strategy Working Group ensured a partnership approach and engagement opportunities were provided through a series of individual and group meetings and larger workshops. Appendix 2 of the draft strategy set out the wide range of workshops and one to one engagement interviews and the findings that had resulted from this engagement activity.

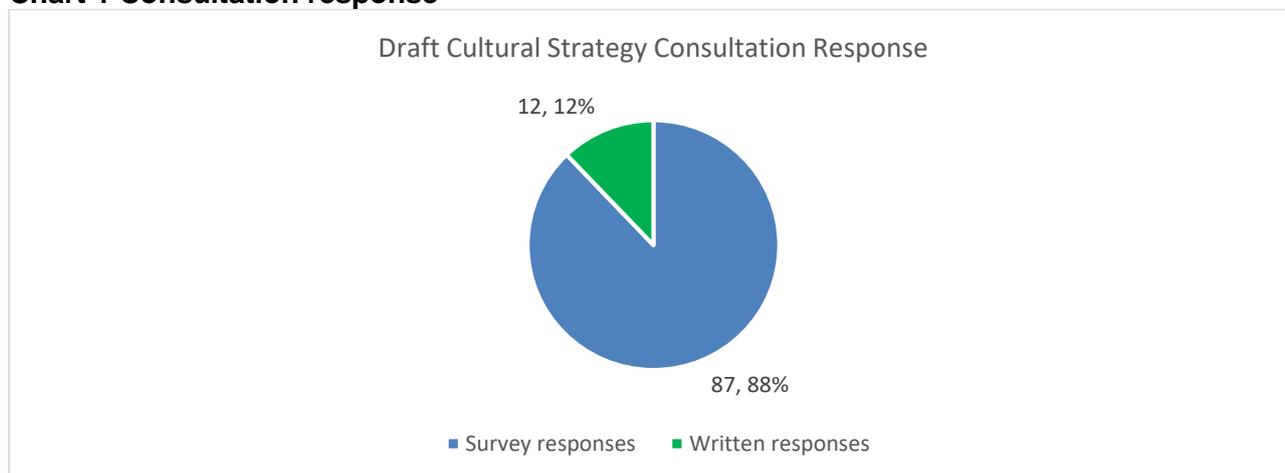
The consultation was promoted widely using press releases on Shropshire Council’s Newsroom, local newsletters (for example the SALC news to town and parish councils and the VCSA news for the voluntary and community sector), and by targeted email communications to key stakeholders. Members of the public and key stakeholders were encouraged to participate during the 12-week consultation using an online survey or by email or letter. Additional face to face engagement during the consultation period was not possible, however, those unable to contribute online were provided with alternative means of providing their views.

The consultation provided robust information to allow people to provide well- informed feedback. The draft strategy was published alongside the evidence base, strategic evidence review (including details of links to other strategies and policies), details of feedback from workshops and face to face engagement, and an Equality and Social Inclusion Impact assessment.

## 2. Consultation Respondents

There were 99 responses to the consultation in total, 87 survey responses and 12 written consultation responses. It is possible that a small number of survey respondents also provided detailed written responses, but this duplication can be helpful and allow people to present their views and feedback in a comprehensive way. Chart 1 details the total response.

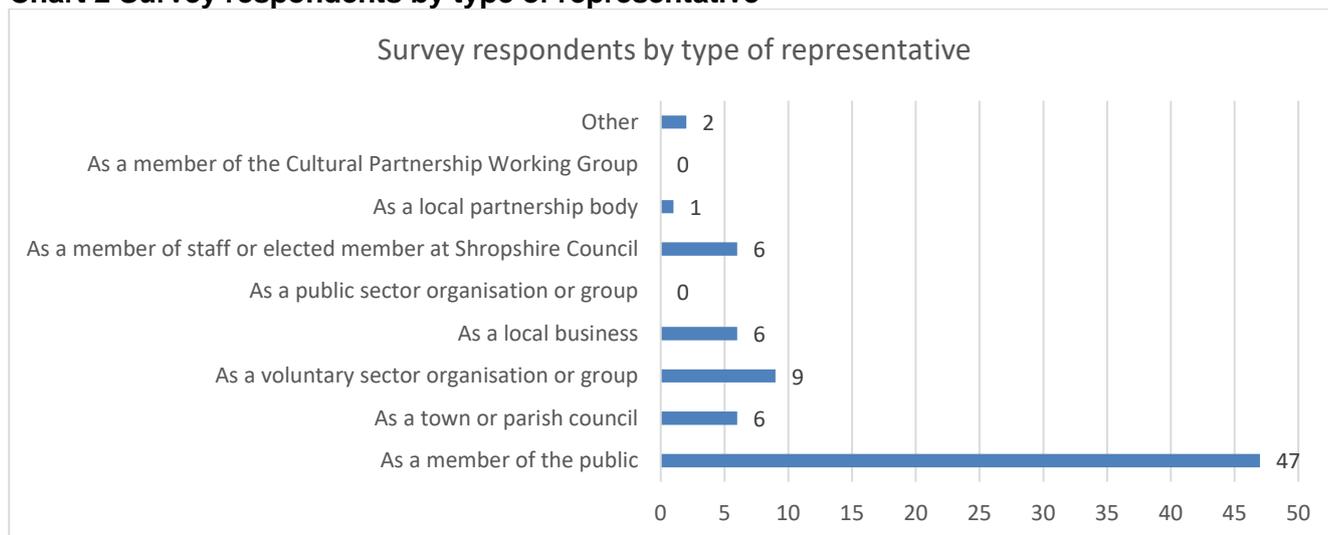
Chart 1 Consultation response



Survey respondents were asked to provide a bit more information about themselves to support Shropshire Council in its work to monitor responses in line with its Equality and Social Inclusion Impact Assessment and equalities duties. Shropshire Council works hard to ensure feedback can be provided by people with a range of different characteristics who are representative of the wider community. The survey results were all anonymous so no one could be identified by their response.

Chart 2 highlights that 47 of the 86 survey respondents were members of the public. There were also a smaller number of responses from VCS groups and organisations, town and parish councils, County Councillors, and members of staff at Shropshire Council.

**Chart 2 Survey respondents by type of representative**



Many consultation respondents were happy for their responses to be attributed to their groups and organisations. Anonymity has been applied within this report (quotes are not attributed to any individuals, groups or organisations), but recognition and thanks should be given to the following:

- Basils Shropshire Ltd, The Haughmond
- British Horse Society
- Church Stretton Town Council
- Ellesmere Town Council
- Friends of the Flaxmill Maltings
- Friends of The Flaxmill Maltings and Maltings Art Group
- Ludlow Food Festival
- Lydbury English Centre Ltd
- Meadow Arts
- MediaActive Projects CIC
- Play Scotland
- Raven Studios
- Sansaw (Shrewsbury) Men's Shed
- Shropshire Association of Local Councils
- Shropshire Playing Fields Association
- Soldiers of Shropshire Museum at Shrewsbury Castle
- Spunhill
- Telford Woods
- The Friends of Church Stretton Library
- The Shropshire Way Association Charitable Trust
- The Strettons Community Arts Forum
- Visit Shropshire
- Wem Town Council

Questions about personal characteristics are always optional but provide useful information when completed. Some did not complete this section of the survey. Around 25 of the 87 decided not to participate and many of these may have felt the section was not relevant if they were representing a group or organisation rather than providing an individual response. Of those who did complete the section on characteristics, 29 were female and 25 were male. This mixed response is important. Sometimes if very biased responses are achieved then additional engagement may be required. Chart 3 displays the results.

**Chart 3 Gender of survey respondents**

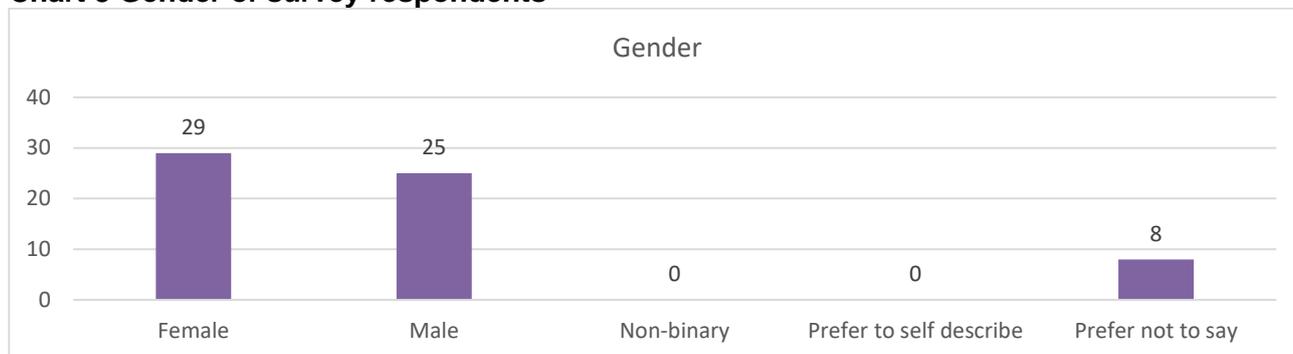
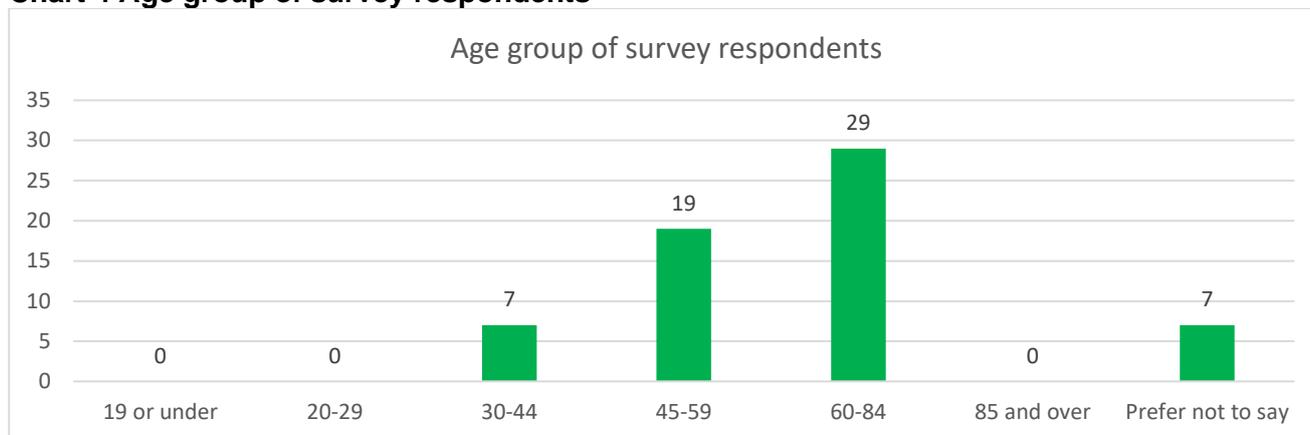


Chart 4 considers the response by age group. The results highlight that very few young people contributed to the consultation. 77% of those who completed the question were aged 45 or older. However this is not a concern since the extensive engagement activity carried out in addition to the survey means that views have been gathered through alternative methods.

**Chart 4 Age group of survey respondents**

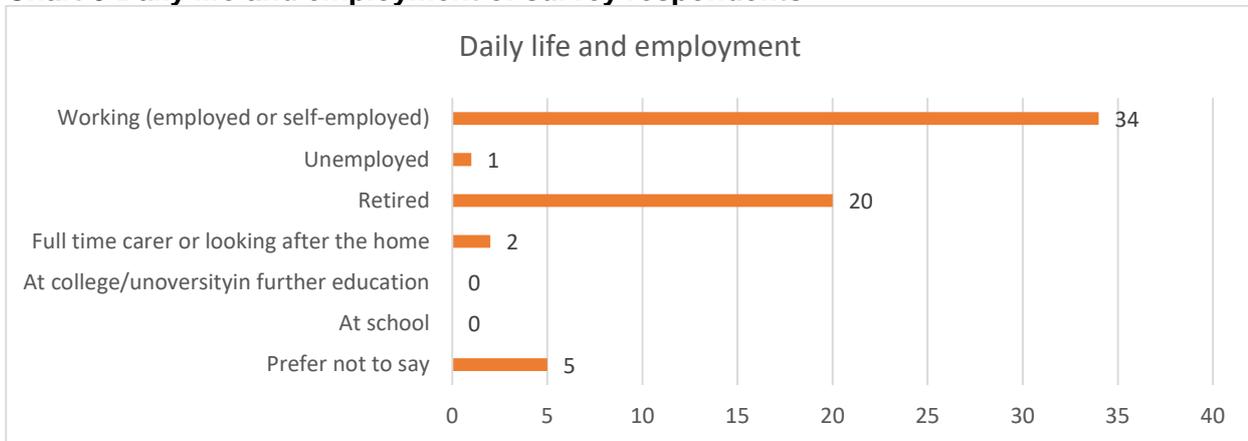


Questions were also asked about ethnic background and whether English is a first language. There is a recognition that there may be barriers to participating if English is not your first language and that responses should represent the make up of the wider population. No-one indicated that English was not their first language and 82% were of White British, Irish or Welsh backgrounds. 9% were from other ethnic backgrounds. This is probably reflective of the wider population and obtaining views from people with different backgrounds is very important and encouraged. Other questions were also included to check representation of the wider community. When asked about long-standing illness or disability, 76% of the survey respondents did not have a long-standing illness or disability that limits their daily activity, 16% do, and 8% preferred not to say. Input from members of the public with different health and access needs can be very valuable in influencing policy and service design and has resulted in very valuable learning for many of Shropshire Council's consultations.

Chart 5 includes the results obtained when people were asked about their day to day lives and employment. 55% of those who answered the question are working (either employed or self-

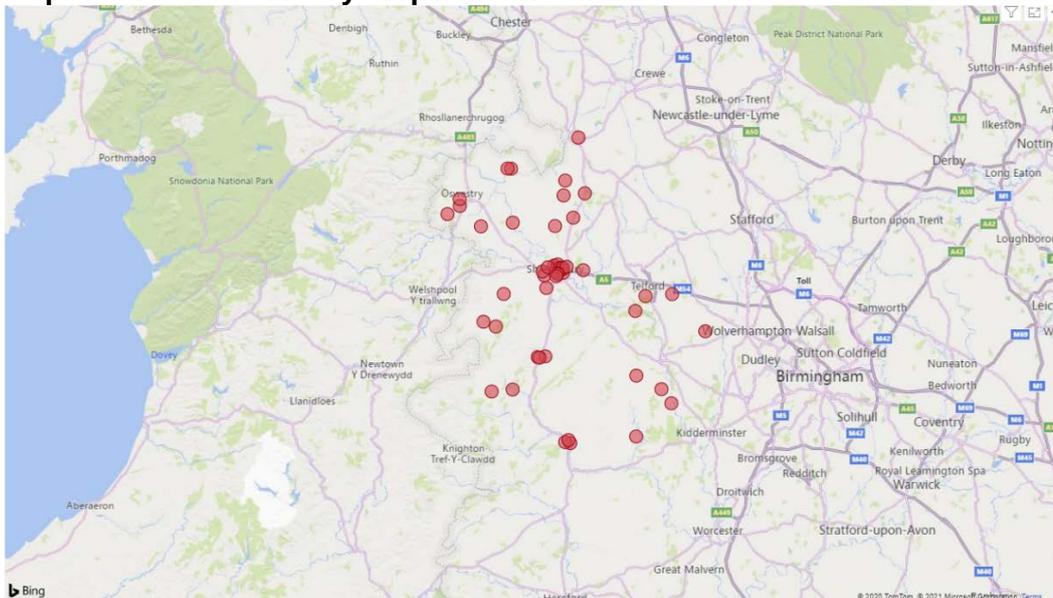
employed), 8% preferred not to say, 3% are full time carers or looking after the home, 2% are unemployed, none of the survey respondents are in education and 32% are retired. The results reflect the age groups above and, with the exception of young people and children, do include people able to represent different lifestyles and experiences.

**Chart 5 Daily life and employment of survey respondents**



Survey respondents were also asked about their location within Shropshire to ensure the feedback was representative of communities across the whole county. Map 1 displays the information provided by 60 of the survey respondents. There is one location not shown on the map (a response from Edinburgh). Overall responses were spread across the county and representative of the whole of Shropshire and slightly beyond.

**Map 1 Location of survey respondents**



In order to further support work to ensure feedback is representative of people living in Shropshire, survey respondents were asked ‘If you have any comments on diversity, equality or social impact that you would like us to consider in the work to deliver the Cultural Strategy, please provide your feedback below. There were 4 important issues raised within the comments provided:

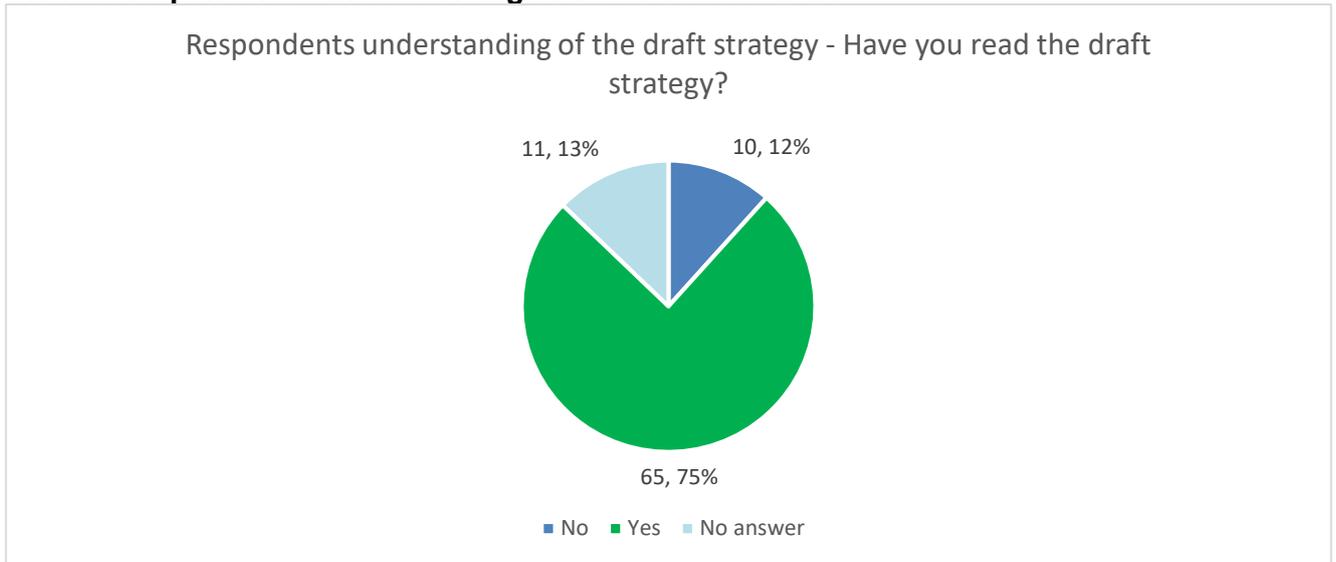
- The importance of accessible consultations and not relying too heavily on pdfs online.
- The importance of considering the needs of older people and older people with special educational needs.
- The link to transport and rurality (understanding that people without a car need suitable access).
- The link to the issue of loneliness, and the Government’s response to combating loneliness.

The next section of the report considers the feedback provided on the draft Strategy document.

### 3. Consultation Feedback

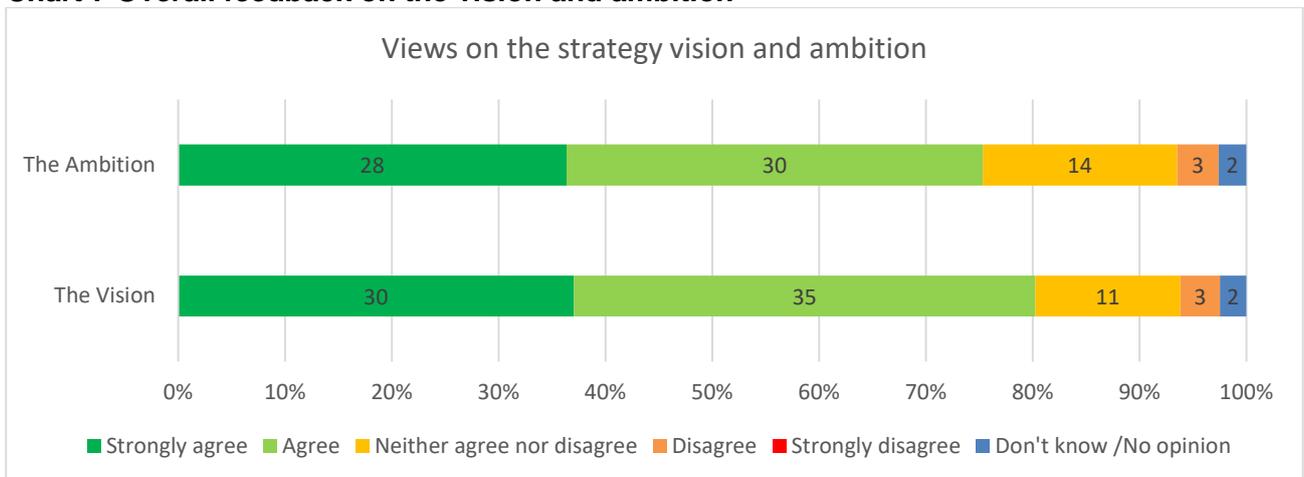
The first main question survey respondents were asked, was whether they have read the draft strategy document (see chart 6). A good number of survey respondents had read through the draft before providing comments. Only 10 of the 87 survey respondents had not read the document and 11 provided no answer (suggesting that they may also not have read the document). So, of all survey respondents 75% were able to make very well-informed comments having read and considered the document. It is anticipated that all 12 written responses were based on a very good understanding of the draft strategy document, since many were very comprehensive and detailed in nature.

**Chart 6 Respondents' understanding of the draft document.**



The survey asked for feedback on the draft strategy's vision and ambition. Chart 7 below shows that, overall, the feedback was positive. 75% of the survey respondents strongly agree or agree with the draft vision and 67% strongly agree or agree with the draft ambition. A significant proportion have no opinion or don't know. None of the respondents strongly disagree with either the vision or ambition but 3% disagree with both.

**Chart 7 Overall feedback on the vision and ambition**



Survey respondents were asked to provide comments on the vision and ambition, particularly if they disagreed with them. There were 24 comments in total. Extracts and examples are included below under main headings to illustrate the points made.

## Survey comments: Draft vision and ambition

### Approach

- *I think the volunteer sector is over-used and there must be more about setting up work positions and apprenticeships. Great ideas but it seems to be on the cheap. The transport to these diverse venues has not been solved.*
- *I am not sure whether support means actual money or just goodwill with no investment of the taxpayers' money. Clare Featherstone's appendix on concerning Social Inclusion is the most positive because it actually says it will promote 'work placements and apprenticeships'. Hooray. I have a real problem with volunteering as a replacement for paying people to do work.*
- *I agree with much of this - however - would suggest that the cultural offer is not predicated on its economic benefit but for the fact that it does good to all whether it is financially viable or not - economic impact and money is a by-product of a rich cultural environment not a direct consequence Also the lack of archaeological value within the documents negates the rich and varied past of the county*
- *I think the vision underplays the importance of being an 'audience' - lives are definitely enhanced by experiencing great art as well as creating it. It's impossible to achieve many of the ambitions of the strategy, particularly about nurturing careers in the arts as part of the economy if people don't pay to engage with performances, exhibitions etc.*

### Measurement, detail and implementation

- *It's hard to see what is measurable in the vision. There are a lot buzz words and jazzy photos. As a Shifnal resident I read it thinking what has this got to do with me? Yet again we are out on a limb- how are you trying to engage with ALL Shropshire residents?*
- *I'm the importance will be in the details.*
- *I think the strategy is just empty word in a nice-looking document, there is no action plan, there are no figures put against anything.*
- *It's all very well to say 'our ambition is' anyone can say that, there is no mention at all of what you are going to do about it. We all know how important culture is, nothing has changed, but clearly you do not have the means to fund it but feel you need to look as if you are doing something about it. The amount of money spent on rounds of consultations would have been better spent supporting people who are already providing the culture you are after.*
- *It's very vague - it all sounds lovely, but ultimately this feels like a lot of marketing flannel. The 'how we will measure this' section sounds very much about numbers of visitors and surveys, not necessarily how the arts and culture will actually be supported. Ultimately, the arts need investment in order to thrive, to reach everyone and to generate broader income. There doesn't seem to be much of that mentioned on here... it seems very focused on support in kind. For example - 'Encourage cultural diversity through providing opportunities for more communities and communities-of-interest' - how will you do that? What opportunities? Without some level of specifics, this is fairly meaningless as a statement. I'm aware that this is a draft, but the actual level of commitment seems fairly low bar the one mention of investment in local cultural hubs, with no definition of what these might be.*

### Ambition

- *Given the figures seem to focus on council run properties mostly, the vision of inspiring more people doesn't set a real goal – through population growth this vision could already be met, or simply through counting non-council run properties. It could be more ambitious.*
- *I think the document is not ambitious enough. 1. there is a huge wealth of untapped expertise and experience in Shropshire in relation to the environmental changes that need to take place. 2. linking projects such as Restoring Shropshire's Verges, Marches community land trust & the Steppingstones project to sustainable food initiatives, local producers and tourism could be built on.*
- *I don't think the vision is far reaching enough, it is really disappointing. There is so much talent in Shropshire, you only need to allow it to shine. Of course, the old and young should have access to it. And minority groups should have access to it. Culture & Tourism should be joined in regards to marketing. That is the minimum we should expect.*

### Environment and climate change

- *Reduction of impact on the environment, as well as adapting to change, should become inherent in culture.*
- *I do not understand what is meant by 'climate and environmental change mitigation' and therefore cannot see whether cultural venues and activities are capable of leading the way on it.*

### Requests for change and perceived gaps

- *I am disappointed on the lack of reference to play and indeed sport in the strategy, play is an integral part of the strategy for your community.*
- *.... children are not fully represented in the vision or the ambition through their right to optimal development through play, arts and culture. The importance of play and recreation in the life of every child..... Involvement in a community's cultural life is an important element of children's sense of belonging. Children inherit and experience the cultural and artistic life of their family, community and society, and through that process, they discover and forge their own sense of identity and, in turn, contribute to the stimulation and sustainability of cultural life and traditional arts.....Children are also at the forefront in using digital platforms and virtual worlds to establish new means of communication and social networks, through which different cultural environments and artistic forms are being forged. Participation in cultural and artistic activities are necessary for building children's understanding, not only of their own culture, but other cultures, as it provides opportunities to broaden their horizons and learn from other cultural and artistic traditions, thus contributing towards mutual understanding and appreciation of diversity.*

### Presentation

- *Visuals need to reflect women /young women better in being part of the delivery of the vision /ambition - imagery is too passive (needlework!) and NO female representation in the digital /tech section!!*
- *The strategy is beautifully presented, and reasonably easy to follow. Comprehension would be improved if the size of the text was larger and the number of words per page, per paragraph and per sentence were reduced. Ask yourself if it's easy to understand what is meant in each sentence on the first time of reading. This is the definition of plain English. There are some excellent inspiring sentences. But in some cases, the meaning isn't clear and is hidden in high sounding waffle. It's visually inspiring - the page about what we mean by culture is excellent. The document is very close to being an inspiring read, but the words need more work.*

### Equality and access

- *Access to facilities across the county - travel is an issue which is not improving. This has to be integrated.*
- *Not sure they have thought about delivering culture outside large towns. How do you ensure all are included? One size does not fit all.*
- *It will be easier for larger towns with BIDs to fund the organisation and staging of cultural events. Some supplementary help will be needed by smaller towns, possibly working together. The challenge for towns, like Church Stretton, with a preponderance of older residents is how to involve younger people and promote intergeneration / cultural activity.*

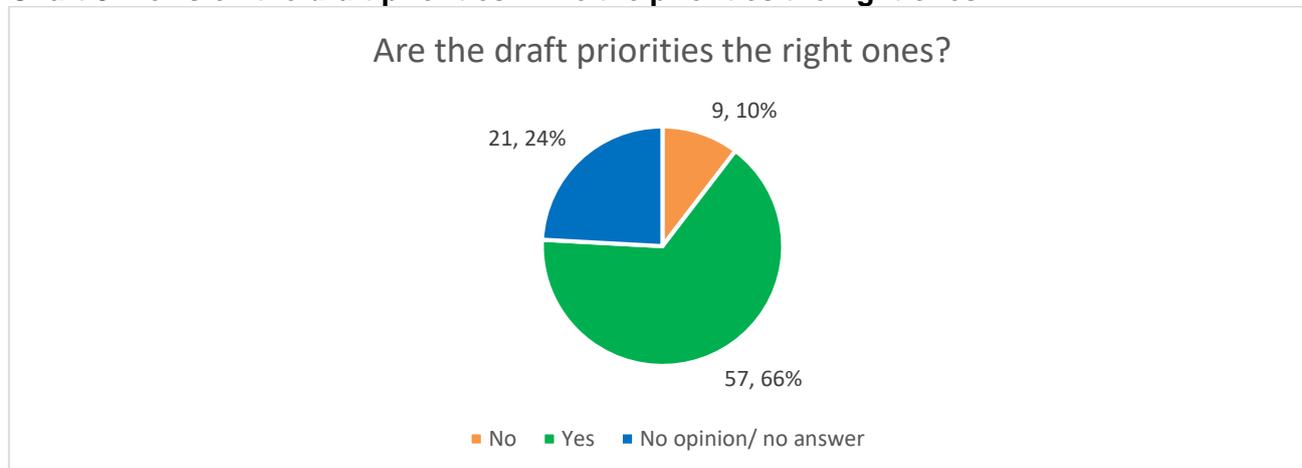
### General comments

- *The ambition and vision are just forms of words combined to sound good and reflect current views. I've seen lots of "visions" and have never seen any be fully realised. The renovation of pride hill gives a good indication of how the vision and ambition doesn't really align with the reality.*
- *Seems very short-sighted.*
- *Shropshire needs to retain its essence but embrace the new and dynamic.*

Many of these comments were reflected again within other survey question responses.

The survey asked for feedback on the draft priorities contained within the strategy. When asked 'Overall, do you think these priorities are the right ones?' 10% of survey respondents (9 people) answered 'no', 66% (57 people) answered 'yes', and the remainder (24%) did not give an opinion at all. The results are displayed in Chart 8.

**Chart 8 Views on the draft priorities – Are the priorities the right ones?**



Overall agreement

- *But don't agree with the order listed above. Enjoy should be top of the list.*
- *I broadly agree but what's missing for me is the sense that 'ownership' of and 'pride' in our county's culture are in themselves the most powerful motivations to participation. You can provide all the above but unless our communities feel great about being part of their own culture, the outcomes feel a little 'tick-box'.*

Additions and other priorities

- *I might add 'Celebrate' to the list, because taking joy in the culture and heritage of Shropshire is what makes all of this worthwhile, and why so many people enjoy living here...Add "Attracting inward investment".*
- *There is no reference to play and indeed sport in the strategy, play should be an integral part of the strategy for the community.*
- *There is no reference to parks, playgrounds, play sufficiency, cycling routes, inclusion and accessibility in these priorities*
- *While I do not disagree with the above, it would be good to include 'play' within the priorities.*
- *Sustainability during difficult times also. With the pandemic more low-key but inclusive events.*
- *Nurture is not just focused on climate and landscape, there is also a need to nurture talent in people, young and old alike.*
- *Although the county is a rich and important rural economy and so although areas have outstanding natural beauty, they also have a deep rooted meaning of place and history. You cannot preserve and enhance one without investing in the other.*
- *Yes, but you're missing a crucial one - Invest. Without investment, these things aren't possible. Investment in culture pays dividends, but there doesn't seem much of that mentioned in here. Where's the actual investment in existing talent, in nurturing new talent? How will you ensure young people can access 'clear pathways into the cultural sector' - whatever that actually means, jobs/opportunities/training? Some of the language used in this is fairly corporate...*
- *Shouldn't there be something about inclusivity - "benefit for all isn't" enough and supposing a shared cultural ambition suggests we all start and (want to) end at the same place ...diversity and inclusion require a dynamic cultural economy and community ...open to difference. Shared ambition? Too closed!*

### Suggestions for implementing the priorities

- *The right priorities but there is a lack of referencing to how increasing the number of users is going to be supported to allow the 'enhancement' for future generations. It is without expenditure and employment.*
- *However, better marketing of Shropshire's cultural offer to visitors also needs to be a priority.*
- *More attention should be given to improving accessibility and engagement by those groups who are 'hard to reach' and have low participation including those suffering a degree and socio-economic deprivation."*
- *"Authentic experiences are key to Shropshire and we believe the Flaxmill Maltings will be part of that. The independent thinkers and engineers who built and designed the Mill are very much to be celebrated. Their reach goes beyond Shropshire and they deserve a wider recognition beyond Thomas Telford.*

### Explanations and further information

- *The meaning of some of the headings and the text that describes them is bringing down the overall impact and value of the priorities 'Live' for example - what has harnessing the 'power of places' to do with living? - Nurture should address the decline in wildlife - what is the meaning of 'independent' in Explore? - digital development often takes the place of physical access. The idea behind the presentation is let down by the words on the page - this weakens the impact and meaning.*
- *It doesn't actually explain what the culture is. They are high level borderline esoteric concepts that are just words to the average person on the street. I don't know after reading them what they want to actually achieve.*

### Concerns

- *Flannel.*
- *As in my 1st answer empty words*
- *It has to be a partnership, but the rainbow hopes mentioned above have to be backed up with very strong leadership and plans about how to invigorate the local population.*
- *In principal the priorities are good, but I am really unconvinced you mean it. The hypocrisy here is unbelievable. You are giving planning to build houses in front of our 'distinctive place' (Oswestry Hillfort) which doesn't feel like 'harnessing the power'. Shropshire's 'high-quality landscapes' are probably fine, but the rest of Shropshire is a decaying 18th Century landscape filled with monocultures which are marginalising flora and fauna. That's where we need to be 'nurturing' with biodiversity through organic farming. Digital development would be good if we had reliable internet. Improving physical and intellectual access does not tackle isolation. Much digital influence in fact enhances social isolation. Do we have a 'shared cultural ambition'? I'd like to know what it is.*
- *I am concerned at the core members of the working group do not include any creative representations from those individuals/organisations who have been left over the past few years to develop alternative cultural offers and events outside of the formal cultural framework. The group represented seems a very safe option and will not in my view bring forward new creative and disruptive ideas. I would recommend a sub stakeholder group of representatives from pubs/clubs/promoters are co-opted to the working group to explore specific support and access to resources to explore the community forum process.*

The survey was also designed to get feedback on key elements of the draft strategy document and the following statements were used to gauge opinion:

- The draft strategy clearly sets out the ambition and strategic priorities of Shropshire's cultural sector for the next 10 years.
- The draft Strategy represents the range and diversity of cultural activities and services in Shropshire
- Shropshire's cultural offer is clearly described within the draft strategy.
- The draft strategy defines what we mean by culture in a way local people and visitors can understand

- The cross-cutting themes help to highlight the issues that will be important considerations throughout the strategy’s implementation.
- The draft strategy effectively sets out the objectives and commitments for each priority.
- The strategy explains the partnership approach and which organisations will take a leading role in implementation.
- The evidence base, upon which the strategy is based, is robust (see Appendices 4 and 5 for more information).

Chart 9 is used to presents the results. For each statement, survey respondents were asked to choose one of the following options: strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, strongly disagree or don’t know. As Chart 9 highlights, most of the feedback was very positive. Of those who answered the question, 77% strongly agreed or agreed that the draft strategy clearly sets out the ambition and strategic priorities of Shropshire’s cultural sector for the next 10 years. This was the most positive response of all the statements considered. The second highest level of agreement was for the statement ‘The draft strategy defines what we mean by culture in a way local people and visitors can understand’ (69% strongly agreed or agreed and 16% disagreed or strongly disagreed).

The lowest level of agreement was for the statement ‘The evidence base, upon which the strategy is based, is robust’ (48% strongly agreed or agreed). Levels of disagreement were low (10% disagreed or strongly disagreed), many did not have an opinion (42%).

The highest level of disagreement was for the statement ‘The draft Strategy represents the range and diversity of cultural activities and services in Shropshire’. 22% disagreed or strongly disagreed. There was also some concern displayed against the statement ‘The draft strategy effectively sets out the objectives and commitments for each priority’. 19% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Feedback was similar across the other statements with between 58% and 62% strongly agreeing or agreeing and between 13% and 16% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing.

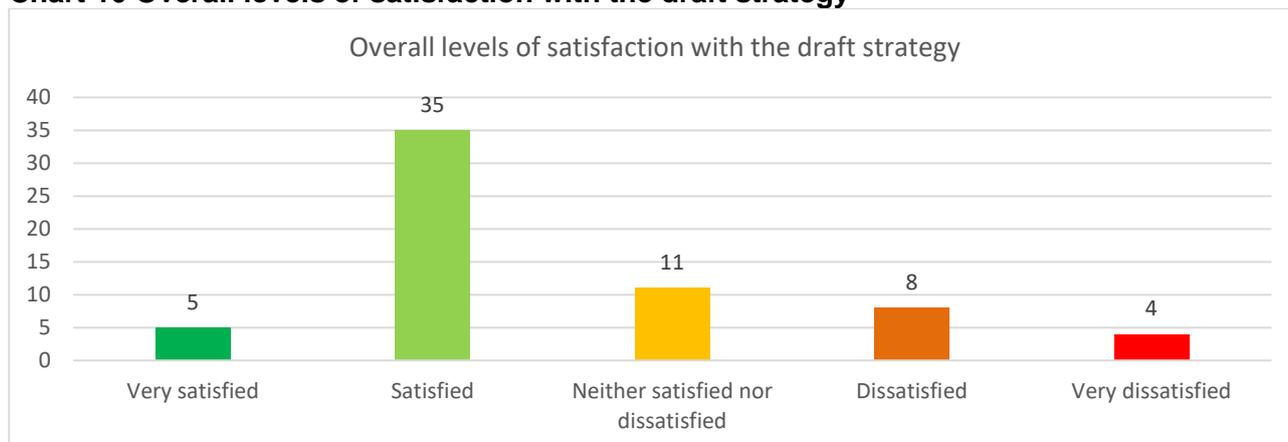
**Chart 9 Feedback on the draft strategy contents**



To understand overall opinion, the survey included the question: ‘Overall how satisfied do you feel with the contents of the draft Strategy?’. The results, shown in Chart 10, reflect the responses to previous questions and most people indicated that they were either very satisfied or satisfied with the draft strategy (63%). 19% were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the draft strategy and 17% were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. It is positive to see more satisfaction but important to understand more about the areas of dissatisfaction. The following sections look more closely at the

comments written within the open common boxes within the survey and at the detailed written consultation responses.

**Chart 10 Overall levels of satisfaction with the draft strategy**



## 4. Concerns

There were 21 concerns highlighted within the survey feedback and more expressed within the 12 written consultation responses. All feedback has been combined and merged to highlight common themes and areas that may form a focus for the next phase of work.

### Geographical coverage

- *There is a need to at least name the Market towns and some of the images of them would be visible. There is a lot of focus on Shrewsbury. If joined up working and marketing is to be a reality then those communities need to be represented, many of them will have little to offer, some of them will have a lot but they are nowhere pulled together e.g. in my town Whitchurch - not everyone knows about the directory nor would use it so there is a need for some paper offering or support for the preparation of such. Also the blended working we have and the big arts groups in the county like Arts ALive etc. have learnt, needs to be somehow embedded in this document*
- *Don't believe it substantially addresses the needs of smaller rural committees.*

### Comments on approach and content

- *Needs to be bolder, more inclusive, cater for green economic development. Shows too many signs of silo thinking. This is the time to do better!*
- *I think if we move in a direct of sustainability as well as the gig economy it will be a balanced future.*
- *Consider making more of the Vision and Ambition (Pages 11 & 12) and making the page more memorable - Relate or cross reference the Priorities and Cross Cutting Themes to the following pages where they are unpacked. Consider dropping the phrase 'cross-cutting themes' and replacing it with something more relatable to the audiences.*
- *The vision and ambition of the strategy are well-expressed and the definition of culture (a sense of self, place and purpose) is good. However, the role of artists and arts organisations, especially the independent arts sector, seems underplayed in comparison to council provision, heritage and the natural environment. This is evident on p8 where only attendance at council venues is noted and the graphic does not mention audiences at independent events across the county. Shropshire has long-standing and nationally recognised cultural organisations which attract diverse audiences and considerable outside investment from the Arts Council and elsewhere, but their influence is hardly mentioned. These organisations pre-date University Centre Shrewsbury by many years and have helped to grow the cultural ecology of Shropshire, including the distinctive mix of tradition and innovation. It would be good to see the strategy*

*acknowledge the impact of the independent arts sector more generously and indicate more clearly how this significant strand will be supported through this strategy.*

- *The evidence base needs to urgently take account of Covid-19 changes and perhaps could focus more on how this challenge will be met.*
- *The draft Strategy is suitably ambitious but, particularly post-pandemic, it underestimates the handicap of poor digital coverage across the county, especially for small creative home-based firms. The current cultural offer is more geared to older generations in Shropshire, so more stimulus is needed for younger generations, as a way of retaining them in county, with employment opportunities that will boost the tourism economy.*
- *Inclusivity and Diversity needs to be FAR more prominent - as an intention - this is a 10-year strategy... and needs to align with the major cultural bodies' clear priorities around these key agendas - ACE, BFI, etc. Whilst SC area currently has a very low ethnicity rate, we are part of the Midlands, part of the UK. In broader terms we shouldn't be complacent about the importance of embracing and celebrating diversity... and recognising the part we all have to play in making a more inclusive society. Most of the visuals reflect local authority venues/projects...so if this strategy is intended to be "owned" by all you REALLY need to reflect that visually. Hardly any images of women /girls....MUST include some in digital /tech section (this is a major national agenda), and in participatory /leading (non passive) mode. Obviously, this can be applied to any protected characteristics grouping, but women are over 50% of the population in the county.....*

#### Inclusion of play

- *There is no reference to play and indeed sport in the strategy, play should be an integral part of the strategy for the community.*
- *Omission of child-friendly neighbourhoods, sufficient play opportunities, accessibility and inclusion. Suggest a Play Strategy which links to the cultural strategy*
- *Play is excluded from the strategy and it has an important role in the lives of communities.*

#### Mistakes and queries

- *In various places the copy reads 'we' are going to do this, 'we' are going to do that: Who is 'we'? The council, the working party, the cultural sector? .... how can we make a difference? This isn't explained.*
- *Concern that the data used comes from The LEP visitor economy strategy, Visit Britain and old county data.*
- *In the aim ... I would like to see the word 'Provide' in place of 'Explore', which is too non-committal.*
- *Typo- Oswestry: Park Hall Farm (missing m).*
- *On Page 2, the word Forward is misspelt and should read Foreword.*
- *When did Pontcycyllte aqueduct become part of Shropshire?*
- *The UNESCO states that the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct and Canal is in North Wales although the site does start at its southern end at Chirk Bank which is in Shropshire, this might be queried. It might be an idea to mention that the Canal is the Llangollen arm of the Shropshire Union.*
- *The mention of just 100 village halls may need to be clarified (the Shropshire RCC states that there are 240 Community Buildings in Shropshire).*

#### Strategy presentation and format

- *Suggestions for improvement - where are the solid commitments? Where's the investment? And just on a very basic level, the whole thing needs a damned good proof, there are a fair few typos along with corporate speak which is off-putting and feels obtuse.*
- *The strategy is beautifully presented, and reasonably easy to follow. Comprehension would be improved if the size of the text was larger and the number of words per page, per paragraph and per sentence were reduced. Ask yourself if it's easy to understand what is meant in each section on the first time of reading. This is the definition of plain English. There are some excellent inspiring statements. But in some cases, the meaning isn't clear and is hidden in high sounding waffle..... It's visually inspiring - the page about what we mean by culture is*

excellent. The document is very close to being an inspiring read, but the words need more work.

- The document kicks off with the word 'unprecedented' now very over-used and a word which makes the copy feel out-of-date before it's even been published!

#### Action and Implementation

- You should have an action plan with dates, costs and who will do it otherwise it is just pretty pictures and empty words.
- The section on commitment is lacking. This is fine and aspirational but there is little on how and who is going to be employed to link the communities, how the access is going to be achieved and how the places recommended to visit are going to be protected.
- The draft strategy feels incredibly general – it doesn't feel Shropshire-specific particularly; yes the main towns are named along with key events and activities all attractively presented in nice graphics, but I feel like if you just replaced them with names of other towns, the bulk of the text would still apply. It feels very much like a series of broad brushstrokes with little commitment – of course what's mentioned all sounds great, but I think a quick move on to explain how this will happen (investment for example) is needed.
- Documents like the draft strategy just make my heart sink sometimes – a lot of general statements with what feels like little action. Shropshire is a glorious county, and I am excited about seeing how the promotion of it develops – I spend my life explaining where Ludlow is, so to put Shropshire on the map will be wonderful.
- ... I am pleased about the approach and the energy and the vision, but I am unsure about the manner of the implementation. I am not happy about the lack of indication about how the strategy is going to be funded and who is going to be employed - and I mean employed at the grass-roots level to implement the strategy and not rely up volunteers for leadership which I think has some drawbacks.

#### General comments and concerns

- It's just words expressed by a council with a track record of failing to deliver.
- In all honesty who do you expect to read a strategy document. Give us a summary, bullet points, headlines and it might get read.
- Vibrant is definitely the wrong word. I'm unconvinced. The whole thing has a hollow ring about. I know the council has no money and no real government support. I know it's being 'run' by a Tory majority that abhors change and has an MP who is totally ineffective. I think this is another valiant effort to say Shropshire Council is doing something but frankly its hands are tied. I've tried to support the County's initiatives by attending meetings etc but it's always more of the same.
- A lot of it seems to be about shuffling things around that already exist rather than making real improvements.

#### Questions

- Is there a county or combination of places that are aspired to; that can be considered as a best practise model? Did the research extend to what was going on outside Shropshire? Outside the UK?
- What are the cultural priorities? How will they be fulfilled? What is the budget to do this work? How will this strategy create new money to deliver the outcomes? What precise outcomes do they hope to deliver? What is new that this strategy will create? The priorities listed could apply to anywhere. How are they specific to Shropshire?

Concerns about the draft document are summarised in the box below.

#### **Concerns – Summary**

The feedback is varied, and it is difficult to summarise, but the themes help to highlight where there are common areas of concern and they include:

- A request to consider how the strategy will be applied throughout the county, benefitting all communities and rural areas, and to avoid focusing too much on Shrewsbury as the main county town.
- The importance of reflecting the needs of all stakeholders (beyond Shropshire Council's direct influence) and adjusting the strategy (or its implementation) to respond to the changes generated by the coronavirus pandemic.
- A small number of consultation respondents (including the local groups and organisations who took the time to prepare detailed written consultation responses) requested that play is included before the final document is considered for approval. This is a message repeated when respondents were asked about gaps and asked about suggestions and ideas.
- There were a small number of comments relating to the detail of the document and specific changes that may be required (e.g. typos and some mistakes). These suggestions are very helpful and will be considered and acted on before a final version of the document is produced.
- Many of the comments highlighted concerns around action and implementation. These concerns were also inferred in some of the more general comments. There is a widespread recognition of the financial challenges local authorities are facing and there appear to be concerns that resources will not be available to allow many of the ambitions, and suggestions from consultation respondents, to be achieved.

## 5. Gaps

When asked within the survey whether there are any gaps within the draft strategy document, 31 people made comments. The comments made within the 12 written consultation responses have also been incorporated and grouped into themes below:

### Cultural Opportunities and Engagement

- *...somehow weaving the local ground up cultural groups.*
- *Does not leave space for others to get involved. Organisation.*
- *The lack of involvement in the working group with both private sector and groups. Tourism BID? The document seems slightly outdated since recent discussions.*
- *We are concerned that we were not asked to participate in the workshops that contributed to the strategy, and indeed, were scarcely aware that it had been published and out for consultation. We feel that we need more information about the development of the strategy and that it needs more publicity generally if the consultation process is to have any value.*

### Inclusion, Diversity and Accessibility

- *You talk about 'driving digital development' and yet to present your strategy you use an online PDF - have you tried navigating it on a phone, or with accessibility issues. If you want to connect present this information in an accessible way.*
- *Diversity as we develop as a county.*
- *Communities that are fit for 8-year olds are also fit for 80-year olds- intergenerational perspective essential. Child friendly community planning.*
- *Culture and Creativity projects provide arts and culture experiences in local settings and encourage participation in the development of new skills. This is done by storytelling, performance (dance, theatre, concerts, etc), creative writing workshops, Arts & Craft activities, exhibitions, poetry readings and spoken word, cookery or food related cultural activity, oral or local history projects. Library staff and Friends groups are skilled at working with local or county wide partners to develop such activities.*
- *There is too little focus on meeting the needs of the whole of Shropshire and on place. There needs to be more recognition that many people cannot easily travel around a county of Shropshire's size, so while you can't have everything everywhere, it is essential to have a decentralised strategy that doesn't simply rely on everything being in Shrewsbury on the basis that everyone can travel to benefit from it.*

- *I do not feel that young people were able to contribute to it, they were not directly represented in the steering group and their experience of culture - in the form of self-initiated activities that do not link in any way to organised venues or organisations - is missing completely.*
- *Although Digital Strategy is mentioned, particular attention should be paid to the County Website & ticketing process. At the moment you can have to telephone (or I have even been asked to send a Stamp Addressed envelope) for ticketing. This really is 35 years out of date and makes the county look very backward from the start. Processes should be very easy for the public from the start.*

#### Consideration of towns and locations

- *It covers broadly the county however we believe it misses out the differences of the county, the difficulties of the geographical size and also the variances between the areas.*
- *I understand that existing facilities are highlighted. I think there is a bias towards south Shropshire and the Shrewsbury area, the north east of the county has a lot of rural/outdoor activity amenity opportunities which could be promoted more- possibly in tandem with the tourism potential of Oswestry.*
- *I feel it doesn't address the yawning gap between what is provided/encouraged/ promoted in Shrewsbury and the Ironbridge area and the paucity of cultural experiences elsewhere in the county, particularly the forgotten market towns.*
- *The scope to have more artisan markets in market towns to increase resident and visitor footfall in small town centres. Local digital networks of creative/artisan firms around market towns are needed to stimulate ideas and collaboration and to maximise the local cultural offer to visitors.*
- *The strategy seems focused on the usual honey pot areas plus Shropshire Council venues and attractions – how will it become more inclusive of the whole county – North Shropshire seems to have little mention.*
- *This vision and its delivery plan will need to be rolled out across this rural county and not centred in Shrewsbury alone. There are other sectors that need to be addressed such as transport which is currently poor, especially in the evenings across the county. This also has to work with reducing the use of the car and our carbon footprint.*

#### Climate change and environment

- *A greater emphasis in the role of culture in response to climate change and the loss of nature and wildlife. Both are massively significant. Also - the focus on Covid 19, although hugely important and influential now, will quickly date the document and make it seem less relevant in future years. If in future years we are still in trouble with Covid 19, the focus on its impact in 1 year may also affect how the document is viewed.*
- *The stumbling block throughout is how access to these varied and beautiful places is going to be facilitated. Surely, given the climate change commitment not more cars on the road and enlarging parking spaces. Where is the reference to increasing local transport and the use of electric buses - small and more frequent - which can be picked up from designated centres? The reference to the employment of people to do these wonderful supportive things is lacking.*

#### Investment and Resources

- *Money.*
- *The funding plan!!!! The employment of young people to support this plan - the employment of such people will bring much needed young people into our community and have taxpayers contributing. I trust the SCC is protecting these cultural places from exploitation and excessive commercial intrusion. For instance, I see no value in promoting the Iron Age Fort which is unique and beautiful and a place I take all of our out of county visitors IF the commercial interests of urban building are permitted to impinge on the place you wish to promote. Another instance is the use of Nesscliffe - it is overused by horse riders and mountain bikers in that they score the delicate environment with unsanctioned paths; again what is the point of promoting a beauty spot if it is already being wrecked because the SCCF does not employ sufficient people to protect the area.*
- *Investment.*

- *There must be recognition that actioning such an ambitious vision will require paid employment and some capital spend on venues.*
- *There also needs to be more information/consideration of resources, I realise that local authorities simply do not have and are unlikely to have 'spare' financial resources to invest in arts and culture over the next few years, so there probably needs to be greater honesty about what funding can be brought to bear by different partners.*
- *While being ambitious in many respects the strategy offers little in terms of identifiable finance or staffing resource to promote, manage and deliver its objectives. The strategy is clear on the vital importance of the cultural resource in delivering its corporate aims and objectives across a wide range of Council functions. Yet fails to identify any concomitant resources."*
- *Where is the investment coming from for the 'Will's'?*

#### Volunteering and involvement of the voluntary sector

- *Too much reliance on volunteers.*
- *I'm pleased that volunteering gets a good mention, and can suggest a number of references you should include to update and reinforce the evidence presented about 1) Volunteer demographics and 2) volunteering and wellbeing: Heritage Volunteering Group have conducted a number of sector specific surveys - including one on volunteer responses to reopening museums during the pandemic - and a pre-pandemic pulse survey that is referenced in a DCMS white paper about heritage sector recovery; available towards the bottom of the page here: <http://www.heritagevolunteeringgroup.org.uk/about/> Imperial War Museum North and Manchester Museums concluded a ground-breaking project called IF (Inspiring Futures) Volunteering for Wellbeing, which provided clinical evidence that volunteering in museums was good for mental health. More details here: <https://www.iwm.org.uk/volunteer/programmes/volunteering-for-wellbeing>*
- *As a charity with many volunteers, we support the focus on opportunities for volunteering, work placements and apprenticeships as well as the training programmes for volunteers. It makes sense to combine forces within charities to access training which for many might be too expensive to buy in. The sector depends on this for quality and continuity and needs the council's full support to enable and access this. We suggest that rather than just counting the number of volunteers in the framework, there is also a focus on involvement and quality of experience, and the access for young people to volunteering.*
- *There are 8 Men's Sheds in Shropshire most members of The U.K. Men's Shed Association. They are meeting the needs of socially isolated older men (though not exclusively men). Members gather together in a workshop setting to make Friends and 'things' for themselves and the wider community. Some sheds are starting to be involved in Social Prescribing. They could do with more support from the Strategy.*
- *Friends groups are recognised in the cultural strategy as an important resource for implementing this strategy. Friends groups require a range of skills and expertise, including registering as a charity, managing finances, running events, fund raising and marketing and communications. We were lucky in that we had people within our community who had the skills and expertise to help us form a Friends group. However, one cannot assume this will be the true for all local communities. We believe the most effective way to support Friends groups to be successful is to enable them to support each other. This could be done by creating a Friends network, through which Friends groups can share their experiences, including what worked well as well as solutions found for problems others might face.*

#### Play

- *Wem Town Council is fully supportive of the Shropshire Playing Fields association's response relating to the inclusion of Play and its importance to the Strategy.*
- *Inclusion of play.*
- *Shropshire Playing Fields Association strongly believe that play should be utilised fully in the production of the Shropshire Cultural Strategy 2021-2031 towards social intervention for the positive benefit of individuals, families, communities, cultures and from generation to generation, helping to create social cohesiveness, social bonding, social transmission and through it positive learning and evolution.*

- *We believe that play is the 'engine' that provides the foundation from which culture can prosper, culture being the vehicle the activities through which play can travel, individuals being the drivers who choose which vehicles to drive, where to drive, when to drive and who with.*

### Socio-economic change

- *Fails to consider the effects of Covid. Old fashioned notion of culture only. Concessions to tech, not seen as a gamechanger. Underdeveloped sense of culture for young people. No consideration of black swan events, Covid being one, 5G and 6G another, ageing population another, potential for universal basic income, four-day work weeks, working from home, impact of Brexit on tourism, etc. Within 10 years all these things could change how we see culture, but not one seems to be mentioned. This view of culture is looking backwards 10 years for improvements, not forwards.*
- *Prior to the Covid 19 pandemic, we were running regular activities and events of educational cultural interest, including drama events, poetry workshops, Winter Talks, author evenings, quiz evenings - as well as supporting library staff in running events for children such as puppet shows, storytelling and craft workshops. We are now planning activities for 2021, but this will depend on whatever Covid19 restrictions are in place.*

### Heritage and Geology

- *There is also no mention of the huge capital investment at Shrewsbury Flaxmill & Maltings where Historic England are spending millions investing in improving that site, which they anticipate will radiate outwards overtime, gentrifying the whole strip of Shrewsbury from the station to the Flaxmill's site. This would be hugely significant for the city. What can that mean for the County?*
- *"We support the importance of industrial heritage and would welcome a further engagement in developing this perspective in the on-going work. In fact, we were disappointed to not be acknowledged as one of the main industrial heritage assets in Shropshire, and would expect to be included, especially given our opening of a larger visitor attraction by Spring 2022. We have already made connections with Coleham Pumping Station and Ironbridge Gorge. We are members of the West Midlands Industrial Heritage Group and the European Route for Industrial Heritage. Shrewsbury Museum has hitherto been contracted to manage our education programme which has comprised programmes examining life as an apprentice and STEM based workshops examining model-based power and drive mechanisms.*
- *Shropshire's BIG strength is it being the only county to have 2 World Heritage Sites – this is amazing! A cultural-tourism-heritage-economic strong point which should be dynamically celebrated way more than at present (see Mayflower400 below). The significance of these sites is underplayed in the strategy.*
- *Archaeological heritage and sense of Shropshire deep history and rural economy.*
- *Although geology of Shropshire is mentioned (just once) in the 'The Cultural Sector in Shropshire: Key Metrics section of Appendix 4' ("...and more varied geology than anywhere else in Britain."), much more emphasis should be made of the global importance of the geology of the area. Murchison, Sedgwick and Lapworth, carried out a great deal of work in the County and Welsh Marches leading to the development of the stratigraphical column which includes Shropshire place names that are known globally and used by geologists worldwide.*

### Education and learning

- *Education. Culture comes through education. I would like to see this getting into schools, but in secondary schools creativity is being marginalised and local history is ignored due to National Curriculum demands. None of your aspirations will come to fruition if future generations have no notion of what culture is.*
- *Reading projects to support the wider culture strategy, develop skills and stimulate imaginations. Libraries encourage people to read for pleasure, support literacy and create excitement about reading through reading groups, events, workshops and activities that draw on a wide range of text and digital resources.*
- *We support the focus on families and school programmes, and like many other organisations, have built this in as part of our activities. This in turn, will help address health & wellbeing*

issues. May we suggest that a baseline will be set not just on how many engage with culture and outdoor, but also how often? And in general, we would welcome the figures to be based on more up to date data and from areas that are not just council controlled.

#### Other gaps and comments

- *This area should be recognised as a potential for growth and engagement throughout the region and we would welcome the Strategy to support this.*
- *Engagement with creative tech companies: our work with [name removed] in sound and light has offered many people new cultural experiences. There is an opportunity for Shropshire to lead in this exciting new venture, which could also be linked to training and work placements. We suggest that this is strengthened and brought together with the other focus points mentioned.*
- *Health & wellbeing is an agenda on which we are already working with partners such as Energize, the Shropshire Cycle Hub and The Hive and through our neighbourhood walks. May we strongly suggest that mental health through (performance) art is recognised as a viable activity in delivering on this agenda?*
- *We wonder if culture is seen as cafes and restaurants, whether it should not also include pubs, art and craft shops. They are after all instrumental in the viability of a town and county and influence the appeal to tourists on the same level as cafes.*
- *There is no mention of food, which seems an omission. Ludlow is a foodie mecca – Ludlow Food Festival, Ludlow Food Centre, a multitude of wonderful independent food shops. These should be celebrated! Food is cultural, food generates revenue, healthy independent shops help local high streets thrive, which all feeds into the cultural-tourism-economic strengths of a place.*
- *I also think you can talk about tourism more openly... it's only mentioned a handful of times.*
- *See my comments above about the independent arts and culture sector.*
- *Aspiration, vision.*
- *Anything factual to show how, when and what will happen.*

The gaps mentioned within the consultation responses are summarised below:

#### **Gaps – Summary**

There were some common themes within the comments received through the consultation. They include the following:

- Engagement was a common theme. Although considerable pre-consultation engagement was carried out, there is some suggestion that some stakeholders may not have been involved.
- There was a common theme within many comments about the importance of inclusion and diversity. Some comments relate specifically to a need to review the strategy document and others seem to focus on the implementation phase of work and strategy delivery.
- As mentioned under the previous section, some concerns have been raised concerning the application of the strategy across the whole county and focusing on the needs of all market towns and rural communities.
- Although included within the strategy, there are some suggestions that a greater emphasis is required to set out how the cultural strategy and its implementation can positively respond to the challenges of climate change.
- Investment and action planning were a strong theme throughout (as highlighted above) may consultation respondents highlighted that they are keen to understand if investment will be available to implement the strategy and achieve its vision and ambitions. There is a call for allocation of resources and employment.
- Although there seems to be a positive response to the inclusion of the voluntary and community sector and volunteering within the strategy, some warn of an over-reliance on volunteers and highlight a need for resources and support.
- Play is identified as a gap with requests to include this in the strategy and its implementation.
- There is a recognition that changes brought about by Covid may generate a need for review.

- There are requests to place greater emphasis on Shropshire's heritage and historic and natural assets.
- The feedback included comments on the importance of education and learning for children and adults as part of cultural strategy design and delivery. The role of schools and libraries were highlighted.

It is possible that some of the comments are more relevant for the action taken as a result of the strategy, rather than the overarching strategy itself (particularly if they are detailed and action focused). The extract shown in this report are helpful to illustrate the main points, but the feedback must also be considered in context and in full before changes can be made and future work planned.

## 6. Suggestions

Survey respondents were asked if they had any suggestions or ideas they would like to share before the strategy is finalised. There were 23 suggestions included within the survey and others referred to within the detailed written consultation responses. The feedback has been collated and presented under some common themes below:

### Heritage and history

- *The Shropshire Hills are globally recognised as the birthplace of modern geology but there is no museum/ heritage centre in Church Stretton to promote this legacy. The designation of a grant-finding co-ordinator would increase the generation of such funding, save time and avoid duplication.*
- *A wider democratic voice for archaeological heritage and the rural economy. That investment in culture is the end goal - rather than cultural can be used to provide an economic impact - this can happen but should not preclude investment - not all culture will create a profit - but broad investment allows for a deeper and wider societal measure which will in the long run produce a stronger and more resilient county.*
- *Activities based on famous Salopians fits in well with the Darwin festival, which we have contributed to, and we would hope that famous Salopians would also highlight the women of Shropshire who made a difference. This is something that we ourselves are also very much aware of.*
- *Old skills some of which are delivered at Acton Scott should be embraced and vital in rural areas are those of hedge laying and ditching.*
- *The Shropshire Hills are globally recognised as the birthplace of modern geology but there is no museum/ heritage centre in Church Stretton to promote this legacy.*

### Innovation

- *Innovations -promoting local cultural events to help them grow as they will feed into the county's cultural strategy and tourism and growth etc.*
- *The innovation section is weak. Innovation is a visionary mindset, not just IT or VR headsets of the Industrial Revolution! The innovation section lacks ambition. Look at Plymouth for a great example of a relatively small city reinventing itself culturally due to ambition and vision.*
- *I would like the partnership to consider the here and now in the culture sector. The Contemporary. I believe that History, education and the environment are covered. But there seems to be under representation of contemporary culture or artists. This is what is missing and what will inspire the young.*
- *Be more forward reaching digitally. Work hard, really hard to include ALL of Shropshire or you are going to leave communities behind.*
- *Information & Digital Projects provide access to computers and support people to develop skills to make use this technology. We have learnt through the Covid pandemic that the internet can provide a wealth of access to cultural activity as well as being essential to support school children's learning. Yet some people still have no access to the internet from home and others do not have the skills needed to make use of this as a resource.*

### Partnerships and engagement

- *Co-production of Tools to help children and young people get involved in placemaking.*
- *We are surprised and disappointed that although within the cultural offer there are 3,600 miles of Rights of Way, there is no mention of the Shropshire Way. A Long-Distance Path is a great asset to any County, particularly Shropshire with its diverse landscapes in addition to the AONB. The Shropshire Way Association Charitable Trust is about to become a Registered Charity.... We have worked in partnership with Shropshire Council to achieve the restoration of the route as a Long-Distance Path. We are also working with Ramblers Groups, P3 groups, the Discovery Centre and hospitality venues to welcome walkers to the County. We see many opportunities for continuing our partnerships.*
- *Shropshire Wildlife Trust.*
- *You should consider adding IGMT to your partnership list.*
- *"We support events and festivals being key to the visitor economy and our programming will tie in with this as an event space. We are also keen to offer space for other partners to engage on common interests. The Cultural Strategy could be seen to offer more guidance in overarching themes to further interest tourists from other counties / countries, or to further develop already existing strongly recognised points of cultural interest.*
- *The Local Authority need to support the strategy, but ownership needs to be much wider. The partners are all Shropshire Council departments: The strategy needs to have wider representation if it is to succeed. For example, Herefordshire Strategy led onto Herefordshire Cultural Partnership which has wide public, private, 3rd sector representation and is now drawing £1000's into the county. In Hereford the importance of public /private sector collaboration to lever in external funds is very clear and there has been a hard drive to bring business into the cultural mix.*
- *Health & Well Being projects provide activities that support healthy living, combat loneliness, and reduce health-related socio-economic inequalities. This is done through support groups run in partnership with other agencies, self-help activities, social prescribing activities and by offering resources for activities such as healthy living, yoga, t'ai chi and hobbies that support wellbeing.*
- *Whilst the Shropshire Playing Fields Association had attended a meeting in the very early stages, it was disappointing that it had not continued to play a bigger part as work on the strategy developed.*
- *At the end of the document, SALC would have liked to have seen involved working in general with the regional links in addition to the regional "heavyweight" organisations - e.g. City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra and The Royal Academy of Dance and that it hoped they would be involved as the Strategy's implementation went forward.*
- *Embedding of the value of direct participation in and promotion of creativity and cultural activities for school- and college-age people, with increased funding in Arts education – for example the playing of musical instruments.*
- *We are particularly pleased to see the development of volunteering and understanding of its social and economic benefits in the strategy. Volunteering is much more than the activities and services it creates it is a valuable activity in itself. I am pleased that it is a cross cutting theme and hope that this means volunteering in the wider context and not just volunteering at cultural activities.*
- *The most successful Arts projects are reliant on a diverse range of partnerships. It is good to see that Tourism, which includes hospitality, visitor stays etc. are linked to the offer of all kinds of Arts availability. All the market towns have each got something distinctive to offer to the mix and attraction to visitors to the county.*
- *All of the local communities need to participate in shaping the final strategy and feel they have a stake its delivery widely across the county.*

### Diversity and Inclusion

- *Have an Inclusion and Diversity lead involved!*
- *Work harder in the market towns, perhaps through creating links between them to strengthen and diversify the cultural offering. Don't only concentrate on areas where there is already stuff in place.*

- *We are also aware that varied culture and lifestyles are derived not just from prominent individuals but also by people living in somewhat diverse communities in both town and rural areas. It is important to recognise all contributory factors including ethnicity, age, gender, mobility, employment and income.*
- *Accessibility /inclusion /diversity is very underplayed in the strategy, which feels rather old-fashioned. For example, there is only one person of colour depicted in the document and the photo caption says it was taken in 2004! Is this really the most recent photograph of a non-white person? If so, that is embarrassing, especially in the current moment of BLM and the debate around Shrewsbury Museum collections, Lord Clive statue, etc.*
- *How can culture be used to widen representation across all communities? This is key, this is hugely important: the strategy should aim to resonate with everyone. In terms of accessibility, is the strategy available in other formats, with bigger font size and so on? Have dASH been consulted on its' accessibility?*
- *Inclusion of art-forms and culture important to younger as well as older generations.*
- *The bottom up approach was not mentioned. An example was given of local amateur dramatics that assisted children in developing confidence and creating skills.*
- *Strategies for intergenerational engagement in creative and cultural activities.*
- *The current cultural offer is more geared to older generations in Shropshire, so more stimulus is needed for younger generations, as a way of retaining them in county, with employment opportunities that will boost the tourism economy. There needs to be a stronger emphasis working with schools towards an intergenerational engagement; breaking through the ageism barriers. Culture, Arts are for everyone and more often than we think can be enjoyed by different generations together.*

### Environment

- *Work to improve the environmental impact and sustainability of our culture sector is imperative and I would welcome joint ventures for venues in particular to work together across Shropshire in a combined and cost-effective effort to achieve the high standards we wish to meet. In isolation this body of work seems daunting, applying for funding in this area could potentially be achieved in a consortium bid for multiples?*
- *There is a great opportunity within the context of the Cultural Strategy not only to maintain and improve the existing PROW network but also to aspire more broadly to extending the network. Wales is currently considering the possibility of upgrading footpaths to bridleways where practical and we think this is something that Shropshire should consider as well.*
- *An enhanced PROW network would be good for equestrian tourism as well as for walking and cycling tourism. Horse and rider B&Bs are sought after for long distance routes of which there are several in Shropshire (Jack Mytton Way, Blue Remembered Hills, Humphrey Kynaston Way) and farm and equestrian centre holidays are popular in areas where there is good riding such as on Long Mynd. These activities could be developed in other parts of the county if the PROW network were improved. It should also not be forgotten that equestrians contribute a considerable amount to the overall economy. The latest 2019 figures estimate the economic value of the nonracing GB equestrian sector at £4.7 billion.*

### Play

- *...play could be integrated with culture in our local communities.... being to integrate cycling through the use of play and enterprise zones across Shropshire, in order to increase levels of physical activity in society and affect positive use of our rural countryside and outdoor public spaces.....play due to its innate qualities, underpins all cultural activities, therefore would be of critical importance in any future cultural strategy that Shropshire Council might at that time be proposing.*
- *...play can, and should, be applied to any of the broad fields mentioned in the draft cultural strategy document, including sport, recreation, leisure, physical activity, physical education, art, craft, music, drama, amongst others.*
- *The inclusion of play in the strategy*
- *The Group is fully supportive of the SPFA response relating to the inclusion of Play and its importance to the Strategy.*

## Libraries

- *I want the role of the libraries to be acknowledged, almost a million visits each year, and I want more funding directed to these vital cultural centres. They are a source of information for all of the other cultural offerings and are under-valued and definitely under financed. I am unimpressed by the rave reviews about the 'cultural heritage' while at the same time planning allows so many of them to be suffer from encroachment which imperils their continued survival. How are you going to inform and educate people of sensitive use of these cultural treasures? NO mention of relationship with schools. Shropshire County Council obviously wants more visitors to the county but so many of the areas are already under stress from visitors and their misuse re litter and mountain biking and negative impact on wildlife and farm animals but nothing in place, i.e. people employed, to make sure the usage is positive.*
- *We are surprised that there was little recognition of libraries in the document, since these provide a vital resource for the development of creativity and the promotion of culture across the county. Libraries sit at the heart of communities and often provide the first point of access to cultural activity. They reach audiences from all backgrounds and of all ages, and provide meeting places, maker spaces, and focal points for creative and cultural activity within local communities. Libraries are located across the county, and within an easy travel distance for most Shropshire residents. They are therefore well placed to bring cultural activities to local communities, often in partnership with other agencies and groups.*

## Sectors, Services and Employment

- *Greater support for self-employed people working in the creative industries and arts sectors. More opportunities and work to make the sector more resilient.*
- *Employ people at all levels. I really like the management plan but unless there is a team paid and organised to deliver, utilising the existing structures and paying people to set up programmes which will enhance and utilise the glories of the Shropshire cultural.*
- *Development of outdoors opportunities (especially walking linked to history) in NE Shropshire, linked with tourism in Oswestry.*
- *It was noted that Tourism was a key focus and acknowledged that in the rural County of Shropshire tourism is important to the economy.*
- *I would like to see a council-based officer responsible for 'Filming Shropshire'. They would have a full co-ordinating role across the county for all the requirements of location filming. This would be fully funded by charging the film companies for the service. It needs to have council authority because of the need for road closures, community engagement, tourism booking of accommodation, liaison and recommendation of locations, local facilities and suppliers.*
- *On Page 20, I am particularly interested to see how you will promote the local food and drink producers – and if we can work with you on this.*
- *A strategy for developing county-wide networks of artisanal and creative firms and increasing numbers of artisanal markets in centres of small towns.*
- *We would like to see scope to have more artisan markets in market towns to increase resident and visitor footfall in small town centres. Also, local digital networks of creative/artisan firms around market towns are needed to stimulate ideas and collaboration and to maximise the local cultural offer to visitors.*

## Investment and action planning

- *How can such an ambitious strategy be funded? The need for adequate venues. The designation of a facilitator and grant-finding co-ordinator would increase the generation of such funding, save time and avoid duplication.*
- *Investment! How will this work? I know everyone's cash-strapped at the moment and this feels lovely and optimistic as a strategy, but more firm commitments would be great. 'Seek out partnerships' that sounds great - you've already got some, but what benefits do they bring? What have you already achieved together? I sort of feel that this is a chance to sing a bit about what things you've already done and how this can be built on rather than starting from a standing position. Be more proud!*
- *It would be good to see actionable points that are more defined - I feel these are rather broad at present.*

- *It's clear that culture and heritage costs money, and often, with hard to spot or intangible returns on investment. What I hope this strategy is saying is that the cost of culture is a worthwhile investment based on the broad range of positive outcomes from participation, and that meeting the objectives set out in the strategy should come before obvious or significant financial gain. The Council's role in providing cultural access is a duty, not a business opportunity, and I have to trust that - when faced with decisions on cuts or savings - they will bear this in mind.*
- *Overall, the document needs more graphics and greater substance! We need to see more evidence of HOW actions are going to be delivered. What the outcomes will be is not unpacked enough. For example, the NPOs are named, but what do they do in terms of culture individually and collectively, what does this mean economically /socially /culturally and how does their work reinforce what the Council want to deliver, or need to achieve with the strategy?*
- *To be a more honest document, more strategic and less of a tourism pamphlet the strategy should explore Shropshire's SWOT – and have an action plan for the areas we want to grow and develop.*
- *The support – local and central – which will be available in the short term and for small scale projects to help communities work through their own ARTS PLAN and obtain funding from a range of sources.*
- *The strategy for identifying and recruiting appropriate commercial partners in development of Arts and cultural hubs.*
- *Recognition that for the long-term strategy of and Arts Hub to be realised, investment must be made at local community level in*
  - *salaried fund-raisers with experience of success in grant applications – this is essential in the light of the huge nationwide demand likely for grants from National Lottery, Arts Council &c, post-COVID-19*
  - *salaried managers, specialist trained and ancillary staff for cultural venues (for example, financial officers, volunteer co-ordinators, box-office staff)*
  - *buildings (to provide appropriate, sustainable and accessible venues).*

#### Other suggestions

- *The counties strengths should be pushed more, more hype, more clarity around what the Council can do to think innovatively /creatively to draw visitors to these places and to carry the news of Shropshire's assets outwards. The strategy requires more vision rather than just stating facts.*
- *The strategy needs to consider Shropshire in the context of the character of neighbouring areas (especially Telford & Wrekin), and the wider (Marches) sub-region, and the unique 'offer' these can provide in complimenting and enhancing the Shropshire cultural 'offer'.*
- *We feel that Shropshire Council have a much clearer grasp of what rural and community mean than what culture means. This shows in the way that the Community and Rural strategy reads much better and is a more confident document than the Cultural Strategy, which spends pages explaining what culture means – surely that should be clear in the vision and the evidence of actions without needing to define the word? We query why the Community and Rural Strategy is held within a separate document? In the Cultural Strategy urban areas are defined as 2% of the county's geographic locations. Therefore, 'rural' culture needs be way more integrated in the cultural strategy.*
- *The strategy is good at identifying assets but not at defining how they will be used to further the aims of cultural growth. How will these assets be used to generate income, develop tourism, invest in communities, support economic growth? For example, the strategy states that Shropshire has 150+ Town Halls. Great, but what does that mean? What benefit does that bring? How will they be maintained? Who might use them? Why should we care? How will they be upheld as vibrant community spaces in the future?*
- *The document should not be read in isolation as the appendices contained the substances behind the statements and one-liners and it was therefore important to circulate the Strategy in full. The Portfolio Holder might wish to emphasize this in her Foreword to make it clear that much work had been undertaken.*

- *Importance of public transport to, from and between cultural hubs and venues including in the evening and at weekends.*
- *The strategy for identifying, supporting and developing the cultural strengths and initiatives of individual Shropshire towns and dovetailing these cross-county.*

The comments and extracts are summarised below:

### **Suggestions – Summary**

The suggestions made, reflect the concerns and gaps highlighted previously and illustrate that the consultation feedback was very constructive. When consultation respondents highlighted a concern, or something they perceive to be a gap, they took steps to suggest a way forward and clarify how that concern could be addressed. There must be some caution applied in summarising the suggestions into themes, because the detail of each suggestion is important.

- Consultation responses included suggestions that some of Shropshire's historical sites, and heritage assets should be emphasised and included.
- It was suggested that the theme on innovation requires further attention, and that there are more opportunities to look at how cultural facilities and provision has recently and is changing (e.g. through use of digital infrastructure and services).
- Partnerships and engagement were a recurring theme, but the suggestions made, specifically suggested further engagement with groups within the community or individual organisations and forums.
- Diversity and inclusion formed a theme within the suggestions made. Some people referred to intergenerational issues as part of the cultural strategy and others referred more specifically to the need to consider the strategy and how it reflects and considers the diversity of people and their cultural needs and considerations. There was a suggestion that the presentation of the strategy document (e.g. images) could be more diverse.
- Strong linkages were made within the suggestions between the cultural strategy and the county's outdoors assets such as rights of way. The importance of environmental impact of the culture sector was also highlighted.
- A suggestion to integrate play into the cultural strategy was made and supported by more than one consultation respondent (at least 3 or 4 local groups and organisations raised this within their comments).
- Libraries and their role in the cultural strategy was highlighted. Specific suggestions and activities were provided (some feature in the extracts and examples above).
- Some suggestions referred to cultural sub-sectors including tourism, artisanal and creative producers and food and drink.
- The importance of investment and action planning was a common theme throughout the feedback provided and the suggestions include specific examples of where investment may be required. Examples range from local level investment to employment opportunities, and commercial and venue/building investments.

## **7. Positive feedback**

The consultation feedback included some very positive comments on the draft document. Within the survey results there were 24 comments to highlight what people like best about the draft document. More comments have also been extracted from the 12 written consultation responses and quotes/comments are presented below:

### Development of the strategy

- *Someone thinks there should be one for the cultural sector.*
- *That there is one! I have seen a great development in the social and cultural offering in Shropshire, especially the events around Shrewsbury. However, the county has still suffered loss of everyday places where people can connect - village shops, Post Offices, Pubs, Churches. Hence loneliness is a massive issue for the elderly.*

- *The recognition there is a requirement to support the cultural heritage of the Shropshire and fund its protection as well as its development.*
- *Putting culture at the heart of a strategy which will also drive economic stability.*
- *The idea that a strategy is necessary.*
- *We welcome Shropshire Council's Culture Strategy for 2021 to 2031. The Strategy recognises the importance of culture and leisure activities for both the quality of life and the economic resilience of communities, especially given the importance of tourism for employment and the local economy.*
- *Members of the Forum welcome the ambition of the Council's Proposed Cultural Strategy for Shropshire for the next ten years. That this has been put together during the global social upheaval of the COVID-19 Corona virus epidemic shows a will and optimism which are heartening. In particular, we welcome the acknowledgement that engagement in creative and cultural activities (1) is not only enriching but essential to human health - especially psychological health - and well-being, and (2) can prevent the erosion of health and well-being which is caused by chronic loneliness.*

#### Ambition and vision

- *Its vision, its aims, its elements -the pillars.*
- *It is a bold ambition and good to see Arts and Culture broadly and clearly described as complementary to health, wellbeing, quality of life and economy and as an inspiration in communities.*
- *I like all the intentions. I particularly like the notion of a 'shared cultural ambition' but you are not telling me what it is.*

#### Partnership approach, inclusion and engagement

- *Inclusion.*
- *The cohesive nature of the document and the fact it is stronger because of multi-voice stakeholder groups*
- *The acknowledgement of the work being done at the grass roots level. The clear thinking of the respondents to the surveys. It is clear what exists in Shropshire culturally and where the strengths lie in terms of provision and organizations. That part was rather inspiring.*
- *Active, healthy and connected aspiration. Communities that are fit for 8-year olds are also fit for 80-year olds- intergenerational perspective essential*
- *Forum members are also delighted that inclusivity, diversity and accessibility will be fundamental to the County strategy.*

#### Reference to workspace

- *The inclusion of 'Explore affordable, flexible co-working space in key locations' on page 18, as I consider this crucial to the growth of a vibrant resident artist base, from which much of the strategy-desired creative provision will spring.*
- *Affordable and flexible co-working spaces in repurposed heritage buildings: our partner and site owner Historic England is offering four floors for commercial use via Towler Shaw Roberts. This exemplary regeneration project is giving historic buildings a new lease of life which is to be celebrated. Where possible, given the site constraints, we aim to make full use of the Dye House as a pop-up venue for creative workspace and community use. The site will become a major centre for events, exhibitions, learning, social and recreational activities and eventually a new residential community of 120 households.*

#### References to environment and climate change

- *The aim of linking the cultural strategy to the conservation and climate change mitigation agendas is good and essential.*
- *The broad explanation of culture and the inclusion of the incredible, powerful natural environment.*
- *We are pleased that Shropshire Council is determined to address the challenge of bringing culture for all in a largely rural county.*

- *We are delighted to see that the importance of Shropshire's Outdoors is recognised throughout the draft Strategy.*
- *We applaud the linking of cultural strategy to conservation of natural resources and mitigation of climate change.*

#### Presentation

- *The Group agreed the Strategy was well written, easy and enjoyable to read and it was good to see that it covered the many rural areas as well as urban areas.*
- *The presentation of the strategy is particularly good - makes it easier to read by a wider range of people which I hope will go a long way to making it embedded in every-day practice by partnership organisations.*
- *The visual presentation is good.*
- *Pretty pictures.*

#### Other feedback

- *The Strategy covered a broad range of activities which was welcomed.*
- *The definition of culture, the presentation of the document, the quality and variety of images used - it's mostly stunning (with the exception of the pages 11 & 12). I scrolled down looking for what don't I like. As it's not here, I'm adding my own I'm not sure about the front cover - I like the idea behind it, but it's hard to understand what the image is saying (until you look for its description).*
- *Its attempt to define culture.*
- *Pretty concise - nice visuals though not the right ones!! Messaging is clear...though not quite there yet....*
- *It is fairly comprehensive.*
- *It is well-written with a broad overall vision and unarguable policy themes. It will be good to see the implementation plan to understand how these will be achieved in practice. I especially welcome p30 where there are proposals for new infrastructure to help take forward the policy priorities. The development of a Cultural Trust seems a strong idea at a time when local authority provision is so stretched. However, I suggest this should include direct representatives of the business, community and independent sector as well as strategic roles (as in the current Cultural Partnership).*
- *I love the ambition. I love the sound of it all, but it is just all very vague in terms of actual solid commitments. I think it needs examples of what you might do, just to make it clearer for everyone reading this - I'm sure your crack team who've worked on this all have really clear ideas but that's missing on this actual draft. I love the idea of properly branding and marketing for tourism - it's something that's been sorely lacking for a long time, ever since Tim King left the council's employment. There needs to be better support and co-ordination for tourism across the board. But again, the commitment is vague, 'encourage joint promotion of activities' sounds lovely but actually hiring a tourism officer or team would surely be even better. Without anyone co-ordinating it from within the council (and I appreciate this is a big job), this feels too vague.*
- *We agree that well-coordinated, supported and funded Arts and Culture enterprises will be of direct, sustainable economic benefit to our communities.*
- *We are pleased that the contribution of - and benefits to - volunteers in the provision of Arts, culture, health and well-being for their community is emphasised. However, it is important that the proposal recognises that the national increase in retirement age, and increasing, above-average age of the Shropshire population, mean that the pool of retiree volunteers is likely to diminish.*

It is important to highlight that many of the consultation respondents who expressed satisfaction with the draft strategy did not necessarily go on to provide detailed responses. It is also important to note that many of those with concerns also had positive feedback. As with other responses there were some common themes within the positive comments made, these are summarised in the following box.

### Positive Feedback – Summary

There were some clear themes within the positive comments made:

- Consultation respondents welcomed the production of the strategy. Many were pleased to see a cultural strategy for Shropshire and the commitment to its implementation.
- There were some very positive comments relating to the strategy's ambition and vision.
- The partnership approach and commitment to engagement and inclusion is clearly valued. Many consultation respondents understood the engagement and partnership activity that has been already carried out and valued the commitment to ongoing partnerships.
- This was only mentioned by a few people but there was positive feedback for the mention of workspaces and a recognition of the needs of those who work in the cultural sector in Shropshire.
- Many consultation respondents welcomed the commitment to considering climate change within the strategy and the focus on understanding and minimising environmental impact on the cultural sector and its activities in Shropshire.
- Although a few suggestions were made in relation to presentation, there was an overall appreciation of the way the strategy had been presented and its visual impact.

## 8. Other comments

The survey feedback included 10 other comments and a few more comments have been included from the written responses provided. Some of these were difficult to categorise under the main headings of concerns, gaps, suggestions and positive feedback above. Overall the comments seem to fall into two main themes; a) comments about specific communities or locations in Shropshire, and b) more strategic and countywide comments.

### Other comments - Communities and Shropshire locations

- *The Friends of the Flaxmill Maltings have welcomed the opportunity to feedback thoughts around the draft cultural strategy, which we have read with great interest. We look forward to engaging with partners and stakeholders and would welcome an opportunity to be involved in the next steps through the Forum. From our expected opening of the full visitor attraction in Spring 2022 we will be playing a big part in the town, county and regional visitor economy and the cultural offer.*
- *Church Stretton has a rich cultural life, but it lacks a venue for cultural events (other than village, church or school halls), particularly since it has lost access to the concert hall at Concord College. Is there scope to include such a facility in a future community hub?*
- *Oswestry Station is clearly a building that should be used for cultural activity. It is a shame that it is virtually empty and still owned by the unitary Council.*
- *Shrewsbury Big Town Plan – is this initiative happening, confirmed, or pending? What will it mean for culture and when will it be delivered?*
- *We in Church Stretton would welcome the opportunity to become a hub for the Arts and culture in South Shropshire, being part of the co-ordinating of neighbouring towns of Craven Arms, Much Wenlock, Bishops Castle, Ludlow and Bridgnorth..... There is a will to build on experience to date, a will to 'start small' with the hope that, as social norms and the economy recover from the effects of the COVID-19 epidemic, momentum will gather. Success on small scale may attract investment. It would certainly be possible to develop a literary or a poetry festival here.*

### Other comments – Strategy and countywide

- *Please don't feel I'm being negative, lots of good work has gone into this but I think, as with almost every council I've worked with, the language in places is a bit too corporate for a public-facing document. I think there are lots of bold and brilliant things in here and challenges too, but clarity is king, not just in terms of aims and aspirations but also in how you will deliver this.*
- *There are some excellent inspiring statements. But in some cases, the meaning isn't clear and is hidden in high sounding waffle. Consider making more of the Vision and Ambition (Pages 11 & 12) and making the page more memorable - Relate or cross reference the Priorities and Cross Cutting Themes to the following pages where they are unpacked. Consider dropping the*

*phrase 'cross-cutting themes' and replacing it with something more relatable to the audiences. It's visually inspiring - the page about what we mean by culture is excellent. The document is very close to being an inspiring read, but the words need more work. Please include a stronger focus on climate change and loss of nature and wildlife - culture is our way of life, these two things are vital to a 'Vibrant Shropshire'.*

- *The encouragement of the development of economic activity related to the distinctiveness of the area should go beyond that of simply encouraging the visitor economy to itself becoming core to local economic activity (i.e. development and promotion of distinctly 'Shropshire' products/services).*
- *We have been asked to comment by a concerned group who is appalled at the omission of play from this cultural strategy. Play Scotland is happy to provide more detailed responses and good examples if requested*
- *I support this strategy. I want it to be more innovative and solve the transport issue.*
- *Please consider the archaeological and historical aspect of culture - museums and heritage attractions are part of this but are limited in scope and impact.*
- *...we notice with interest that Shropshire Council are signed up to Britain's Leading Edge – a collaboration of rural upper-tier local authority areas without large cities who are reframing the story of the contribution that rural regions can make to a sustainable national economy in light of Brexit. We'd love to hear more about this initiative, what it means for the county and how the collaboration impacts on arts and heritage.*
- *...there has to be a lively interaction between all 3 sectors: Economy, Health and the Arts. Each of these three needs to be robust and inter-connected for happier and more participative communities. That will be challenging in this particular period of time following the virus pandemic. All are necessary and need to be flourishing. The Arts in all its forms can raise the aspiration of society and enhance economy and improve health and wellbeing.*

## 9. Overall findings

The consultation results suggest there is overall support for the draft Cultural Strategy 'Vibrant Shropshire, Independent by Nature'. Of the 87 survey respondents 63% strongly agree or agree with the draft strategy, with higher proportions agreeing with the priorities (66%) and ambition (67%). The 12 written consultation responses also highlight overall agreement with the development of the strategy and contain suggestions for further development. It is also important to note the considerable engagement work carried out alongside the consultation survey.

There were some common issues highlighted by consultation respondents and these have been highlighted as themes for further attention. These themes include support for an approach that focuses on diversity and inclusion, engagement, consideration of sustainability and climate change and a recognition of Shropshire's environmental and historical assets and heritage. Suggestions include a request to consider the inclusion of play, the role of libraries and education, the needs of different cultural sub sectors, and a more robust consideration of the impact of the coronavirus pandemic and opportunities for innovation. There are also calls for the needs of the whole county (all market towns and rural areas) to be considered and a strong emphasis on the importance of action planning and investment in order to implement the ambitions set out within the draft document.

The next phase of work will involve, not only considering how some of these overall themes can be addressed, but also considering some of the consultation responses in detail to better understand the proposals and suggestions they contain and whether they can be achieved. Once a final version of the strategy has been developed, using the consultation feedback, it will be formally approved by decision makers (elected representatives) and made public.

Note: A short summary report is also available.

