



**REPORT of  
DIRECTOR OF STRATEGY AND IMPROVEMENT**

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to  
**STRATEGY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE**  
11 JUNE 2026

**CULTURE AND HERITAGE STRATEGY**

**1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 To seek Member approval to create a Culture and Heritage Strategy (the Strategy) for the Maldon District drawing on information set out at **APPENDIX 1**.
- 1.2 **APPENDIX 1** consolidates 15 briefing papers which will inform a public-facing Culture and Heritage Strategy for Maldon District, shaped by research, community surveys, and collaboration with local organisations.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- (i) That a Culture and Heritage Strategy for the Maldon District be approved, informed from the briefing papers at **APPENDIX 1**;
- (ii) That subject to approval of (i) above, Members acknowledge work will now commence to develop a costed Action Plan to be brought back to the relevant Committee later this calendar year, proposed to be September 2026.

**3. SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES**

- 3.1 The Council's Corporate Plan 2025-2028 priority 'investing in our district' states the Council's commitment to develop a Culture and Heritage Strategy. This would aim to delivery investment in culture, improving our offering to residents, businesses and visitors. Following a comprehensive procurement process, Cultural Engine CIC were appointed to support the development and delivery of the strategy. Since the appointment, extensive work has been carried out, with stakeholders and a continuing focus on outreach and engagement across the district as well as developing key elements of complementary strategy and projects.
- 3.2 The formation of the strategy has been a process of active engagement and research, running workshops, attending meetings and events (Parish forums, Annual General Meetings (AGMs) etc.), and proactively initiating collaborations, networks and related strategy. This work has been delivered in-person for a sustained period, and in close collaboration with the Council and many other partners. An online survey was also available. In total, 169 engagement sessions have been carried out, and 171 responses have been received to the online survey.
- 3.3 Events that have been managed by Cultural Engine CIC, and often in partnership with others, include a 'Neighbourhood and Creative Health' Event bringing together many different sectors and presentations from Essex County Council, Mid & South Essex integrated care board, Creative Lives and Maldon & District Community

Voluntary Services (CVS). This is now leading to the formation of an established network and collaboration with Public Health. The first cultural network gathering was hosted along with a similar event for festival/event organisers. The team has also played a key role in supporting the newly formed Saltmarsh Coast Tourism Group (SMCTG), previously the Maldon District Tourism Group, Regenerative Tourism Event in March and are working on related Regenerative Tourism strategy.

- 3.4 Cultural Engine has produced the Expression of Interest that was required to enter the UK Town of Culture bidding process. This was a significant piece of work that offered an opportunity to reflect the importance of key cultural and heritage themes including the Battle of Maldon and explore the unique 'story' of Maldon and the wider district, whilst linking this to national themes.
- 3.5 A comprehensive and dynamic database of activities, spaces, buildings and other important cultural and heritage references has also been compiled to support the strategy and help to inform the process going forward. It is not possible to reference all projects, places, spaces and activities in the main strategy document. Rather there will be a focus on key projects, and issues around future governance and sustainability of what are predominantly grassroots movements and organisation across the district.
- 3.6 The detailed themes set out below have been grouped into a smaller number of broader strategic areas to summarises the main strategy document **APPENDIX 1**. These key areas provide a clearer overview of where future focus, partnership working and investment is needed.
- 3.7 **Governance, Leadership and Community Empowerment:** This area brings together Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), future governance arrangements, and the role of Town and Parish Councils. A consistent theme throughout the Strategy is the need to strengthen local leadership, community resilience and grassroots capacity so that culture, heritage, environment and tourism continue to have a strong voice as Maldon transitions into a new Mid Essex structure.
- 3.8 **Visitor Economy, Place and Regenerative Tourism:** This area includes Regenerative Tourism, Festivals and Events, and the contribution of local hospitality businesses such as pubs and bars. The Strategy highlights the importance of a more coordinated, sustainable visitor economy that supports local businesses, strengthens the Saltmarsh Coast identity, and ensures that tourism contributes positively to communities, heritage, culture and the natural environment.
- 3.9 **Culture, Heritage and Local Identity:** This area brings together Arts and Culture, Heritage and Libraries. The Strategy shows that Maldon District has a strong and distinctive cultural and heritage offer, much of it supported by volunteers, local organisations and community networks. Protecting and developing these services will be important not only for local identity and pride of place, but also for wider regeneration, learning, participation and destination development.
- 3.10 **Health, Wellbeing and Community Participation:** This area includes Health and Wellbeing, Volunteering and the wider role of creative, heritage and environmental participation in strengthening communities. The Strategy identifies clear opportunities to connect creative health, prevention, volunteering and local networks so that participation in culture, heritage and nature supports both individual wellbeing and stronger community infrastructure.
- 3.11 **Environment, Planning and Delivery:** This area brings together Nature and Environment, Planning, and the practical conditions needed to deliver the Strategy

over time. The document highlights the importance of environmental stewardship, planning policy, infrastructure, funding and coordinated delivery mechanisms to ensure that future investment and decision-making support sustainable growth, local distinctiveness and long-term resilience across the district.

- 3.12 From these themes, it is proposed that a costed Action Plan is produced to deliver against the Strategy. Where possible, external funding will also be sought, from sources such as Arts Council England, Public Health, Heritage funding and emerging government initiatives. This Action Plan will be brought back to the relevant Committee for approval later this year, proposed to be September 2026.
- 3.13 The Action Plan will be centred on a partnership approach. Utilising networks and working to empower community action and grassroots, together with partners and Town and Parish Councils. This prepares the networks for LGR and sets out the importance of culture, heritage and environment to the wider economy in the district.
- 3.14 The Action Plan will be a live document, and is intended to develop as related strategy, government policy, LGR and existing projects progress.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

- 4.1 The Maldon District Culture and Heritage Strategy provides a clear and practical framework for protecting and strengthening the district's distinctive cultural, heritage and environmental assets, whilst supporting community wellbeing, regenerative tourism and economic resilience. It reflects extensive engagement, partnership working and evidence gathered across the district, and sets out a strong basis for coordinated action at a time of wider change through LGR. Approval of the Strategy will enable the Council and its partners to build on this momentum, support the production of an Action Plan and position culture and heritage as an important part of Maldon District's future prosperity and identity.

#### **5. IMPACT ON PRIORITIES AS SET OUT IN THE CORPORATE PLAN 2025 - 2028**

##### **5.1 Supporting our communities**

- 5.1.1 The Strategy will support the Council's priority of supporting our communities by recognising the importance of creative health as part of a preventative, community-based approach to wellbeing. Evidence from Arts Council England, NHS England and the National Centre for Creative Health shows that participation in arts, culture, heritage, libraries, volunteering and creative activity in nature can help to reduce loneliness, improve mental wellbeing, support people living with long-term conditions and strengthen social connection and resilience within communities.

##### **5.2 Investing in our District**

- 5.2.1 This Corporate Plan priority clearly identifies the need to develop a culture strategy. The proposed Strategy supports this priority by providing a framework for targeted investment in the district's cultural, heritage and environmental assets, as well as the networks, partnerships and infrastructure needed to sustain them. It helps to identify where future effort and resources should be focused, strengthens the case for external funding and provides a clearer strategic context for regeneration, destination development and community-led activity.

### 5.3 Growing our economy

- 5.3.1 The proposed Strategy supports the Council's priority of growing our economy by recognising the contribution that culture, heritage, visitor activity and the wider environment make to local economic performance. A stronger and more coordinated cultural and heritage offer can help to increase footfall, encourage longer stays, support the hospitality and retail sectors, and strengthen Maldon District's position as a distinctive destination within Essex and the wider region.

### 5.4 Protecting our environment

- 5.4.1 The proposed Strategy supports the Council's priority of protecting our environment by recognising the close relationship between culture, heritage, landscape and the natural environment in shaping Maldon District's identity and quality of place. The Strategy promotes a more joined-up approach to environmental stewardship, encouraging future investment and activity to respect local distinctiveness, protect valued assets and support sustainable use of the district's coast, countryside and green spaces. It also aligns with the principles of regenerative tourism and place-based planning, helping to ensure that cultural and visitor activity contributes positively to biodiversity, local character and the long-term resilience of the environment.

## 6. IMPLICATIONS

- (i) **Impact on Customers** – The Strategy is intended to have a positive impact on residents, visitors, community groups and partner organisations by improving coordination, visibility and access to cultural, heritage and environmental opportunities across the district. Over time, delivery of the Action Plan should help to strengthen participation, local pride, wellbeing and the overall visitor and user experience.
- (ii) **Impact on Equalities** – The Strategy provides an opportunity to improve inclusion and accessibility by encouraging wider participation in culture, heritage and environmental activity across different communities, age groups and geographic areas. Equality considerations will need to continue to inform delivery of the Action Plan to ensure that opportunities are inclusive, accessible and responsive to local need.
- (iii) **Impact on Risk (including Fraud implications)** – There is a risk that, without an agreed strategy, opportunities for coordinated investment, external funding, partnership development and long-term delivery may be missed. There are no direct fraud implications arising from the approval of the Strategy itself; however, any future allocation of funding or commissioning activity will need to be managed in accordance with the Council's financial procedures, procurement requirements and governance arrangements.
- (iv) **Impact on Resources (financial)** – Delivery of a future Action Plan will require a budget to be identified. External funding opportunities will also continue to be explored where available to support delivery, reduce pressure on Council resources and maximise the value of partnership working and investment. The cost of developing the Strategy has been £34,100.
- (v) **Impact on Resources (human)** – Delivery of the Strategy will require ongoing officer coordination, partnership working and programme oversight. The proposed approach is intended to build on existing networks, community

capacity and external collaboration, but delivery will still need to be managed alongside wider service priorities and available staff resource.

- (vi) **Impact on Devolution / Local Government Reorganisation** – The Strategy is particularly timely in the context of devolution and LGR, as it helps to articulate the importance of culture, heritage, tourism, environment and community networks within the district ahead of any future structural change. It also provides a clearer basis for local advocacy, partnership development and future governance discussions to help ensure that these priorities continue to be recognised and supported within a new Mid Essex context.

Background Papers:

[Council 26 March 2026 Culture and Heritage Update Report](#)

[Council 26 March 2026 Culture and Heritage Update Appendix 1](#)

[Council 26 March 2026 Culture and Heritage Update Report Officer Presentation](#)

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