



**Corporate Policy and
Resources Committee**

**Thursday, 13 November
2025**

Subject: Resourcing and Funding Culture

Report by:	Director of Commercial & Operational Services
Contact Officer:	Cara Markham Commercial, Cultural and Leisure Development Manager cara.markham@west-lindsey.gov.uk
Purpose / Summary:	To provide options and a recommendation for ongoing delivery of cultural strategy and programming in West Lindsey.

RECOMMENDATION(S):

Option A – Fully funded and resourced

1. Approval an annual contribution to increase the balance on the Cultural Strategy Reserve to a maximum of £100k, commencing 2026/2027.
2. Approval to recruit an Events Officer to deliver cultural legacy events and the Lincolnshire Show.
3. Approval to add the Cultural Development Manager permanently to the establishment.

IMPLICATIONS

Legal: N/A

(N.B.) Where there are legal implications the report MUST be seen by the MO

Financial :

This report contains three requests for approval:

1. Approval for the Cultural Strategy Reserve to be topped up annually to £100k to deliver the cultural programme.
2. Approval for a new full time permanent post called Events Officer to deliver legacy events.
3. Approval to amend the current Fixed Term post named 'Cultural Development Manager' to permanent.

Cultural Strategy Reserve

The current balance after commitments of the Cultural Strategy Reserve is £61.6k for 2026/2027. Please see table below for more details.

The request is for approval to annually top up the reserve to £100k per annum. Based on the current balance it would require a contribution in 2026/2027 of £38.4k. Each subsequent year would be topped to a maximum of £100k.

Cultural Strategy Reserve	Scale Point 25/26	Contract	Start Date	End Date	2025/26 £	2026/27 £	Total £
Opening Balance on Cultural Strategy Reserve							(250,900)
Cultural Development Manager Approved 17/10/24 CPR FIN/84/25	9c	37hrs FT for 2yrs	01/01/2025	31/12/2026	55,600	43,200	98,800
Festival Approved 17/10/24 CPR FIN/84/25					25,000		25,000
Cultural Events and Activities £65k Approved 11/12/24 CPR FIN/109/25					65,500		65,500
Closing Balance				Total £	146,100	43,200	189,300
Closing Balance on Cultural Strategy Reserve							(61,600)

Cultural Resourcing

There is currently an approved Cultural Development Manager post. The current contract is a full-time fixed term post for 2 years ending December 2026, which is funded from the Cultural Strategy Reserve. The report is requesting approval to make this post permanent and build this into the Medium-Term Financial plan (MTFP).

A request has been made for an additional permanent fulltime Event Officer to be built into the MTFP. This post would be subject to a job evaluation and therefore the band 7 is an estimate. This post is required to deliver legacy events.

There is £20.7k in the budget pressure contingency budget for cultural and leisure officers to cover the shortfall in 2025/26. From 2026/27 there is a further £60k per annum set aside which can be used to offset the 2026/27 costs. For the next three years there will be a shortfall which totals £154.7k. This assumes that the reserve will continue to fund the Cultural Development Managers post until 31/12/26.

Resources costings	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	Total
	£	£	£	£	£	£
Cultural Development Manager - Band 9 Permanent 37hrs	53,500	56,500	59,300	60,800	62,800	292,900
Events officer - New Band 7 - start Oct25 Permanent 37hrs **	22,800	47,700	48,900	50,100	51,800	221,300
Total	76,300	104,200	108,200	110,900	114,600	514,200
Current funding for Cultural Development Manager Band 9 Fixed	(55,600)	(43,200)				(98,800)
Budget Pressure Contingency Budget	(20,700)	(60,000)	(60,000)	(60,000)	(60,000)	(260,700)
Funding required for resources	0	1,000	48,200	50,900	54,600	154,700

* Cultural Development Manager is a Fixed Term post until Dec 2026 funded from Cultural Strategy Reserve FIN/84/21

** Event Officer post has been estimated at the top of band 7

*** All costings include oncosts and an estimated payaward

FIN REF : FIN/80/26/CPR/SSc

Staffing :

The Events Officer role is subject to job evaluation and therefore the band 7 estimate should be considered indicative.

HR REF: HR246-08-27

Equality and Diversity including Human Rights :

The cultural programme is delivered free of charge to the end user and designed to be inclusive, targeting no particular demographics except for those who may face barriers to cultural engagement. All signature events are welcoming and inclusive for both residents and visitors.

Data Protection Implications : N/A

Climate Related Risks and Opportunities: N/A

Section 17 Crime and Disorder Considerations:

Cultural activity will support the delivery of meaningful community engagement, and this has the potential to offer diversionary activities.

Health Implications:

The Council's Corporate Plan 2023-2027 commits to a strategic aim of "reducing health inequalities, promoting healthy lifestyles and improving wellbeing across the district" which will partially be achieved by the Council increasing opportunities for sport, culture and leisure activities across the district. A key outcome of delivering this aim is the provision of a "co-ordinated cultural events and activity programme that increases participation and meets the needs of our people across the district."

Recruitment of an Events Officer and retention of the existing officer will increase capacity to deliver this strategic outcome.

Title and Location of any Background Papers used in the preparation of this report :

Wherever possible please provide a hyperlink to the background paper/s

If a document is confidential and not for public viewing it should not be listed.

Risk Assessment :**Call in and Urgency:****Is the decision one which Rule 14.7 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules apply?**

i.e. is the report exempt from being called in due to urgency (in consultation with C&I chairman)

Yes☐**No**☐**Key Decision:**

A matter which affects two or more wards, or has significant financial implications

Yes☐**No**☐

Executive Summary

This report outlines the resource requirements to sustain and grow the cultural offer in the district.

The report sets out the context of existing resources, established programming and the adopted West Lindsey Cultural Strategy. The cultural programme is explained, with headline costs and indicative engagement figures to illustrate impact, and an example budget of a signature event to show how funds are used.

Ultimately, it is recommended that the cultural strategy is fully resourced with: the cultural reserve annually topped up; Cultural Development Manager role retained and Events Officer recruited to safeguard future delivery.

- 1.1 This paper reviews the cultural events and activities that have taken place in the last 12 months and recommends the use of the Cultural Reserve to support delivery over the next 12 months.
- 1.2 The link below directs Members to the website page for the Cultural Strategy and provides a video link to a year-round summary of the cultural events delivered throughout the term of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.
- 1.3 <https://www.west-lindsey.gov.uk/transport-visitors-markets-leisure/culture-arts-heritage/culture>
- 1.4 To date the delivery has been achieved using the roles detailed below.
 - Commercial, Cultural and Leisure Development Manager
 - Cultural Development Manager – fixed term March 2027
 - Cultural Outreach Officer
- 1.5 The Cultural Development Manager joined the Council in March 2025, to date the Officer has led delivery of GO Festival, a major legacy event in the cultural calendar, plus, membership of the Lincolnshire Place Based Partnership Bid, membership of the East Midlands International Programming Consortium (EMIPC) and begun the networking and researching elements that feed into strategy delivery.
- 1.6 This has included planning an alternative major-funding strategy for 2026-27, due to suspension of new National Portfolio Organisation (core Arts Council England funding) applications. Data collection for mapping and targeted intervention through the Cultural Strategy has begun, with a survey for Parish Councils about their areas and meetings with partner organisations around the district.
- 1.7 The Cultural Outreach Officer post has been active since January 2025 and delivered workshops, market support and vital capacity to Illuminate and GO Festivals. A high volume of workshops, particularly with schools groups, have been arranged by the COO in advance of the festivals and to support other Council projects such as the Canute mosaic and Savoy time capsule for the LUF projects. Simultaneously, the COO has begun the work of creating foundations for community cultural networks by meeting with local cultural providers – and many of these contacts bore fruit through the GO Festival programming.
- 1.8 The capacity of the roles has been compromised by the need to continue delivery of key legacy events without an Events and Marketing Officer. The delivery of GO Festival and subsequent evaluation has taken staff capacity away from delivering the Cultural

Strategy action plan from April to July. The absence of an Events and Marketing Officer has also meant that the cultural team has been more engaged with delivering smaller events, such as Farmers & Craft Markets and the Lincolnshire Show. The temporary absence of a market focussed role has resulted in additional work for the cultural team in maintaining market functions, delivering farmers & craft markets over the summer and delivering Gainsborough Word Fest.

1.9 Operational and programming support for events has also been provided from the Trinity Arts Centre Manager and Technical Manager.

1.10 The Cultural Events and Marketing Officer post was removed from the establishment at the end of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund period, this vacancy now creates a capacity pressure on the remaining cultural staff.

1.11 Since January 2025 the following events have been delivered -

Event	Location	Workshops/ Fringe events	Participants/Attendance main event	Partners
Illuminate	Gainsborough	19	2500	15
Welton Wordfest	Welton	3	c. 60	3
Go Festival	Gainsborough	28	Approx. 3742 (mobiles in Market Place only**)	31*
Trinity on Tour	Gainsborough Richmond Park	NA	75	3
Wolds WordFest	Market Rasen/Caistor/Welton	23	c.370	14
WordFest	Gainsborough	2	1938 + (**618 New)	7
Nature Calling	Wolds/Market Rasen	10	Ends September 2025	10
Live & Local	District wide	NA	5 (1 Jan, 4 April-May)	4

*Includes 10 schools hosting workshops

2. Cultural Outcome Review

2.1 Over the past 18 months there has been an increased number of cultural, heritage and creative programmes running across the district.

- 2.2 There has also been an increase in cultural partners and businesses that are now engaged with the Council's cultural delivery. This includes over 12 schools, 10 heritage sites, 7 voluntary and community sector groups, and 15 businesses. The ambition is to bring all this enthusiasm and collective work together with the development of the West Lindsey Cultural Compact.
- 2.3 Feedback surveys from the legacy events show a strong and positive engagement with all activities provided and delivered. This has been collected through online surveys, social media comments and compliments through the Customer Experience Manager.
- 2.4 The evaluation data from Go Festival 2025 can be found in Appendix 1.
- 2.5 There has been an increased footfall into the Market Place, with data analysis indicating a spike in visitors attending the legacy events, reaching over 2000 impressions.
- 2.6 The Council has worked with numerous organisations and businesses to create activity to suit all ages, abilities and interests through place based cultural activity.

This includes:

- Gainsborough Rotary Club
- Gainsborough Multicultural Group/X Church
- 203 Gainsborough Squadron RAF Cadets
- Laybo's Legacy
- Bearded Fisherman
- Men's Shed
- Local Churches
- Voluntary Centre Services
- Lincolnshire Co-Op
- Lincolnshire YMCA
- Lincolnshire Wolds National Landscape
- Everyone Active
- The Gainsborough Heritage Centre
- Connexions (and through Connexions: Disability Social Network; The Redeemed Christian Church – Nigerian Church Group; Connexion 4 Youth)
- Gainsborough Adventure Playground
- Cherry Chums and Dementia support group
- Caistor Arts & Heritage Centre
- Lincolnshire (and local) Libraries
- Gainsborough Old Hall
- Wrights of Willingham
- Parish and Town Councils

- 2.7 Markets in Gainsborough and Market Rasen have stimulated the local and visitor economy, this has included a Food and Drink Festival in Market Rasen, the Young Trader Market in Gainsborough and supporting Caistor Town Council to adopt the same Young Trader model to diversify their offer.
- 2.8 As set out in the strategy, we aim to build on this community involvement as we develop our networks and working relationships with community cultural organisations.

3. Legacy Events Review – Illuminate, GO Festival, Christmas Lights Festival

- 3.1 The **Illuminate** legacy event has been delivered for 9 years, the event hosts a parade, fire garden in grounds of the Parish Church and projections onto/or in the Gainsborough Old Hall. The event has strong links to schools, with artists and WLDC staff holding lantern making workshops during school time and encouraging students to join the community lantern parade that starts the festival. The total cost for this event was £53,285, with a contribution of £10,000 from Lincolnshire County Council and £1,000 from Gainsborough Town Council.

- 3.2 <https://discovergainsborough.com/illuminate2025gallery/>

- 3.3 The **GO Festival (Revive)** was born out a strong programming relationship with the Arts Council funded, SO Festival based in East Lindsey.

The GO Festival showcases local professional artists, community groups and international artists. The international artists are programmed as part of an East Midlands tour that promotes cultural learning, growth and gives East Midlands residents free access to international cultural talent.

The GO festival provides numerous community workshops before and during the event, including: a variety of sessions across ten schools (in 2025); sustained artistic development for G-Town Dance Crew; drop in session for the migrant community; sessions at day centres and for vulnerable groups in the community; take-home craft kits distributed through a range of partners; a reprisal performance at Vibe Fest (Gainsborough Multicultural Group at X Church); and a variety of creative and wellbeing opportunities to join in with on the day itself.

The Gainsborough Rotary Club supported Go Festival 2025 by hosting a Pedal Car Race derby in the Ship Court car park and a duck hunt with town businesses and retailers. Their volunteers also supported the smooth running of the event through additional stewarding capacity.

The Baltic Mill provided a new venue for additional activity: family yoga, crafts, acoustic singers, poetry and an interactive whale storytelling experience delivered by Talking Birds.

The total cost for this event was £41,372.24 with an Arts Council project grant of £30,000 and a contribution of £3,000 from the Town Council.

GO Festival 2025 has also passported funds to the Vibe Fest to support the Gainsborough Multicultural Group in increasing their local engagement.

3.4 [GO Festival 2025 - Photo Gallery - Discover Gainsborough](#)

3.5 Legacy event budget example

GO Festival 2025		
Artistic spending	£19,622.99	Community workshops, International and local performers, artist commissions e.g. costumes, arts consultants, workshop leaders
Arts costs	£2,486.14	Stage, sound, light, travel etc.
Making the work accessible	£10,707.16	Community and school workshops, building community relationships, community choreography
Marketing & developing audiences	£2,749.17	Photography, banners, programmes, paid social adverts
Overheads	£3,786.78	Health and Safety, operatives, tech support, evaluation
Entertainment	£2,020.00	Zorbing
Total	£41,372.24	

3.6 The **Christmas Lights Festival** is an annual, event that marks the start of the festive period. The event is held in the Gainsborough Market Place and surrounding streets. The event draws visitors from across the district and neighbouring authorities.

This traditional event was previously hosted by the Gainsborough Town Council, and then through a formal contract with Marshall's Yard.

Whilst the Christmas Lights Festival is not a cultural event, it has a strong place in the programme through its legacy and traditional ties with residents.

WLDC continue to work with the Town Council to make this event inclusive and a family friendly, safe and affordable event that engages with all demographics. The Town Council provide the Christmas Tree, Christmas streetlighting and commit £8k to the annual event.

4. District Wide Support

- 4.1 WLDC support organisations, community groups and events through marketing and promotion for those wishing to reach a bigger audience, sell more tickets or grow their engagement.
- 4.2 The Council does this through the West Lindsey social media channels, inclusion into the monthly events newsletter which has 4197 subscribers.
The digital boards in both Gainsborough and Market Rasen are regularly updated to promote events from across the district.
- 4.3 The Council also offers a web page that lists events for free. There are currently over 25 pages of listings stretching to 2026.
The webpage offers a link to an event submission form that can be completed by any organisation wishing to promote their event in the district.

<https://www.west-lindsey.gov.uk/events>

- 4.4 The Council will continue to financially support across the district a range of cultural groups, community organisation and Parish Councils to support the delivery of the cultural strategy.

This financial support has been administered through a range of funding tools.

1. Community Facilities Fund
2. Community Action Fund
3. Councillor Initiative Fund
4. Community Development Fund

5. Cost Of Delivery – Cultural Programme

- 5.1 As a part of the Cultural Strategy delivery, the Cultural Development Manager will seek funding for events and arts development from the Arts Council England projects grants and other appropriate funders. Funding will support cultural activity but not commercial events, such as the Christmas Lights Festival.
- 5.2 The forecasted amount from Gainsborough Town Council for the legacy events for 26/27 is expected as follows -

Go Festival 2026 - £3,000
Christmas Lights Festival 2026 - £8,000
Illuminate 2026 - £1,000

- 5.3 The table below now sets out the required funds to maintain the cultural programme that has been established.

Event/Market	Detail	Base budget required
Go Festival 2026	2nd weekend in June	£25,000
Christmas Lights Festival 2026	3 rd weekend in November	£25,000
Illuminate 2027	3 rd weekend in February	£25,000
Farmers' Market activity	11 Markets 2 nd Saturday of the month	£5,500 (£500 per market)
Footfall events (includes WordFest)	Gainsborough, Market Rasen and Caistor	£8,000
Marketing and Partnership	Promotion across the district for all activities	£6,000
Budget required		£94,500

- 5.4 It is recommended that the Cultural Reserve is reviewed annually and 'topped up' to a minimum of £100k, to ensure there are adequate funds to deliver the cultural programme, alternatively the programme be reduced to reflect the funds available.
- 5.5 Should successful funding bids add to the WLDC budget, the external funding will be used as a priority, protecting the funds in the reserve. For instance, £9,000 of WLDC allocation was spent on GO Festival 2025, meaning £16,000 can be returned to the cultural reserve thanks to grant funding attracted

6. Cost of Delivery – Staff Resource

- 6.1 To continue cultural delivery and maintain the programme additional staffing is required. A full time Events Officer is urgently needed to deliver the legacy event programme.

Tasks include

- Plan, deliver and grow the WLDC legacy events and the WLDC Lincolnshire Show stand.
- Manage event health & safety.
- Produce all event management plans and risk assessments.

- Manage events budget.
- Manage sponsorship and partner relationships.
- Events marketing strategy
- Market and promote all events across all platforms, using social media, press releases, newsletters and radio.
- Support third sectors cultural event delivery to promote community cohesion, engagement and health & wellbeing.

6.2 To continue with the cultural development, partnership working and obtaining external funding, the Cultural Development Manager role is a permanent requirement in the establishment.

6.3 The post is currently on a fixed term contract until March 2027, on a fulltime, graded at a band 9.

6.4 Termination of the post in March 2027 will result in no staff provision for a creating external funding bids, no management the District's Cultural Compact/Board, withdrawal from the EMIPC and the Lincolnshire Placed Based Partnership Bid from Summer 2026.

6.5 The proposed costs are as follows:

Resources costings	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	Total
	£	£	£	£	£	£
Cultural Development Manager - Band 9 Permanent 37hrs	53,500	56,500	59,300	60,800	62,800	292,900
Events officer - New Band 7 - start Oct25 Permanent 37hrs **	22,800	47,700	48,900	50,100	51,800	221,300
Total	76,300	104,200	108,200	110,900	114,600	514,200
Current funding for Cultural Development Manager Band 9 Fixed Term *	(55,600)	(43,200)				(98,800)
Funding required for resources	20,700	61,000	108,200	110,900	114,600	415,400

* Cultural Development Manager is a Fixed Term post until Dec 2026 funded from Cultural Strategy Reserve FIN/84/25

** Event Officer post has been estimated at the top of band 7

*** All costings include oncosts and an estimated payaward

7. Risks

- 6.1 Failure to recruit and/or under resource will impact on the amount of activity and quality of the activity which will be delivered.
To ensure the aims and objectives of the Cultural strategy and the Corporate Plan have the maximum impact, it is imperative to recruit the correct officers with the relevant experience and skills.
- 6.2 Should the Council significantly reduce the cultural activity this will have a negative impact on future funding applications and Arts Council England withdrawing support should the Council fail to demonstrate how they are delivering the strategy.
- 6.3 There is also a risk of withdrawing established and popular events that have become a key part of the district's cultural programme, this will have a negative impact on the Council's reputation in the local community and to the town centre businesses and markets that thrive during the events.

7. Next Steps

Next steps are dependent on the funds and resources made available for delivery.

Option A – Fully funded and resourced

- Annual 'top up' to the Cultural Reserve to a base budget of £100k
- Recruit an Events Officer
- Retention of the Cultural Development Manager (currently fixed term to March 2027)
- Move forward with 2026/27 event planning
- Develop cultural outreach model

- Develop events marketing strategy
- Refresh the Cultural Strategy
- Build the Cultural Compact membership
- Establish a District Cultural Provider Network
- Work as a partner in the Lincolnshire Placed Based Partnership Bid

Option B – Use the remaining of the reserve and no additional resource

- Deliver the cultural programme with reduced activities
- Review events for 2026/27 – potentially cut the WordFest series and Go Festival (Withdraw from the East Midland International Programming Consortium)
- Handover the Lincolnshire Show stand planning to an alternative team
- Review cultural strategy delivery to reflect limitations
- Establish the District Cultural Providers Network
- Do not create a Cultural Compact/Board
- Withdraw from the Lincolnshire Place Based Partnership Bid

8. Recommendation

It is recommended that Members approve the above Option A and fully resource and fund culture, this allows the delivery of cultural services to be rooted into the authority and allows officers to maximise the benefits, plan future activity and grow the cultural offering across the district.