

## **Foreword**

Gosport has just celebrated 100 years of becoming a Borough and, with a new administration leading the Borough Council, this seems just the right time to be thinking of enhancing our local cultural activities.

Gosport has been named an Arts Council England 'Priority Place' and a 'Levelling up for Culture' place which demonstrates the real need for enhanced cultural provision in the Borough and demonstrates what we already know - that Gosport is a place that deserves investment. We have developed new partnerships with Arts Council England, funders and cultural providers, and a great deal has been achieved in terms of building on Gosport's heritage as a source of cultural inspiration.

The Borough Council has recently demonstrated its own commitment to investing in Culture by purchasing the historic former Criterion cinema in Forton Road. The Council has ambitious plans to bring the building back into life as a multi-purpose cinema, theatre and live music venue - something Gosport has never had. This exciting project will be the centre-piece of Gosport's Cultural Strategy in the coming years. The Council looks forward to working with our partners to make it a reality.

As well as coming at the right time, this strategy has the right focus. It rightly puts local people at the heart of its objectives. Residents of the Borough have been extensively consulted on the way ahead and the strategy is firmly focused on the issues facing the area.

It is realistic too, recognising that culture is not just nice to have. It is vital to education, community cohesion and, of course, economic wellbeing - especially in a local economy where tourism plays a key role.

This strategy is bold and ambitious but its goals can be achieved if we all work together to make it happen. Alongside projects led by organisations and individuals already working to deliver the strategy, Gosport Borough Council is committed to leading the way with a series of bold initiatives such as that for redeveloping The Criterion. You can read more about the Council's priorities in an appendix to this document.

The new Council administration strongly values arts, heritage & culture. We recognise the important role it plays in driving regeneration, helping to make Gosport a great place to live, work, socialise and visit.

I look forward to the Council and its partners delivering on the policies set out in this document, placing culture at the centre of our plans to improve Gosport in the years ahead.

**Councillor Peter Chegwyn**  
**Leader, Gosport Borough Council**