

Funding Agreement between Colchester Borough Council and the Mercury Theatre

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Colchester's vibrant cultural sector is one of the Borough's unique selling points and something that Colchester Borough Council (CBC) aims to support and sustain, working with partners to align policy and funding to help deliver key social and economic outcomes through investment in the arts.
- 1.2 As Arts Council England (ACE) National Portfolio Organisations (NPOs) Colchester Arts Centre (CAC), The Mercury Theatre and Firstsite are key partners, together providing leadership, capacity, and innovative programmes of delivery that contribute to making Colchester a great place to live, learn, work and visit.
- 1.3 CBC provides core revenue grants to these organisations under the Strategic Arts Partner programme; to enable them to contribute to the delivery of the Council's Strategic Plan and specifically the actions within the new [Cultural Strategy for Colchester](#); support Creative Colchester, a framework for enhancing the impact of the arts and creative industries on the local economy; and contribute to initiatives which help reduce inequalities and which support health, wellbeing and community cohesion across the Borough.
- 1.4 As part of the Council's commitment to transparency, quality and performance management systems, the organisations that receive CBC funding must set out clear objectives and provide performance and sector data so that the service provided through partnership working can be measured, evaluated and improved. This document defines the performance targets and monitoring process and confirms the funding amounts currently agreed.

2.0 Scope and Financial Arrangements

- 2.1 Between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023, the Council will fund the Mercury Theatre to the amount of £168,175. This is a funding settlement agreed by Cabinet in line with budget strategy to support the core operations of the organisation, as set out in the business and operations plan and to meet the targets for performance set out in section 9 of this Agreement.
- 2.2 Upon signature of this Agreement, the Council will release the funding in quarterly instalments.
- 2.3 Any financial investment that the Council needs to make under its obligations as the owner of the theatre buildings is deemed to be outside of this agreement. However, any tenant responsibilities that the Mercury Theatre holds are considered to be within this agreement.
- 2.4 On signing this Agreement, the Mercury Theatre recognises that it is in receipt of public funding and accepts responsibility for showing proof of eligibility,

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meetings the targets for performance, and collecting qualitative and quantitative performance data to provide evidence of the service standards. The Theatre also agreed to provide available sector data to assist with monitoring and performance assessment.

- 2.5 Where appropriate and possible within current resources, Colchester Borough Council will provide non-financial support to the Mercury Theatre where it seeks to develop additional services that contribute towards meeting the Council's strategic priorities. If these additional services are developed to a point that requires additional funding, the Mercury Theatre may request such funding formally, and the Council may issue a separate funding agreement if applicable. If this circumstance arises, the services will be deemed to fall outside of this agreement.

3.0 Eligibility and Criteria for Acceptance

- 3.1 In order to be eligible for funding the Mercury Theatre must supply evidence to demonstrate that it is:
- a. Properly constituted
 - b. Financially viable
 - c. Able to manage its work effectively, monitor and manage risk, and seek necessary professional financial, legal and insurance advice
 - d. Operating with effective policies and procedures in equal opportunities, health and safety, equality and diversity, access, and protection of children, young people and vulnerable adults.
 - e. Delivering on the current strategic priorities of the Council.

4.0 Performance monitoring framework

- 4.1 The Mercury Theatre must submit an up to date Business Plan and operations information to CBC, including a budget to cover the same period as the funding agreement and a copy of the audited accounts from 2021-22 when available.
- 4.2 As a minimum throughout the term of the agreement, the Mercury Theatre must submit quarterly budget reports if required and invite a Council representative to observe Board meetings if appropriate. The organisation will also participate in an annual review meeting, as outlined below.
- 4.3 At the end of the agreement period, the organisation must provide audited accounts and submit performance data to evidence the organisation's turnover, audience and participation levels as well as contribution to the Council's strategic priorities.

5.0 Annual review process

- 5.1 A review meeting will take place between Colchester Borough Council and Mercury Theatre at least once during the period of the agreement. The meetings shall be attended by the Portfolio Holder (PFH), relevant officer(s) of the Council and Executive staff of the Mercury Theatre.

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5.2 The Portfolio Holder and Theatre Management may be asked to sit before a Scrutiny Panel to monitor performance and achievements. As such, the annual review process should be seen as an opportunity to ensure that the Portfolio Holder can evidence performance within their area of responsibility.

6.0 Acknowledgement of funding

6.1 The Mercury Theatre will acknowledge its financial assistance from CBC in all marketing and communication materials in print, electronic, broadcast and other formats.

6.2 The organisation is asked to specify particular steps that it will take within the period of this Agreement to promote the support that it receives from the Council in Section 9.

7.0 General conditions

7.1 The funding provided under this agreement may not be assigned to any other person, association or company other than in the course of delivering the Business Plan and agreed performance targets.

7.2 This agreement does not constitute the Mercury Theatre as an agent of the Council or otherwise make the Council liable to any person who may take proceedings against the Theatre.

7.3 The Council reserves the right to nominate annually a councillor to be a director on the Mercury Board.

7.4 Funds will be repayable in full to the Council in the event of any of the following:

- i. Misuse of payment received from the Council by Mercury Theatre
- ii. A breach of the law by Mercury Theatre
- iii. Petitioning the court for the appointment of an administrator
- iv. Having a receiver appointed over all or any part of the Theatre's assets
- v. Being the subject of a petition or resolution for the Mercury Theatre's 'winding up'

7.5 The Council should be consulted where any change or development in the direction of the organisation's affairs might affect this Agreement.

8.0 Breach in agreement

8.1 In the event of either the Council or the Mercury Theatre notifying the other in writing of a breach in this agreement, the parties shall meet to discuss the alleged breach within 21 days.

8.2 Both the Council and the Mercury Theatre agree that they have an equal responsibility to reach a practical and reasonable solution to the breach, but if after 12 weeks a solution has not been agreed then the parties mutually agree to arbitration.

9.0 Specification of performance targets

- 9.1 The specification of performance targets is developed collaboratively between the Council and the Mercury Theatre. The information provided here substantiates the Council's decision to invest public funds and helps to strengthen the partnership delivery model.
- 9.2 The information is set out to help to convey to Members, officers and partners how the Council's financial support is an effective and efficient way to deliver services to meet identified local needs.

9.3 Programme

Target	Outputs/Report
<p>Annual target to put on 400 performances with 100,000 people attending.</p>	<p>497 performances achieving a capacity of 60% (against the national Post Covid average of 48%)</p> <p>Actual audience attendance of 105,580 at the Mercury.</p> <p>In addition, we co-produced five additional shows that were either premiered with us or visited as part of their national tour.</p> <p>Audience figures for these productions were as follows:</p> <p><i>Good Luck Studio</i> – Mischief Theatre Company and Salisbury Playhouse – 22 perf/3,980 attendance <i>The Instrumentals</i> – Little Angel Theatre, Blouse and Skirt Theatre Company, Goblin Theatre – 36 perf/2,453 (to year-end – national tour continues) <i>Evelyn</i> – Wildcard Theatre Company – 31 perf/1,584 <i>Kabul Goes Pop</i> – Hightide and Brixton House – 33 perf/1,502 <i>Run Rebel</i> – Pilot Theatre, Theatre Royal York, Derby Theatre, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry – 19 perf/2,797</p> <p>Total Performances: 141 Total Audience: 12,316</p> <p>Whilst on tour, each production carries the branding of being a 'Mercury Production' co-produced by Colchester Mercury Theatre.</p>
<p>Annual target for non-ticketed performances/events to the café bar and outdoor space – 20,000</p>	<p>Total Un-ticketed Events – 368 Estimated attendance – 38,186</p> <p>The above includes our Lates Programme in our Bar/Café (including Black History Month, World Aids Day, Cocktail Cabaret, International Women's Day and various community events. In addition, the above include attendance and participation in the Jubilee Street Party, Christmas Lights Switch On Parade, Farmers Market, Street Theatre and Dance shows.</p> <p>The above excludes day and evening casual usage of the</p>

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	Bar/Café.
Collate and report audience feedback about the artistic programme with a minimum of 60% approval rating.	<p>Customer Satisfaction Surveys are carried out regularly throughout the year and include Mercury Productions, Visiting Artists, Mercury Originals and Co-Productions.</p> <p>Customers rated the Mercury as 4.3* out of 5* (86%). This feedback is reviewed weekly.</p>
Collate and report press feedback about the artistic programme.	<p>All press reports from local, regional and national newspapers are collated. Copies are available on request.</p> <p>During the year there were 234 mentions of the Mercury in the press.</p> <p><i>The best Dame in the Country</i> - Britishtheatre.com <i>Hugely entertaining</i> - The Stage</p> <p><i>It's the kind of play that might just save theatre itself</i> - Keep Colchester Cool</p> <p><i>A remarkable achievement</i> - The Stage</p> <p>Further non-show related coverage included:</p> <p>Mercury Theatre partners with four companies to collaborate on new work https://www.thestage.co.uk/news/mercury-theatre-partners-with-four-companies-to-collaborate-on-new-work</p> <p>Mercury Theatre opens its backstage for residents to explore https://www.gazette-news.co.uk/news/23349704.mercury-theatre-backstage-residents-explore/</p> <p>Colchester's Firstsite and Mercury Theatre receive cash boost https://www.gazette-news.co.uk/news/23102344.colchesters-firstsite-mercury-theatre-receive-cash-boost/</p> <p>Mercury Theatre Livestream Pantomime to Hospices and Care Homes Across Essex https://theatreweekly.com/mercury-theatre-livestream-pantomime-hospices-and-care-homes-across-essex/</p> <p>https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2022/oct/22/its-really-desper-cost-of-living-crisis-spells-bleak-times-for-british-arts-venues</p>

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At least 50% local audience and 50% audience supporting tourism economy.	63% of our audience was local to Colchester (within City Postcodes) and 37% from beyond Colchester (majority Essex). Proportionally this is higher than 'normal' (possibly due to the impact of the Pandemic).
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9.4 Community and Audience Development

Target	Outputs/Report
Annual target of 800 community and education sessions with 30,000 participants	36,027 children, young people and adults took part in our Creative Engagement Activities across 3,467 sessions. This was a significant increase from previous years indicating the growth of this aspect of our programme, the strength of partnership working within the community and more space in our new building able to accommodate the needs of the programme.
Maintain rate of 7% of tickets sold to disabled people and carers.	8% achieved during the year (we estimate this would have been more, however, post Covid this is an audience segment that were most nervous about returning and mixing in large groups of people).
Maintain level of accessible performances for disabled and D/deaf people – 16 performances.	27 access performances achieved during the year including for the first time in more than 10 years, two BSL interpreted shows of our panto. Performances included: Captioned, Audio Described, BSL, and Relaxed.
Maintain methods of seeking audience and user feedback 75 surveyed events per year.	An audience experience survey is conducted throughout the year following each of our Mercury Productions, Mercury Originals and Co-Produced shows. 21,816 surveys were distributed (using Purple Seven).
Become Secretariat (and re-launch) the new Colchester Local Cultural Education Partnership (LCEP)	During the year we have formally become the secretariat for the new Colchester LCEP (with a smooth transition from Essex Music Service). We have seconded a member of staff to the programme as the Project Co-ordinator. The LCEP has recently re-branded and in future will be known as <i>Colchester Creative</i>

	<i>Pathways.</i>
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9.5. Governance and Management

Target	Outputs/Report
<p>Mercury Theatre Board of Directors to agree a new three-year business plan for the period 2022/23 and 2023 - 2026 to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activity Plan • Artistic Programme • Financial Projections • Cash Flow 	<p>Our new Three-Year Business Plan for the period 2023-2026 was agreed by our Board of Directors in December 2022. The plan will be reviewed annually and will be accompanied by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activity Plan • Artistic Programme • Annual Action Plan • Projected Budgets • Cashflow <p>The Board of Directors receive regular reports on artistic activity and review quarterly management accounts at their full meeting and our quarterly Finance and General Purposes Committee.</p> <p>In addition, the Board have established a series of ‘task and finish’ groups to review and implement aspects of our work.</p> <p>These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creative Sub Committee • Marketing and Communications Committee • Evaluation and Impact Group • Staff Pay and Benefits Group
<p>Mercury Board to review and update all policy statements to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equality and Diversity Strategy and action plan • Digital Plan • Audience Development Plan • Risk Management • Health and Safety • Sustainability and Environmental Strategy 	<p>All policies have been reviewed during the year and approved by our Board of Directors (December 2022).</p> <p>Our Risk Register is reviewed by the Board at each of their quarterly meetings.</p> <p>Copies of all policy documents are available on request.</p>

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Annual review all equality action plans and policies.	All Equality Action Plans and Policies have been reviewed and approved by our Board.
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9.6. Diversity and Access

Target	Outputs/Report
<p>Continue to encourage more diverse audiences and participants engage with the Mercury across all equality groups.</p> <p>Target: 10% of audiences</p>	<p>We are pleased to report a continued increase in the diversity of our audiences, including:</p> <p>12% - global majority 8% - disabled and D/deaf people 77% - women</p>
<p>Continue to ensure the Mercury recruits and attracts a diverse workforce.</p> <p>Target:</p> <p>70% female 10% disabled 5% global majority 16% LGBT</p>	<p>During 2022-23, we employed a total of 143 staff.</p> <p>50% - female 16% - disabled 17% - global majority 19% - LGBTQ+</p> <p>In addition, we engaged 130 actors and creatives.</p>
<p>Continue to attract those from lower income and modest income households, proactively engaging with those from disadvantaged backgrounds and deprived areas of Colchester.</p> <p>Target: 10% of users and audiences</p>	<p>We continue to monitor audiences and users from across socio-economic backgrounds.</p> <p>6% of audiences attended from deprived wards including St Anne's, St Andrew's, Greenstead, Berechurch and Shrub End.</p> <p>The above is data from ticketed shows and events only and excludes targeted Creative Engagement activities at the Mercury and within the community engaging low income households and those from disadvantaged backgrounds.</p>
<p>Maintain rate of 10% all tickets sold as concessions are for young people.</p>	<p>16% achieved during the year.</p>
<p>Annual target of 800 community and education sessions with 30,000 participants</p>	<p>36,027 children, young people and adults took part in our Creative Engagement Activities across 3,467 sessions.</p>

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<p>Maintain Teachers Forums for Primary and Secondary Schools.</p> <p>Target: 40 members schools</p>	<p>42 Primary and Secondary Schools remain as members of our Teacher Forum.</p> <p>With the development of the LCEP, it is envisaged that this forum will take on a more direct and strategic approach to engagement with schools.</p>
<p>Continue to create opportunities for access to the arts particularly for children and young people. This includes community involvement in Mercury Company productions and an ongoing commitment to overall community activities.</p>	<p>Opportunities created for children and young people include:</p> <p>Mercury Young Company (MYC) (38 weeks per year):</p> <p>5-8's 8-11's 11-13's 13-15's 15-17's Musical Theatre</p> <p>MYC is an integrated programme for disabled and non-disabled children and young people with Youth Assistants and Access support across all sessions.</p> <p>7-week long Half Term, Easter and Summer Holiday Programmes (including 4-week projects for SEND young people) – 102 young people</p> <p>Young People's Chorus – <i>Beauty and the Beast</i> – Panto 2022/23 (24 young people).</p> <p>Community Choir – <i>Can't Pay, Won't Pay</i> (40 adults and young people).</p> <p>Global Majority Choir – 30 adults</p>
<p>Maintain level of 150 children and young people enrolled weekly in Mercury Young Company.</p>	<p>487 children and young people participated in our Mercury Young Company across three terms during the year (38 weeks).</p>
<p>Continue to engage with senior residents through Senior Social Club, senior matinees and other specific activities.</p>	<p>83 sessions achieved during the year engaging with 1,079 older residents.</p> <p>Weekly Activities included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senior Social Club • Zumba Gold Dance Group

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	<p>Additional outreach workshops and events included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dementia Awareness Week • Panto Livestream in Care Homes and Age Concern • Christmas Music in local Care Homes • Dementia Café workshops and performances • Independent Age Dance Classes <p>Senior Matinees</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 141 performances • 27,833 attendance
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9.7 Job Creation, sector skills development and contribution to the local economy

Target	Outputs/Report
<p>Deliver 20 work experience placements during the year.</p>	<p>During the year we were able to offer 7 work experience placements.</p> <p>The number of placements were reduced this year due to the impact of the pandemic. We expect (from current interest) for requests to increase to 'normal' levels next year.</p>
<p>Deliver 1 apprenticeship across all areas of the Mercury and 5 internships</p>	<p>We were unable to continue our Technical Apprenticeship this year due to not being able to secure a validating college for the apprenticeship standard. We continue to search for a suitable partner.</p> <p>Again, due to the pandemic, we were only able to offer 2 paid internships this year.</p> <p>We continue to work in partnership with Colchester Institute (with whom we signed a new MOU this year) to develop further work experience and internship opportunities for young people.</p>
<p>Provide evidence and support for new and emerging regional talent and companies.</p> <p>Target: 60 participants</p>	<p>During the year we have been able to support a record 2,788 artists across our Talent Development activities including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Producers Programme

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Playwrights • Masterclasses • 19 sharings of work in progress • 2 x week long R+D's <p>Our Mercury Creatives Programme completed its final year having supported local creatives/freelancers and entrepreneurs through mentoring, professional development workshops and an annual conference. The summary stats for the programme include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 116 individual artists or creative businesses have been supported through our mentoring programme • 124 new jobs have been created • 132 new products have been created • £2.2 million of new investment has been generated into the region to support the creative industries <p>Essex Theatre Artists Network's membership continues to grow (now 1,200).</p> <p>In addition to the above activities, we were able to support local organisations such as Colchester Fringe.</p>
<p>Target and engage with 20 volunteers during the year.</p>	<p>We have currently suspended our volunteer programme due to the challenges of the pandemic.</p> <p>We are reviewing how to offer meaningful volunteering opportunities in the future.</p>
<p>Assist CBC with other initiatives including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Night-time economy • Local employment and skills • Development of creative and cultural industries • Marketing of Colchester as a visitor destination • Town Deal Programme 	<p>The Mercury continues to work in partnership with CCC. In the past year we have assisted as follows:</p> <p>Night-time Economy Our Executive Director has taken on the Chair role for the Colchester BID Leisure Recovery Board that brings together the City Centre Leisure and Night-Time businesses monthly to formulate a future strategy for growth.</p> <p>In addition, we were a key partner in the delivery of the first Christmas Lights</p>

	<p>Switch on Parade and supply our panto characters for the Lion Walk Switch On Event.</p> <p>Local Employment and Skills The Mercury continues to work in partnership with a variety of organisations to improve local employment and skills such as:</p> <p>Kickstart Programme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• We employed 12 local young unemployed people to receive training in Front of House, Box Office and our Bar/Café.• We host regular meetings by Essex Chambers of Commerce.• We have a regular presence at local business and employment events and fairs. This includes offering schools 'Industry Days' to visit the Mercury and see behind the scenes and meet staff to find out about their roles. This is in addition to hosting a recent Creative Careers Fair.• We retain strong partnerships with the University of Essex and Colchester Institute (with both of whom we have signed MOU's). <p>Apprenticeships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• We are about to commence two paid apprenticeships in our catering team in partnership with the Institute.• We continue to work closely with the Colchester Job Centre and their team and advertise all roles with them.• The Mercury already has Silver Employer Status from the Ministry of Defence for our employment of ex-service personnel and their families. We will be seeking Gold Status next year.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Mercury is the only theatre in the UK to have gained this award. <p>Development of Creative and Cultural Industries</p> <p>Creative Colchester The Mercury retains a place on Creative Colchester's Board (our Development Director) to support their future growth).</p> <p>CCC Cultural Strategy During the year, the Mercury's Executive Director was closely involved in developing and starting to implement the strategy.</p> <p>Mercury Creatives – the future The Mercury Creatives programme (funded by ERDF) finished at the end of the year. We are now working on fundraising to continue the programme from Autumn 2023.</p> <p>In the meantime, the programme will leave a legacy of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• New searchable website of local creative businesses and freelancers.• Free resources and 'How To' Guides such as marketing, financial management etc). <p>Talent Development During the year (as noted above) we have continued to offer support for local artists and other creatives through workshops, master classes and making space available for sharings and research and development.</p> <p>This complements the programming of our studio where we prioritise the work of local Colchester and Essex/East based artists.</p> <p>We will continue to consolidate and expand this programme next year.</p> <p>Marketing of Colchester as a Visitor</p>
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	<p>Destination The Mercury continues to engage with Officers from across CCC about how to promote Colchester as a destination.</p> <p>Our Executive Director now sits on the <i>BID Marketing Colchester</i> Group.</p> <p>We continue to offer ticketing services for key local events such as Bonfire Night in Castle Park. The data from these events can be used to support marketing.</p> <p>Town Deal Programme We have continued to offer general support to the Town Deal Team, including:</p> <p>New Digital Centre – Queen Street Our Executive Director sits on the Board for the development of the new space.</p> <p>Development of Jumbo Our Executive Director has offered direct practical support towards the development of this important heritage asset.</p>
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9.8 Action on Climate Change and Environmental Sustainability

Target	Outputs/Report
Review and implement new Sustainability and Environmental Policy and Action Plan.	<p>During the year we have reviewed our Sustainability Policy and created a new Action Plan for the period 2023-26.</p> <p>We have established a Sustainability Action Group of staff from all departments and levels within the organisation. This group meets monthly to review our plan and ensure actions are monitored. In addition, we have a Sustainability Champion on our Board.</p>
Collate and publish targets to reduce carbon footprint and provide evidence of improvement at regular intervals.	All environmental targets are collated through the year.
Monitor the usage of green energy.	All energy supplies are green. During the year we were successful in securing a grant from the Wolfson Foundation to install more battery storage to capture the

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	energy generated from our solar system.
Prioritise the use of local suppliers within procurement and purchasing	<p>We prioritise local suppliers across all areas of operation – in particular our bar and catering offer.</p> <p>From our recent economic impact study, we currently spend £3.9 million in the local economy.</p>

9.9 Health and Wellbeing of Colchester’s communities and residents

Target	Outputs/Report
Continue to develop relationship with Colchester Refugee Action hosting joint workshops and events	<p>During the year we further developed our partnership with Colchester Refugee Action and were able to commence:</p> <p>Global Choir – a new weekly choir for refugee and asylum seekers</p> <p>Creative Meet Ups – held at the Marks Tay Hotel, our Wardrobe Team are working with refugee women and girls to make clothes using our recycled wardrobe fabric.</p> <p>Community Days – during the year we have hosted several community days with the community to allow them to visit the Mercury, have a tour backstage and participate in workshops and family activities. For the majority of participants this was their first visit to Colchester outside of the hotel and its grounds.</p>
Continue to offer dance and movement workshops for targeted community groups (Parents and Tots, Seniors, Disabled people)	<p>Due to demand we have significantly expanded our weekly workshop programme that now includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents and Tots x 2 • Musical Theatre Dance x 2 • Zumba Gold x 1 • Pilates • Dance for older people • Adult Movement Class
Continue to offer workshops and after school activities for disabled children and young people	During the year we continues to offer after school workshops for schools (x 36), a monthly club night and x 3 holiday clubs.
Continue to host targeted events such as	During the year we have further

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<p>– Black History Month, World Aids Day, Diwali, International Women’s Day, Pride and Cocktail Cabaret (LGBT)</p>	<p>developed our Lates programme that are all free to attend, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Black History Month Events • International Women’s Day • World Aids Day Celebration • Monthly LGBT Cocktail Cabaret • Ukrainian Benefit Night • Stand Up for Diversity Comedy Night • Family Sing-a-Long • Quiz Nights <p>In addition, we have supported Colchester Pride in their planning and event management running the Children and Family Craft Tent.</p> <p>Next year we will be starting a series of Lates events engaging with the South Asian Community.</p>
<p>Continue to partner with Essex Music Service to provide music workshops for children and young people from low income backgrounds</p>	<p>We continue to partner with Essex Music Service to offer music workshops every Saturday throughout the year (30 weeks per year – term time). These workshops offer a variety of access to learn musical instruments for low income families.</p>
<p>Continue to host and develop Senior Social Club for Elders</p>	<p>As noted above, 83 sessions achieved during the year engaging with 1,079 older residents.</p>
<p>Continue to offer Mental Health and Well-Being Workshops and sessions to local schools</p>	<p>During the year we offered 20 Mental Health and Well-Being workshops to local Colchester Schools.</p> <p>This programme was limited during the year due to Covid restrictions on visitors into schools. The programme will be reviewed prior to next year in consultation with the LCEP Membership.</p>
<p>Continue to be active members of One Colchester and Community 360 to deliver targeted programmes around Health and Well-Being</p>	<p>We continue to be active members of One Colchester and Community 360 and deliver a range of workshops and activities. Sample sessions include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LGBT History Month – Drag Storytelling in partnership with Essex Library Service

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Storytelling and Literacy Workshops with Essex Library Service (Colchester, Greenstead, West Mersea, Prettygate, Stanway and Wivenhoe Libraries)• Monthly Drag Workshops (prior to Cocktail Cabaret)• Human Library Events with Essex Book Festival and Essex Diversity Project• Dementia friendly tours and workshops•
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9.10 How the organisation will promote the support that the Council provides during the period of the agreement

The Mercury has continued to promote the support of the Council as follows:

Partnerships

development of community, youth and educational partnerships

National Touring of Mercury Productions

ensure clear credit on all publicity and press material promoting Colchester.

Regional and National Conferences and Events

acknowledgement of support in materials and in person.

Brochures/Newsletters/Social Media/Website

ensure clear funding credit and acknowledgement in partnership with Arts Council England and Essex County Council

Press Conferences and Events (online and face to face)

ensure credit on materials and in presentations.

Annual Civic Night

annual event for Councillors and local VIP's to acknowledge the Council's support

9.11 How the organisation will contribute specifically to achieving the actions within the Colchester Cultural Strategy, and wider objectives within the Colchester Borough Council Strategic Plan and other relevant local, regional or national strategies

During the year, the Mercury has:

- Continued to develop partnership working with the other NPO's and key arts, cultural and heritage organisations in the City (such as Colchester Fringe)
- Continued to work in partnership with Amphora around key events (such as the Christmas Lights Switch On).
- Worked in closed partnership with the Civic Office to support key local events such as:

- The Death of Queen Elizabeth II and becoming a formal space in the City Centre for the book of condolence.
- Contributed towards the visit of of King Charles and Camilla
- Produced 'Colchester Commemorates – the civic event to remember local people who died or who were impacted by Covid.
- Work in partnership with the Colchester BID to promote the economic recovery of the City centre.
- Work in partnership with the Council to promote tourism and the visitor economy
- Support the continued development of Creative Colchester
- Work in partnership with Colchester Borough Homes through outreach work to local care homes, activities and competitions for council house residents and hosting their annual conference.
- Continue to work in partnership with schools and other education providers (University of Essex and Colchester Institute) to provide formal and non-formal educational, learning, work experience and employment opportunities
- Work with local charities and the Job Centre to provide employment opportunities for local unemployed people
- Work in partnership with the Council to promote Climate Change and sustainability (being as founder member of the Colchester Sustainability Group and Active Travel Group).
- Work in partnership with the Council to ensure all our activities are accessible ensuring that marginalised communities and equality are at the centre of our work.
- Work in partnership with the Council to promote partnership working across the public, private and non-profit sectors.
- Our Executive Director is a Colchester Ambassador and attends regular meetings to work across all sectors to promote and embed economic regeneration.

The Mercury proactively supported the Council's Cultural Strategy during the year by:

- Work in partnership with the Town Deal to support the development of new facilities and programmes for young people (such as Greenstead)
- Produce and host site specific events to animate the public realm within the town centre and elsewhere (such as our monthly Farmers Market and other community events)
- Continue to work in partnership with the other NPO's and CCC to review and implement the Cultural Strategy
- Supported new and emerging events, festivals and artists through our programming in our studio, in our Café/Bar and elsewhere (such as Colchester Fringe, Packing Shed Theatre Company and others).
- Develop and implement shared training and capacity building for the wider cultural sector (including Diversity and Inclusion, specific skills – e.g. fundraising and event management)
- Continue to develop shared marketing and publicity opportunities to highlight and promote Colchester's culture and heritage offer
- Continue to offer and refine:
 - Talent Development Programmes
 - Apprenticeship Programme
 - Volunteer Programme

