



Executive
16th January 2006

**Report from the Director of
Environment & Culture**

For Action

Wards Affected:
ALL

A Cultural Strategy for Brent 2006 – 2009

Forward Plan Ref: E&C-05/06-007

1.0 Summary

1.1 This report provides Members with an overview of the Cultural Strategy for Brent (Appendix A). The Strategy outlines Brent's cultural assets, identifies cultural priorities for the borough and identifies a vision for Brent's cultural development based on the following three themes which have emerged from consultation:

- Civic pride
- Safe, healthy, cohesive communities
- Building a cultural economy

1.2 The Cultural Strategy is not service unit specific but draws together priorities from all of the Brent Council cultural services such as sports, libraries and the arts as well as giving a future direction for culture from all providers in the borough, partners and stakeholders.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 That the Executive note the findings of the Cultural Strategy

2.2 That the Executive agree the key themes within the Strategy and their priorities as set out in paragraphs 3.5 and 3.7 of this report

2.3 That the Executive agree the adoption of the Cultural Strategy for Brent

3.0 Detail

- 3.1 Local Cultural Strategies are a way of bringing together the priorities of services within the cultural sector (whether local authority, national, business or voluntary sector), stakeholders and practitioners to ensure that a borough's cultural assets are maintained and developed for the benefit of all local residents. In 2004, the Mayor of London published 'London – cultural capital' outlining the vision for culture in London. The GLA also published guidelines for local authorities to develop their own cultural strategies. The Audit Commission definition of culture includes arts, heritage, libraries, parks, play and sports and the Cultural Strategy for Brent includes all of these services.
- 3.2 The Cultural Strategy for Brent has been developed after a period of intense consultation over eighteen months with stakeholders, artists and creative practitioners, the voluntary sector, the relevant service heads and through targeted consultation activities (both general corporate such as the BME Forum and specific such as the Cultural Debates programme)
- 3.3 The draft Cultural Strategy has also been available for consultation via the council website, in hard copy on request and in the Council's libraries. There was little response as extensive consultation had already been undertaken in the drafting of the document but those comments that were received have been collated and will be available on the Council website. The Strategy has been amended to reflect a number of the comments. However, the majority received were very service specific or addressed within existing service strategies. These have been passed on to the relevant services for consideration.
- 3.4 The strategy provides a way forward for cultural services in Brent and identifies ways in which Brent Council departments and other partners can work collectively to improve cultural provision, widen access, advance quality, and ensure that the distinctive assets – the talents, ideas, infrastructure and initiatives – of Brent are explored and supported to their full potential.
- 3.5 The Cultural Strategy includes the following:
- i) An appraisal of Brent's cultural assets whether in local authority ownership or elsewhere
 - ii) Identification of cultural priorities for the borough drawn from existing strategies or research
 - iii) A vision for the future of culture in Brent based on three key themes which emerged from the consultation process:
 - **Civic Pride:** Ensuring that local and incoming people recognise the unique cultural assets of Brent, supporting them to build strong senses of place through processes of cultural exchange, and encouraging civic pride in a Borough that is genuinely going places

- **Social and Environmental Regeneration:** Working to develop safe, healthy, cohesive communities with cultural expression, participation and consumption at the fore.
- **Employment:** Building a strong cultural economy that benefits from the diverse assets of Brent's grassroots cultural sector, with locally generated creativity and activity translated into local jobs in the Cultural Industries.

3.6 The Cultural Strategy identifies the following role for Brent Council:

- The Council is a major provider of libraries, parks, the museum, the archive, sports and the core festivals programme for Brent.
- The Council will be the main strategic coordinator or developer of infrastructure for the heritage, arts, creative industries and public realm in Brent.
- The Council will work with others to deliver cultural services in the borough.
- The Council will work where required through sub regional means to improve efficiency and the range of accessible services.
- The Council will use and encourage the use of new media in the delivery of Cultural Services.

3.7 As well as outlining existing priorities for cultural service units, the Strategy also identifies the following for the three core themes:

i) Strategic priorities for Civic Pride:

- Maximise on new developments, including Wembley and 2012, to ensure that locally recognised cultural products and opportunities are included at an early stage.
- Raise the profile of Brent through effective marketing of the Borough's new image locally, regionally and nationally
- Improve communication on cultural opportunities in the Borough to ensure local people and visitors to the Borough know what is happening and how they can get involved.
- Work with the Borough's diverse communities to ensure that Brent's rich cultural landscape is seen as a source of celebration and esteem.
- Build opportunities to work regionally/sub regionally through initiatives that enable individuals and local cultural organisations to participate in London's wider cultural life, and provide access to services elsewhere.
- Improve quality and efficiency through a process of engagement.

ii) Strategic Priorities for Safe, Healthy, Cohesive Communities:

- Develop networks between those who provide cultural services, ensuing consistently high quality, equity and coordinated provision.
- Ensure children and young people are central to the development of a vibrant cultural landscape in Brent.
- Promote the health benefits of an active lifestyle.

- Enable cultural access at all levels – both socially and physically – to promote cultural entitlement that is appropriate, including ‘hard to reach’ communities.
- Ensure new Cultural venues are managed in an inclusive manner, and are in suitable and accessible locations
- Involve local people in the design and development of cultural programmes and projects.
- Ensure Cultural Services contribute to raising educational standards

iii) Strategic Priorities for Employment - Building a Cultural Economy

- Maximise the employment generating impact of cultural activity by finding ways to intervene to assist practitioners to develop the skills required to succeed in economically.
- Build capacity for sector growth, focusing on improving access to appropriate workspace and improving networks.
- Identify cultural employment opportunities for those from deprived communities and work with partners to ensure access to suitable opportunities.
- Capitalise on the distinctive potential of specific localities to operate as concentrations for cultural industries activity – with a focus on Wembley, Harlesden, Willesden and Kilburn
- Build a strategic sub regional approach to cultural and creative industries, ensuring an overview and coordination of activities and funding bids.
- Encourage the digital media/film/broadcasting as key sub sectors for the borough.

4.0 Financial Implications

4.1 There are no financial implications for Brent Council arising from this strategy. The key priorities for council services are already addressed in service specific strategies and/or work is already being undertaken by cultural service units.

4.2 The Cultural Strategy highlights a number of developments for cultural assets within the borough. It is clear that Brent Council will not necessarily be the main funding body for these developments and cultural providers will work in partnership to maximise or better use existing resources; or secure external funding as appropriate.

5.0 Legal Implications

5.1 It is no longer a statutory requirement for local authorities to produce a Local Cultural Strategy. However, the Greater London Authority is encouraging all London authorities to complete a cultural strategy for their residents and has issued guidelines for drafting a strategy. It is important for cultural services in Brent to demonstrate how they are contributing to the Council’s corporate strategy and to the shared national priorities.

6.0 Diversity Implications

- 6.1 The Cultural Strategy addresses the needs of all communities in Brent and identifies as a priority the need to widen participation in cultural activity to engage hard to-reach groups and disenfranchised communities.
- 6.2 Consultation was undertaken across a broad spectrum of the Brent community including Brent's BME Forum, a Youth consultation exercise (Culture Shot) and via a cultural survey.
- 6.3 An Equality Impact Assessment has been conducted for the Cultural Strategy and is available on request.

7.0 Staffing/Accommodation Implications (if appropriate)

- 7.1 There are no direct staffing or accommodation implications arising directly from the Cultural Strategy. However, the strategy identifies the following priorities from existing strategies which may impact on accommodation needs:

Strategic Priorities for Accessible places and spaces:

- Additional sports pitches in East and South Brent
- Improve or provide indoor sports facilities across the borough
- Additional workplace, exhibition and rehearsal spaces for the creative sector, with Wembley seen as the prime opportunity site
- An improved Archive facility
- Improvements and change of locations of key Library sites.
- Suitable spaces to hold events and festivals as attendees increase
- Increase and improvement to Play spaces, with a focus on the north

- 7.2 The above priorities are being addressed through strategies such as the Sports & Physical Activity Strategy, the Play Strategy and the Library Service Position Statement.

Background Papers

Appendix A: A Cultural Strategy for Brent 2006-2009

0052R/2003: Process and Themes – Cultural Strategy. April 2003

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