



Executive
16 December 2009

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

Wards Affected:
ALL

Brent Cultural Strategy 2010 - 2015

Forward Plan Ref: E&C-09/10-17

1.0 Summary

- 1.1 This report provides a background and overview of the new Brent Cultural Strategy 2010 - 2015. This is a joint strategy produced by the partners on the Brent Culture, Sport and Learning Forum and, as such, it is designed to influence all providers of cultural services in Brent to help deliver a shared vision for culture in the borough.
- 1.2 In developing this Strategy the partners have recognised the unique offer culture has to make in developing a thriving cohesive community and that we will only realise the full potential of a cultural offer in Brent if all partners work together. To this end the Strategy sets out a set of eight agreed principles that partners have identified as key to achieving the shared vision for culture in the borough.

2.0 Recommendations

- That the Executive
- 2.1 Note this is a joint Cultural Brent Strategy produced by the Brent Culture, Sport and Learning Forum.
- 2.2 Agree the key principles and actions within the Strategy and that these will be reflected in the Council's own direct service related 'sub strategies' as explained at paragraph 3.7

3.0 Detail

- 3.1 The current Brent Cultural Strategy was produced in 2006 and is a three year strategy ending December 2009. Whilst the strategy did recognise the role of partners in the overall delivery of a cultural offer for Brent and did go through a period of consultation with partner organisations, it is a Brent Council cultural strategy with actions specific to Brent services.

- 3.2 In 2008 the Brent Culture, Sport and Learning Forum was set up bringing together key 'providers' of cultural 'activities' in the borough. The forum is chaired by Rachel Evans, representing the Fountain Studios. Members of the forum include representatives from the Tricycle Theatre, Wembley Arena, Wembley Stadium, Wembley Plaza Hotel, BTWSC, College of North West London, Federation of Patidar Centres, Brent Community Sport and Physical Activity Network, Leisure Connection, the cultural regional agencies and a number of council officers representing different service areas. The Forum is a 'thematic partnership' reporting to Partners for Brent (the Local Strategic Partnership) and one of its key tasks has been to produce a new cultural strategy for the borough. The Forum believes the new cultural strategy will contribute to the delivery of actions within the Brent Community Strategy.
- 3.3 There is an increasing need for organisations providing cultural services to work jointly if a real cultural offer for Brent is to be developed. The partners in the Forum believe that culture is an essential ingredient of a thriving borough and contributes to a safe, healthy and cohesive community and this is reflected in the Strategy. Culture can provide opportunities to include the excluded, inspire learning and engage with disadvantaged groups. However, this potential will only be recognised if organisations work together. The new national performance framework includes a number of performance indicators that relate directly to cultural service provision or to which cultural services make a significant contribution. Unlike the majority of the performance indicators in the previous Comprehensive Performance Assessment 'cultural block' these 'new' indicators measure overall levels of participation and engagement in activities rather than specifically measuring use or satisfaction with council owned and/or managed facilities and services. For example National Indicator 11 measures whether adults have engaged in an arts activity at least three times in the previous twelve months. It is not specifically related to Council funded arts activity; it is related to all arts activity in the borough. Consequently there is a need to ensure we work with all the cultural service providers in the borough to improve the cultural offer for residents and maximise participation rates. To this end, we need an over-arching jointly agreed cultural strategy for all providers of cultural services, rather than a strategy that relates only to the Council's cultural service providers.
- 3.4 The Culture, Sports and Learning Forum has taken the lead in developing the new strategy. In general, the Forum felt that the existing cultural strategy was too 'long and wordy' and that the new strategy should be a much shorter, easy read which concentrated on developing key principles that all providers could sign up to. The new strategy therefore provides an overall direction and vision for the development of a cultural offer in Brent rather than being a detailed document with a long action plan. To this end the strategy highlights the key principles that the Forum have agreed as the main issues that all partners should address when delivering services if the shared vision for culture in Brent is to be achieved.
- 3.5 One of the main issues raised and discussed by the Forum during the development of this strategy is that Brent already has a relatively well-developed cultural programme but that we 'don't shout enough' about it. It was felt that more should be done to develop cultural leadership within Brent to raise the profile of the borough's cultural offer. It was also felt that more needs to be done to make people aware of what is on offer in Brent as often a lack of awareness seems to be a key reason for non or low participation. In cultural terms, Brent's diversity is considered a real benefit to the borough as it has a huge impact on the vibrancy of the area.

3.6 The Brent Culture, Sport and Learning Forum undertook a consultation on the draft Strategy during the summer/autumn. The consultation period ran for twelve weeks from 20th July to October 9th. A range of consultation methods were used to gain maximum feedback including articles in the Brent magazine and local press, two public meetings, an email was sent to over 400 local organisations along with the draft strategy and details on how to comment and copies were sent to the diversity forums with an offer to attend the Forum for discussion if required. About 150 comments were received from around 60 individuals/organisations. The Forum discussed the feedback from the consultation at its meeting on 20th October 2009 and has amended the Strategy accordingly. A 'word version' of the final draft of the Strategy is attached as Appendix 1.

3.7 The Strategy identifies eight key principles important to the successful delivery of the vision for culture in the borough. These are

- Enhancing cultural vibrancy
- Increasing participation
- Raising the profile of culture
- Encouraging young people to take part
- Developing the public realm and the built environment
- Making the most of London 2012 and other Major Events
- Supporting the cultural economy
- Promoting health and well-being

Each principle is discussed within the strategy outlining its importance and why it has been included as a key principle. The final strategy document also includes a number of case studies which illustrate each of the eight principles and each study relates to work undertaken by partners who sit on the Forum. There are also four key actions to ensure the delivery of the vision and objectives. These are:

- To make sure people know what's on offer
- To get more people to engage with culture by ensuring equality of access
- To provide appropriate locations, facilities and opportunities to encourage participation and creative expression
- To maximise the wider benefits of culture for Brent residents through strong cultural leadership

3.8 Given the above, it is the responsibility of the various partners to use the principles and actions within the strategy to help shape and develop their own services and action plans. The Council is a significant provider of cultural services and opportunities within the borough. The principles within the new Cultural Strategy support both the Community Strategy and the Corporate Strategy and will contribute to the delivery of actions within these two documents. As one of the partners in the development of the new cultural strategy it is recommended the Council agrees to the eight principles within the new Cultural Strategy and ensures these are reflected in future service strategies and plans produced by the Council's own cultural services (for example the Parks Strategy and the Arts and Festivals Strategy). These Council 'sub-strategies' will have detailed action plans outlining how services will be developed and delivered in the future.

4.0 Financial Implications

4.1 There are no direct financial implications for the Council resulting from the principles and actions within the new Cultural Strategy. Any financial implications will arise from

specific actions within any subsequent 'sub strategies' produced by Council managed cultural services.

5.0 Legal Implications

- 5.1 Councils have a wide range of powers to provide cultural services. For example, they are empowered to provide libraries museums and art galleries under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964. The Council has the power pursuant to Section 19 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 to provide such recreation facilities as it sees fit, including the provision of buildings equipment and assistance of any kind. It has the power to acquire and manage parks and recreation grounds under the Public Health Act 1875 and other statutes.
- 5.2 Over and above these specific powers, the Council has the general power to do anything which it considers is likely to promote and improve the economic, social or environmental wellbeing of its area under Section 2 of the Local Government Act 2000. In exercising this power it has to have regard to its Sustainable Community Strategy.

6.0 Diversity Implications

- 6.1 The Cultural Strategy includes key principles for the delivery of cultural services including one around increasing participation and engagement in activities and an action about ensuring equality of access. It highlights barriers to participation experienced by recognised groups of people and that actions should be implemented to reduce these.

7.0 Staffing/Accommodation Implications

- 7.1 None

Background Papers

A Cultural Strategy for Brent 2006 - 2009

Contact Officers

Any person wishing to inspect the above papers should contact

Sue Harper, Assistant Director, Environment and Culture ext: 5192

Neil Davies, Deputy Head of Libraries, Arts and Heritage ext: 2517

Richard Saunders

Director of Environment and Culture