



**Cabinet**  
9 February 2026

**Report from the Corporate Director  
of Housing and Resident Services**

**Lead Member – Cabinet Member for  
Customer Experience, Resident  
Support & Culture  
(Councillor Promise Knight)**

**Brent Creates – A Cultural Strategy for Inclusion, Wellbeing  
and Growth: 2026-31**

<b>Wards Affected:</b>	All
<b>Key or Non-Key Decision:</b>	Key
<b>Open or Part/Fully Exempt:</b> (If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)	Open
<b>List of Appendices:</b>	<p>Five</p> <p>Appendix 1: Draft Brent Culture Strategy: 2026-31</p> <p>Appendix 2: The Role of Schools and Young People within the Culture Strategy – Delivery Through Vi-Brent and the LCEP</p> <p>Appendix 3: Embedding Public Health – Reducing Loneliness and Supporting Mental Health Through Creative People &amp; Places (CPP)</p> <p>Appendix 4: Alignment with key corporate strategic policies</p> <p>Appendix 5: Consultation Process</p>
<b>Background Papers:</b>	<p>Final Report: Creative, Cultural and Visitor Economy Research (June 2025) – <b><i>Please note: this document has been circulated as a separate attachment.</i></b></p>
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## 1.0 Executive Summary

- 1.1 Brent must act now to build on the momentum of its London Borough of Culture year and respond to growing demand for a clear long-term vision. Culture is not optional — it is central to Brent's identity and future. It fosters civic pride, strengthens social connections, improves health and wellbeing, supports learning and skills development, and regenerates local spaces. It is also a proven economic driver, contributing over **£238m annually** to the local economy. Without a new strategy, Brent risks losing momentum and missing opportunities for growth, funding, and community engagement.
- 1.2 The Cultural Strategy 2026–31 sets out a bold, shared vision to make culture in Brent truly inclusive, accessible and reflective of the borough's rich diversity. It embeds culture across health, education, regeneration and environmental agendas, ensuring that cultural activity is not only available to local people, but shaped by them through a strong community led approach. The strategy also explores long-term sustainability, including advocating for fair contributions from the visitor economy to reinvest in cultural infrastructure and community access.
- 1.3 Delivery will be driven through partnerships including ViBrent, Creative Community Brent (CPP) and the Brent Cultural Compact — ensuring culture is enabled through schools, community organisations, health services, local businesses, anchor institutions and grassroots groups across all wards. The strategy is supported by practical delivery mechanisms, including partnerships, co- commissioning models and a proposed annual micro- grants programme to enable grassroots cultural activity at a neighbourhood level.
- 1.4 The strategy focuses on widening participation, strengthening creative skills and employment pathways, and embedding culture in everyday life. It builds on recent investment in spaces such as Harlesden Picture Palace, Neasden Cultural Hub and Wembley studios, alongside public facing initiatives like shutterart commissions and community programmes that support placemaking and freelance opportunities.

## 1.5 Strategic Context & Goals

The strategy provides a clear framework for cultural development aligned with the Borough Plan. To achieve this, the strategy is structured around six strategic goals that collectively widen participation, strengthen skills, support wellbeing and help culture contribute to community identity, place-making and environmental responsibility:

- Inclusive Cultural Access
- Creative Skills & Careers
- Cultural Health & Wellbeing
- Community-Led Placemaking
- Infrastructure & Investment
- Environmental Sustainability

## **2.0 Recommendation(s)**

2.1 Cabinet is asked to review and agree the proposed Cultural Strategy 2026–2031 having commented on and endorsed the following recommendations to:

- a) Approve the Brent Cultural Strategy 2026- 2031 as the guiding framework for cultural development across the borough.
- b) Endorse the establishment of a Brent Cultural Compact, bringing together council teams, cultural, health, education, business, and community partners to coordinate delivery.
- c) Commit to working collaboratively to embed culture in wider council plans, including health and wellbeing strategies, regeneration projects, and cross-departmental initiatives, including enabling small-scale community-led activity through mechanisms such as a council-supported micro-grants programme.
- d) Endorse the creation of an Impact Framework to measure cultural outcomes across wellbeing, participation, economic growth and environmental sustainability. This framework will be developed with colleagues from Public Health in Q4 2025/6.
- e) Endorse the publication of an Annual Cultural Impact Report, measuring progress against KPIs across wellbeing, inclusion, economic growth and environmental sustainability. The report will assess effectiveness, inform future investment and ensure transparency and accountability across partners.
- f) Support advocacy for fair contributions from the visitor economy—including exploration of ticket levy or visitor tax mechanisms—in partnership with major venues and sector stakeholders, with options brought back to PCG/Cabinet for consideration.

## **3.0 Detail**

### **3.1 Cabinet Member Foreword**

3.1.1 Culture is integral to everyday life in Brent and central to the borough's identity. It is shaped by our diverse communities and experienced across our neighbourhoods, high streets, schools and public spaces. From Wembley's global profile to the grassroots creativity of Kilburn High Road, the entrepreneurial character of Ealing Road and Harlesden's internationally influential Black music heritage, Brent's cultural life reflects both local pride and global reach. This rich creative legacy supports community cohesion and continues to shape the borough's character and sense of place.

3.1.2 The Cultural Strategy 2026–2031 builds on this legacy and recent investment in cultural infrastructure, creative spaces and community-led programmes. It

sets out a clear vision for culture to improve wellbeing, create opportunity and contribute to inclusive growth. The council will act as a facilitator, embedding culture across health, education, regeneration and sustainability and supporting strong partnerships that place residents at the centre of cultural life. Informed by national evidence on the social, economic and health benefits of cultural participation, the strategy commits to measuring local impact to guide investment and long-term decision-making, recognising culture as central to Brent's future prosperity and wellbeing.

- 3.1.3 The strategy embeds culture across health, education, regeneration and sustainability, aligning with the Borough Plan and wider corporate strategies. It positions culture as a driver of social equity, economic opportunity, community pride and environmental responsibility.

### **Priority Audiences**

To deliver equity in cultural access, the strategy targets six priority audiences facing the greatest barriers to participation:

- Children and young people (0–24)
- Adults on lower incomes
- Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities
- Eastern European communities
- People with mental health needs
- Local artists and freelancers

### **Delivery Partnerships**

- 3.1.4 Delivery is powered by strong cross-sector partnerships that ensure cultural activity is created with and for communities:

- **Vi-Brent (Place Partnership):** expanding access to cultural learning, festivals, creative career pathways and schools' engagement.
- **Creative Community Brent (CPP):** embedding culture in everyday spaces to support public health priorities, reduce loneliness and improve mental wellbeing.
- **Brent Cultural Compact:** aligning cultural, health, education, business and community partners with shared governance and delivery responsibility.
- **Develop a major strategic partnership:** with a higher-education institution or leading cultural/creative-industry organisation—such as the University of Westminster, a film studio, museum or gallery—to expand outreach, skills pathways, placements, research, innovation and community engagement in Brent.

- 3.1.5 These partnerships form a borough-wide network that builds capacity, strengthens collaboration and ensures community leadership.

### **Implementation Roadmap Summary**

- 3.1.6 The strategy includes a phased delivery plan with the following key phases:

- **Phase 1: Foundations (2026)** – Establish governance, launch Vi-Brent and CPP programmes, embed culture in health pathways. Design and launch a Brent Micro- Grants Programme to support small- scale, community- led cultural activity, aligned with the Brent Cultural Compact and priority audiences.
- **Phase 2: Expansion (2027–2029)** – Scale programmes, deliver borough-wide events, strengthen creative health pilots.
- **Phase 3: Evaluation & Legacy (2030)** – Publish final impact report and inform future cultural strategy.

### **Key Performance Indicators:**

- Growth in participation among priority audiences
- Engagement on **BrentCreates.com** (6,000 users by 2026; 9,000 by 2027)
- Delivery of Creative Careers bootcamps and mentoring placements
- Cultural programmes embedded in social prescribing (360 residents engaged)
- Eight co-commissioned community projects delivered by 2029

### **Measurable Outcomes and Performance**

- 3.1.7 To ensure accountability and value for money, delivery of the Cultural Strategy will be guided by a clear set of measurable outcomes. These will include agreed performance indicators relating to participation, skills development, health and wellbeing, economic value and environmental sustainability. See appendix 2 of the Strategy for key performance indicators and measures.

- 3.1.8 In addition to programme-level outcomes, the council will track organisational actions within its control, including:

- The **number of external funding applications submitted annually** to national, regional and philanthropic funders.
- The **value of external investment secured or leveraged** to support cultural delivery in Brent.

- The **number of strategic partnership agreements developed**, including with higher education, creative industries and major cultural institutions.

3.1.9 These measures will be included within the Cultural Impact Framework and reported annually to ensure progress is transparent and evidence-led.

## 3.2 Background

3.2.1. Brent's 2020 Borough of Culture year demonstrated the power of creativity to bring diverse communities together and celebrate local identity. The end of the Metroland Cultures legacy programme in 2023 created a natural moment to define the next phase of cultural development. The LGA Peer Challenge strongly recommended a long-term co-produced strategy, and extensive stakeholder engagement — including sector roundtables, one-to-one interviews, workshops and surveys — has shaped the priorities and delivery model of this strategy.

3.2.2. Significant external funding has already been secured to underpin delivery:

- **£554,000** through the Vi-Brent Place Partnership
- **£750,000** through Creative People & Places

## 3.3. Economic Impact of Brent's Cultural Sector:

3.3.1. To understand the economic contribution of Brent's cultural sector, Achates (a specialist consultancy engaged by the council) applied Arts Council England's methodology for calculating Gross Value Added (GVA). This approach estimates the additional economic value generated by cultural organisations beyond their state funding. The calculation subtracts state funding from organisational turnover and then applies a 1.3 multiplier to account for indirect and induced impacts, combining this with the adjusted turnover to produce total GVA.

3.3.2. Brent's cultural sector contributes approximately **£238 million annually** to the local economy:

- **£38 million** from charitable cultural organisations.
- **£200 million** from Wembley non-sporting events.

3.3.3 This is equivalent to around **£700 per resident**, demonstrating the substantial economic value of culture and the importance of sustained strategic investment.

## 3.4 Key Performance Indicators and Benchmarks

Headline indicators include:

- Growth in participation among priority audiences.

- BrentCreates.com engagement: 6,000 users by 2026; 9,000 by 2027.
- Delivery of four Creative Careers bootcamps and 60 mentoring placements by 2027.
- Cultural programmes embedded in social prescribing (360 residents engaged).
- Eight co-commissioned community projects delivered by 2029.
- BrentCreates.com reaching 20,000 annual users by 2031.

#### **4.0 Stakeholder and ward member consultation and engagement**

4.1 The development of Brent's Cultural Strategy was underpinned by extensive consultation with stakeholders across the borough, carried out by Achates ensuring the strategy reflects local needs and priorities.

#### **4.2 Stakeholder Consultation**

4.2.1 **Roundtables:** Extensive consultation underpinned strategy development:

- **Cultural Sector** – Kiln Theatre, Mahogany Carnival Design, Deafinitely Theatre, Lexi Cinema, Punchdrunk Enrichment, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra.
- **Civic Organisations** – ASC Studios, We Restart, Unique Community, Brent Artist Network, local educators.
- **Creative Industries** – Garden Studios, CEZ managers, regeneration officers.

Each session explored cultural strengths, barriers to engagement, priority audiences, and desired outcomes.

4.2.2. **One-to-one interviews:** Achates conducted interviews with key leaders and funders, including University of Westminster, Fresh Arts, Greater London Authority, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, and Unique Community. These provided deeper insights into sector challenges and partnership opportunities

4.2.3. **Workshops:** Facilitated sessions co-created the Statement of Purpose, Theory of Change, and priority-audience segments with council Officers and cultural partners, ensuring shared ownership of the strategy framework.

#### **5.0 Financial Considerations**

5.1. The Cultural Strategy 2026–31 is underpinned by a financially sustainable model that combines the London Borough of Culture (LBOC) Legacy Budget with significant secured external investment. This approach ensures Brent can

continue to grow its cultural offer without creating additional financial pressure on core council budgets. The strategy also strengthens Brent's ability to attract further national and philanthropic funding by setting out a clear, partnership led vision for cultural development.

## 5.2. Legacy Budget.

5.2.1 **LBOC Legacy Budget** The annual **£200,000 LBOC Legacy Budget**, funded through the Olympic Way commercialisation agreement with Quintain, provides the core financial foundation for delivery. This budget supports cultural infrastructure, sector capacity building and community led programmes across all wards. It also enables the council to meet existing match funding requirements and leverages external grants by demonstrating long-term commitment to culture.

5.2.2 A small proportion of the Legacy Budget will be used to enable light- touch, high- impact activity, including an annual micro- grants programme offering up to 10 awards of £500. This approach supports grassroots participation and early- stage ideas while remaining proportionate and financially contained within existing resources.

Forecast expenditure 2026/27:

Item	Amount	Comments
Staffing costs	£106,000	Forecast for 2026/7
Vi-Brent partnership match-funding	£10,000	Payable to Punchdrunk Enrichment annually until 2027
Creative Place Partnership match-funding	£19,000	Payable to Fresh Arts annually until 2029
Music Mile Festival contribution	£10,000	-
Curate Brent - year 2	£25,000	-
Strategy delivery project costs	£20,000	-
Micro-grants programme	£10,000	New
<b>Total</b>	<b>£200,000</b>	-

## 5.3 External Funding and Investment Leverage

5.3.1 A key principle of the strategy is to maximise external investment through a strong, coordinated partnership model. By acting as a facilitator, the council will continue to broker partnerships, advocate for culture across regeneration and public-health agendas, and support local organisations to access national funding streams. This includes funding from Arts Council England, National Lottery programmes and philanthropic partners.

5.3.2 Confirmed external funding includes:

- **£554,005** National Lottery funding via Arts Council England's Place Partnership Fund for Vi-Brent



- **£750,000** for Creative People & Places (CPP) to deliver long-term, community-led programmes
- In-kind contributions from partners (venues, staffing, resources)

5.3.3 These secured funds significantly reduce financial risk and increase programme reach, ensuring Brent delivers wide-ranging cultural, economic and social outcomes.

## 5.4 Future Funding Opportunities

5.4.1 To create a sustainable long term model, the council will continue exploring options for fair contributions from the visitor economy — including mechanisms such as a ticket levy — in collaboration with major venues and sector stakeholders. Any future proposals will be subject to further legal, financial and equity assessments before returning to PCG/Cabinet for consideration.

## 6.0 Legal Considerations

6.1. There is no duty on the council to provide arts or cultural events, but the council may provide (or arrange for the provision of) entertainment, the development and improvement of the knowledge, understanding and practice of the arts, and otherwise attract visitors to the area for recreation etc under S144 and 145 of the Local Government Act 1972.

6.2. As detailed at paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3, the council is included as a partner within both consortia. The council's powers to apply for grant funding and enter into a Grant Agreement derive from section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972 and the power of general competence set out in section 1 of the Localism Act 2011. In accordance with Section 9 of paragraph 9.5 of Part 3 of the Constitution, submission of bids for additional resources from government or other bodies is a decision for a Corporate Director in consultation with the individual Cabinet Members in relation to their portfolio area. Upon approval, the Corporate Director has delegated authority pursuant to paragraph 9.5 of Part 3 of the Constitution and Financial Regulation 8.2.2 of Part 2 of the Constitution to enter into a grant funding arrangement. In doing so, the Corporate Director must ensure that the objectives of the grant agreement are consistent with the council objectives and priorities in accordance with Financial Regulation 9.1.2 and must only exercise delegated powers where the Corporate Director, Finance and Resources approves entry into such arrangement.

6.3. Contracts Standing Order 85 (a), provides No Partnership Arrangements may be entered into unless they are approved by the Corporate Director Finance and Resources and a formal agreement covering the arrangements is signed by the parties.

## 7.0 Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Considerations

7.1. The Cultural Strategy is fully aligned with Brent's Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy (2024–28), embedding fairness, representation and inclusive access throughout its design and delivery. It prioritises removing barriers for residents who have historically been underserved by cultural provision and ensuring that cultural opportunities are genuinely accessible across all communities. Practical measures include:

- Free cultural programmes (e.g., Cultural Backpack).
- Multilingual resources and co-commissioning models giving communities a direct voice.
- Inclusive career pathways and workforce diversity through Vi-Brent and CPP initiatives.

7.2 By linking culture to health, education and regeneration agendas, the strategy advances Brent's EDI commitments, fostering a stronger sense of belonging, supporting wellbeing and ensuring that cultural leadership and creative opportunities reflect the diversity of the borough.

## **8.0 Climate Change and Environmental Considerations**

8.1 The strategy supports Brent's Climate and Ecological Emergency plan to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030. Commitments in the strategy include:

- Reducing waste and reusing materials at cultural events.
- Encouraging sustainable travel (walking, cycling, public transport).
- Using parks and open spaces for cultural activities to connect culture with nature.
- Designing cultural spaces to promote recycling and resource efficiency.

## **9.0 Human Resources/Property Considerations (if appropriate)**

9.1 There are no specific Human Resources implications.

## **10.0 Communication Considerations**

10.1 We will promote opportunities for residents and cultural organisations to shape delivery of the strategy through existing communication channels, including social media and e-newsletters, the new dedicated cultural section of the *Your Brent* magazine and [BrentCreates.com](https://www.brentcreates.com).

10.2 The strategy contains an ambition to attract funding which will enable the establishment of a Brent Cultural Fund. The council will use its communication channels to promote the fund and any visitor economy contribution agreements,

ensuring residents, venues and cultural partners understand eligibility, application routes and impact reporting requirements.

### 10.3 Strategy Launch and Socialisation

10.3.1 Subject to Cabinet approval, the Cultural Strategy will be formally launched in March 2026. This will include targeted briefings for cultural partners, schools and community organisations, online promotion via BrentCreates.com, and integration into existing forums such as Vi-Brent and Creative Community Brent. This phased approach will ensure the strategy is widely understood, owned and activated across the borough.

## 11. Summary

11.1 The Brent Cultural Strategy 2026–31 sets out a bold and essential roadmap for the next stage of the borough’s cultural development. Following the success of Brent’s London Borough of Culture year and the strong legacy that followed, there is now a clear need for a long-term, co-produced strategy that sustains momentum, responds to community demand and positions culture as a driver of inclusion, wellbeing and growth. Without this framework, Brent risks losing the progress, partnerships and investment secured over recent years.

11.2 The strategy directly advances the Borough Plan priorities by widening access to culture, strengthening community cohesion, supporting skills and employment pathways, improving health and wellbeing through creative engagement, and contributing to regeneration and environmental sustainability. It provides a clear structure for how culture will support thriving communities, reduce inequalities and enhance local identity.

11.3 Developed collaboratively with residents, cultural organisations, health partners, educators and community groups, the strategy is rooted in local voice and shared leadership. Through delivery partnerships such as Vi-Brent, Creative Community Brent and the Brent Cultural Compact, it brings together expertise from across sectors, ensuring cultural activity is shaped with and for communities, and that resources and opportunities reach those who face the greatest barriers.

11.4 With significant external funding already secured and a strong model for further investment, the strategy establishes a sustainable, partnership-driven approach that strengthens Brent’s cultural ecosystem. Approval will enable Brent to build on its national profile, deliver meaningful cultural participation across all wards, and embed culture at the heart of the borough’s social, economic and environmental ambitions.

### **Report sign off:**

**Thomas Cattermole**

Corporate Director of Resident and Housing Services

