

	Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee 16 September 2026
	Report from the Corporate Director of Residents and Housing Services
	Lead Cabinet Member for Communities, Culture and Cost-of- Living Support - Cllr Tina Amadi
Post-Decision Scrutiny Review: Brent Creates - A Cultural Strategy for Inclusion, Wellbeing and Growth (2026-31)	
Wards Affected:	All
Key or Non-Key Decision:	N/A
Open or Part/Fully Exempt: (If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)	Open
List of Appendices:	A – Key Delivery Programmes B – Delivery Roadmap – Plan on a Page C – Cultural Compact D – Performance and Outcomes Framework
Background Papers:	Brent Creates: A Cultural Strategy for Inclusion, Wellbeing and Growth (2026-31)
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1.0 Executive Summary

- 1.1. [Brent Creates: A Cultural Strategy for Inclusion, Wellbeing and Growth \(2026-31\)](#) was approved by Cabinet in March 2026. The strategy provides a framework for using culture to support wider borough priorities, including community cohesion, health and wellbeing, skills and employment, inclusion, regeneration and sustainable growth.
- 1.2. Since approval of the strategy, significant progress has been made through partnership working and external investment. Approximately £1.5 million of Arts Council England funding has been secured through the ViBrent Place Partnership programme and Creative Community Brent (Creative People and Places). Key delivery activity has included the launch of BrentCreates.com, development of the Brent Cultural Compact, delivery of the Emerging Curators Programme, expansion of creative skills opportunities for young people, and implementation of schemes designed to increase access to cultural activity for residents.

- 1.3. During 2026/27, delivery will focus on establishing the Brent Cultural Compact, expanding participation in cultural activity, developing creative skills and career pathways, strengthening creative health initiatives, supporting community-led cultural programmes, and embedding a performance and evaluation framework to measure outcomes and impact. Detailed delivery plans and supporting programme information are provided within the appendices.
- 1.4. This report provides Members with an update on implementation of the strategy, outlines priorities for the year ahead, and presents the proposed performance framework. Scrutiny Committee members are invited to consider whether the planned programme, measures of success and identified risks provide an effective basis for delivering the strategy's ambitions and securing positive outcomes for Brent residents and communities.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee is invited to:

- Review and note progress in implementing the Cultural Strategy and the programme of planned activity for the year ahead.
- Provide views on the proposed performance framework and measures of success.
- Recommend any areas for particular focus during the first two years of implementation, including any specific risks or opportunities for consideration.
- Agree that an annual progress report be brought back to scrutiny to monitor delivery and outcomes.

3.0 Contribution to Borough Plan Priorities & Strategic Context

3.1 Since Cabinet approved Brent Creates: A Cultural Strategy for Inclusion, Wellbeing and Growth 2026-31 in March 2026, the focus has been on establishing the partnerships, programmes and investment needed to turn the strategy's ambitions into practical action for residents. Significant progress has already been made, including securing approximately £1.5 million of external funding through Arts Council England programmes, expanding opportunities for young people through ViBrent, launching BrentCreates.com, developing the Brent Cultural Compact, and securing Creative Community Brent as the borough's first Creative People and Places programme. These initiatives provide a strong foundation for increasing participation in culture, supporting wellbeing, developing creative skills and strengthening community connections across the borough.

The year ahead will focus on delivery. Key priorities include expanding cultural opportunities for residents, strengthening links between culture, health and education, supporting creative careers and local talent, building community-led cultural programmes, and establishing a robust framework to measure the

impact of cultural investment. This work will continue to be delivered through collaboration with residents, cultural organisations, schools, health partners, community organisations and businesses across Brent.

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of progress, planned activity and the proposed approach to measuring success. Scrutiny has an important role in ensuring that delivery remains focused on the outcomes that matter most to residents and in providing challenge and support as implementation progresses. I welcome the Committee's views on the priorities, opportunities and risks identified within this report and look forward to its contribution to shaping the next phase of delivery.

- 3.2 Brent Creates supports delivery of the Borough Plan through its focus on cultural participation, skills and employment, health and wellbeing, community cohesion and inclusive growth. The strategy is closely aligned with the Brent Youth Strategy; Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy; and Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy, recognising culture as a means of improving life chances, tackling inequalities, supporting healthier communities and strengthening Brent's social and economic resilience.

4.0 Delivery Progress and Priorities by Strategic Goal - 2026/27

- 4.1 Brent Creates was approved by Cabinet in March 2026. The strategy is designed to be delivered through a partnership model, with the Council acting as a facilitator and convenor rather than the sole provider of cultural activity.
- 4.2 Since the launch of the strategy, implementation has focused on establishing the partnerships, governance arrangements and programmes needed to deliver the strategy's six strategic goals. Key milestones have included securing external investment, developing the Brent Cultural Compact, expanding delivery through ViBrent and Creative Community Brent, and strengthening arrangements to measure impact and outcomes. The following sections summarise progress to date and the key delivery priorities for 2026/27 against the six strategic goals.

4.3 Strategic Goal 1: Inclusive Cultural Access

Progress to Date

The strategy seeks to increase participation in culture amongst communities that experience the greatest barriers to engagement. Since adoption of Brent Creates, activity has focused on expanding opportunities for children and young people through the Brent Backpack pilot, supporting borough-wide cultural activity through ViBrent, and securing £750,000 of Arts Council England investment through Creative Community Brent. The Council has also established a partnership with Ticket Bank to increase access to discounted and free cultural opportunities for eligible residents.

Further priorities for 2026/27

Key priorities include establishing the Brent Cultural Compact, expanding the Brent Backpack programme, delivering the community engagement phase of Creative Community Brent and increasing participation amongst priority groups identified in the Cultural Strategy. As part of its first-year mobilisation phase, Creative Community Brent will undertake borough-wide community listening and consultation activities between October and December 2026. This will include engagement with schools, faith organisations, community groups and residents to ensure local people help shape programme priorities, commissioning decisions and the future cultural offer within Brent.

4.4 Strategic Goal 2: Creative Skills and Careers

Progress to Date

The Council and its partners have continued to develop opportunities for residents to access creative skills, training and employment pathways. Activity has focused particularly on supporting young people and improving awareness of career pathways within the creative industries. This has included delivery of work experience opportunities, creative bootcamps, paid placements and professional development activities through ViBrent, alongside successful delivery of the first Emerging Curators Programme cohort.

Further priorities for 2026/27

Priorities include recruiting a second Emerging Curators cohort, expansion of placement opportunities through ViBrent, delivery of freelancer support programmes, and the development of new routes into creative employment for residents from underrepresented communities.

4.5 Strategic Goal 3: Cultural Health and Wellbeing

Progress to Date

A significant milestone has been the establishment of Creative Community Brent through Arts Council England's Creative People and Places programme. Developed with Public Health and local partners, the programme aims to use culture to improve wellbeing, reduce isolation and support communities experiencing health inequalities. Partners include the University of Westminster, Young Brent Foundation and the Compass Learning Trust.

Further priorities for 2026/27

Creative Community Brent is now focusing on establishing community leadership structures, strengthening partnerships with health and wellbeing services, developing referral pathways linked to social prescribing, and implementing a programme of creative wellbeing, community participation and SEND-focused activities. Planned delivery includes community listening activity, creative wellbeing programmes, Dance Together and Sing Together initiatives, SEND-focused activity, community celebrations and partnerships with social prescribing and wellbeing services.

4.6 Strategic Goal 4: Community-Led Placemaking

Progress to Date

The strategy has supported culture-led activity that celebrates local identity, animates public spaces and strengthens community connections. Progress includes continued development of the Kilburn Music Mile initiative and delivery of cultural events that showcase Brent's heritage and diverse communities.

Priorities for 2026/27

Key priorities include expanding community-led cultural programmes, further development of Kilburn Music Mile, delivery of cultural and heritage events including Kilburn Music Mile. Community leadership structures, including the Creative Community Steering Group and Young & Creative Panel, will play an important role in shaping future cultural activity across the borough. In addition, a borough-wide microgrants programme (grants of up to £500) is being established to support grassroots cultural activity.

4.7 Strategic Goal 5: Infrastructure and Investment

Progress to Date

Since adoption of the strategy, the Council and its partners have secured approximately £1.5m of external investment through the ViBrent Place Partnership programme and Creative Community Brent. The Council has begun development of the Brent Cultural Compact to strengthen partnership working and attract future investment into the borough. Brent's designation as a DCMS Culture Priority Place also creates opportunities to access future funding streams targeted at areas with high levels of community need and lower levels of cultural participation.

Priorities for 2026/27

Priorities include formally establishing the Brent Cultural Compact, publishing Brent's first Cultural Impact Report, and supporting the borough's Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisations. A further priority is continuing to grow the usage of BrentCreates.com, a dedicated digital platform which launched in 2025 as a dedicated borough-wide platform to promote cultural events, opportunities, funding and participation across Brent.

The Council is exploring opportunities to secure additional investment linked to the visitor economy and major events, such as a ticket levy. Any future proposal would be subject to feasibility assessment, stakeholder engagement and separate decision-making processes.

4.8 Strategic Goal 6: Environmental Sustainability

Progress to Date

Environmental sustainability has been embedded within Brent Creates as one of the strategy's six priorities. Initial work has focused on engaging partners and considering how environmental objectives can be reflected within cultural programmes and events, recognising the role culture can play in supporting environmental awareness and sustainable behaviours.

Priorities for 2026/27

Partners will work through the Cultural Compact and wider delivery programmes to promote sustainable cultural practices, support environmentally responsible event delivery, and explore opportunities for cultural activity to contribute towards wider climate and sustainability objectives.

5.0 Proposed Performance Framework

- 5.1 Brent Creates will be monitored through an annual performance framework designed to assess the contribution of culture to the Borough Plan priorities, including participation, inclusion, health and wellbeing, skills development, community cohesion and economic growth. Performance reporting will combine quantitative measures with qualitative evidence, including case studies, resident feedback and programme evaluation.
- 5.2 The proposed framework is structured around the six strategic goals set out in sections 3.2.3 to 3.2.8 above.
- 5.3 Annual reporting will focus on a small number of headline measures within each theme, together with analysis of impact, learning and areas for improvement. Baseline measures have been established using a combination of national datasets, local data and programme-specific evaluation and will be reported through future annual Cultural Impact Reports. For more information please see Appendix D.
- 5.4 Members are invited to comment on the proposed approach and identify any additional information they would find useful through future annual reporting.

6.0 Risks and Mitigation

Risk	Mitigation
Insufficient external funding to deliver the ambitions of the Cultural Strategy.	Delivery is based on a partnership model designed to maximise external investment and reduce reliance on Council funding. Significant funding has already been secured through Arts Council England programmes, and further investment opportunities will be pursued through the Brent Cultural Compact and strategic partnerships.
Participation and engagement levels are lower than anticipated, particularly amongst priority or underrepresented groups.	Programmes including Creative Community Brent, Brent Backpack, Ticket Bank and community engagement activity are specifically designed to reduce barriers to participation. Performance monitoring will assess participation levels and help identify areas where additional targeted activity is required.
Partnerships do not sustain the level of collaboration	Delivery is supported through established partnerships including ViBrent and Creative Community Brent, with the Brent Cultural

Risk	Mitigation
required to deliver the strategy.	Compact providing strategic oversight, shared ownership and opportunities for collaboration across sectors.
The impact of cultural investment cannot be clearly demonstrated.	The strategy is supported by a performance and evaluation framework that combines participation data, outcome measures, resident feedback and case studies. An annual Cultural Impact Report will be used to monitor progress and demonstrate outcomes.
Cultural opportunities and investment are not distributed equitably across the borough.	Delivery programmes will prioritise community-led activity, neighbourhood engagement and targeted investment in communities experiencing lower levels of cultural participation. Regular monitoring will be used to identify and address gaps in provision.

7.0 Stakeholder and ward member consultation and engagement

- 7.1 Brent Creates was developed through a programme of engagement and consultation involving residents, artists, cultural organisations, freelancers, education providers, health partners, businesses and community groups from across the borough, led by an external consultancy. The strategy was informed by stakeholder interviews, workshops, surveys and sector engagement activities, ensuring that its priorities reflect the needs, aspirations and experiences of Brent's diverse communities.
- 7.2 The strategy adopts a partnership-led approach to delivery and ongoing stakeholder engagement. Key delivery partners include members of the ViBrent network, Creative Community Brent, Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisations, education providers, public health partners and community organisations. The establishment of the Brent Cultural Compact will further strengthen opportunities for stakeholders to contribute to strategic oversight, collaboration and the co-design of cultural initiatives. Details of the Cultural Compact is found in Appendix C.
- 7.3 Community engagement remains a core principle of implementation. Programmes including Creative Community Brent will utilise community panels, co-commissioning approaches and participatory decision-making processes to ensure that residents continue to play an active role in shaping cultural activity and investment across the borough. Particular attention will be given to engaging communities that experience barriers to cultural participation.
- 7.4 Given the borough-wide nature of the strategy, all wards are affected. Ward Members will continue to be engaged through existing Council governance and scrutiny arrangements and through local cultural initiatives taking place within their communities.

8.0 Financial Considerations

- 8.1 Since approval of the Cultural Strategy, approximately £1.5 million of external funding has been secured through Arts Council England programmes, including ViBrent Place Partnership and Creative Community Brent (Creative People and Places). This funding supports delivery of the programme objectives set out within the strategy. The activities described within this report are being delivered through a combination of existing resources, external funding and partnership working.
- 8.2 There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendations contained within this report. Any future funding requirements, grant applications, investment proposals or budget implications will be considered through the Council's established governance processes.

9.0 Legal Considerations

- 9.1 This report is for noting and scrutiny purposes only. There are no specific legal implications arising directly from the recommendations contained within this report.
- 9.2 The implementation of Brent Creates will continue to be undertaken in accordance with the Council's statutory duties and powers, including those relating to cultural services, equalities, procurement, grant funding and data protection, where applicable.
- 9.3 Any future projects, funding arrangements, partnership agreements or contractual commitments arising from the delivery of the strategy will be subject to the Council's established governance processes and will be supported by appropriate legal advice where required.

10.0 Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Considerations

- 10.1 Equity, diversity and inclusion are central principles of Brent Creates: A Cultural Strategy for Inclusion, Wellbeing and Growth 2026-31. A key objective of the strategy is to reduce barriers to cultural participation and ensure that all residents have opportunities to access, shape and benefit from cultural activity. The strategy identifies a number of priority groups that experience lower levels of cultural participation or face barriers to engagement, including children and young people, residents on lower incomes, Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities, Eastern European communities, people experiencing mental ill-health, and local artists and freelancers.
- 10.2 The strategy supports the Council's Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2024-28 through its commitment to inclusive representation, community co-design, workforce diversity and equitable access to cultural opportunities. Programmes delivered through the strategy seek to ensure that cultural activity reflects Brent's diverse communities and supports residents whose voices have historically been underrepresented within the cultural sector.
- 10.3 Implementation of the strategy incorporates a partnership and community-led approach, including co-commissioning, community panels and participatory

decision-making processes. These arrangements are intended to ensure that residents and communities are actively involved in shaping cultural provision and that investment is informed by local needs and lived experience.

- 10.4 The strategy also contributes to addressing health inequalities through its focus on creative health, wellbeing and social connection. Through programmes such as Creative Community Brent and partnerships with health organisations, culture is being used as a tool to support mental wellbeing, reduce isolation and improve outcomes for communities experiencing disadvantage.

11.0 Climate Change and Environmental Considerations

- 11.1 Environmental sustainability is one of the six strategic priorities within Brent Creates. The strategy recognises the role that culture can play in supporting environmental awareness, sustainable behaviours and community engagement with climate action.
- 11.2 Through its focus on community-led placemaking, cultural infrastructure and partnership working, the strategy seeks to encourage sustainable approaches to cultural delivery, including the use of local venues and assets, environmentally responsible event management, and the integration of sustainability themes within cultural programming.
- 11.3 As implementation of the strategy progresses, the Council will work with cultural partners through the Cultural Compact, ViBrent and Creative Community Brent to identify opportunities to reduce environmental impacts and promote sustainable cultural practices. This includes considering how cultural activity can contribute to wider borough objectives relating to climate resilience, community wellbeing and sustainable regeneration.

12.0 Human Resources/Property Considerations

- 12.1 Delivery of Brent Creates is being undertaken through existing staffing resources and a partnership-led approach. The Council's role is to facilitate, coordinate and support delivery through collaboration with cultural organisations, community groups, education providers, health partners and other stakeholders.
- 12.2 There are no direct human resources implications arising from this report. Any future staffing requirements associated with specific projects or externally funded programmes will be considered through the Council's established workforce and budget management processes.
- 12.3 The strategy recognises the importance of cultural infrastructure and creative spaces within the borough. Opportunities to utilise and develop cultural, community and public assets will continue to be explored through individual projects and partnerships, with any associated property implications being considered through the Council's normal governance arrangements.

13.0 Communication Considerations

- 13.1 Effective communication will be essential to the successful delivery of Brent Creates. The strategy seeks not only to increase awareness of cultural opportunities across the borough, but also to demonstrate progress against its commitments and ensure residents can see the benefits being delivered through implementation. Communications will be delivered through a range of channels including Brent Creates, Council communications platforms, partner networks, social media, newsletters and community-based communications.
- 13.2 Particular emphasis will be placed on communicating opportunities for participation, especially amongst communities that experience barriers to cultural engagement. Communications activity will support the Inclusive Cultural Access objective by promoting affordable and free opportunities, highlighting opportunities available through Ticket Bank, and ensuring information is accessible through a variety of channels and community networks.
- 13.3 Progress and impact will also be communicated through the publication of an Annual Cultural Impact Report, providing residents, partners and Members with transparent information on delivery, outcomes and future priorities.

Report sign off:

Tom Cattermole

Corporate Director of Residents and Housing Services