

Southwark Council Cultural Strategy 2013 to 2018

Executive Summary

- The council consulted widely across the cultural sector in Southwark, across our own organisation and with partners and stakeholders during the first half of 2013.
- We understand the broad and powerful ways that culture affects key Council priorities such as employment, place making, cohesion, wellbeing and creative vibrancy.
- We have developed a strategy for 2013 to 2018 that uses our targeted support, partnership and leverage to enable the valuable cultural sector in Southwark to create, develop and grow and therefore generate opportunities, build local pride and deliver prosperity for the borough.
- The strategy, set out in this paper in summary, is articulated as a range of specific and measurable actions to take over the next 5 years.

1. Introduction

Overarching political framework

Culture in Southwark is key to enabling the council to achieve its Fairer Future commitment to its residents

While many people value culture for its own sake, at a time of austerity when the council's role has to be fine tuned and constantly refined, we have taken an essentially 'instrumentalist' view of culture in this strategy. In order for culture to justify attention, support and resources from Southwark residents, we need to understand the ways that it has a positive impact on our borough, its aspirations and goals; ways in which it supports our Fairer Future commitments.

The strategy will focus on ways that culture can help us to make Southwark a place to be proud of. It will explore and leverage opportunities for us to work for everyone to realise their potential, both directly in cultural production and employment and in secondary ways, reflecting the impact that culture can have on aspiration, attainment and education. The strategy will also have a very limited budget attached, since we are aware that we can't afford to fund, subsidise or invest widely, but that what we can do is enable, connect and support and this is a fundamental focus of this work.

CULTURAL STRATEGY JUNE 2013

Making Southwark a place to be proud of

The strategy supports the cultural sector's ability to shape positive messages about culture, continuing to raise the profile of Southwark as a great place to live, work and study.

For many years the London Borough of Southwark was known for being one of the most deprived areas in the country. In more recent years Southwark has become identified in much more positive ways, with culture being a key part of real, on the ground, development and change, that has created a new more positive identity and message. Through the breadth, richness and quality of Southwark's cultural offer, the council recognises the value of culture in making Southwark **a place to be proud of** for local residents, and in attracting visitors from across London as well as a **destination** for tourists from all over the world.

Southwark's reputation as a cultural destination brings new business, money and investment into the borough, creating **jobs and opportunities**. Culture also has a role to play in the **regeneration** of local areas. Cultural activities in regeneration areas engage and bring together local communities in periods of change, attract visitors to all areas of the borough, and increase footfall for local business, attracting more spend in these areas. The thriving creative businesses in Bermondsey, and the new library and culture space at Canada Water are examples of this. The scope for further engagement in Elephant and Castle, Peckham and Camberwell over the coming years will be significant.

Working for everyone to realise their potential

The strategy supports continued access to cultural opportunities, enabling all sections of the community to realise their potential.

Whatever their age, ethnicity or economic circumstance, our residents have access to a rich range of cultural provision including author talks led by our libraries, participatory and community arts programmes, cultural festivals and internationally recognised galleries, museums, theatres and performing arts organisations. Southwark Council believes that this not only has a leisure value for our residents, but also contributes to the quality of life of local people, ensuring our residents are **healthy active citizens** and belong to **cohesive communities**.

As well as cultural provision, **skills and employability** are also supported. Nationally the cultural industry in the UK accounted for 5.1% of employment in 2010 and is one of the fastest growth industries in the UK. Southwark's buoyant cultural economy is a key contributor to this overall picture. Within the borough arts, entertainment, recreation and other services (as categorised by the ONS Census 2011) are shown to

CULTURAL STRATEGY JUNE 2013

provide 7% of our population with employment and it is the registered trade of 10% of Southwark's VAT or PAYE registered businesses. To set this in context this is only 2% lower than the percentage of our population who are employed in finance and 3% above those who are employed in the construction industry.

The HE and FE institutions in the borough are producing increasing numbers of emerging artists with new skills and talents to develop and share. The creative and cultural industries provide employment and other opportunities for local people to grow and develop through training, apprenticeships, volunteering and work experience. The cultural provision for young people is outstanding and offers access to skills and experiences which can enhance and support their personal development and educational achievement.

Context in which we work

The strategy articulates a collaborative approach that will deliver the benefits that culture brings for residents, the cultural sector and commercial organisations within the borough.

Clearly this strategy sits within a time of austerity, with unprecedented central government cuts to local authorities, and also to Arts Council England, creating multiple impacts on the cultural sector. This strategy defines how and where the council should concentrate its support and resources in this environment with finite staffing and ever tighter budgets.

Current cultural offer and position

The strategy establishes ways that the council can support and enable Southwark's cultural offer to endure during difficult times and suggest ways that we can further leverage value across the borough.

Southwark's cultural offer is incomparable, with enormous cultural variety and potential in its places, people, institutions, heritage and diversity that have a local, regional and international impact. This cultural wealth is a driving element of the borough's dynamism, as an influential force within renewal, for tourism and the local economy, for community cohesion and engagement, and for creating vibrant local places. It is testament to the success and vibrancy of the borough that we are consistently in the top five for Arts Council applications for funding across London.

We have long established arts organisations that are working with Southwark's diverse grass roots communities and providing high quality participatory arts for our residents. This includes work with schools and young people outside of formal education, work with older people and

CULTURAL STRATEGY JUNE 2013

inter-generational work with residents on local housing estates. There are also a number of organisations addressing the health and well-being agenda through work led by and for mental health service users, and people with disabilities.

The impact of national FE institutions in the borough (such as University of the Arts London), that are specialising in creative industries courses, means that we also have an increasing number of new and emerging artists and practitioners, as well as small creative businesses being set up. Retaining the talent and skills of recent graduates in the borough means that we are constantly renewing and refreshing the cultural offer ensuring that Southwark remains a culturally vibrant place to live and work, reinforcing Southwark's reputation as a cultural destination and a leading borough for culture in London.

The borough attracts and generates artistic innovation and creativity, so that we are becoming synonymous with non traditional arts experiences being host to pop up theatres and galleries, immersive and experimental arts experiences and new media works. Definitions of cultural spaces have become blurred in recent years due to an increase in the use of temporary and unusual/pop up spaces for culture, alongside the traditional cultural venues. The demand for space to produce and present new work is ever increasing.

This borough's profile is further reinforced by the high quality work and reputation of internationally renowned cultural institutions like Shakespeare's Globe, the Imperial War Museum, Siobhan Davies Dance, Tate Modern and alongside the broader South Bank and Bankside Cultural Quarter.

The regeneration of the physical landscape creates both opportunities and challenges for the cultural sector. They have a role to play in engaging residents, creating meaning for spaces and helping the council understand the creative resources that need to be embedded in our new developments to ensure that they create healthy positive environments. Culture, along with other services, is an integral part of the development of these areas.

The most effective role that the council can play in the development of this rich cultural ecology is often to enable and support, creating the conditions in which they can thrive. However, we sometimes have a more direct role to play, such as when we develop iconic and ground breaking resources like the Library and Culture Space at Canada Water, and make accessible our own unique archive, museum and art collections.

2. Scope of strategy

Southwark's cultural strategy is designed to shape and define the role that the council will play in supporting the cultural sector in Southwark and drive the direction, development and delivery of Southwark's cultural offer over the next five years.

CULTURAL STRATEGY JUNE 2013

The cultural sector plays a critical role in regeneration, place making, engagement, employability, community cohesion and resident wellbeing, and it is essential that the council plays an empowering, positive role across the borough to maximise the benefits and ensure that the right conditions are created for the sector to thrive.

Whilst the culture portfolio sits within the Libraries, Arts & Heritage business unit of the Culture, Libraries, Learning and Leisure (CLLL) division, there are many departments and services across the council that support, influence or directly deliver cultural activity in the borough, and so this is designed to be a council wide strategy, cross-cutting department agendas and promoting joined up thinking and working. This will include cross-council working with CLLL, Communications, Regeneration, Planning, Public Realm, Community Engagement, Corporate Strategy, including Economic Development, Adult Social Care, Housing, Health & Wellbeing and Children's Services.

As a result of an extensive consultation process with internal council departments, the wider cultural sector and strategic partners such as the Arts Council, the strategy will direct how the council focuses its resources for culture over the next five years. It will enable us to have a more informed basis for funding and partnership decisions. It will strengthen the relationship between the culture service and the wider council and improve joint working, and will enable us to take advantage of economic opportunities that occur for the sector.

For Southwark's thriving cultural sector, the strategy will determine how we support and engage with them, what their needs and issues are, how the cultural landscape is changing and how regeneration affects local areas, and the implications of this for the sector.

The scope of the cultural strategy includes the following disciplines/areas:

Included	Excluded
Arts, the performing and visual arts, including music, theatre, dance, public art, applied arts, fashion and the creative industries, film, media and digital arts	Peripatetic music provided by the music service
Events / festivals with creative programming	
Literature development, creative writing and reader development.	Library opening hours and buildings (considered in 2011 as part of the libraries review)
Heritage, both our cultural and built heritage, including local history, heritage buildings, monuments, museums, collections and archives.	
Youth arts and arts education	Sport

CULTURAL STRATEGY JUNE 2013

3. Methodology / Approach to consultation

Internal oversight and ownership

We created a steering group made up of officers across the council who are engaged with culture and carried out an internal audit of cultural activity. We then engaged an external consultant to support the development of an engaging consultation approach and to facilitate the discussions with the sector across 10 events.

Involvement and collaboration across services

The council brought together teams from across the organisation from Arts, Heritage, Events, Libraries, Regeneration and Planning to ensure that we fully understood the issues we needed to understand and what questions we needed to ask of the sector. Staff from across all these teams worked together to create an approach that worked with everyone and a set of questions that generated insights and data.

Engagement with the sector

The council worked hard to engage the sector and over 160 people attended representing a cross section of cultural interests at the 10 consultation events that took place across the borough. The consultation sessions asked a series of questions in a conversational small table format, encouraging people to network, share views and explore ideas together.

Engagement with the community

We provided the community with the opportunity to comment on specific areas of cultural consumption, who culture should be for, and marketing, to feed into the strategy.

Critical Friends

Arts Council England feedback has been key to the development of this strategy. It has provided an objective perspective on the vision of the strategy and helped us to clarify and articulate the themes that have emerged from the consultation process.

CULTURAL STRATEGY JUNE 2013

4. Cultural Themes for 2013 to 2018

We have developed a set of themes for our cultural strategy; shaping and grouping the ways that we can support the cultural sector in response to the consultation.

1. Communicating, connecting and navigating

This theme addresses the need to improve how the council communicates both internally across departments and externally with the cultural sector and partners.

It will focus on improved internal connections across departments so that the council has a better overview of cultural provision and will be able to support the cultural sector in unlocking and navigating through council systems.

Through this the council will be in a better position to signpost the cultural sector to appropriate information and opportunities, to facilitate networking and collaboration and to broker partnerships between cultural sector organisations, artists and practitioners. Communicating, connecting and navigating also addresses the need to support the sector with marketing, and to raise the profile of culture, and promote the richness of Southwark's cultural offer and the economic benefits therein.

2. Platforms, places and spaces

This theme addresses the need to provide access to suitable spaces for the production and presentation of work, and the need to acknowledge the long term role of cultural facilities in areas that are physically changing, due to regeneration.

It will focus on exploring the sector's need for access to affordable space, including temporary and incubator spaces and pop-up spaces, as well as long term permanent spaces, and buildings.

Working cross-council it will consider the issues and challenges facing the sector, with regard to premises related matters. The council recognises the value of the cultural sector in transforming local areas, making places more attractive and changing the perception of a place. It also recognises that cultural activity helps with transition during periods of change, enriching and bringing communities together when lives are disrupted by what is happening around them. Culture has been described as the "glue" to local areas and the theme supports the need to both champion new opportunities for the sector as part of the regeneration process as well as make the case for existing cultural provision.

CULTURAL STRATEGY JUNE 2013

3. Creativity, quality and innovation

This theme addresses the need to support the creation and production of new work, to promote creativity, innovation and quality, enabling imaginative work to be created. This involves providing opportunities for new and emerging artists, recent graduates and cultural producers to practice in the borough. It will focus on working with partners to provide advice and guidance and support, including access to space, signposting to funding and opportunities for residencies and platforms to promote their practice. It also recognises the value of new, experimental and immersive cultural experiences and what the wider sector can learn from these new models of working.

4. Resilience and sustainability

This theme addresses the need to support the long term viability of the cultural sector. It will focus on the practical support and advocacy that the council and other partners can provide in terms of training, capacity building and professional development, links to business and enterprise. It will review how the cultural sector currently accesses council funding, and will signpost individuals and organisations to other sources of funding. The council recognises the value of retaining existing long established organisations in the borough, alongside the new and emerging companies and practitioners. It also explores how we work with partners to enable organisations to harness the skills of the local community through volunteering.

5. People and audiences

This theme addresses the need to support the cultural sector to increase and diversify audiences, enabling the sector to reach local audiences, be aware of the changing nature of the population as a result of the physical changes in the area. The council recognises the value of supporting work that is rooted in local communities, encourages engagement and participation, and is accessible to Southwark diverse communities.

Appendix 1 Action Plan

Compiled by
Coral Flood and Rachael Roe, June 2013