



*Basingstoke
and Deane*

Cultural Strategy for Basingstoke and Deane

2012 to 2015





Photo: Willis Museum

“Culture... is about improving the quality of life for all, allowing people both to derive pleasure and to fulfil their own potential and broaden their horizons. Equally cultural services play a crucial role tackling social exclusion, contributing to regeneration, to promoting safer communities, encouraging healthier lifestyles, providing opportunities for voluntary and community activity and stimulating life long learning.”

Department for Culture, Media and Sport

The council's Cultural Strategy

This strategy sets the context for the borough council's investment in its cultural service. It focuses primarily on the council's arts and heritage provision but also refers to events and, in particular, the Basingstoke Festival.

As well as this strategy other aspects of 'culture' are being addressed in partner documents, such as the Sport and Recreation Plan, the Local Development Framework and its associated policies and the Economic Prosperity Strategy.

“If we are given the right tools, we will meet the challenge. By making the arts, heritage and culture available to everyone, we will help make Basingstoke a better place to live and work.” Professor John Holden, former Chair of Basingstoke and Deane Cultural Forum.

This Cultural Strategy builds on 'Culture in Basingstoke', an advocacy document which was produced by the Basingstoke and Deane Cultural Forum, with support from Audiences South, in November 2009. The Cultural Forum is an independent organisation made up of professional arts and heritage organisations from across the borough, which comprises membership from organisations the council regularly funds and those it doesn't.

The document was prepared to demonstrate the value of culture to Basingstoke and its residents and highlight the diversity and quality of the work delivered by the partner organisations. Through a series of case studies and images the document explores a number of themes, including culture's impact on the local economy, its effect on local communities and importance in creating a sense of place. As well as providing an opportunity for the organisations to highlight projects to partners, the document was also a valuable tool to share with stakeholders and potential funders to demonstrate what is being delivered locally. The report was presented to the November 2009 Community wellbeing Overview Committee by the Forum's independent Chair, Professor John Holden, for information and discussion. (See *Appendix 1 for the full document*).

Culture contributes to many different aspects of life such as:

- Economic development
- Creating and building community
- Countering social disadvantage
- Broadening and expanding horizons

It is important for the future of cultural sector that culture is not just seen as the soft option or icing on the cake but rather vital to the well-being and prosperity of a community. Arts and culture can be used as a tool for delivering on a wide range of agendas such as:

- community cohesion and building a sense of place and belonging that can lead to greater community responsibility and pride

- community consultation, engaging people in a different way
- highlighting and celebrating cultural diversity and therefore reducing isolation – making the borough an inclusive place to live, work and visit.

National and regional context

National picture

The Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) has made significant changes to how its funding is managed. Arts Council England (ACE) has taken over responsibility for key areas that used to be part of the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council.

This has created opportunities for ACE to propose how it would incorporate responsibilities for regional museums and libraries into its work with the arts, to create a more coherent cultural offer that benefits the cultural sector and the audiences it serves.

As a result of the Government's Comprehensive Spending Review, the overall budget for DCMS was cut by 25% in October 2010. DCMS also outlined a 29.6% reduction in its overall grant-in-aid for Arts Council England over four years from 2011/12 to 2014/15, as shown below:

2011/12	£388m
2012/13	£360m
2013/14	£352m
2014/15	£350m

ACE has been allocated a budget of around £46m a year by DCMS to deliver these additional functions. The Renaissance in the Regions programme has been cut by 15% to £43.4m, in line with the overall cut to the museums' sector made in the government's spending review.

At the current time Anvil Arts is the only one of our regularly funded organisations that is core funded by Arts Council England as part of its national portfolio. Proteus Theatre Company has recently received Grants for the Arts funding from ACE to commission a new piece of work that includes interactive workshops.

Despite changes and reductions to funding streams the Government is continuing to invest more than £2.2 billion in the arts over the next four years. Even in an uncertain economic climate national investment in creative industries is continuing; however the reality is that other funding partners, regionally and locally, are looking at reducing grant funding to discretionary services.

Regional focus

The south east of England is a vibrant centre for culture in which Basingstoke and Deane plays a key role.

“Cultural services are the fastest-growing sector of the regional economy and currently provide jobs for nearly 15% of the regional workforce. Their indirect effects on the economy are equally important: the richness of cultural facilities, coupled with an attractive natural and built environment, provide a quality of life that gives the South East region a unique competitive edge for people wishing to visit, live and work in the area.”
(Source: Hampshire Sustainable Community Strategy 2008–18).



Photo: Arabian Nights, Proteus Theatre Company



Photo: Fairfield Arts Centre

The wider cultural benefits are both social and economic. A strong and vibrant cultural offer - through creative industries but also through tourism, participation and secondary spend all contributes to the local economy. In addition a strong and vibrant cultural offer supports inward investment and makes a considerable contribution to positive place marketing.

Strategic direction for arts and culture locally

Our Shared Vision for Basingstoke and Deane to 2026

The Community Strategy sets the overall strategic direction for the area through a long term vision and identifies the medium term priorities for action. Its primary purpose is to act as a guide for aligning strategies and actions in a way that promotes social, economic and environmental wellbeing specific to the local area. The shared Community Strategy vision for Basingstoke and Deane sets the broad strategic direction for the borough and describes the type of place and community we want to be.

In 2026 Basingstoke and Deane's people, communities and businesses will be flourishing - enjoying an excellent quality of life and environment which has been improved through well planned growth that draws on our strengths and secures vital improvements.

Regenerating our towns and estates, and enriching the character and vitality of our villages and outstanding countryside, will support Basingstoke as a major vibrant centre, leading north Hampshire and fulfilling an influential role in the region.

We will be:

prosperous and thriving - where

- a regenerated state of the art Basing View, along with easy transport connections, attract a range of new business to the town
- links with higher education stimulate innovative business growth
- a strong learning culture encourages young people to aim high and achieve more
- residents can readily improve their skills and play their part in and benefit from the area's prosperity.

connected and vibrant - where

- we create inviting places and communities where people want to live, feel they belong, and it is easy to meet every day needs
- we feel and are safe, active, and healthy, and we look out for the needs of the most vulnerable, so that no-one is left isolated
- people can connect, enjoy their lives, and get involved, creating a strong community spirit
- new homes meet local needs, and bring improved and new local facilities.

environmentally responsible and distinctive – where

- we live and work in harmony with the natural elements and systems on which we depend, and are responding to the challenge of climate change
- the local built and natural environments are in tune and continue to provide opportunities for the economy and people's enjoyment; they are well managed to provide for the future

- we enrich the different characters of and links between towns, villages and the countryside, in the way we plan, such as the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the River Loddon area
- we insist on the highest quality design and environmental standards to demonstrate pride in our place.

Our cultural partners support the new shared vision by involving local people in projects that make the vision a reality.

Local picture

This strategy supports the delivery of Basingstoke and Deane's Council Plan in a number of ways by focussing cultural activities to contribute to the key priorities:

- **Economy** – we want to drive economic prosperity by supporting business to innovate and create new jobs and encouraging residents to develop their skills.
- **Community** - we want our communities to be strong, safe and active and enjoy high quality of life including access to homes that are affordable and to community / leisure facilities
- **Environment** - we want to protect and enhance our natural and built environment by involving our communities in planning for our future including reducing our overall carbon footprint and regenerating residential and business areas in Basingstoke

The cultural sector in the borough has a lot to be proud of with great venues and forward-thinking organisations. The borough has a number of cultural assets, from modern performing arts venues to historic stately homes. Over the last 20 years the borough has benefited from significant investment in cultural provision. Investment in facilities such as The Anvil concert hall and Milestones, Hampshire's living history museum, and improvements to existing facilities including the Haymarket and Willis Museum, have all contributed towards a strong cultural infrastructure. The borough has developed a good range of public art, established a vibrant events programme and is fortunate to have a thriving voluntary and amateur arts sector.

Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council recognises the importance of the borough's cultural offer and the benefits that on-going investment in the arts and heritage can bring. Consistently high satisfaction levels with cultural facilities also indicate that residents value the service. In the 2009 residents' survey 74% of respondents indicated that they were satisfied or very satisfied with the cultural offer.

It is well recognised that taking part in cultural activities has benefits for all, enhancing the quality of life. Culture provides opportunities for people to have fun, try new things, learn new skills, meet new people and explore new places. It can support mental and physical wellbeing, increase self-confidence, and open up a world of enjoyment and possibilities. It can celebrate diversity and local distinctiveness, encourage understanding and respect and bring communities together in a shared experience.

The borough's cultural facilities and events programme are important in promoting a positive image of the borough, developing a sense of civic pride as well as helping to establish it as a great place to live, work and visit.

Other work in the past two years has involved discussions with funding partners such as Arts Council England, Audience South and Hampshire County Council about a strategic way forward across Hampshire for culture.



Photo: Anvil Arts



Photo: Jo Ellis

Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council has invested over a long period in building a strong cultural infrastructure through buildings and cultural organisations. The opportunity ahead is to maximise this investment, particularly the current difficult economic times by encouraging partnerships beyond arts and culture to discuss how best to use the resources available in meeting the Council's priorities. Whether it be a play where the police and young people work together as a strategy for building positive relationships or an environmental project where an artist facilitates the creation of sculptures with community groups using found materials such as tree foliage or litter as a recycling strategy.

Basingstoke and Deane – financial position

The strategy is set in the context of a difficult time when the cultural and voluntary sector is going through considerable change in the borough as well as nationally. The economy is still emerging from recession and many of the funding bodies and trusts that support cultural activities are reviewing which organisations they fund and how funding is awarded, as well as reducing how much is available. Along with other public sector bodies, Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council has to make significant savings in its Medium Term Financial Strategy (2012/13 – 2015/16) which is likely over time to have an impact on external funding.

It is always important to assess regularly how we deliver and fund discretionary activities and to make sure that organisations that receive funding from the council are delivering outcomes that support council objectives.

This Cultural Strategy sets out key principles for the council's work in this sector. However it is set in the context of how that council operates currently and may need to be amended in light of changes to the borough council's operating structure. This could alter the council's approach to external funding and service delivery over the next three years and beyond.

Key areas of focus

The focus for the borough council's work with partners to deliver cultural opportunities to borough residents, businesses and visitors will be on four key strands:

- working in partnership
- maximising engagement and increasing participation
- ensuring value for money
- supporting the economy and enhancing the image of the borough

Working in partnership

The borough council works in partnership with a range of organisations to deliver its cultural service. This approach has a number of benefits:

- creating a more coherent and better connected service
- increasing the effective use of resources
- widening access to expertise and the sharing of knowledge
- offering a greater opportunity to inform and influence decision making.

The council currently invests in a portfolio of regularly funded organisations, which offer a wide range of high quality activities to a variety of audiences. These include the performing arts venues, Central Studio and the Haymarket and the regionally acclaimed Anvil concert hall. Funding is also provided to The Making, Fairfield's Arts Centre and Proteus and the borough's museums, including Milestones, the Willis Museum and Whitchurch Silk Mill. During the financial year 2011/12 combined participation levels through partner organisations exceeded 400,000.

Partnership working is at the heart of delivery. As well as our portfolio of regularly funded organisations, we also work closely with internal and external partners from both the cultural and non-cultural sectors, at a local, regional and national level. This includes the Basingstoke and Deane Cultural Forum, Hampshire County Council, Arts Council England and education providers such as the University of Winchester. It is recognised that the cultural sector is broad and, in addition to our relationship with professional bodies, we also seek to work with and support the amateur and voluntary sector especially through Basingstoke Festival.

It is important to review our partnerships to ensure that these continue to provide value for money and respond to residents' needs. Therefore it is essential to regularly revisit our rationale for supporting activities and seek to refocus our investment where this is considered appropriate. A dynamic cultural offer can be maintained by working closely with partners to share our priorities, gain an understanding of what can be delivered and to develop exit strategies with those who no longer deliver against the aims. It is also important to be proactive in looking for new and innovative partnerships that can promote opportunities for culture to act as a vehicle to meet other agendas such as health, community protection, economic development and regeneration.

Through maintaining existing partnerships and working to develop new ones, we can combine our collective resources and offer a better service to local communities. Delivering services with more efficiency is challenging and developing effective partnerships is an important way of achieving this.

Our aims

- We will commission organisations who are delivering activity in line with the Council Plan, meeting our customers' needs and offering value for money in their provision.
- We will build on existing partnerships and seek new, creative and innovative partnership working from both within and outside of the cultural sector, at a local, regional and national level.

Maximising engagement and increasing participation

The council aims to support a cultural service which is inclusive and accessible to all residents in the borough, where there is something for everyone to enjoy both as audience and participant. As well as seeking to offer a broad programme, we also want to reach audiences and groups who do not traditionally participate in cultural activities and are least likely to engage. This may include those excluded by age, sexual orientation, geography, faith, race or social background.

It is recognised that culture can often be seen as 'elitist' and just for those that can afford it. This borough is uniquely placed to change these perceptions through the wide variety of cultural activities on offer. It can facilitate partners providing innovative solutions to many of the key issues raised by residents; for example, activities for young people. Working with partners to create positive experiences for children and young people by offering alternative activities to anti-social behaviour and raising attainment and aspiration levels is a key driver for empowering individuals and communities.



Photo: Fairfield's Arts Centre



Photo: Basingstoke Live crowd

Customer need

Understanding customer needs is key to designing and delivering council services. Market research conducted by the council repeatedly highlights activities for young people as one of the top things that is important in making somewhere a good place to live but also in most need of improving.

In addition we receive intelligence from our communities all the time through our contact centre and other informal feedback from business units. The council needs to listen to what is being said to build up a picture, formally and informally, about what people want to see happening in their borough to improve quality of life.

Basingstoke Festival

The economic assets of Basingstoke include venues for the performing arts and other cultural activities. Surveys of local residents indicate high levels of satisfaction with these facilities. In addition, the Basingstoke and Deane area can boast a wide variety of individual events and community activities that contribute to its overall cultural offer. Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council is interested in making better use of its cultural assets and has proposed the creation of a regular festival. It is felt that this could act as a focus for cultural activity and help maximise the area's economic and social potential.

Together with a range of professional and amateur partners the council is working hard to establish a Basingstoke Festival, to be delivered from 2012. This will include the already successful Basingstoke Live event, which has grown in both size and reputation since it began in 2007.

Offering a programme of cultural activities and events throughout the borough, the festival will seek to be inspirational to residents, appealing to those outside the borough, lucrative to the businesses within it and instrumental to its positive image. There is strong potential to increase audiences and participation by addressing both real and perceived barriers to engagement and broadening the cultural offer.

It would be unrealistic to expect this or any other festival to achieve success overnight. However, Basingstoke already has successful venues and events that it can build upon and develop to reflect its own identity. Distinguishing features of Basingstoke include an excellent customer base and source of potential sponsors within the town's business community. Basingstoke also has excellent access by road and rail, including links to London that it can exploit. If the borough can attract more visitors to its events then this would translate well into economic benefit.

The benefits of arts festivals are not just financial. Positive social effects include increased media profile, enrichment of the lives of residents, expansion of the visitor economy, creating a sense of civic pride and place, as well as educational benefits in the case of festivals that include programmes for this purpose. If these benefits can be successfully captured then this could be to the good of a wide range of cross-cutting local authority objectives.

The business plan for developing the festival will obviously look carefully at financial implications and income generation. Ticketing, sponsorship, grant applications, advertising and participation subscriptions all need to be explored thoroughly as well as reviewing current financial arrangements such as the funding provided by the council.

Successful festivals have all had to start somewhere and they take time to develop. They require long term commitment and full support from those involved to give them the longevity that is required to realise the benefits for the local community and economy.

Currently the council funded Festival Coordinator is working closely with the Festival Board on the development of an exciting programme of events that will make up the Basingstoke Festival for the 2012 summer season. The business plan and marketing/sponsorship strategy is also being developed at this time to ensure there is a sustainable approach to developing the festival beyond 2012.

Our aims

- We will strive to increase the levels of participation in cultural activities for the entire community, resulting in a healthier and engaged borough.
- We will develop arts opportunities for people and places with least engagement, such as young people, older people (55+), BME communities, rural communities, those on low incomes and non-traditional attendees/audiences.
- We will ensure our commissioned organisations are focused on attracting audiences, seek to be accessible to a range of different audiences and undertake targeted marketing to encourage priority groups to engage with their work.
- We will support local communities to become part of, or to engage in, the festival and will also encourage volunteers to take part.

Delivering value for money

The Council Plan for 2011-2014 outlines that in the current economic climate the council must remain efficient and continue to provide value for money. The Council Plan puts customers at the heart of service delivery, with a commitment to making sure that services meet their needs. In order to deliver these aspirations, the council is reviewing how it delivers all of its services, ensuring that it enhances customer experience and seeks to achieve significant efficiency and savings targets.

It is recognised that in these times of financial restraint, ongoing investment in cultural facilities and activities is challenging. It is important to take a creative approach to addressing funding issues, ensuring that we can offer a good and improving service on a reduced budget. The council's investment in culture has to work hard. Through engagement with a range of partners, new ways of working will emerge, including using funding to leverage other monies, maximising earned income and achieving financial stability.

It is understood that cultural organisations face on-going financial challenges and they require support in finding ways to ensure that delivering a high impact, sustainable service to their customers continues. Future work with partners to undertake regular reviews of costs and identify areas in which any efficiency savings can be made will be crucial.

In addition the council can work with cultural partners to seek ways to add value for money, such as accrediting the work they deliver, engaging with volunteers to support their services and identifying and engaging in partnership with other organisations to share both experience and cost. Exploring culture's cross-cutting potential and its ability to meet other key issues may also provide access to alternative funding streams from outside the cultural arena.



Photo: Whitchurch Silk Mill



Photo: Milestones Museum

Our aims

- We will take a creative approach to addressing funding issues, ensuring that we can continue to offer a good quality and improving service on a reducing budget.
- We will support cultural organisations in the borough to seek alternative and varied funding streams to ensure sustainability, proactively encouraging use of council funding to leverage other monies.

Supporting the economy and enhancing the image of the borough

Culture and the creative industries are increasingly recognised as vital to the health of the UK economy at both a local and national level. Ensuring that the creative industries are highlighted through the cultural organisations the council supports and through other partnerships is important.

It is recognised that a range of career development opportunities can be provided through the cultural sector. As well as employment, the creative industries can provide mentoring, advice and support to ensure that skills are supported and nurtured. Cultural infrastructure provides meeting places for the exchange of ideas and work spaces for artists and creative practitioners. Not only can arts and culture inspire future audiences, but they can also engage and provide skills to the next generation of artists and arts leaders. Where possible we will also work with partners to retain creative talent in the borough and to support jobs in this sector.

Culture can create a distinctive environment and a sense of place. The borough's cultural infrastructure is a significant element in its identity and a key component in tourism. We will look to retain and maintain the existing cultural infrastructure. Whilst we will not proactively seek new capital developments, we will aim to respond to any future opportunities which may develop, particularly where these are multi-use facilities. We will work with partners where it is appropriate to encourage investment in new and existing cultural initiatives. In addition we will advocate for the inclusion of public art schemes in new developments and the council's own capital projects, involving professional artists in their creation and gaining input from those who live in the area.

Embedding culture and quality of place into the Enterprise M3 Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP)

As part of the work to develop priorities for Enterprise M3 LEP it has been suggested that consideration be given to the approach adopted in South Hampshire. This has led to the successful delivery of a work programme designed to reinforce the area's reputation as a desirable place to live and work.

One key area is to explore how culture and quality of place can be embedded into the partnership's strategic themes. A business case is being prepared to explore if and how this stream of work can be delivered by Enterprise M3.

Driving Economic Prosperity for Basingstoke and Deane

The primary goal of the borough's economic prosperity strategy is to support the Council Plan in making Basingstoke and Deane a place where local business, organisations, families and individuals of all ages can flourish by improving its image and reputation as an attractive place to live, visit and do business.

Culture can contribute to this in a number of ways, from raising the profile of the area positively through projects such as Basingstoke Festival, which in turn can have a wider economic impact through investment and secondary spend, through to creating an environment where creative industries can thrive.

Our aims

- We will seek to ensure that cultural activity plays a role in the economy of the borough in a sustainable and positive way including using our influence to grow the number of jobs in this sector.
- We will maintain and increase the offer of cultural opportunities and existing facilities to promote the image of the borough as a great place to work, live or visit (using wider partnerships where possible).
- We will aim to improve the quality of design in the public realm through encouraging developers to include art and craft in new developments and improvement schemes, creating a vibrant range of public art that is unique to the borough.
- We will work with partners to develop a Basingstoke Festival making it a sustainable event that generates income and attracts investment.
- We will market the Basingstoke Festival to attract a regional/national audience over time and to maximise the benefits of wider economic impact.

Moving forward

Implementation

An implementation plan will be developed in line with the changes to become an 'enabling council'. There will need to be greater focus on outcomes and set in context our customer need and clear outputs for delivery of services including cultural activity and how discretionary services are to be funded in the future.

Over the next year the focus will be to:

- Develop Basingstoke Festival including continuing to maximise contributions from the community and our professionally funded organisations.
- Deliver the Basingstoke Festival business plan (year one) and to progress actions for future years including the marketing and sponsorship.
- Further research to show how the arts can work across the council and support the delivery of council priorities in non-traditional ways.
- Work with partners to engage them in discussions about future funding and to ensure continued delivery of high quality cultural services (set against the context of difficult financial times).
- Continue to work together in partnership with other funders to develop a long-term strategy for cultural priorities in Basingstoke and Deane but also taking account of the borough's place in the region.
- Work within the new 'enabling structure' to determine, as appropriate, reviews of cultural investment and opportunities for alternative service delivery.





**For a large print copy of this leaflet
please call 01256 844844**

©Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council 2012

www.basingstoke.gov.uk

customer.services@basingstoke.gov.uk 01256 844844

Follow us on Twitter: twitter.com/BasingstokeGov

Images courtesy of the borough council's cultural partners.