

Draft Cultural Framework for Sutton

1. Definition of Culture

'Culture' means different things to different people and for some people it is a term which means very little. The Department for Culture Media and Sport states in the Culture White Paper, March 2016, that:

Culture no longer simply means being familiar with a select list of works of art and architecture, but the accumulated influence of creativity, the arts, museums, galleries, libraries, archives and heritage upon all our lives. When we talk about our 'cultural sectors', we are referring to an extraordinary network of individuals and organisations, that together preserve, reflect and promote who we are as a nation, in all our rich diversity.

2. The ambition for Sutton

The ambition is to highlight, connect and encourage the different arts, cultural and heritage activity that takes place right across the borough, bringing out the diversity of skills and interests that exist among the residents of Sutton. The cultural complexion and richness of a place comes from the people who live and work there, which in turn attracts people to visit. The population of Sutton is growing and changing and this will influence its cultural identity. The Sutton Plan is an approach which brings together a wide range of partners across Sutton to support and enable activity which meets the needs of Sutton residents. This approach is relevant to developing the cultural offer within Sutton. The Council, like all the other partners in the borough is keen to play its part in enabling arts in its widest sense to thrive - music, heritage, food, dance, festivals and other events, big and small scale. The Council can also contribute by raising the profile of arts and culture with developers and local businesses so that where new developments take place, cultural opportunities are considered as a matter of course.

3. The cultural offer in Sutton today

There are three major strengths for development in Sutton today:

Strength One: Innovation in Libraries

A Library strategy 2015 to 2019 is in place which will modernise the offer to residents across Sutton, partly through the introduction of new technology and new ways of offering a flexible Libraries, Heritage and Arts service across the Borough. This includes the refurbishment of the Central Library which will provide a modern gallery space for exhibitions and events and new, bookable work spaces where groups can meet..

Strength two: Revitalising Heritage

Sutton has a strong commitment to its heritage and the role it will continue to play in the future. The council itself manages five historic buildings: Honeywood Museum; Little Holland House; Whitehall Museum; Upper Mill and the Carew Manor dovecote.

Since 2010, organisations in Sutton have secured nearly £6 million of Heritage Lottery funding. £5.54 million has been raised by the London Borough of Sutton, including two big restoration grants: £3.26 million for Beddington Park and The Grange Garden and £2 million for the restoration and new interpretation at Whitehall Museum that will reopen in 2018.

The Sutton Town Centre Masterplan places heritage at the heart of the town's redevelopment and is the first Heritage Action Zone in London.

Strength 3: An emergent community arts scene

Sutton has an emerging arts scene with considerable community and voluntary activity taking place including the Wallington music Festival and Carshalton Arts Open Studios. Smaller groups meet regularly to enjoy their own heritage and culture such as the Afro-Caribbean Heritage Society. There is a growing body of diverse and creative talent within the borough and the professional arts and culture sector would benefit from greater exposure.

4. What the community said

Five, targeted engagement workshops about culture and heritage took place, across the Borough, in October 2017, facilitated by an organisation specialising in community engagement for culture. The summary of points raised from these workshops is set out below:

- The cultural offer is not as diverse or inclusive as it should or could be and there is a need to celebrate and provide more visibility to what is happening
- There is a need to maximise opportunities for external investment and additional advice and support to do this
- There is a need for affordable studio and performing space
- Links with schools could be developed e.g. Schools Art exhibition; use of schools' performance facilities by other groups
- There is a strong heritage offering in Sutton

- There is a need for an Arts and Culture Hub

5. Development opportunities for culture in Sutton

The principle, as referred to earlier, is to take the Sutton Plan approach. Working with all partners, including communities themselves, to make Sutton a more attractive place to live, work and play for all age groups, maximising our potential for cultural development, economic growth and making Sutton a more attractive place to visit.

Short Term

There is potential to increase and celebrate local diversity through better networking of groups that are already working actively within the Borough.

New opportunities for people of all ages and backgrounds to meet, share interests and exhibit will come from the refurbishment of the Central Library.

Medium Term

Work can continue, to support population health and wellbeing through the cultural activity that is on offer in the Borough such as: helping older people overcome isolation; helping young people perform better in education and gain more of the skills needed to find work; helping communities to build their resilience and social capital

Longer Term

Exploit the heritage offer to develop stronger high streets, independent shops, higher turnover for businesses and draw in more visitors.

The Cancer Hub brings with it an opportunity to develop interdisciplinary arts and research, attracting skills and talent to Sutton.

Sutton Town Centre will undergo a major overhaul over the next decade, transforming it into a destination fit for the next 30 years. This brings new opportunities to develop the Night time economy and to create pop up work spaces in the town centre. An approach will be taken to encourage developers to consider arts and creative industries in whatever they do so that every opportunity to support and develop a diverse range of cultural activity is seized.

6. Some options to increase the scope and pace of change

Increasing the cultural diversity and offer within a place is an organic process and it is led by the people who live and work there, not by any single organisation or sponsor. From a Council perspective, as an enabler of cultural development, steps have already been taken in response to the expressed needs of Sutton residents. These include working with Arts Network Sutton as a local networking group, with a focus on increasing and connecting the diverse talents and cultures that are emerging. The modernisation of the Library and Heritage services has already been mentioned, with the new Central library as one focal point where the community can come together. The Council will continue to be active in promoting cultural development and identifying opportunities to work with local communities to enrich the offer in Sutton.

There are other ways that places have developed their cultural scene. The majority of these involve investment, such as bringing in a cultural development partner. Arts groups themselves have been able to lobby and persuade private developers and commercial businesses to invest in them.

As a Council, funding available to invest directly in arts and cultural activity is limited and already committed. Connections and bids have been made however to Arts Council England, the GLA and the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) through the Libraries, Heritage and Arts service. Officers in the Environment, Housing and Regeneration directorate have also been successful in securing investment from the HLF, the GLA and other bodies to develop the heritage and cultural offer in Sutton. More opportunities will emerge with the town centre redevelopment.

A roadmap has been created which sets out some of the current, strategic milestones for change. It is likely that this roadmap will evolve over time.

The Framework for Cultural development which will be drafted later this year will expand upon the detail of activity already happening in Sutton and opportunities for further development.

7. Roadmap to a More Vibrant Cultural Scene in Sutton



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