

Committee: Council

Date: 2 February 2011

Agenda Item: 17

Wards: ALL

Subject: Sustainable Communities – Culture & Sport

Lead officer: Chris Lee, Director of Environment & Regeneration

Lead member(s): Councillor Martin Whelton, Cabinet Member for Community & Culture, and Councillor Andrew Judge, Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability & Regeneration.

Contact officer: Christine Parsloe, Leisure & Culture Development Manager

Recommendations:

- A. Note the contents of the report and recognise the value of Culture & Sport as a means to achieving wide-ranging social and community outcomes.
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PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Council receives a report at each Full Council meeting updating Members on the progress being made against one of the strategic objectives. This report provides the Council with an opportunity to review Culture & Sports provision, under the Sustainable Communities strategic objective. The report will review Culture & Sport service delivery against the historic priorities and then consider some of the challenges facing these services over the coming years as Merton seeks to put customers at the heart of service planning; deliver what customers want and need; provide value for money for residents, and provide the best quality and safe services for local people, all whilst delivering greater efficiencies through innovative solutions and ultimately contributing to reducing our costs as public finance reduces.
- 1.2 The key portfolio holders are Councillor Martin Whelton, Cabinet Member for Community & Culture, and Councillor Andrew Judge, Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability & Regeneration.
- 1.3 The Business Plan can be viewed at www.merton.gov.uk/businessplan

2. DETAILS

Background to Sustainable Communities – Culture & Sport

- 2.1 Merton's approach to date to culture and sport is outlined in its Cultural Strategy entitled a 'Better Future for All'. This strategy covered the period 2007- 2010.

- 2.2 As the period covered by the Cultural Strategy has now come to an end, it is timely to look at the council's priorities in terms of culture and sport in the context of a new period of reduced central and local government funding. Statutory duties apply for the provision of Library Services, Allotments and Cemeteries.
- 2.3 Cultural services and sport provide tools that can be used to deliver service outcomes for a range of target groups particularly in the areas of health & well-being and crime & disorder.
- 2.4 There are three key teams within the local authority that take ownership of, and drive forward the cultural agenda. These are the Libraries & Heritage Service, Greenspaces Team and Leisure & Culture Development Team. With their leadership they work with partners across the council, across the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) and with partners in the wider community as well as operating across national, regional and sub-regional networks.
- 2.5 The Leisure & Culture Development Manager is the Chair of the London Cultural Improvement Programme and is also the council's lead officer for the London 2012 Olympic & Paralympic Games as well as the Queen's Diamond Jubilee, 2012.

Performance relating to Sustainable Communities – Culture & Sport

- 2.6 In recent years Culture has been measured as part of the council's annual performance assessment, firstly as the Culture Block within the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) and then through the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA), as well as being a contributor to the councils Use of Resources and Value for Money Assessments.
- 2.7 In the 2009 CAA, Cultural Services neither stood out as being exemplar (green flag) nor unsatisfactory (red flag), it was therefore considered a good standard service provider in Merton. In 2010, just prior to the abolition of the CAA, the Audit Commission were encouraging Merton's Cultural Services to report on their exemplar work with a view to them being considered for the award of a green flag in 2010. The CAA was abolished in 2010 and therefore the green flag could not be awarded for our exemplar work, however the Audit Commission advised our LSP of the quality of our service on one of their visits. The submission is attached as Appendix A – The story of Culture in Merton, July 2010.
- 2.8 Culture and Sport, until recently, contributed to the National Indicator (NI) set as well as having local Indicators some of which were included in the Local Area Agreement (LAA) and others included within strategies and service plans. The NI measures became defunct in 2010, although some of them are still being collected and will continue to be used to inform our service planning whilst others will be replaced by more local measures.
- 2.9 Merton Cultural Services was one of the first to complete Regional Commentaries when they were introduced in 2006, whilst the Leisure & Culture Development and Greenspaces Teams were one of the first in London to utilise the Cultural Services Improvement Tool (CSIT) and teamed up with LB Bexley to carry out a reciprocal arrangement for a peer challenge in 2009.
- 2.10 Headline performance includes: -

- 4 of the boroughs parks & open spaces awarded Green Flag (a quality assurance measure for parks)
- The borough's three leisure centres hold the Quest assurance (a quality assurance measure for leisure centres)
- On average 69.5% of the Merton population has been consistently satisfied with the local cultural offer over the last 4 years (residents survey)
- National Indicator for Adult Participation in Sport & Physical Activity (NI 8) – average of 3 x 30 mins of physical activity per week has risen from 21.9% in 2006 to 24.1% in 2010, an increase of 2.2%.
- National Indicator for Engagement in the Arts (NI 11) has held relatively steady over the 3 years of measuring, starting at 49.7% in 2008, rising to 50.4% in 2009 and recently dropping back to 49.0% in 2010.
- Residents Satisfaction Survey 2010 highlights significant % increase in all residents saying Good – Excellent, Leisure & Sports Facilities, with a 5 % points increase over the previous survey.
- Residents satisfaction in Parks and Open Spaces has been consistently high, above 65%, for several years.
- National Indicator for Children & Young Peoples' Satisfaction with Parks and Play Areas (NI 199) was 63% in 2010.
- Residents satisfaction with Libraries: the Annual Residents Survey shows an increase of 14% satisfaction with the library service since 2004, to 66% in 2010.

Commentary and key achievements relating to Sustainable Communities – Culture & Sport

2.11 Cultural Services exemplar work and achievements are detailed in Appendix A – The Story of Culture in Merton, July 2010

2.12 Since this was produced the Council has:

- been short-listed for the 2011 Local Government Chronicle (LGC) Awards for their Public / Private Partnership working with the New Wimbledon Theatre (managed by Ambassador Theatre Group Ltd) and the Wimbledon Civic Theatre Trust
- transferred the lease on New Wimbledon Theatre to the Ambassador Theatre Group Ltd, who in Jan 2011 have been credited with being the No.1 theatre company in the country (Stage Listings, Jan 2011)
- finalised and awarded a 15-yr leisure centre management contract [with 7 year break clause] for the operation of the borough's 3 leisure centres to Greenwich Leisure Limited (GLL) this new contract will deliver a new youth zone at the Canons Leisure Centre and a new Health Spa in Wimbledon Leisure Centre
- delivered a 'free swimming programme' for under 16's and over 60's as part of a central Government funded initiative to increase participation in swimming by both target groups. This programme was curtailed due to the early withdrawal in July 2010 of the specific Government grant that funded it.
- issued £16,960 in small arts grants to local groups allowing them to deliver £251,764 of arts activities locally for community benefit. A 1,484% return on the grant investment made.
- however, been unable to deliver the Sustainable Merton Pools project (SuMP) due to the deletion of this Grant programme .

- successfully bid for £65k of London Marathon Trust money and passed Stage 1 of the Mayor's Play Sport Fund towards building a Regional Standard BMX track at St. Mark's Academy in Mitcham. This project is being delivered in partnership with the Academy and British Cycling
- successfully bid for £700k to cover the additional costs the borough will incur in providing the infrastructure support and responding to service demand as well as sub regional coordination during the Olympic & Paralympic Games in London 2012
- successfully acquired the promise of 5 Black Poplar trees, free of charge, from a benefactor for planting across the borough to celebrate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee (N.B. the Black Poplar is the Queen's favourite tree)
- helped ensure that 22 young people engaged in the 'Volunteer to Work' programme run by the Wimbledon Park Watersports Centre
- further improved the Participation in Sports & Physical Activity by adults from 22.7% in 2008 to 24.1% in 2010, as measured by NI 8.
- ensured that Culture and Sport as well as Parks and Recreation are included in the Local Development Framework (LDF)

2.13 The Libraries & Heritage Service:

- Contributes to culture in a number of ways, primarily reading, but access to information in all areas of knowledge supports individual growth and life chances. Leisure activities are a part of this and the service has a wide range of partnerships that help to deliver on the different activities, addressing all ages and different backgrounds.
- A focus on skills is prevalent at Pollards Hill Library, where Big lottery Funds have enabled activities that engage strongly with the local community.
- Community involvement is further fostered by formalising and expanding volunteers' involvement in specified roles, supporting staff to deliver core, professional services.
- The Service is very cost effective – it delivers the lowest cost per visit out of all the London boroughs, whereas customer satisfaction matches the London average.

Challenges ahead for Sustainable Communities – Culture & Sport

2.14 The future for the Culture and Sport sector is currently changing, as many of the programmes run locally were funded from central Government directly or through Culture & Sport quangos. Our third sector partners more often than not, delivered these programmes. For example the School Sports Partnership (SSP) find their provision reduced as a result of changes in Department for Education (DFE) Grant funding.

2.15 The Merton SSP is currently reducing staff to allow them to deliver some service through to August 2011 on a reduced budget. They are also trying to hold some funds back for next academic year to maintain some service provision, whilst they resolve the future position for this service. Merton SSP will be able to operate on a skeleton staff for next academic year and this will give them time to see what other opportunities and funding streams become available.

- 2.16 Many Non Departmental Public Bodies (NDPB's) have been affected - the Museums, Libraries and Archives (MLA) will no longer exist after 2012, but some of their retained services are likely to move into the Arts Council, which has itself seen a reduction in central Government funding and is now expected to rely more on private benefactors.
- 2.17 A merger of Sport England and UK Sport will take place with a view that this may also include the Youth Sports Trust. In addition London Councils is repatriating a proportion of all London Boroughs contributions to the London wide grants programme thereby reducing the financial demands on boroughs and in so doing will also reduce its support of the Cultural programmes it funded. The Council is working through a process of how such funds will be utilised. Some of these funds were previously used to support cultural activities in the borough.
- 2.18 At the same time Government funding to local authorities is being reduced and this could have an impact on the Culture & Sport provision in Merton at a time when the local voluntary and community groups are looking to the council for financial assistance to support them. For the end user, the customer, the resident, the child at school - in most cases they don't know who funds the activities and events they have enjoyed, they just know they have changed, been reduced or stopped.
- 2.19 What is clear is that Culture & Sport services are valued by the people that use them and benefit from them, be that a stroll in the park; borrowing a book; engaging in an activity or event; getting fit and being active or learning a new skill. As the services move forward with reduced financial and human resources, facing gaps in service provision due to reductions in central government funding, priorities will need to be agreed so that the resources are used providing the best value to the most needy and that elsewhere full cost recovery is achieved so that all our communities can still benefit from Culture & Sport services.
- 2.20 Culture & Sport in Merton has been delivered through partnership working across public sector bodies, third sector organisations and some of the private companies locally. As the services move forward it is clear that in order for the customers and community to continue to benefit from good standards and values, all partners will have to work harder and more closely than before.
- 2.21 The new Leisure Centre Management Contract with Greenwich Leisure Limited will ensure that both Wimbledon and Canons Leisure Centres increase and diversify their leisure offers in order to meet the change needs of local people, whilst they will work with the authority in relation to the future provision of Morden Park Pools.
- 2.22 One positive change is that the lottery funds originally established to benefit primarily Culture, sport and community activities is due to return to that remit and this should make more funds available through this source. It is very unlikely though that these will match the total of the combined reductions elsewhere.
- 2.23 The future will need to be more about joint/shared projects, value for money and innovation so that for less money more is generated.
- 2.24 One of the biggest immediate challenges will be how the borough maximises the benefits and impact of the London 2012 Olympic & Paralympic Games and Queen's Diamond Jubilee celebrations, whilst operating in the context of having to

make savings. Arrangements are in hand for the borough to lead on a sub-regional basis for the coordination of services and to establish a Borough Group Support Unit to assist with this.

- 2.25 Another of our challenges will be in ensuring that we do what we can to retain an acceptable level of quality library and leisure services, despite the impact of the public finance reductions. This will not be easy and difficult decisions in terms of balancing the needs of residents for our different services will be required going forward.

Reports of Overview and Scrutiny Commission / Panels

- 2.26 Last year the Sustainable Communities O&S Panel completed a Task Group looking into Parks and Open Spaces within Merton and made 14 recommendations to Cabinet. The Cabinet accepted the Task Group paper and a report was received at the December 2010 Panel informing members on the progress towards achieving these recommendations. Panel members agreed that Friends of Parks groups needed to be promoted as widely as possible.
- 2.27 At this meeting, the Panel also heard a report on the Libraries Service and were updated on progress since the task group review of 2007. Panel members asked to be kept up to date with issues such as changes in library opening hours.
- 2.28 A report on the Wandle Valley Green Grid Area Framework was received at the November 2010 Panel meeting, which the panel accepted. Members also unanimously agreed to ask Cabinet to approach the other Boroughs making up the Wandle Valley and for all these Boroughs (Wandsworth, Merton, Sutton & Croydon) to lobby their MP's to change the law so that the Wandle Valley Park benefits from the levy paid, by Council Tax payers, to the Lee Valley. This change requires an Act of Parliament. The Framework should act as a lever to access funding for a variety of projects.

3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 3.1 The Culture & Sport lead service delivery teams of Libraries Services; Greenspaces and the Leisure & Culture Development Teams are all currently reviewing their service areas so as to address both the council's financial requirements at the same time as developing new ways of delivering services through the council's transformation programme.

4 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

- 4.1 Consultation on Cultural Services and Sport are part of almost everything we do as we seek to deliver services that meet national, regional and local agendas, whilst delivering clear outcomes and benefits for local people to a standard that is appropriate, acceptable, accessible and affordable. This will continue appropriately as we move forward.
- 4.2 Examples of such consultation include:
- Four of the boroughs parks and open spaces have been awarded Green Flags (a quality assurance for parks) and all three leisure centres are Quest accredited (a quality assurance scheme for leisure centres). All quality

assurance accreditations have customer consultation and satisfaction as part of the criteria.

- In the annual residents survey, which includes a range of culture and sport service specific measures.
- Feedback forms from activities and events.
- Public meetings for engaging local people in Culture & Sport initiatives and activities.
- Public meetings, where services are proposed for major change.

5 TIMETABLE

5.1 None for the purposes of this report.

6 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no financial, resource or property implications arising from this information report. All related services are delivered within existing resources or are delivered in partnership or external funding/resources are secured.

7 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are no legal or statutory implications arising from this information report.

8 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

8.1 There are no specific human rights, equalities or community cohesion implications arising from this information report, however it is noted that the Cultural Services and Sport offer can be used to address Human Rights, Equalities and Community Cohesion agendas.

9 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are no specific crime and disorder implications arising from this information report, however it is noted that the Cultural Services and Sport offer can be used to address Crime and Disorder agendas.

10 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are no risk management or health and safety implications arising from this information report.

11 APPENDICES

A. The Story of Culture in Merton, July 2010

12 BACKGROUND PAPERS

Resident Survey, 2010
Active People Survey, 2010
Taking Part Survey, DCMS, 2010

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Useful links

Merton Council's Web site: <http://www.merton.gov.uk>

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<http://www.merton.gov.uk/legal.htm>

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The Story of Culture in Merton July 2010

Introduction

Merton's natural environment is one of our main attractions. We have more than 65 parks and open spaces, 11 nature reserves and 17 allotment sites. Wimbledon & Mitcham Commons also form an important part of the open space in the borough and are a unique feature of the area. Four of our parks have been awarded the prestigious 'Green Flag', while our annual festival at Cannizaro Park was a finalist in the 2008 MJ Awards, Public Private Partnership.

Merton has a strong cultural heritage with the River Wandle being ideally suited to the textile industry. In the 14th century the Merton based textile industry on the river started, developing and expanding through the ages. At the beginning of the 19th century Edmund Littler took over the Merton Abbey works for the production of silks and fine fabrics and by the second half of the 19th century the market for exotic goods, silks and printed cottons had expanded and a large number of the products sold at the fashionable Liberty's store in London were made at the Merton Abbey Mills works. During the second half of the 19th century the greatest designer of his day was William Morris. In 1881, Morris took over a site north of Merton Abbey Works - which is now the Savacentre, and opened up a factory to accommodate vegetable dyeing, workshops for cloth printing, textile and carpet weaving and tapestry making. Upon purchasing the site, Morris refused to pull down any of the existing buildings and apart from some minor alterations they remained unchanged until the works closed in 1940.

Merton is also proud of its sporting heritage being the home to the All England Lawn Tennis Club and the annual Grand Slam Tennis Championships as well as the being the home to the oldest cricket club, Mitcham Cricket Club and the oldest Women's Hockey Club, The Wimbledon Club. In the arts, Merton boasts the New Wimbledon Theatre, which celebrates its centenary year this year. New Wimbledon Theatre and Studio are two of the region's leading live entertainment venues, showcasing the best West End, local and touring productions from across the UK each and every year. The internationally renowned Polka Children's Theatre opened its doors in 1979 here in Merton and since then it has been inspiring, stimulating and engaging children through theatre, often for the first time. Polka strives to stir the emotions, spark the imagination and, most of all, entertain. Over 100,000 children a year come to Polka Theatre. The University of the Arts also has a Wimbledon base. The academic provision of the Wimbledon College of Art is divided into three Schools - Foundation Studies, Fine Art and Theatre. These deliver a suite of specialist art and design courses ranging from pre-foundation and foundation to undergraduate and postgraduate, as well as providing research supervision for students undertaking a research programme of study.



'Cultural services' means many things to many people. In Merton, our residents have told us that for them cultural services means ...

"... the provision of a range of cultural activities, which includes the arts, sport, leisure, parks and open spaces, children's playgrounds and activities for teenagers, libraries and heritage as well as activities that acknowledge and celebrate different backgrounds. In short it covers everything people of all ages do in their spare time!" ⁽¹⁾

The 2006 to 2015, Community Plan acknowledged the value of culture to the community and recognised the benefits that cultural activities bring to improving people's quality of life, how culture helps to deliver the Local Strategic Partnership's (Merton Partnership) strategic objectives and outcomes, in particular ...

- Bringing together diverse communities to participate in sports, arts, learning, heritage, events and activities
- Developing a greater understanding of each other, showing mutual respect, recognising different customs, heritage and beliefs and ensuring we live in harmony with each other
- Contributing to the quality of life of the people of Merton.

Merton's first Cultural Strategy (2007-10) – "*A Better Future For All*" (www.merton.gov.uk/leisure/culturalstrategy.htm) set out ambitions across the four key themes of: - *Learning; Things To Do; Places To Go; Cultures & Communities* and three common principles that came from the consultation as to the delivery of activities such that they must be: - *Affordable; Accessible and Communicated* so that we *Promote Culture To All*.

With these themes and common principles in mind and the vision of creating a "*Better Future For All*" through culture, the improvement journey began knowing that success would be dependent on all the people in all our communities joining together to make it happen, thus enhancing the quality of life in Merton.

Culture and the Golden Thread

Merton Partnership's strong commitment to culture is evident at the highest level. It features prominently in Merton's community strategy and in our Local Area Agreement. The refreshed Community Plan 2009 - 2019 recognises Culture and the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games as one theme that cuts across the five themes of the plan: -

- Sustainable Communities & Transport
- Safer & Stronger Communities
- Healthier Communities
- Older People
- Children & Young People

The Community Plan highlights the importance of the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games for the people of Merton, recognising that we will use the opportunity of the Cultural Olympiad to showcase Merton talent and innovation whilst reflecting the themes of the 2012 Games: -

- Celebrating Merton and welcoming the world
- Inspiring and involving young people
- Generating a positive legacy



It will inspire people who visit, work and live in the borough to participate in a range of cultural activities, which reflect and celebrate our diverse communities. It will also maximise and promote the sporting and cultural traditions of the borough linking into the delivery of the outcomes set out in the Cultural Strategy. In this way we will increase participation and enable all those who visit, live or work in Merton to benefit from the London 2012 Games experience and Merton's involvement in the Games as well as the wider cultural and social benefits and outcomes.

Within the original Local Area Agreement (LAA) there were 5 specific performance indicators relating to Culture: -

Outcome - Children & Young People – Enjoy & Achieve

- Children & young people's participation in a minimum of 2 hours high quality PE & school sport per week

Outcome – Adults Engaged in Lifelong Learning

- People with basic skill needs undertaking an Online course followed by an Information Advice and Guidance (IAG) session

Outcome - Reduced Obesity in Adults

- NI 8 Percentage of adults aged 16+ participating in at least 30 minutes moderate intensity sport and active recreation
- Number of people engaged in Cultural Olympiad through sport and active recreation

Outcome - Improving Mental Well-Being

- Number of people engaged in Cultural Olympiad through arts activities and events

In addition to these there were many more LAA and National indicators where culture can be used to assist with the delivery including: -

- Increasing the number of people engaged in formal volunteering
- NI 55 - Obesity in primary school aged pupils – reception year
- NI 56 – Obesity in primary school aged pupils – year 6
- NI 110 - Young people's participation in positive activities
- NI 1 – percentage of people who believe people from different backgrounds get on well together in their local area
- NI 2 – percentage of people who feel that they belong to their neighbourhood
- Percentage of older people who feel that their local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on
- NI 138 – satisfaction of people over 65 with both home and their neighbourhood.

Culture is clearly a crucial and valuable tool in 'Bridging the Gap' – the stated objective of the LAA – and cultural service providers have been proactive and innovative in using resources in a way that provides cultural opportunities to people living in the more deprived parts of the borough.

Co-ordination arrangements

Responsibility for culture in Merton is not managed by a single thematic partnership. Instead, the Merton Partnership took the view that culture is a truly cross cutting theme that has to be 'owned' by each partnership. To support this approach, officers and partners with direct links to cultural services, sit on all areas of the Merton Partnership. For example, the Artistic Director of the renowned Polka Theatre is a member of the Merton Partnership representing the 3rd Sector. Officers across the organisation come together in a cultural services officers group to share ideas & knowledge, plan and co-



ordinate delivery. Within the council there is a strong 'can do' culture, with officers from different departments and service areas, for example libraries, arts development and open spaces, routinely working together and sharing expertise to deliver innovative projects.

Politically, all the parties recognise the value of culture in Merton and understand the benefits that culture can provide for the people of Merton and the wider community.

Delivery

Cultural services are delivered in Merton with and through partners, be that voluntary, private or other statutory sector partners. We all come together to pool both our expertise and resources as none of us have a lot of money to spend. The key to our success is fundamentally how we use the money and the physical assets we have and how we work to our strengths to bring benefits in the east of the borough as well as borough-wide in order to 'Bridge the Gap', whilst serving all of our community.

Here are some examples that exemplify our work, showing innovation, value for money, partnership working and all in all delivering a 'Better Future For All' in an affordable, accessible and inclusive way.

New Wimbledon Theatre

Highly Commended, MJ Awards 2010 – Public Private Partnership.

Three partner agencies bring their strengths to the table to combine investment in facilities with outreach programmes, resulting in the delivery of high quality arts experiences to all, especially those who might not otherwise engage thereby 'Raising Aspirations Through The Arts'.

The Wimbledon Civic Theatre Trust (WCTT) raises the funds, Merton Council provides the theatre, capital improvement funding and the contacts to the people and the New Wimbledon Theatre (NWT), part of the Ambassador Theatre Group (ATG) Ltd, provides capital improvement funding, operates the theatre and employs the staff to deliver the shows, outreach programmes and community benefits.

In 2010 the New Wimbledon Theatre (NWT) celebrates it's Centenary. It will also celebrate a successful tri-partite partnership that delivers opportunities to enjoy exciting and innovative performances providing exhilarating experiences through theatre, drama, writing and the wider cultural offer.

Outcomes: Engagement in the arts (NI 11); Use of resources; Value for money; Children & Young People - Be Healthy; Enjoy and Achieve; Positive Contribution

Bookfest

A regular returner for a small arts grant of £1,500 against a total project cost of £20k this group has established a reputation in the publishing world that now attracts key authors to the borough to present their works and provide a literary festival. Authors included in 2010's festival: Salman Rushdie, Anthony Gormley, Tony Parsons, Will Hutton, Lynda La Plante and Maggie O' Farrell. All schools in borough invited to be part of the writing competition and Bookfest have held events in Mitcham Library.

Outreach work takes place in local schools as well as a borough-wide writing competition and a partnership with the Polka Theatre for children who run their Word Festival at the same time.



Outcomes: Engagement in the arts (NI 11); Value for money; Children & Young People - Be Healthy; Enjoy and Achieve; Positive Contribution

Bridging the Learning Facilities Gap

Merton residents will soon be reaping the rewards of some innovative partnership work between Merton Adult Education and the local voluntary sector.

In September 2008, Merton Adult Education was awarded a bid for £111,000 for the 'Bridging the Learning Facilities Gap in Deprived Areas' project to work in partnership with the Merton Voluntary Service Council, St Marks Family Centre and the Commonside Community Development Trust to enhance learning opportunities for residents who live in the east of the borough. The money came from the Learning and Skills Council.

The cash was used to enhance learning in deprived areas in the east of Merton, refurbishing classrooms at community and voluntary centres. Future funding will go towards providing adult education classes for residents facing financial difficulties, as well as problems due to disability, ethnicity, belief, sexuality, age or gender.

Training and meeting rooms for use by community groups and local businesses were upgraded in Vestry Hall, whilst St Mark's Family Centre built a classroom to put on courses for the community including family learning courses, IT and numeracy and literacy.

Outcome: Lifelong Learning delivered close to where people live

Mobile Youth Activity Bus

Seven young people from Mitcham worked with Merton Youth Service Detached Team to make successful bid for £61,000 to fund a mobile youth activity bus.

The young people identified the need to make youth service provision, information, activities and advice more accessible to young people in Merton and came up with the idea of a mobile youth bus.

The activity bus is set to hit the streets of Merton later this year. On board, young people will have access to laptops, information about sexual health, learning and career opportunities and events, music mixing decks and recording equipment, and Playstation 3 and Nintendo Wiis for entertainment. It will also serve as a space for young people to relax and discuss the issues that affect them.

Outcomes: Children & Young People - Be Healthy; Enjoy and Achieve; Positive Contribution

Film London

Merton's Arts Development team was approached by Film London to be a part of the city-wide 'Film London in 90 seconds' scheme. The prize offered by Film London included a £300 cash prize for the winner and a screening of the film at ITV's Best of Boroughs awards to be held at BAFTA in July

Individual boroughs could choose their own theme and Merton chose 'Bridging The Gap'.

Merton's winning film was entitled 'Timeless Fun' and was based on two characters dressed in historic tennis clothing taking the tennis theme through the borough. Following its successful award and due to its individuality and content, officers approached the All



England Lawn Tennis Club (AELTC) to see if they would show it during Wimbledon fortnight, needless to say 'Timeless Fun' has been shown daily on the big screen at the AELTC throughout the 2010 Wimbledon Tennis Championships.

Outcomes: Engagement in the arts (NI 11); Value for Money; Positive Contribution.

Artists Studios

The borough has 3 outlets offering 25 artist studios, which are leased to the Association for Cultural Advancement of Visual Artists (ACAVA).

In negotiating the lease ACAVA benefit from low rentals in return for 254 free community hours of artist activity per annum for the council to determine what projects it wishes to support.

In 2010, one such project is the Pollards Hill Library Arts Sculpture, whereby a professional artist works with local young people to create a sculpture for the community.

Outcomes: Engagement in the arts (NI 11); Community Engagement; Value for Money

Partnership Working to deliver Better Outcomes through Libraries

The Library Service has engaged more intensively to deliver services with the result that greater expertise has been brought to bear, new skills are introduced, efficiencies are found and improved targeting of audiences is achieved. Examples are:

- Wellbeing services are being delivered through libraries with improved health information points, drop-in and group sessions aimed at people with mild mental health issues. Partner agencies are the PCT, St George's Trust and Imagine
- A Children's Centre is operating at Raynes Park library and has taken over storytelling sessions, baby rhyme-time sessions and craft activities from library staff.
- As part of the Big Lottery funded project at Pollards hill library, a range of partners are helping to deliver outcomes agreed as part of the community engagement plan to increase usage generally as well as by specific target groups (BME, lone parents), improve health outcomes, improve skills levels. Partners include Merton Adult Education, PCT, local community groups, the Exchange Group (the latter is a private company based in three libraries delivering computer based learning; they contribute to some of our LAA targets)
- Volunteer Centre Merton (VCM) was commissioned to run the library home visits service in 2008. Since then, they have maintained the already high satisfaction in place, increased user numbers and identified new services (books aimed at people with dementia).
- VCM are also managing the Library Service's volunteer strategy where roles have been identified where volunteers add value to the work library staff do.

Outcomes: Value for Money; Partnership Working; Increased Volunteering Opportunities; Community Engagement

Merton's cultural Olympiad Events

The Olympic and Paralympic Games come to London in 2012 with Merton hosting the Olympic Tennis event. At the closing ceremonies of the 2008 Games in Beijing the official



handover took place and London was able to start celebrating the four years prior to the 2012 Games, known as the Cultural Olympiad.

In Merton, we welcomed this with a number of events and activities:-

- Song-writing competition for primary school aged children delivered by Merton Music Foundation. The winning song was 'It's a Beam' written by Ronke Oyerinde of Cranmer School and was performed by schools across the borough on the 17th September 2008 at the Paralympic Handover time as well as being performed by the school choir at that evenings Full Council meeting. The song also formed part of the music accompaniment to an Olympic themed Firework show in the borough on the 5th November.
- On the Olympic handover time, the bell-ringers of Christchurch in Colliers Wood rang out the church bells and a large Olympic Flag was passed over people's heads at the annual Merton Abbey Mills Kidfest event before being lead off by Jack Binstead, an emerging young wheelchair racer from south-london along the 2012 metres from the Merton Abbey Mills along the Wandle Trail through Morden Hall Park and up through Morden town centre to be raised by the Mayor of Merton, Councillor Martin Whelton. On the flags journey along the route it was carried by different community groups young and old and to assist the Mayor and Jack at the flag raising ceremony were Merton's London Youth Games Gold medal winning Girl's Cricket Team and Jonathan Hotchkiss, a local elite triathlete.
- On the Paralympic handover day, Greenwich Leisure Limited (GLL) organised a disability sports day with guest appearances from international wheelchair racer, Tushar Patel and international Paralympic skier, Tim Farr. Both athletes also visited Cranmer School to meet Ronke and hear the school sing 'It's a Beam' at the Paralympic handover time.
- The Grand Finale for 2008 occurred at the end of September when Merton joined in with the London-wide handover celebrations by putting on a South London Cultural Festival at Wimbledon Park, which welcomed thousands of people to a free cultural and sporting event.
- In 2009, a cultural Olympiad event was held in Colliers Wood delivered with 'Making Colliers Wood Happy'. The event in the local park had sports and arts activities including tennis, basketball, football, arts & crafts, music, dance, etc. It contributed to the park gaining its first Green Flag
- In 2010, following a theme of having cultural events in all our town centres during the Cultural Olympiad officers have joined with 'My Raynes Park' to establish a similar new event at Cottenham Park on 10th July. This event will form part of a wider cultural festival in Raynes Park delivered by local people and businesses.

Outcome: People engaging in the Cultural Olympiad

Traveller Exhibition

In 2008, the heritage services combined with the schools department to produce a qualitative display including photographs and commentary to promote Merton's traveller community. The traveller community was involved in making contributions to the exhibition and many of the visitors were excited to see their families mentioned and represented.



The Story Of Culture In Merton
July 2010

Outcome: Community Engagement

Celebrating Age Festival

Age UK organises the Celebrating Age Festival with support from the council. Since its inception in 2003, it has run annually increasing its range of activities, participating organisations and visitors' year on year. It is unique, one of its kind and aims to raise the profile of older people, celebrate the diversity of our community, and encourage people to remain healthy both physically and mentally.

While many of the activities are fun based (e.g. belly dancing) and provide social interaction, other activities support information and learning (e.g. health & well-being; silver surfing).

Over a third of the participants come from the more disadvantaged parts of the borough and a small increase in participation from BAME communities (8-9%) was recorded in 2009.

Intergenerational activities are also promoted (e.g. local students assisting with art and computer classes in libraries). BAME communities provide activities and one comment received after visiting the local Ahmadiyya Mosque was: " It made me realise how blinkered we can be".

Outcomes: Community Engagement; Older People's Well-being; Older People (NI 139)

Peace Week

Peace Week is a successful programme of events for the whole community, celebrating diversity, equality and social harmony co-ordinated by council officers and delivered in partnership with voluntary and community organisations. It provides an opportunity for people of different backgrounds, ages, faiths and cultures to participate in events that promote peace, community cohesion and community safety.

The borough was 'Highly Commended' by the London Peace Alliance for Peace Week, 2009. The events included a workshop at South Wimbledon Youth Club (facilitated by the founder of the STOP campaign) to deter young people from carrying a knife and being involved in gang activity. A Family Fun Day held in Mitcham was an intergenerational event that showcased local talent, with participants coming from diverse backgrounds.

The most inspirational aspect of Peace Week 2009 was the mosaic plaque that was unveiled during the Peace Garden naming ceremony. Young people on reparation assisted in the design and production of the plaque and found the activity both interesting and fulfilling.

Outcomes: Community Cohesion; Community Engagement; Community Safety

Mitcham Carnival

One of the borough's biggest and most established outdoor events which attracts up to 10,000 people each year. An impressive community-group parade sets off from Figges Marsh and makes its way through Mitcham Town Centre to the Carnival site on Three King's Piece.

This is a free event and epitomises the spirit of 'community' - local groups and organisations come together to provide and showcase different cuisines, dance, sports,



activities, singing and music (for which they are allocated time in the main arena to perform to the crowds), history, heritage, arts and craft, etc.

Outcomes: Engagement in the Arts; Value for Money; Children and Young People - Enjoy and Achieve; Positive Contribution; Partnership Working; Community Engagement; Older People

POST Exhibition

Collection of local artists who have formed their own group and are producing art exhibitions in three Merton parks using a variety of contemporary art forms and works.

The parks being used are in the east of the borough, thus contributing to 'Bridging the Gap'. Merton contributed £1,500 against a project cost of £16k. On the back of Merton's contribution POST were able to access money from the Arts Council.

Outcomes: Engagement in the Arts (NI 11); Value for Money

'Ma Kelly' Plays

ATTIC Theatre Company is a regular funded group by Merton council (£3.5k per annum). This company writes and produces bespoke productions primarily for older people. Some of their most recent works include: -

- 'Ma Kelly – Doorstep' which was a play showing older people the issues around doorstep crime
- 'Ma Kelly – Playing With Fire' which tackled the issue of having smoke alarms and was performed to older people in conjunction with the local Fire Service who issued free smoke alarms
- 'Ma Kelly – Goes to The Games' is currently in production and is a play about staying active and healthy linked to the London 2012 Games.

Our funding allows ATTIC to access Arts Council England Grants. They also work in the borough in a local school working with refugee children and within the voluntary sector with older people in singing workshops.

Outcomes: Older people (NI 139); Safer & Stronger Communities; Engagement in the Arts (NI 11); Children & Young People - Positive Contribution

Merton Active Plus

This well established programme offers children & young people's short course holiday activity programmes. With a range of arts, sports, music, drama and cultural activities children and young people get to try out something new during their spare time.

One of our senior staff at the Wimbledon Park Watersports Centre first started sailing on one such course years ago and is now employed by the council running the centre. Year on year new young people take up sailing, canoeing and windsurfing at the lake, some of which gain watersports qualifications and return year after year progressing from participant to volunteer to casual employee teaching the next generation watersports.

Outcomes: Children & Young People – Enjoy & Achieve; Positive Activities

Wandle Valley Regional Park

The Partners in the Wandle Valley Regional Park consist of:



- The linking of the London Boroughs of Merton, Sutton, Croydon and Wandsworth
- South London Partnership
- GLA
- Natural England
- Environment Agency
- Mitcham Common Conservators
- National Trust
- Wandle Forum
- Pro-Active South London
- Groundwork Trust

The overarching vision for a Wandle Valley Regional Park is:

“Our shared vision is for an innovative, sustainable and high quality regional park in the Wandle Valley that is easily accessible, with a rich and thriving biodiversity, offering recreational, landscape, heritage, cultural and resource management benefits in which local people and businesses can take pride and ownership”

There are many cultural activities and events within the area for this new regional park including an annual Wandle Valley Festival; Merton Abbeyfest; etc.

Outcomes: Getting people active; Celebration and greater understanding of what the River Wandle has and does offer

POLKA Theatre

An internationally renowned children’s theatre based in Merton. Polka receive a core grant from the council of £30k per annum which provides a contribution towards a community officer; education workers and towards their core business thus providing a solid basis for them from which they can raise other funding including a significant grant from Arts Council England to operate their business.

They deliver work into the east of the borough through a community outreach officer who aims to attract audiences from that part of the borough to the theatre, thus increasing community engagement in this area of the borough.

Outcomes: Children & Young People - Be Healthy; Enjoy and Achieve; Positive Contribution

Merton in Bloom

The annual 'Merton in Bloom' competition, forms part of the Royal Horticultural Society's 'London in Bloom' and 'Britain in Bloom' competitions and encourages and highlights good horticultural achievement in local schools, resident and community gardens, on allotment sites and commercial/business premises, in parks and open spaces and on public house exteriors - the main objective being to emphasise the floral beauty within the borough.

To enhance the competition and engage a wider audience, we have further added a children's drawing and adult’s photography competition to the categories this year. The competition is free to enter and winners are awarded trophies and certificates at an awards ceremony each year.

Outcomes: Healthier Communities; Children and Young People - Enjoy and Achieve; Positive Contribution; Older People; Community Engagement



River and Cloth Project (www.riverandcloth.co.uk)

A Heritage Lottery Funded Project of circa £140k over 2 yrs is being delivered in partnership with local people, community groups, libraries and schools.

This project focuses on the enormous contribution and worldwide influence of William Morris, Liberty & Co and the Merton textile industry based on the river Wandle. The workshops look at practical textile practices and the history associated with them including the immigrant workers, the Huguenots, and their influence on the crafts as they developed.

This project is increasing local understanding and raising awareness of Merton's textile heritage and recognising the contribution of immigrant and refugee workers on the development of Merton's textile industry.

Outcomes: Community Engagement; Children and Young People - Enjoy and Achieve; Older People; Community Cohesion.

London Youth Games

Annual competition programme involving all London Boroughs culminating in the finale weekend in July each year.

Merton uses volunteer team managers for each of the teams and links as many sports as possible to local sports clubs. Competitors must either live or go to school in the borough.

Every year local children and young people get involved through their sports clubs, schools or as individuals and try their best against the best in London and every year some of the Merton competitors rank among the medal winners.

Outcomes: Children & Young People Enjoy & Achieve; Value for Money; Volunteering

Wimbledon Common Cannizaro Park Festival (www.cannizaroparkfestival.com)

The Wimbledon Common Cannizaro Park Festival has been taking place in the walled gardens of Cannizaro Park for almost a decade now. Featuring music, dance and theatrical acts – both famous and local, the festival continues to draw a healthy audience.

In 2008, this project was a finalist in the MJ Awards for public, private partnership. In 2009 the economic downturn meant that the then promoter Cannizaro Event Ltd could not afford to operate and the show couldn't go on, but back it has come for 2010 with a new promoter, BSL, a local Merton business, which has taken on operating this unique event at no direct cost to the Council.

Outcomes: Engagement in the Arts (NI 11); Value For Money.

"Life in St Helier" Film Project

This project was developed as a partnership between Merton Council's Neighbourhood Renewal and Arts Development teams. The aim of the film was to see how people get along in the St. Helier Ward. Asking - is there a sense of community here and what does that mean for local residents?

The film includes interviews with St. Helier residents from school children to the elderly; local police; street wardens; Merton College; the Mosque; local churches; businesses and voluntary organisations.



Supported by Mayor of London, Boris Johnson, who said: "I am delighted to lend my support to the Life in St. Helier DVD that was produced by the Neighbourhood Renewal Team and the people of St. Helier.

There are many hidden cultural stories throughout our city, which tell us as much about our identity and history as the grand displays of institutions like the Tate Modern and the National Gallery. I am thrilled to find Londoners using their local community for artistic inspiration and hope this project will be cherished by the residents of St Helier."

A screening of the film took place at Wimbledon Odeon in July 2009.

Outcomes: Engagement in the Arts (NI 11); Positive Contribution; Community Cohesion.

New Leisure Centre Management Contract

As part of the new Long-Term Leisure Centre Management Contract we have produced a robust Services Specification, which ensures the contractors meet various service standards and quality assurance measures as well as delivering against wider strategic outcomes for Merton as identified in the local Community Plan.

Some of the areas included are: -

- Pricing - rates must ensure inclusiveness for all
- Environmental Improvements – reduction in CO₂ emissions
- Improving Health levels & reducing obesity – Increase in physical activity & sport
- Benefiting target groups – increase in participation of target group members
- Quality of Services – improving customer satisfaction levels & independent assessment levels

The regular performance monitoring of service standards and quality measures are linked to a payment mechanism and deductions regime with the reporting of contractor's delivery of the wider Merton Partnership Community Plan outcomes being rewarded through an annual over-performance bonus.

Outcomes: Value for Money; Children & Young People; Healthier Communities; Older People.

South Park Gardens

South Park Gardens is a triangular shaped park, 2.4 hectares in size, situated near Wimbledon town centre. It lies between Trinity, Dudley and Kings Roads within the South Park Gardens Conservation Area. It was designed in the Beaux Arts style with serpentine paths, circular flowerbeds, trees, shrubs and ornamental planting beds. It has a granite drinking fountain and horse trough. The Gardens were opened in September 1901 and have been restored using a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund, re-opening in June 2009. They are registered on the English Heritage Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Interest as Grade II. Large numbers of people use the Gardens every day and there is a very active Friends Group (the Friends of South Park Gardens), who organise regular events and activities for local residents.

Outcomes: Community Engagement; Community Cohesion; Value for Money



Sustainable Merton Pools (SuMPs)

An opportunity arose to bid for capital investment for the borough's swimming pools as part of the Government's Free Swimming Programme. Merton bid to the Swimming Pools Modernisation Fund and successfully moved through to award stage.

This submission was the only outer London borough to be taken through to final award and was primarily due to the innovation of our proposal.

The proposal which costs £850k with (£550k from the programme) is to introduce a number of energy saving devices into our three leisure centres to reduce the energy consumption primarily linked to the swimming pools. The reduction in energy use would save money and the proposal was that the value of the savings would be split 3 ways – 1/3rd to the leisure centre contractor to re-invest in front of house improvements; 1/3rd to the council and the final 1/3rd to the leisure contractor to implement targeted activity programmes to increase participation in sport and physical activity.

Although the new Government has withdrawn the 'Free Swimming' programme from 31st July this year the council is still awaiting a decision on the Modernisation Fund.

Outcomes: Sustainable Merton; Value for Money

Wimbledon Music Festival

In 2009 Wimbledon Music Festival was awarded a small arts grant of £1,500 towards an overall project cost of £70k. They wanted to run a music festival primarily in the west of the borough. Officers negotiated with them so that council funding was used to take an elite musician to other audiences across the borough.

Professional classical violinist, Jack Glatzer, performed impromptu concerts at Wimbledon Station; Wimbledon Piazza; Mitcham Fair Green; in Mitcham's public houses; at Morden Tube Station and Raynes Park Station.

He also did two workshops in schools – one special school and one primary school in Morden. When his day with us across the borough was done he performed in the evening to a paying audience.

Outcomes: Engagement in the Arts (NI 11); Value for Money

OUTPUTS

There are a number of regularly collected outputs that are used to inform cultural services in Merton including: -

Annual Resident survey results

% satisfaction with	2008	2009	% improvement
Parks	66%	68%	Up 2%
Libraries	64%	66%	Up 2%
Leisure and Sports facilities	39%	40%	Up 1%
Cultural opportunity	68%	70%	Up 2%



Place survey

% satisfaction with	2008-9	London average	National average
Parks and open spaces	79%	72%	69%
Theatre and galleries	52%	39%	43%
Sport and leisure facilities	44%	46.4%	46.2%
Libraries	66%	67.6%	69%

Active people survey

	2008	2009	% improvement
NI 008 % adults participating in 30 minutes sport 3 or more times a week	22.7%	23.1%	Up 0.4%
NI 011 % adults engaged in the arts	Not measured	50.4%	

Awards

Year	Award	Category	Outcome
2007	Municipal Journal Awards	Public Private Partnership	Winner – The Hub @ Tooting & Mitcham
2008	World Leisure Innovation Awards		Short-listed – The Hub @ Tooting & Mitcham
2008	Municipal Journal Awards	Public Private Partnership	Finalist – Cannizaro Festival
2010	Municipal Journal Awards	Public Private Partnership	Highly Commended – ‘Raising Aspirations through the Arts’

Conclusion

Cultural services provides a valuable service locally by...

- Bringing together diverse communities to participate in sports, arts, learning, heritage, events and activities
- Developing a greater understanding of each other
- Showing mutual respect, recognising different customs, heritage and beliefs and ensuring we live in harmony with each other
- Contributing to personal growth and the quality of life
- Delivering value for money services

