

Committee: Council

Date: 6th February 2013

Agenda Item: 7

Wards: ALL

Subject: Strategic Objective Review – Sustainable Communities (with a focus on Libraries and Culture)

Lead Officers: Christine Parsloe
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Lead Member: Councillor Nick Draper
Cabinet Member for Community and Culture

Forward Plan reference number: N/A

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Recommendations:

A. That Council consider the content of the report.

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 Council, at its meeting on 7 March 2012, approved the Business Plan 2012-2016.
- 1.2 The Business Plan represents the way in which the council will deliver the Community Plan, which is grouped into five strategic themes (sustainable communities, safer and stronger communities, healthier communities, older people, children and young people). Performance against these themes, plus an additional theme of corporate capacity, is monitored by Council.
- 1.3 Each meeting of Council will receive a report updating on progress against one of these strategic themes. This report provides Council with an opportunity to consider progress against the priorities that are to be delivered under the Sustainable Communities strategic theme, with a focus on Libraries and Culture.
- 1.4 The vision for the Sustainable Communities strategic theme is:
“We want the environment, economic and related services to build resilience and stability and enhance the quality of life in Merton.”⁽¹⁾

References:

- (1) Merton Council Community Plan 2009-19
- (2) DCMS, Taking Part Survey, Quarter 2 Release – December 2012
- (3) DCMS, Taking Part Survey, Quarter 1 Release – September 2012

- 1.5 The Business Plan objectives for the Sustainable Communities strategic theme are:
- Work to support economic growth, by increasing jobs and skills
 - Work to increase the supply of housing
 - Work towards carbon reduction
 - Work to increase investment
 - Work to improve sustainable transport provision
- 1.6 Performance against key indicators is included in the Community & Housing and Environment & Regeneration dashboards. The link to the latest performance is attached at Appendix 1.
- 1.7 The Community Plan, 2009 -19, recognises the importance of Culture and the London 2012 Olympic & Paralympic Games as a cross cutting theme, stating:
 “The Merton Cultural Olympiad will showcase Merton talent and innovation and will reflect the key themes of the London 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 will reflect and celebrate our diverse communities.” ⁽¹⁾
- The Plan links to the borough’s Cultural Strategy, ‘A Better Future for All’ drawing on its key objectives in Learning, Things to do, Places to go and Cultures and Communities and its key principles of Affordability, Accessibility and Communication.
- The Community Plan recognises that delivery of the Cultural Strategy using the embodiment of the three core principles
- “... maximises the existing funding and resources within the borough. It will also ensure that the activities and initiatives it supports are available and known by everyone in the borough. This will lead to wider participation and enable all those who visit, live or work in Merton to benefit ...” ⁽¹⁾
- 1.8 This report does not seek to cover all of cultural services but rather focus on those recent activities, initiatives and programmes delivered through the arts, libraries and heritage services that relate to the Sustainable Communities theme.
- 1.9 This report notes that other areas of cultural services such as sport and physical activity have recently been well documented for Council within London 2012 – Olympic & Paralympic Games reports.
- 1.10 The key portfolio holder is Councillor Nick Draper, Cabinet Member for Community & Culture.
- 1.11 The Business Plan can be viewed at www.merton.gov.uk/businessplan

References:

- (1) Merton Council Community Plan 2009-19
- (2) DCMS, Taking Part Survey, Quarter 2 Release – December 2012
- (3) DCMS, Taking Part Survey, Quarter 1 Release – September 2012

2. DETAILS

2.1 The Sustainable Communities strategic theme is all about building resilience and stability as well as enhancing the quality of life for local people. Cultural services are a key contributor to providing and enhancing the quality of life for local people as well as delivering cultural activities, events and programmes that deliver on wider social, health, educational, economic and environmental agendas all in the best interests of local people in our community.

2.2 Delivery Models

2.2.1 The new library service operating model has been in place since 4 April 2011. It has delivered extended opening hours and broadened the range of services provided in libraries whilst retaining all library sites. It has attracted national attention and the service has been awarded the Local Government Chronicle award for 'Efficiency' and was highly commended by the Municipal Journal for its 'Workforce Transformation'. Key to the success of the delivery model has been five key principles:

- Overhauling staffing arrangements
- Increasing the use of volunteers
- Increased partnership working
- Introducing a security guard service
- Improving technology available

2.2.2 Merton's Library Service is the most cost efficient library service in London. On cost versus performance it scores as the highest performing library service in London. Cost per visit in Merton is the cheapest in London at £2.39 (source CIPFA 2010/11) and 58p cheaper than any neighbouring authority. Resident satisfaction (source Annual Residents Survey 2011) with libraries is in the top quartile for London at 64% rating the service as good to excellent. Visitor figures increased by 1% in 2011/12 as the result of increased opening hours and online usage has increased by 24% and continues to rise as more services become available online.

2.2.3 Merton's Arts Service is comprised of two Arts Development Officers within a small Leisure & Culture Development Team. The team has strong links within the community. Resident satisfaction with the opportunity to participate in the cultural offer was most recently rated at 50% (source Annual Residents Survey 2011). The Arts Service supports small, local community and voluntary groups through an efficient grants awards system which facilitates delivery within the local community and delivers key projects with and through partners engaging more people in the arts whilst delivering outcomes against corporate agendas.

2.3 Usage and Satisfaction

2.3.1 Usage of the library service has increased by 8% since 2007 with 26% of the resident population now regularly using their library service to either, borrow a book, use one of the public Internet computers or utilise online resources. This figure only captures activities where a library card is required to access the service and it is likely that usage is higher if other services are included. 1,142,549 visits were conducted to Merton's libraries in 2011/12. Physical visits to libraries are relatively stable year on year at a time when neighbouring authorities are reporting a decline in visits.

References:

- (1) Merton Council Community Plan 2009-19
- (2) DCMS, Taking Part Survey, Quarter 2 Release – December 2012
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- 2.3.2 A key service objective for libraries is increasing usage and participation amongst all resident groups. Key to this objective is targeted work with certain sections of the community. Usage has significantly increased amongst children and young people, but usage amongst elderly and working age people has slightly declined. There is also a challenge to increase usage amongst the resident population, particularly in the Mitcham area.
- 2.3.3 The latest results show that 78.9% of adults engaged in the arts in the last year, a significant increase reported since 2005/06 (76.3%) and 2010/11 (76.2%). ⁽²⁾ The 2012/13 Quarter 2 survey release also noted that increases in engagement occurred for adults living in urban areas, whilst the 2012/13 Quarter 1 survey release noted significant increases in London from 73.4% in 2010/11 to 78.5%. ⁽³⁾
- 2.3.4 Engagement in the arts became National Indicator 11 between 2007 and 2010, during which time Merton recorded a baseline of 49.7% rising through to 50.4% and then to 49% at the point where its collection ceased.
- 2.3.5 Prior to 2011 Merton asked its residents in the Annual Residents Survey about their satisfaction with cultural services in the borough. From the inception of this question satisfaction was at 70% only dropping by 1% point in one year of the 5 years in which it was asked. In 2011, Merton changed this question to separate various aspects of cultural services and this included satisfaction with opportunities to participate in the arts. Merton residents advised that 35% of respondents were satisfied, whilst 7% reported being dissatisfied and 15% reported not having a view.
- 2.3.6 Even though these findings are very pleasing and should be applauded, arts services still recognise that there is a significant amount of work to be done as...

“In the year up to September 2012, the following patterns of (national) arts engagement were observed:

- Arts engagement tended to be higher among people who live in less deprived neighbourhoods. Since 2009/10, levels of engagement have remained flat in each Index of Multiple Deprivation decile group.
- People aged 75 and over had lower arts engagement rates (64.0%) than the other age groups. Although the 45-64, 65-74 and 75+ age groups have seen a significant increase in engagement since 2005/06 (from 78.5% to 81.1% for 45-64 year olds, from 70.7% to 76.8% for 65-74 year olds, from 57.7% to 64.0% for age 75 and over), engagement rates for the younger age groups have remained steady during that period.
- Arts engagement was higher among adults from white groups (79.7%) than adults from black and minority ethnic (BME) groups (72.5%).
- People with no long-standing illness or disability had a higher arts engagement rate (81.6%) than people with a long-standing illness or disability (72.4%). This could be due to barriers such as lack of suitable transport to art facilities or a lack of hearing loops at the venue, enabling people with a long-standing illness or disability to engage. Both groups have seen a significant increase in proportions since 2005/06.” ⁽³⁾

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2.3.7 In light of the national indicators outlined in 2.3.6, Arts development work in Merton seeks to support and develop arts for all whilst extending the services, activities, events and programmes to the east of the borough. It also works to deliver directly and commission projects that 'Bridge the Gap' by benefitting local people from the east of Merton.

2.4 **Technology**

2.4.1 Engaging with new technology and making effective use of it in cultural settings will ensure that services remain up-to-date with social changes and relevant to the needs of residents.

2.4.2 Technology continues to develop at an ever increasing pace and cultural services will continue to adapt as technology changes. In Merton, technology is key to providing a 'comprehensive and efficient' service and self-service technology has been a key enabling tool.

2.4.3 The Leisure & Culture Development Team commissioned a new online booking system late in 2011 to allow services to be purchased directly through an online booking and payment system. This ensured that during the summer of 2012, Merton Active Plus children's courses including some in the arts could be advertised and directly purchased. The system is now being used for pitch bookings and in 2013 will also deliver halls (including those in libraries), rooms and event bookings.

2.4.4 Arts & cultural development utilise social media in the forms of Facebook, Twitter, Flickr and YouTube to engage with the local community. Indeed, alongside promoting the work they do, the team have created films that have then gone on to engage proactively with residents, and then used other media channels to publicise this.

2.4.5 Merton became a member of the London Libraries Consortium (LLC) in December 2011. LLC is a consortium of 17 London boroughs that jointly procure and share a library management system and stock contracts. The benefits for customers include access to over 6,000,000 items of stock across the consortium, an automated 24/7 renewal and enquiry line and the ability to use one's library card in any of the boroughs involved. Joining the consortium has enabled the service to deliver savings both in its stock procurement and maintenance contracts linked to the library management system.

2.4.6 In the last year Merton libraries have launched a new web presence, which has improved customer access to a number of resources that are available for free only to library customers. Examples of the resources available include access to subscription services such as Encyclopaedia Britannica, online law guides and other study resources. Visits to the libraries web pages continue to increase significantly each year and in 2011/12 114,247 unique visits were made, with this figure expected to be exceeded again in 2012/13.

2.4.7 As more people start to use e-readers such as Ipads and Kobos to read printed material, and more books are produced only in digital formats, the library service launched its first e-books and e-magazine service in December 2012. The e-books service gives customers access to over 8,000 e-books that can be borrowed for free for up to three weeks like a library book but with no overdue charges applied. The e-magazines service is very new and Merton is one of only a handful of services to provide such a resource. Over fifty

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contemporary magazine titles are available for library customers and can be downloaded anywhere with an Internet connection. The majority of e-magazines available can be retained by a customer on an ongoing basis and there are no limits on the amount of e-magazines that can be downloaded. An e-audio book service is also available.

- 2.4.8 For smart phone users a library app is being developed and is expected to be launched in autumn 2013.
- 2.4.9 Free wi-fi will be available in all libraries by the end of March 2013. Four sites (Wimbledon, Morden, Mitcham and Pollards Hill) will be live in February and the other three sites go live shortly thereafter once line upgrades have been completed. Providing free Internet access to all Merton residents is essential to the delivery of the Council's Customer Contact project and will enable residents to be able to complete more tasks via the Internet in keeping with the government's e-Gov agenda.
- 2.4.10 Self-service technology was installed in all libraries between 2009 and 2010. Self-service technology accounts for 95% of all stock transactions and has assisted with delivering efficiencies on the frontline, which has enabled staff to focus on providing a more qualitative service.
- 2.4.11 As part of the Council's assisted digital strategy staff and volunteers are being re-trained not only to provide support for customers in accessing e-gov services and form filling but also to be able to support customers with using their own devices in libraries through libraries wi-fi. As more people own their own computer and phone devices libraries will play a key role in maximising access to services online and supporting campaigns such as the Mayor of London's 'Know Your Rights' campaign.

2.5 **Volunteering**

- 2.5.1 A key aim of the Merton Partnership is, "supporting and developing voluntary and community organisations to provide opportunities for all our residents to become actively involved in their communities, creating a sense of ownership and pride in the borough."⁽¹⁾
- 2.5.2 Provision of the arts has relied on volunteering throughout history. All the arts organisations and community groups that deliver community engagement through arts rely on organisers, trustees, fund-raisers, helpers and individuals with an artistic talent to create and deliver opportunities for local people. It is practically impossible to measure this volunteer value to the borough and all too often the individuals concerned do not record their efforts as volunteering as it is purely 'something that they enjoy doing', whether that is raising the curtain at a play, making and selling refreshments, making costumes, putting up posters, conducting a choir, writing a play, etc... the list is long.
- 2.5.3 The Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) have been conducting a 'Taking Part' survey since 2005/06 and in its latest release for Quarter 2 – 2012/13 in December 2012 it notes...

"The arts sector has the highest amount of time spent in volunteering during the four weeks before the interview (13 hours and 59 minutes). On average 9 hours 35 minutes had been spent in the four weeks before the interview by volunteers in the heritage sector, followed by 8 hours 26 minutes by volunteers in the sports sector."⁽³⁾

References:

- (1) Merton Council Community Plan 2009-19
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- 2.5.4 The Merton model for volunteering in libraries has been nationally recognised and has been used as a good practice case study by Volunteering England. It was awarded the 2012 Team London award for 'Building Better Neighbourhoods'.
- 2.5.5 730 volunteers have contributed their time to the library service since April 2011 with 304 of these volunteers continuing to remain active library volunteers. 44,164 volunteering hours have been contributed during this time and 18% of library volunteers have moved onto paid employment, with some continuing to contribute their time to the library service. Merton has the highest number of volunteers contributing time to their libraries in London.
- 2.5.6 Due to the success of volunteering in Merton, the library service has led on behalf of ALCL (Association of Chief Librarians) and CLOA (Chief Cultural and Leisure Officers Association) a successful project funded by Team London to develop the Merton model of volunteering across London. The 'Love Libraries Love Volunteering' project has provided funding to develop volunteering across London where a formal arrangement is in place between the library service and local volunteer centre. The 13 pilot boroughs have recruited over 3,000 volunteers in less than eight months, exceeding recruitment targets set for the project by over 1,000. Key outcomes from the project include:
- 95% of volunteers think that volunteering in libraries makes the local community better for people;
 - 92% of volunteers were either satisfied or very satisfied with the support from library staff and the new skills they had learnt;
 - 84% felt that volunteering got local people more involved in the way that library services are delivered;
 - 75% would recommend volunteering to others;
 - 68% felt that volunteering in libraries had helped them to meet people from different backgrounds.

Key Outcome: More people gaining knowledge and skills through culture & leisure.

2.6 **Partnership Working**

- 2.6.1 The Merton Partnership recognises, "that we achieve more by working together." A wide range of partnerships are in place across cultural services with private, public and voluntary sector providers to deliver services which seek to improve the quality of life for local people.
- 2.6.2 Partnership working through Merton's Arts Development with the Ambassador Theatre Group (ATG) Ltd, who manage and operate the New Wimbledon Theatre, combined with the excellent work of the Wimbledon Civic Theatre Trust (WCTT) with our local teenage school children has been applauded with a Highly Commended at the Municipal Journal (MJ) 2010 awards in the category of Public Private Partnership for 'Raising Aspiration through the Arts'. The partnership is such that the charity raises the funds and uses it to fund a Community Engagement Officer employed through ATG, who then works with the borough's Arts Development Officers to devise, develop and deliver programmes primarily through Merton's schools.

References:

- (1) Merton Council Community Plan 2009-19
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2.6.3 Much of the delivery of local arts is done with and through local partners, with funding coming from a range of sources. Merton Arts Development Officers co-ordinate two partnership groups for sharing and disseminating good practice, funding advice and information as well as working jointly on specific projects. The two groups are:

- Arts Professionals Group – meets three times a year. Contains all those representatives of organisations where the people are employed to deliver the arts in some form.
- Arts Consultative Forum – meets twice yearly. For representatives of groups, organisations and individuals based or operating in Merton delivering the arts in some form. Open to all.

2.6.4 In libraries partnerships help residents improve their employment opportunities, health, literacy, numeracy and IT skills. 46 partnerships are in place and examples of service providers include Imagine who deliver health and wellbeing sessions and the Polka Theatre who deliver children's activities in libraries. Using partners to deliver services in libraries has broadened the provision of services and widened the concept of libraries as a community space.

2.6.5 Examples of partnership working are detailed throughout this report.

2.7 **Projects**

2.7.1 Increasing usage of libraries is a key service objective. To increase usage 5 key projects are underway:

(a) Universal library membership for school children.

The Library Service is in the process of establishing a universal library membership card for all school children. Working directly with schools the aim is to issue all school children in Merton with a premium library membership card that will give children free access to library services. The aim is to improve literacy levels amongst school children by increasing visits from schools and utilising incentive schemes to reward schools whose pupils have a high take up of library services. Key to the project is enhanced work with parents and guardians to encourage them into the habit of regularly visiting their local library. The project supports schools with their 'Reading for Pleasure' policies that are a requirement of Ofsted. The Culture Secretary recently announced his intention for every school child in the whole of England to be issued with a library card by 2015 and this scheme will mean that Merton will be one of the first authorities in the country where this has been achieved. The first 5 pilot schools will be issued with their library cards in February 2013 with the aim of completing all primary schools by summer 2014 and all secondary schools by summer 2015. Special schools, further education colleges and nurseries will also be included as part of the scheme.

Key Outcome: More people gaining knowledge and skills through culture & leisure.

(b) Further engagement with working age and elderly people.

A campaign to promote the new technologies in place in libraries will start in late February 2013. It aims in particular to raise awareness of the diverse services that libraries provide for the time poor. 'Libraries...Always With You'

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will highlight the online 24/7 resources available as well as new technologies in libraries such as wi-fi, e-books and e-magazines. Targeted outreach to older people's groups will also be delivered and a survey of non-users will be undertaken in summer 2014.

Key Outcome: More people gaining knowledge and skills through culture & leisure.

(c) Supporting digital inclusion.

23% of households in the United Kingdom still do not have access to the Internet. With more services becoming available online and with the government's e-gov agenda and the Council's 'Customer Contact' project, libraries will play a key role in assisted digital support for residents. Libraries will continue to provide free Internet services with trained and knowledgeable staff and volunteers to support those most in need. Staff roles will develop and move more away from basic IT training to support with form filling and information guidance. There will also be more multi-agency working in libraries.

Key Outcome: More people gaining knowledge and skills through culture & leisure.

(d) Libraries as a community space.

Building on the back of successful partnership arrangements libraries will increasingly act as a community space. It will investigate synergies with other services and seek to co-locate where practicable to improve accessibility to services for residents and to increase efficiencies within the building stock retained by the Council. Four library sites (Wimbledon, Mitcham, Donald Hope and West Barnes) have been included in the draft Sites & Policies Development Plan for potential redevelopment and a range of options are being explored, all of which will safeguard our libraries for the use of future generations.

Key Outcome: Culture & leisure facilities are improved.

(e) Libraries / Arts projects.

In 2011 Arts Council England (ACE) took over the duties of the Museums, Libraries and Archives (MLA) Council following its dissolution. ACE are shortly to publish their 'Envisioning Libraries for the Future' document, which is expected to be the key policy driving document for the libraries sector. Within the document there is expected to be an increased move towards positioning arts based activities in libraries.

Working with Wandsworth, Richmond and Kingston's libraries, Merton has been involved in the first round of ACE funding to develop arts based activities in libraries. The project sought to test the key impact of delivering art activities in libraries and evidence how such activities can deliver against the key outcomes sought by health commissioners. It sought to develop links with commissioners and art service providers with the aim of increasing the commissioning of artist led activities in libraries by working with organisations such as Imagine Services, Creative Music and a local artist to design two art courses aimed specifically at users of mental health services.

References:

- (1) Merton Council Community Plan 2009-19
- (2) DCMS, Taking Part Survey, Quarter 2 Release – December 2012
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Participants were asked to evaluate themselves at the start as well as on completion of the courses using a standard mental health evaluation tool called Recovery STAR. The findings from the evaluation were:

- 56% of participants noted an improvement in their self esteem
- Six people noted a marked improvement in their social networks and/or their ability to develop relationships.
- 56% of the participants felt that the courses had developed their skills and improved their employment prospects.

Work is currently underway to develop toolkits and guidance resources for other library services seeking to improve links with commissioners and working relations with artists.

Key Outcome: More people gaining knowledge and skills through culture & leisure.

- 2.7.2 During recent year's arts development have delivered a number of projects and programmes, some through working in partnership, some with external funding and others by direct delivery. The projects highlighted here seek to provide readers with an eclectic mix of the range and scope of works that the two officers deliver during the course of any year:

(a) Acacia Centre – Photography Project

Merton's Intergenerational Centre, The Acacia Centre, provides a vital community hub in Mitcham. The Centre provides all manner of activities and is well used by local people of all ages. To celebrate the wide range of service users and boast of their ethnicity and ages, Arts Development employed the services of the internationally renowned and multiple award winning photographer, Kalpesh Lathigra, who visited the centre over the period of a week, capturing images of faces and activities.

Key Outcome: More people gaining knowledge and skills through culture & leisure.

(b) Public Art

As a result of funding from a local developer, a new piece of public art has been installed on Wimbledon Station Forecourt. The stag sculpture was designed by a local young artist, Isabelle Southwood, marks the start of the Wimbledon Way. The sculpture makes reference to the stone stag that sits on 'Stag Lodge' in Wimbledon Village and aims to connect the town with the Common. As part of this commissioning process Network Rail were so excited by the quality of the bids coming forward that they used a mosaic submission, produced by Louise Frewin and Karen Parry, at Mitcham Junction Station, which has subsequently gained recognition and awards. Another piece of public art was also unveiled on the corner of Durnsford Road with Plough Lane marking the former home of AFC Wimbledon.

Key Outcome: Leisure & cultural provision more accessible to all.

The borough commissioned renowned sculptor Anthony Dufort to produce a hand held bronze depicting the borough's royal heritage as a gift from Merton to Her Majesty the Queen to mark her visit to St. Mark's Academy in Mitcham during her Diamond Jubilee celebrations. An identical piece was also cast for the borough and is on display in the Civic Centre foyer.

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Key Outcome: Leisure & cultural provision more accessible to all.

(c) Community Films – St Helier & the Queen of Merton

Film is not only accessible, but also inclusive, enlightening and educational. Because of this, Arts Development commissioned a film on a visit from HM The Queen and HRH Prince Philip. Working alongside local community partners as well as Buckingham Palace, the final film, Queen of Merton, was screened before a select audience at the Wimbledon Odeon in 2012. The film is now available for purchase, and is selling well. Prior to this film, but also focusing on elements of community cohesion, was the film about the sprawling, linear, St. Helier estate and its residents. The film reflected and dispelled myths and fears residents held about each other. This film was commissioned in light of the rise of a growing BNP contingent at the time.

Key Outcome: Leisure & cultural provision more accessible to all.

(d) Pollards Hill Sculpture

Pollards Hill is one of the poorer areas in the borough, often affected by crime and disorder. Pollards Hill library sits on a large estate – an area that has seen fatal violence. After the Pollards Hill Library had seen a level of refurbishment, Arts Development created a project to involve local members of the community to increase participation in learning at the local library. Members of the community worked alongside an artist to create a public sculpture that also serves as a book suggestion area for the libraries new and current users.

Key Outcome: Culture and leisure facilities are improved.

(e) Community Events – Cultural Olympiad, Torch Relay & Queen's Diamond Jubilee

Cultural Olympiad events – During the four years leading up to the Games, community cultural events took place in Wimbledon Park, Colliers Wood, raynes Park, Pollards Hill, Wimbledon town centre and South Wimbledon. In 2012 a series of events started with the Outdoor Arts Festival on the Piazza in Wimbledon and finished at Merton Abbey Mills with handover ceremonies for the Olympic Games and a bandstand marathon for the closing of the Paralympic Games. A particular highlight was the 'Light a Lantern' evening which took place at South Park Gardens to celebrate the beginning of the Paralympic Games. Residents brought their handmade lanterns and joined one another to create a light formation in the park.

Torch Relay - Merton identified some locations along the route for local community organisations and individuals with artistic talents to perform and entertain followed by organising four afternoon picnic party events in Mitcham, Colliers Wood, South Wimbledon and Wimbledon Village all of which were very well attended by the community.

Queen's Diamond Jubilee – Mitcham Carnival was chosen as the borough's key community event to celebrate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee, whilst a bandstand event was organised for Morden Park to coincide with a beacon lighting and community picnic with Morden Park Playing Fields Association organising cream teas.

Key Outcome: Leisure & cultural provision is more accessible to all.

(f) Polka Theatre

References:

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Polka Theatre continues to provide fantastic service provision to families and young children in Merton and outside of the borough. Polka is the sole Regularly Funded Organisation (RFO) still supported by Arts Council England (ACE) here in Merton. Polka Theatre engages with thousands of adults and children each year and remains one of the most prolific and well respected organisations in the borough. Not only does the theatre cater for children with special needs, but they are a great community resource for local residents and regularly provide outreach work across the borough and beyond. Merton is working with Polka to reduce its core grant in a managed way so that the theatre builds greater financial stability for the future.

Key Outcomes: Leisure & cultural provision is more accessible to all & more people are satisfied with culture and facilities in their area.

(g) Attic Theatre Group

Attic Theatre has over 45 productions to its credit - world premieres, international plays, classic revivals and Shakespeare. Attic Theatre commission playwrights and take risks with programming to maintain the high quality of production that is the hallmark of the company. Attic Theatre provide access to art in one of the poorer areas of the borough, Mitcham, with outreach work including the 'Ma Kelly' plays developed on Crime Reduction and Home Safety in partnership with the Metropolitan Police and Fire Brigade. 'Many Voices' involves young refugees and asylum seekers in drama workshops that are stimulating and imaginative. Merton is working with Attic to reduce its core grant in a managed way so that the theatre group builds greater financial stability for the future.

Key Outcome: More people gaining new knowledge and skills through culture and leisure.

(h) ACAVA

ACAVA (Association for the Cultural Advancement of Visual Art) develop and deliver innovative educational and community projects. As an educational charity, they enable artists to engage their creativity and skills for the benefit of people of all ages, and within the statutory system, community groups and those drawn together at ACAVA studios. ACAVA have regenerated and now manage all of Merton's Artist Studios. In doing so, ACAVA also provide the Arts Development Team with artists, who then work in the community on projects that aim to promote individual expression and the recognition of and respect for cultural diversity, and to develop visual skills in relation to curricula and beyond.

Key Outcome: Leisure & cultural provision is more accessible to all & more people in paid and unpaid work in culture and leisure.

(i) New Wimbledon Theatre & Wimbledon Civic Theatre Trust

The New Wimbledon Theatre (NWT) is run by the Ambassadors Theatre Group (ATG), which in turn is run by the husband-and-wife team of Howard Panter and Rosemary Squire, who in 2013 were judged top of the list of the 100 most influential people working in the UK theatre industry. New Wimbledon Theatre also houses the New Wimbledon Studio Theatre and both spaces regularly host high profile actors and performers – from both Hollywood and the UK. Through agreements with the Council NWT provide a free ticket

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scheme to young carers and also offer a range of community lets in partnership with the Leisure and Culture Development team.

The Wimbledon Civic Theatre Trust (WCTT) works with the Council and through the NWT to deliver against their charitable aims, using the arts as a medium for engagement. WCTT is an independent charitable trust focusing on young people of secondary school age in our local area and who face real disadvantage. This disadvantage may be physical, mental, social, financial, ethnic or even just the inability to make friends and socialise. The trust regularly fundraisers and delivers bespoke projects within our community through Creative Learning staff employed through ATG at NWT.

Key Outcome: More people gaining new knowledge and skills through culture and leisure.

2.8 **Arts – Small Grants Programme**

2.8.1 Merton operates two small arts grants programmes each offering organisations and groups the opportunity to apply once a year for funding up to £1,500. As well as the general fund there is a specific fund for cultural diversity arts projects. Applicants have to show how they will deliver projects that support the Merton Community Plan, as well as show partner funding (inward investment) for their projects and how they intend to develop and sustain it in the future.

2.8.2 As well as delivering agreed outcomes the funded projects bring in significant inward investment to the borough's cultural offer.

Table 1 – Summary return of inward investment on small arts grants

Year	Grant Amount £	Inward Investment £	Return on Investment %
08-09	29,875	341,785	1,144
09-10	23,862	166,002	696
10-11	16,960	251,764	1,484
11-12	13,700	296,020	2,160
12-13	13,697	167,930	1,226
Totals:	£ 98,094	£ 1,223,501	1.247% average

Key Outcome: More people gaining knowledge and skills through culture and leisure

2.8.3 Details of arts grants development fund can be found on the council's website at http://www.merton.gov.uk/leisure/arts/arts_development_fund.htm

2.9 **Heritage Strategy**

2.9.1 The Heritage Strategy, approved by Cabinet in June 2011, sets out plans to:

- Increase public access to historic resources;
- Extend the range of heritage services available to meet the needs of key targets groups;

References:

- (1) Merton Council Community Plan 2009-19
- (2) DCMS, Taking Part Survey, Quarter 2 Release – December 2012
- (3) DCMS, Taking Part Survey, Quarter 1 Release – September 2012

- Raise the profile of the borough through joint working across stakeholder groups;
- Safeguard access to key sites and documents.

2.9.2 The Heritage & Design Working Group was established in summer 2011 as a forum for all heritage stakeholders. Meetings are held quarterly and have led to improved communication and co-operation amongst stakeholder groups. The Working Group agrees priority work plans and acts as the steering group for the annual Merton Heritage Weekend, which is tied in with Open House.

2.9.3 Progress continues to be made with the transfer of the Wandle Industrial Museum to Ravensbury Mill and discussions are ongoing between the Council, the owner of the site and the Wandle Industrial Museum. Progress has also been made with the transformation of the Merton Priory Chapter House site into a major visitor attraction. The land has now been transferred to the Council and will be transferred to the Merton Priory Trust once appropriate funding has been finalised.

2.9.4 Merton remains a priority borough with the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF). Priority fund status has been awarded as historically Merton has applied for less funding than other boroughs. Through the Heritage & Design Working Group officers are working with heritage stakeholders to increase the number of applications made. A detailed list of proposed bids has been drawn up and it is expected that a higher number of applications will be made in 2013.

2.9.5 A project that has received HLF funding is the 'Merton Memories' project. 'Merton Memories' will digitally preserve over 15,000 photographic images of the borough through the ages and make many of these photos freely available for the first time. Working with heritage stakeholders the Heritage Service is creating a dedicated web resource, which will not only make the images available but also enable other people to load their images of Merton onto the site and to add comments to photos to improve the historical recording of each image. The finalised website will go live in January 2014. To coincide with the launch a series of Discovery Days will be hosted to raise awareness of the new resources and to enable members of the public to share their own photographs and experiences of Merton through the ages.

2.10 **Creative Sector – Business & Employment**

2.10.1 Merton already has a significant and important creative sector. The sector in Merton comprises a range of activities including the production of high value clothing and footwear, the publishing of books, newspaper and software, printing, TV, radio and film production, photography, architecture, advertising and artistic and literary creation.

2.10.2 One in twenty jobs in Merton are now in the broader recreation, culture and sporting sector (3,400 jobs). The sector has shown rapid growth, with employment increasing by more than 56% between 2002 and 2007. At about double the expected size compared to the UK average, the sector shows a strong presence in Merton. In particular, there has been notable growth in sporting related employment with employment expanding by 1,100 jobs since 2002, an increase of 78%, to provide 2,500 jobs by 2007.

Key Outcome: More people in paid and unpaid work in culture and leisure.

References:

- (1) Merton Council Community Plan 2009-19
- (2) DCMS, Taking Part Survey, Quarter 2 Release – December 2012
- (3) DCMS, Taking Part Survey, Quarter 1 Release – September 2012

3. REPORTS OF OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMISSION PANELS

- 3.1 At the Overview & Scrutiny – Sustainable Communities Panel meeting on the 9 February 2012, the panel noted the ‘Preparation for the London 2012 – Olympic & Paralympic Games and Queen’s Diamond Jubilee’ report and congratulated the lead officer and the Leisure & Culture Development Team for their achievements and hard work to date.
- 3.3 A case study on the libraries volunteering model was presented to Overview & Scrutiny Commission on 17 July 2012. The commission formally thanked library service staff for the success of the project, which demonstrated strategic thinking and added value to the services provided.
- 3.4 The Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Panel will receive the Libraries Annual Report at their meeting in April 2013. The last annual report was received on 24 April 2012.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 4.1 None for the purposes of this report.

5. CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

- 5.1 Consultation is undertaken appropriately as needed for each activity, event and programme at the time of development through implementation.

6. TIMETABLE

- 6.1 Performance information is published on the dashboard each month and is available to view via the Intranet and Internet.

7. FINANCIAL, RESOURCE & PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 All financial, resource and property implications are contained within existing budgets and structures, except for where external funding and partner arrangements have been made, but these have all been established during the development phases of the individual activities, events and programmes.

8. LEGAL & STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The Council is required to provide a ‘comprehensive and efficient’ library service, addressing the ‘needs of adults and children’, according to the Public Libraries and Museums Act of 1964. Local authorities have a statutory duty to make provision for a library service but may decide on how this is to be done. Certain aspects of the service must be provided for free including free lending of books, free access to information and free library membership.
- 8.2 There is no legal or statutory duty on local authorities to provide cultural services through neither arts nor heritage; however both of these services are key contributors to delivering other statutory and legal duties successfully e.g. education, social care, community cohesion.

References:

- (1) Merton Council Community Plan 2009-19
- (2) DCMS, Taking Part Survey, Quarter 2 Release – December 2012
- (3) DCMS, Taking Part Survey, Quarter 1 Release – September 2012

9. HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES & COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

9.1 The local programmes, activities and events aim to provide a geographic spread across the borough; be open and inclusive wherever possible and appropriate, as well as having targeted activities to address disadvantage.

9.2 From the most recent Taking Part Survey release the key equalities findings are:

- “Women had lower levels of participation than men in a number of areas: ... 73.1 per cent visited a heritage site (compared with 75.7% for men) and 30.1% gave to charity (compared with 34.1% for men).
- However women had higher levels of participation with regards to use of libraries (43.8% compared with 33.3% for men), engagement with the arts (81.5% compared with 76.3% for men) and were more likely to have volunteered (27.2% compared with 22.6% for men).
- 62 per cent of people from black or minority ethnic groups had visited a heritage site in the last month compared with 76 per cent of adults from the white group.
- 33 per cent of people with a long term-limiting illness or disability had digitally engaged with culture in the last 12 months compared with 45 per cent of those without a disability.”⁽³⁾

10. CRIME & DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

10.1 The programmes, activities and events seek to enhance people’s quality of life by increasing the range and number of things to do, places to go, learning and celebrate communities and cultures, thus cultural services provision seeks to contribute to minimising crime and disorder and also provide solutions for reducing crime and disorder. These initiatives will enhance community cohesion and therefore reduce community tensions.

11. RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH & SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

11.1 Risk assessments and health & safety implications are all considered during the product development processes.

12. APPENDICES – the following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report

Appendix 1 – Environment & Regeneration and Community & Housing Dashboard Performance Indicators

13. BACKGROUND PAPERS

2013 -17 Council Business Plan

14. OFFICER CONTACTS

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References:

- (1) Merton Council Community Plan 2009-19
- (2) DCMS, Taking Part Survey, Quarter 2 Release – December 2012
- (3) DCMS, Taking Part Survey, Quarter 1 Release – September 2012

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Appendix 1 – Environment & Regeneration and Community & Housing Performance Indicators

Either link below will take you to current performance dashboards which cover the whole council. Once in the dashboard click on the E&R tab to get E&R performance and the C&H tab to get the C&H performance.

[Performance Dashboard](#)

<http://www.merton.gov.uk/council/performance/perfmanagement.htm>

References:

- (1) Merton Council Community Plan 2009-19
- (2) DCMS, Taking Part Survey, Quarter 2 Release – December 2012
- (3) DCMS, Taking Part Survey, Quarter 1 Release – September 2012