

London Borough of Waltham Forest

Report Title Developing Stronger Communities through Culture and Creativity: A Cultural Action Plan for Waltham Forest: 2024-2030

Meeting / Date Cabinet, 3 December 2024

Cabinet portfolio Councillor Rosalind Doré
Portfolio Lead Member for
Culture, Libraries, Sports
and Leisure



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Wards affected All

Public access Open

Appendices (1) Cultural Action Plan
(2) Year 1 Delivery Plan
(3) Equalities Screener
(4) Civic and Communities Events Framework
(5) Flags Policy at Fellowship Square

1. Summary

- 1.1. This report seeks approval of a new Cultural Action Plan for the London Borough of Waltham Forest: 'Developing Stronger Communities through Culture and Creativity: A Cultural Action Plan for Waltham Forest: 2024-2030' replacing the 'Useful and Beautiful: Great Arts and Culture in Waltham Forest' arts strategy which was published in 2015 and 'Taking Our Place in London – Waltham Forest's Cultural Strategy 2010 – 2030'.
- 1.2. It sets out the current context, why a new cultural action plan is essential, the extensive research and engagement done, and alignment with corporate priorities to support delivery of Mission Waltham Forest and a preventative approach to stronger communities.
- 1.3. There is extensive evidence to demonstrate that cultural participation can improve health and wellbeing outcomes, increase community resilience and cohesion, and build skills and professional opportunities to increase access to a growing creative sector.
- 1.4. The Cultural Action Plan will enable Waltham Forest to develop stronger communities through culture and creativity, harnessing the

power of culture as part of a cross-council approach to prevention, central to delivering Mission Waltham Forest, the Council's plan for a more equal borough by 2030. Culture and creativity will play a key part in tackling the fundamental challenges and inequity facing residents by increasing equitable participation.

- 1.5. The Cultural Action Plan gives an overview of the borough's unique context, local need and current corporate priorities and has been informed by extensive research and public engagement.
- 1.6. A revised framework for Civic and Community events, and flag raising at Fellowship Square, are presented.

2. **Recommendations**

- 2.1. Cabinet is recommended to:
 - 2.1.1. Approve a new Cultural Action Plan - 'Developing Stronger Communities through Culture and Creativity: A Cultural Action Plan for Waltham Forest: 2024-2030' at Appendix 1.
 - 2.1.2. Approve the revised frameworks for Civic and Community events, and flag raising at Fellowship Square at Appendix 4 and Appendix 5.
 - 2.1.3. Note the Cultural Action Plan Year 1 Delivery Plan at Appendix 2.

3. **Proposals**

- 3.1. Why a Cultural Action Plan?
 - 3.1.1. Waltham Forest last published a cultural strategy, 'Useful and Beautiful: Great Arts and Culture in Waltham Forest' in 2015. This is the first time it has engaged residents about culture and creativity since being the first London Borough of Culture in 2019, continuing to build on this important legacy.
 - 3.1.2. This Cultural Action Plan develops and updates key strands of the Destinations Business Plan, approved in December 2022, whilst adapting and shaping a cultural vision and objectives closely aligned with Mission Waltham Forest, the preventative agenda and the Stronger Communities Directorate.
 - 3.1.3. An up-to-date Cultural Action Plan enables the council to focus resources where they will have the greatest impact and benefit, and to strategically shape and influence cultural policy and programming at the local, regional and national level. Furthermore, a published cultural strategy or action plan is necessary to facilitate strategic partnerships and unlock funding, including investment from Arts Council England.
- 3.2. The Waltham Forest context
 - 3.2.1. Waltham Forest is a borough rooted in culture with an incredible diversity of people that make up its neighbourhoods. It has a unique history of making, innovation and creativity, spanning from the Arts and Crafts movement through to our significant contribution to grime, rave

and pirate radio. Over the last decade, Waltham Forest has built its cultural capacity and expertise, from being one of the host boroughs of the London 2012 Olympic Games and Cultural Olympiad to being awarded the first Mayor's London Borough of Culture in 2019.

- 3.2.2. There is extensive research to evidence that culture and creativity have a central role to play in building stronger communities, and that engagement in arts and culture is a driver of community resilience, social impact and inclusive growth.
- 3.2.3. In 2024, 88% of Waltham Forest residents surveyed agreed that culture and creativity should be a priority for the Council.
- 3.3. The Power of Culture and Creativity
 - 3.3.1. Culture and creativity are a key driver of the economic dynamism of places: creating areas where people want to live, work and visit. Today, 1 in 5 jobs in London are in the cultural and creative sectors. The UK creative industries' economic contribution is bigger than the life sciences, aerospace and automotive sectors combined. In Waltham Forest, creative jobs have increased by 44% since 2015 (29% in the rest of London).
 - 3.3.2. Culture can play a significant role beyond its economic contribution. It shapes and defines us as individuals and communities, strengthening community resilience and nurturing pride in place. Culture and creativity can support all stages of life. Learning through arts and culture develops skills and behaviours that help children do better in school. It is also crucial to a proactive, preventative approach to health and wellbeing. Participation in creative activities can delay the appearance of emerging needs and help manage health issues from Parkinson's disease to dementia. After engaging with arts, 82% of people in deprived communities in London enjoyed greater wellbeing¹.
- 3.4. The Role of the Council and Corporate Priorities
 - 3.4.1. The Cultural Action Plan sets out how the Council's role will optimise the benefits of culture for residents and local enterprises by:
 - 3.4.2. providing strategic vision and oversight to ensure resources are focused where they can have most impact.
 - 3.4.3. being a connector, enabler and facilitator to increase equitable participation, especially for those in greatest need. The council will move away from direct delivery of events and cultural activation, building capacity in the local cultural and creative sector.
 - 3.4.4. attracting external funding and maximising self-generated income to fund cultural programmes which deliver against our key priorities, and to achieve best value for money.

¹ [Report by the All Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health & Wellbeing](#)

- 3.4.5. advocating at the local, regional and national level.
- 3.4.6. Despite vastly decreased financial capacity for local government over the past decade, Waltham Forest Council prides itself in continuing to play a pivotal role as a champion of culture and creative industries. The Cultural Action Plan is developed along six key themes: Community powered Culture; Creative Health and Wellbeing; Creative Education, Skills and Jobs; Cultural Infrastructure and Creative Economy; Creative Neighbourhoods and Culture and Climate, to bring about change and deliver on Mission Waltham Forest, the Council's plan for a more equal borough by 2030. The alignment of the themes with Mission Waltham Forest is presented in Section 5 of this report.
- 3.5. Year 1 Delivery Plan
 - 3.5.1. The Year 1 delivery plan (for Jan-Dec 2025) details a series of activities delivering on the six key the themes of the Cultural Action Plan and is presented in Appendix 2.
 - 3.5.2. A key area of delivery is with the civic communities and equalities events. The proposed new programme and rationale are presented in Appendix 4.

4. Options & Alternatives Considered

- 4.1. Do Nothing
 - 4.1.1. It is almost 10 years since Waltham Forest published its last culture strategy 'Useful and Beautiful: Great Arts and Culture in Waltham Forest'. This no longer meets the needs of Waltham Forest and does not deliver on Mission Waltham Forest. The absence of an up-to-date culture strategy decreases significantly the opportunities to attract external funding for our cultural programmes from funding bodies such as Arts Council England. This option is not recommended.

5. Council Strategic Priorities (and other National or Local Policies or Strategies)

- 5.1. Figure 1 sets out the strategic fit of the six key Action Areas from the Cultural Action Plan and Mission Waltham Forest

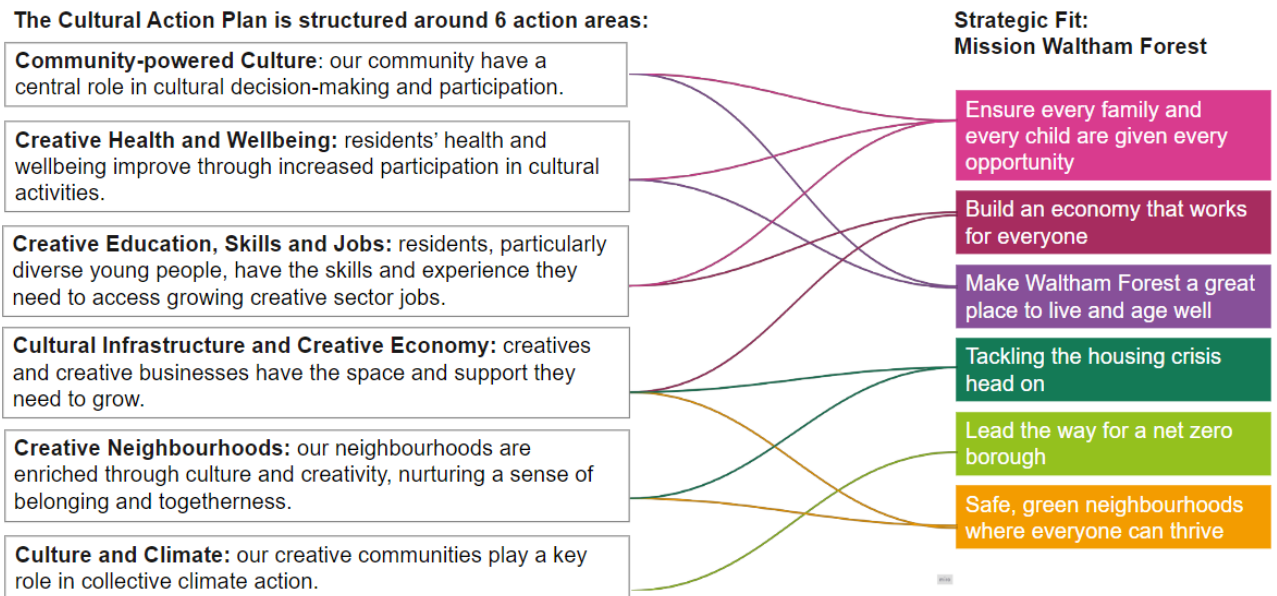


Figure 1: Alignment of the themes from the Cultural Action Plan with Mission Waltham Forest.

6. Consultation

6.1. The proposed Cultural Action Plan has been shaped by an extensive process of research and engagement:

- In depth review of national, regional and local research evidencing the impacts of culture on the quality of people's lives, communities and inclusive growth to address local need. Over 50 reports, strategies and policy documents have been reviewed to shape our 6 action areas.
- 1200 people across the borough have helped us to shape this action plan
- 1000 people responded to a digital survey
- 100 young people gave their views via our StreetBase team
- 35 local cultural organisations and creative partners joined a focus group or consultation meeting
- 30 teams across the Council were involved
- 16 key strategic partners joined a workshop to shape actions, including Arts Council England, the Greater London Authority and the British Council.

7. Implications

7.1. Finance, Value for Money and Risk

7.1.1. The Cultural Action Plan will be delivered within existing General Fund Budgets of £ 2.057m and augmented by external funding. The aim of the plan is to make better use of existing resources and deliver more efficiently through a targeted approach, for example collaborative work across teams and with external partner organisations.

- 7.1.2. Specific actions require additional funding, which will be raised externally through grants or sponsorship. By defining the vision and approach to culture and creativity through this Cultural Action Plan, the Council will significantly increase the potential of attracting external funding to the borough. Self-generated income for cultural services is forecast to grow through our activities and venues, which will decrease the draw on the Council's general fund. The publication of the Cultural Action Plan will enable the Council to access funding streams, such as strategic funds from Arts Council England, which cannot be accessed without a recent, published cultural strategy and action plan.
- 7.1.3. The Cultural Action Plan clearly defines the role of the Council as an enabler a more efficient delivery model compared with direct commissioning and delivery. One of the Cultural Action Plan's central aims is to build capacity within Waltham Forest's growing cultural and creative sector, ensuring they are better equipped to attract external funding, increase their capacity and future resilience. This will reduce reliance on the Council to deliver, which has potential to save costs in the future.
- 7.1.4. Adopting the Cultural Action Plan offers best value for money. The other option would be to do nothing, which is not recommended. It is almost 10 years since Waltham Forest published its last culture strategy 'Useful and Beautiful: Great Arts and Culture in Waltham Forest'. This no longer meets the needs of Waltham Forest and does not deliver on Mission Waltham Forest. The absence of an up-to-date culture strategy decreases significantly the opportunities to attract external funding for our cultural programmes from funding bodies such as Arts Council England.
- 7.1.5. The Cultural Action Plan is reliant on less council funding, as per the agreed budget and will enable the council to generate external income from funders. However, there is a risk is that some of the delivery plan actions are reliant on gaining external funding and will be scaled back accordingly if this is unsuccessful.

7.2. Legal

- 7.2.1. Local authorities are empowered to provide, arrange for the provision of, or make a financial contribution towards arts and entertainments by the Local Government Act, 1972 (section 145). In particular, under Section 145(1)(d), they are empowered to do anything necessary or expedient for the "development and improvement of the knowledge, understanding and practice of the arts and the crafts which serve the arts".
- 7.2.2. The Council also has the power under section 12 of the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 to provide and maintain museums and art galleries.
- 7.2.3. There are no foreseen legal impacts of this strategy.

7.3. Equalities and Diversity

- 7.3.1. The council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and to advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations, between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it (section 149 Equality Act 2010). The council has a duty to have due regard to the need to remove or minimise disadvantages, take steps to meet needs, in particular steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities, and encourage people to participate in public life. The council must have due regard to the need to tackle prejudice and promote understanding.
- 7.3.2. An Equalities Impact Assessment screener has shown that the Cultural Action Plan will have a positive impact on advancing equalities and fostering good relations. Special attention is given to ensure those with protected characteristics can better benefit from culture and creativity. Where specific barriers to participation or accessing cultural education or creative jobs exist, the Cultural Action Plan has defined actions which target and support specific cohorts, for example, young adults from a global majority background.
- 7.4. Sustainability (including climate change, health, crime and disorder)
 - 7.4.1. The Cultural Action Plan has a positive impact on sustainability. It focuses on 6 action areas (see section 5), which include 'Creative Health and Wellbeing', 'Creative Neighbourhoods', 'Culture and Climate'.
 - 7.4.2. Each action area defines key measures which will measure this positive impact across the 5 year period of the Cultural Action Plan.
 - 7.4.3. An annual delivery plan will set out how these impacts will be achieved, through specific projects and activities. The Year 1 delivery plan is supplied as an appendix.
 - 7.4.4. In doing so, the Cultural Action Plan sets out how culture plays a key role in collective climate action, improves residents' health and wellbeing through cultural participation and contributes to safe and vibrant neighbourhoods by developing a sense of pride of place.
- 7.5. Council Infrastructure
 - 7.5.1. There are no known impacts on council infrastructure.

Background Information (as defined by Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985)

None