



Braintree District Council

Braintree District Culture and Leisure Strategy

2010 - 2015



www.braintree.gov.uk

“Arts, culture and sport build social capital, bring people and communities together, develop understanding and provide the bedrock of many friendships and networks promoting community cohesion” IDeA “Taking part counts: the contribution of art, culture and sport to national outcomes”
Local Government Association, 2007

Cover Image

Knights at Castle Hedingham

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Commitment to this Strategy

This Strategy supports the cultural, diversity and leisure priorities of the Braintree District Sustainable Communities Strategy “One District - One Vision”, June 2009 and Braintree District Council’s Corporate Strategy 2008-2012. Other strategies and policy documents that support and link to the Culture and Leisure Strategy are listed in

Appendix 2: Policy Background.

Braintree District Council together with the Culture and Leisure Partnership Board will monitor, evaluate and review the implementation of the Culture and Leisure Strategy through the delivery of the activities in the Action Plan (in Appendix 1).



Executive Summary

The vision of the Strategy is:

That Braintree District is a place where people can recognise, enjoy and celebrate the rich culture, heritage, leisure and diversity of its towns and villages and provide inspiration for individuals, communities and organisations to enhance their quality of life.

Braintree District Council with the Culture and Leisure Partnership Board will achieve this vision by identifying, enabling, supporting and promoting the aspirations of our community in diverse cultural and leisure activities throughout Braintree District. This will include opportunities through the London 2012 Cultural Olympiad, Olympic and Paralympic Games, working in partnership with voluntary and professional groups and organisations, as detailed in the following Strategy and Action Plan.

This Strategy has been developed from surveys and consultations on cultural activities. Three surveys were undertaken between 2007-2009 but the most recent in 2009 by the Culture & Leisure Partnership Board, on behalf of Braintree District Council, for this Strategy indicated that key factors preventing people participating in cultural events are knowledge, awareness and access.

These key findings have helped inform the priorities within this Strategy.

Braintree District Council has an enabling role in culture and leisure within Braintree District with partners identified through the Culture and Leisure Partnership Board, taking into account any current financial constraints. The role of the Culture & Leisure Partnership Board within the Local Strategic Partnership Board is to monitor, evaluate and review the implementation of the Culture & Leisure Strategy through the Action Plan.



Introduction: What are culture and Leisure?

There are many definitions of the term culture. The government's Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) definition includes the following activities:

1. The performing arts (including theatre, music and dance), visual arts, crafts and design
2. Enjoyment of the natural, historic and built environment (including archaeology, historic buildings, ancient monuments, conservation areas and local wildlife sites)
3. Events and festivals,
4. Tourism and attractions
5. Libraries, museums, archives and galleries

Linking these five areas are the opportunities presented by the Cultural Olympiad and London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games for Braintree District. The legacy of the Games will continue beyond 2012 and will include, but not be restricted to:

- Increasing participation in culture and leisure activities
- Maintaining and developing a cultural and leisure infrastructure
- Increasing capacity through volunteering
- Creating a sustainable future for cultural and leisure organisations through investment, tourism, improved marketing and profile-raising



A Cultural and Leisure Portrait of Braintree District

Introduction

People have lived in the area covered by the District for thousands of years and this has created both a sense of place and a rich cultural heritage in both the rural and urban landscape. This varies from the great Norman keep at Castle Hedingham to the modernist village of Silver End; the books of the father of natural history, John Ray in the 17th century to the 20th century novels by Dorothy Sayers in Witham. The attractive countryside, historic towns and villages make Braintree District a popular place to live and provide the opportunity for realising a high quality of life.

Braintree District is at the heart of rural Essex and has strength in its varied and important cultural, heritage and leisure provision. The District has an estimated total population of 140,000 with the majority living in the main urban centres: Braintree (population 43,000), Witham (population 28,000) and Halstead (population 11,000).

The District is characterised by the following cultural and leisure provision and facilities:

- 3 swimming pools and 5 leisure centres
- Numerous play areas and recreation grounds in both rural and urban settings
- More than 400 clubs and groups that cover an enormous range of leisure pursuits including, art, dance, choirs, music, amateur radio, flower arranging, photography, chess and drama with an extensive programme of activities for the entire age range
- There are over 3,000 listed buildings including: Cressing Temple Barns; Paycockes House, Coggeshall; Castle Hedingham and windmills in Bocking and Finchingfield
- Over 60 churches and chapels including important examples at Little Maplestead and Rivenhall
- Important District landscapes include the Stour Valley in the north and the Colne Valley in the east, 39 conservation areas, 5 Essex Wildlife Trust Sites and 251 local wildlife sites, 37 parks and public gardens
- Notable events include the Witham International Puppet Festival; carnivals in Braintree, Coggeshall and Witham; F7 Arts Festival; Three Towns Art Trail, as part of the Essex Summer of Art
- Tourism contributes almost £40m to the local economy, underpinned by the attraction of the landscape and historic heritage of the District
- 9 libraries and 3 mobile libraries aim to deliver a first-class public library service based on reading, access to

information and learning, through libraries in the heart of communities

- The Warner Textile Archive, Braintree hosts an historic collection of furnishing fabrics and designs of national importance and Braintree District Museum interprets the heritage, industry and people of the District. Other museums and heritage centres open to the public can be found at Coggeshall, Earls Colne, Finchingfield, Great Bardfield, Halstead, Kelvedon and Feering and Ridgewell Airfield
- Famous historic people from the Braintree District include: Edward Bawden, artist who worked in Great Bardfield; John Ray, ‘father of natural history’ from Black Notley and Dorothy Sayers, an internationally renowned novelist, from Witham
- A wide variety of community, independent and village halls that provide essential venues to cultural groups throughout the District
- There is a rich archaeological evidence of ancient human life throughout the District including Braintree, the most extensively excavated small Roman town in Essex; remains of a Roman temple at Ivy Chimneys, Witham and over 20 years of excavations at Cressing Temple

- Over 40 examples of Public Art throughout the District
- Shopping centres in Braintree, Witham and Halstead continue to service the needs of residents in the District. The Freeport Outlet Village and Braintree Leisure attract both shoppers and those going to the cinema, swimming and bowling
- The Great Notley Discovery Centre provides leisure facilities including play trails, fishing and cycling and is a developing centre for community activities

Why are culture and leisure important in Braintree District?

The importance of culture and leisure in Braintree District is reflected in the vision:

That Braintree District is a place where people can recognise, enjoy and celebrate the rich culture, heritage, leisure and diversity of its towns and villages and provide inspiration for individuals, communities and organisations to enhance their quality of life

The success of this vision relies upon a multitude of individuals and organisations in the public, private and voluntary sectors; crucial to their success is partnership working.

Specifically culture and leisure have a positive impact on:

- **Economic growth and regeneration** through promotion of tourism and visitor attractions and the associated employment opportunities
- **Health and wellbeing** through experiences that provide opportunities to develop healthy lifestyles; to integrate body, mind and spirit, to encourage an enriched and independent lifestyle
- **Education and learning** by drawing people back into learning and by providing an experience that creates valuable transferable skills through cultural activity
- **The historic and natural environment** by conserving and enhancing the natural and historic environment and people's enjoyment and knowledge of it



- **Community cohesion** by providing opportunities for people of different backgrounds and circumstances to respect and celebrate their diversity and work together to develop a shared sense of belonging and purpose through cultural and leisure participation
- **The creation of social capital** by enabling cultural and leisure networks to flourish within which people can engage for mutual benefit.

The strength of culture and leisure in the District lies with the grassroots providers who enrich the local culture through events such as fetes, concerts and shows and contribute to the diverse provision of local facilities such as play areas, sport and recreation grounds, museums, parks and gardens. This needs to be valued, nurtured, encouraged and supported.

The District is growing and the demand for housing and commercial development must be matched by ensuring that culture and leisure continue to sustain and improve the quality of life for local people. There are problems that cannot be ignored such as pockets of economic and social deprivation; low educational attainment; an increasingly diverse population; a growing ageing population and a lack of rural transport.

Strategic Values

The underlying values that support the Strategy and its priorities are:

Stewardship - including looking after and conserving cultural assets, enhancing investment and exercising a duty of care

Access - including equality of access, physical and intellectual accessibility and affordability

Increasing participation - including

- Increasing the number and diversity of participants
- Increasing choice and diversity
- Improving the quality of culture
- Developing integrated and innovative marketing and delivery

Inclusion - including stimulating aspirations, combating isolation, developing a sense of belonging, and providing culture and leisure services to the vulnerable and those at risk of being excluded through poverty or discrimination

Sense of place - including cherishing local distinctiveness and the heritage and valuing individual community identity and emotional attachments

Learning opportunities - including contributing to skills development, supporting the curriculum, educational

attainment, creativity and the enjoyment of culture

Improving Infrastructure - including providing new and improving existing cultural facilities and supplying the infrastructure to support cultural activity such as improved signage, transport and accommodation.

Economic prosperity - including recognizing that culture can give the District a competitive edge, contributes to the knowledge economy and economic sustainability and is a vital element in cultural tourism.

The Braintree District Compact - applying the principles of Braintree District Local Compact to ensure good practice in the ways in which voluntary and statutory organisations work together in partnership. For further information please visit www.bdvsa.org.uk



A Cultural and Leisure priorities for the Braintree District

Priority 1

Through the 2012 Cultural Olympiad and Olympic and Paralympic Games maximise the cultural and leisure legacy for the Braintree District.

Priority 2

Identify and understand the needs of the people and places that contribute to Braintree District and address these through culture and leisure provision.

Priority 3

Enable, communicate and promote the value of culture, leisure and diversity and their role in:

- Economic growth and regeneration
- Health and wellbeing
- Education and learning
- The historic and natural environment
- Community cohesion
- Creation of social capital



Monitoring, evaluating and reviewing the Strategy

The Culture and Leisure Partnership Board together with Braintree District Council will monitor, evaluate and review the implementation of the Culture and Leisure Strategy through the delivery of the activities in the related Action Plan.

Monitoring

The Culture and Leisure Partnership Board together with Braintree District Council will monitor and report on progress to the Local Strategic Partnership Board and Braintree District Council. Progress on the activities will be reported on a quarterly basis to the LSP or as requested by Members of the CLPB.

The Strategy and Action Plan are public documents and will be available electronically or as paper copy by request to Braintree District Council.

Evaluating

The Strategy will be assessed through the evaluation of the individual actions contained in the Action Plan.

Reviewing

The Strategy will be reviewed on an annual basis.

The Action Plan is a 'living' document and will be reviewed and refreshed regularly.



Appendix 1: Braintree District Culture & Leisure Strategy 2010-2015 Action Plan

The following Braintree District Council Action Plan relates to the priorities identified in section 6 of the Strategy.

Priority 1:

Through the 2012 Cultural Olympiad and Olympic and Paralympic Games maximise the cultural and leisure legacy for the Braintree District.

1. To deliver all actions as agreed by the BDC London 2012 Cabinet Working Group Work Programme 2010-2012.
2. For the BDC London 2012 Cabinet Working Group to identify the legacy resulting from 2012 Cultural Olympiad and Olympic and Paralympic Games

Priority 2:

Identify and understand the needs of the people and places that contribute to Braintree District and address these through culture and leisure provision.

1. To ensure that socio-economic and demographic analysis is carried out to assist with understanding current and future audiences for, and participants in, culture and leisure service provision.
2. With partners undertake an audit of current cultural amenities and available revenue for cultural and leisure activities.

3. To ensure equality and diversity issues are taken into account in the delivery of culture and leisure provision.

Priority 3:

Enable, communicate and promote the value of culture, leisure and diversity and their role in economic growth and regeneration; health and wellbeing; education and learning; the historic and natural environment; community cohesion; creation of social capital.

1. To work with partners to identify opportunities to promote the value of culture, leisure and diversity to improve the quality of life of all Braintree District residents.
2. To work with partners to communicate and promote culture and leisure activities through a number of different channels, including by both paper and electronic means of communication.
3. To enhance the appearance of the District by the provision of cultural and leisure infrastructure within capital projects.

Appendix 2: Policy Background

The first Braintree District Cultural Strategy 2003-2008 was published by Braintree District Council in 2003. Various national, regional and local policy documents have been reviewed to ensure compatibility and relevance

Cultural Partnership members include and represent:

National Policy	
Department of Culture, Media & Sport	A Passion for Excellence: an improvement strategy for culture and sport (March 2008)
Department of Culture, Media & Sport	A Passion for Excellence: One Year On (March 2009)
Department of Culture, Media & Sport	Winning: A Tourism Strategy for 2012 and beyond

Regional Policy	
Living East: The Regional Cultural Consortium for the East of England	A Better Life: the role of culture in the sustainable development of the East of England [2008]

County Policy	
Essex County Council	Celebrating Essex: a shared vision for culture, sport & leisure in Essex (draft, April 2009).
Essex County Council	Essex Legacy from the 2012 Games Action Plan & Annual Delivery Plan
Essex County Council	Exceeding Expectations: Tourism Growth Strategy for Essex
Essex County Council	Essex / North Essex Area Local Transport Plans & Transport Strategy
Essex County Council	Liberating Potential: Essex Local Area Agreement 08-11

District Policy	
Braintree District Local Strategic Partnership & Braintree District Council	One District One Vision: A Strategy for People and Places in the Braintree District (including the Braintree District Sustainable Community Strategy)
Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership Board	Crime and Disorder Annual Partnership Plan 2008-2011
Local Area Committees	Rural Policy & Action Statement 2005
Essex Children's Trust Board	Children and Young People's Plan 2009-2012
Braintree District Council	Play Strategy
Braintree District Council	Braintree Green Spaces Strategy
Braintree District Council	Economic Development Strategy
Health, Housing and Well-Being Partnership	Health, Housing and Well-being Action Plan
Braintree District Council	Housing Strategy
Braintree District Council's Working Group - London 2012	London 2012 Work Programme

Appendix 3: Culture and Leisure Partnership Board Membership

- Braintree District Arts which includes representation from a range of voluntary arts groups
- Braintree District Council
- Braintree District Museum Trust Ltd
- Braintree Town Centre Strategy Group
- Essex County Council Libraries
- B-Diff (Braintree District Faith Forum)
- Independent representatives





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