

Councillor Briefing

Culture Matters - The positive impact of cultural services

This briefing aims to help Elected Members build the case for cultural services within their authority and local area.

Overview

Culture and sport are among any council's most prominent services because of their importance to people and their quality of life. They make a significant contribution to health and well-being, play a key role in community safety by bringing diverse community groups together, provide economic benefits and educational opportunities for children, young people and adults, help create a sense of place and contribute to physical and social regeneration.

As such, cultural services are fundamental to achieving the corporate outcomes that matter.

Why it Matters

Activities supported by cultural services span the arts, sport and physical activity, film and media, heritage, museums, libraries and archives, the creative industries, tourism, parks and recreation. Cultural services often deliver activities themselves, but increasingly they work in partnership with voluntary and community groups to deliver activities, events and festivals. Tourism and the creative industries are of recognised economic importance in the region and depend on a strong cultural offer. This local culture offer can celebrate the distinctiveness of a particular place and reflect the aspirations of its community.

Key Messages

Cultural services should be valued in their own right, but also for their role in helping the council to attain other outcomes. Without wider engagement of culture and sport in the corporate agenda, the council risks losing one of the most important interfaces with the public it serves.

- Cultural services can help your council to deliver a broad range of outcomes in the Corporate Plan and Sustainable Community Strategy.
- Culture and sport have a strong enabling role to play in key local strategies and partnerships, such as crime & disorder and children & young people (particularly 'Every Child Matters').
- The high public profile of cultural and leisure services can help your authority to strengthen its local reputation.
- Assets such as sports and community centres, tourism information centres, libraries and museums can be developed as valuable, multi-purpose outlets for public services.

Facts and figures

Participation in cultural and sporting activities has been shown to have enormous personal, social and economic benefits.

- Engagement in culture is extensive; 81.9% of adults in the East attended an arts event and/or engaged in an arts activity in the last 12 months and 44.2% have visited a historic sites, museum, gallery or archive (Taking Part Survey 2009/10)
- Culture and heritage are key economic contributors and Heritage Tourism contributes more to the UK GDP than advertising or the car industry. (Investing in success, Visit Britain and the Heritage Lottery Fund)
- 81% of teachers thought it either 'likely' or 'very likely' that their pupils had learned more about other people and communities as a result of their visit to museums (What did you learn at the museum today? Hooper-Greenhill E et al, 2005)
- The UK has the largest and fastest growing cultural economy in the world, with the creative industries contributing 6.2% of Gross Value Added. Furthermore, the sport economy's annual contribution has now reached £16.6 billion, up 140% in real terms between 1985 and 2008. (Economic Value of Sport in England, Sport England 2010)
- In city areas, those who participated in culture were 10% more likely to be satisfied with where they live, compared to those who did not participate. (DCMS, internal analysis of Taking Part survey data, 2007)
- Evidence shows that in the East 21.6% of the population 16 years and over, currently participate in sport and active recreation for at least 30 minutes, at least three times a week. That's more than a million people. (Active People Survey 4, 2010)
- Sport is the top activity that young people participate in during their spare time. (TellUS 4 March 2010)
- 70% of young people believe that a lack of positive activities provision leads to more youth crime. (MORI, 2002)
- After education and religion the most common field of interest supported by volunteers was sport and exercise, 22% of current volunteers are engaged in this area. (Helping Out – a national survey of volunteering and charitable giving, Cabinet Office, 2007)
- Tourism is vital to the economy - in 2009 131 million visitors spent over £5 billion and the sector employs 180,000 (East of England Compendium of Tourism Statistics 2009)
- The ONS International Passenger Survey showed that in 2006 just under 4 million overseas visitors to Britain went to the theatre, ballet, opera or a concert.
- The lifetime healthcare costs savings for someone who takes part regularly in sport compared with their sedentary counterparts is valued at up to £46,000 (CASE Research, DCMS)
- Yet total cultural spending represents just 1% of the NHS budget

Your next steps

- Identify which of your authority's strategic priority outcomes recognises culture and sport as important contributors.
- Review the current evidence on the value and contribution of Cultural Services in your authority.
- Identify challenges for culture in your authority, for instance how culture and sport can work with economic development to encourage growth in the creative industries sector.
- Visit front line facilities and talk to staff and the public to get a sense of what works well and how your cultural assets could be used most effectively.