

**LIFE IS FOR LIVING
TWO**



**A REFRESHED
CULTURAL
STRATEGY FOR THE
BOROUGH OF
BRACKNELL
FOREST**

2008 - 2012

**A DRAFT PAPER
FOR CONSULTATION**

March 2008

Foreword

It is now over five years since the launch of 'Life is for Living', a local Cultural Strategy for Bracknell Forest. The aim of that strategy was to increase the range and quality of cultural opportunities and experiences available in Bracknell Forest. It also sought to provide direction to all providers of cultural services so that we could all work together effectively to achieve this aim.

Since 2002 much progress has been made. The Cultural Partnership is now well established and has been an excellent mechanism for bringing together the thoughts, ideas and aspirations of the partners and stakeholders in the widest sense of culture in Bracknell Forest. Working in partnership has enabled us to deliver on a wide range of the action points. One important headline is that together we have attracted £5.5million of external funding.

The Council continues to recognise the important contribution that culture makes to delivering on cross-cutting agendas such as health, economy, safety and environment. We are blessed with a wonderful range of cultural assets. However, our future lies not so much in bricks and mortar and green spaces, but in working together to ensure that all of us have the motivation and means to access a continually increasing range of cultural activities that do so much to improve and enrich our lives.

Moving Forward

The cultural sector can be very proud of the progress that has been made but there is still much to be done and we wanted to take this opportunity to take stock and re-energise the commitment of all those involved to driving forward improvements. This new strategy, seeks to celebrate our achievements, encourage collaboration and identify contributions that we can make to the future. This strategy has been created following consultation with our community and other key stakeholders and thanks are extended to all those that contributed.

Delivering this strategy will be impossible without a genuine partnership approach from all stakeholders. We look forward to working with you all to help residents and visitors to enjoy life in our splendid Borough.



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ABOUT CULTURE

INTRODUCTION

This document sets out the Cultural Strategy for the Borough of Bracknell Forest over the period 2008-2012. It follows on from the first Cultural Strategy that covered the period from 2002-2007. It has been refreshed by reviewing progress to date, assessing national, regional and local trends and by extensive consultation. New ambitions and proposed actions have been produced.

The Cultural Strategy is one of the key delivery mechanisms for the Sustainable Community Strategy, the document that sets out the vision of the Bracknell Forest Local Strategic Partnership. It provides a starting point from which all the individual local organisations can plan their work.

The vision of the Sustainable Community Strategy, as agreed by representatives of the local authorities, Primary Care Trust, the Police, third sector and local business is:

To create an attractive prosperous, vibrant, safe and strong community where people want to live, work and do business.

The five over-arching priorities are:

- A town fit for the 21st century
- Protecting and enhancing the environment
- Promoting health and achievement
- Create a borough where people are safe and feel safe
- Value for money

The Cultural Strategy 2008-2012 *Life is for Living Two* has a new mission statement and three strategic themes:

To improve the look and feel of Bracknell Forest, attracting visitors and making it a stimulating and enjoyable place to visit and to contribute to a thriving community where all people are happy to live, work and achieve.

- Enhance town centres, villages and neighbourhoods
- Improve the sense of belonging and community spirit for all
- Continue to support and improve the range of high quality facilities and services

The Cultural Strategy has close links to current policies and strategies which are produced both by Bracknell Forest Borough Council and other agencies. Because this strategy is a plan for the area, not the Council, it is important to recognise the relationship it should have with the plans and policies of partners such as the South East of England Development Agency, Sport England, the Arts Council, Museums, Libraries and Archives Council, Natural England and others. The plans and strategies which have been reviewed as part of the preparation of this document are listed in Appendix A.

PARTNERSHIP

The keynote of *Life is for Living Two* is a multi-agency approach. The Cultural Strategy needs partnership arrangements to drive it forward, and to involve a broad range of stakeholders in the formation of programmes which will address its ambitions. The Cultural Partnership meets twice a year and has visits to facilities and/or services twice a year. It includes a broad range of stakeholders from the public, private and voluntary sector. The Cultural Partnership is democratically accountable, and is a recognised partnership of the Local Strategic Partnership. Elected members sit on the Partnership. It acts as a forum for exchanging information, discussing topics of interest and advocating cultural services.

All partnerships are constantly evolving and need to be kept under review. The partnership needs to reflect the changing demographic mix of the local population. It also needs to maintain a balance between the different stakeholder groups.

Key local partners are the Parish and Town Councils. Most have their own parish plans which set out their local ambitions. They deliver services locally and are instrumental in promoting community activity.

Increasingly the benefits of working with neighbouring authorities are being recognised. This may be to promote efficiency in service delivery or to maximise opportunities from geographical, historical or administrative boundaries. In Bracknell Forest there is a strong case for promoting cross-boundary working in Crowthorne where the administrative boundary divides the village. There are strong geographical and historic links with Windsor and Maidenhead arising from Windsor Castle, The Windsor Estate and its hinterland. There is potential for developing partnership working with neighbouring authorities in order to deliver the mitigation strategy for the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area. The Berkshire Record Office that stores the archives for the County is jointly funded by the Berkshire Unitary Authorities. The Government is encouraging cross-boundary working through multi-area agreements.

Nationally, cultural services are dealt with by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) and Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA). National policies and programmes are delivered through key agencies such as Sport England, Arts Council, Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA), Natural England and English Heritage. All these organisations have regional offices in the South East. Coordination takes place through the Government Office for the South East (GOSE) and the South East Economic Development Agency (SEEDA). One of the aims of this strategy is to join up the agendas of these national and regional agencies with issues that are important to local people. Other stakeholders such as Play England, CABI Space, Destination Performance UK, and the Learning and Skills Council also have key roles to play in setting the direction of cultural services.

WHAT IS CULTURE?

Culture is a term that often means different things to different people. In short, culture is all that contributes to people's quality of life, which is why we have chosen as the title of our Cultural Strategy "*Life is for Living*". It is what makes people what they are, bringing people together whilst at the same time acknowledging individuality and choice, be it language, religion, personal circumstances, ethnic background or interests and activities.

This strategy defines culture as follows:

Culture in Bracknell Forest is the combination of pursuits, beliefs and knowledge which defines who we are and what we do.

The definition of culture is wide ranging; the scope of this document and the activities it includes covers a wide range of activities, as detailed in the following list from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport:

- The performing and visual arts, craft, and fashion
- Museums, artefacts, archives and design
- Libraries, literature, writing and publishing
- The built heritage, architecture, landscape and archaeology
- Sports events, facilities and development
- Parks, open spaces, wildlife habitats, water environments and countryside recreation
- Children's play, playgrounds and play activities
- Tourism, festivals and attractions
- Informal leisure pursuits

In addition, culture has a value dimension:

- Relationships
- Shared memories, experience and identity
- Diverse cultural, religious and historic backgrounds
- Standards
- What we consider valuable to pass on to future generations

The above lists cover people's **pursuits** and **activities** that affect culture in Bracknell Forest. Equally important are the **environment** and **facilities** which surround them. These factors work together to determine the nature of Bracknell Forest. Although the focus is on actions, the scope of the document recognises that culture is not just about activity, but also about values and beliefs.

Culture celebrates achievements and creates a sense of belonging within different communities. It signifies the identity and character of the community within Bracknell Forest as well as the Borough's physical infrastructure. It also recognises the many hobbies and interests that people pursue during their informal leisure time.

WHY HAVE A STRATEGY?

Quite simply, the strategy aims to improve the range and quality of cultural services available in the local area. It aims to improve the quality of life and extend opportunities for all. The case for culture is set out in the following section. Culture has a huge role to play in contributing to local agendas in all sorts of different ways. This Strategy aims to:

- Give vision and direction
- Promote good practice
- Promote collaboration and partnership working
- Flag cultures' wider contribution

- Attract resources
- Communicate cultural ambitions
- Celebrate the culture of the local area
- Provide the context for improvement plans for individual service areas
- Be a stimulus for action

Successful cultural provision depends on meeting the needs of all local residents and visitors. It needs to cater for the very young and the elderly, parents and carers, those with learning disabilities or physical disabilities. Increasingly it needs to cater for those from ethnic minority backgrounds who may have different faiths or cultural needs. Successful provision depends on the input of a large number of professionals and volunteers, often working through clubs, societies and local organisations.

Successful cultural provision depends on having a broad spectrum of buildings and green spaces in which activity can take place. This strategy contains new initiatives that help utilise this infrastructure and remove barriers to participation. It aims to achieve an appropriate balance between new initiatives and ensuring that essential resources are not diverted away from the fundamental day-to-day management of the infrastructure on which these activities depend.

Through this Cultural Strategy, we hope to promote the benefits of being involved in the full range of activities and pursuits which help to generate the vitality and life within Bracknell Forest. The Strategy will help to create positive links between the past, present and future of the Borough, and provide a focus for the range of organisations which are involved in providing cultural activities.

The importance and value of the activities included in the scope of this document should not be underestimated. The diversity of cultural services ensures there is something for everyone to participate in, realise their potential and develop a sense of wellbeing. People we have consulted have expressed in particular the importance of health and wellbeing to their quality of life, an aspect positively promoted by all the cultural activities. This Cultural Strategy needs to focus on the demands and aspirations of the communities in Bracknell Forest so that their cultural needs are met in an efficient, equitable and effective way.

THE CASE FOR CULTURE

There is an inherent need for culture in all societies. After the First World War, it was recognised that boredom and loneliness were problems in rural areas and so a network of village halls was created to enable people to meet together and find things to do. After the Second World War, the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 set up the public rights of way system and recognised the need *“for the enjoyment of the opportunities for open air recreation and the study of nature”*. The Arts Council was established and incorporated by Royal Charter in 1946 with the objective of encouraging and promoting the arts and improving standards throughout the country. The Museums and Galleries Commission was originally established in 1931 and in 2000 it joined with the Library and Information Commission to form the Museum, Libraries and Archives Council. The Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 required local authorities to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service to those who live or work or study in their areas. Sport England is the government agency responsible for advising, investing in and promoting community sport. It was originally set up as The Sports Council in 1972 and became Sport England in 1996.

Locally, the Bracknell Development Corporation that set up the New Town included essential cultural infrastructure as part of their plans. They set up the Sports Centre, Arts Centre and created a network of parks and community centres. In 1974, the ongoing role of local government was recognised when a Recreation Department was formed in the then Bracknell District Council. This work has continued and now forms part of the Environment, Culture and Communities Directorate of Bracknell Forest Borough Council.

In 2007, The Local Government White Paper “Stronger and Prosperous Communities” set out a new vision for local government and acknowledges the role of culture and sport in the “place shaping agenda”. On ‘Cities and Regions’ it states:

“Sporting and cultural activity and events can generate significant economic, commercial and social benefits, both locally and nationally. Major sporting events have catalysed long-term economic gains where they have been used as a lever for wider regeneration of a place. Participation in cultural and sporting activities improves skills and confidence, enhances social networks and strengthens social cohesion, and has positive impacts on health. These benefits are particularly marked amongst young people, ethnic minority groups and disabled people.”

Provision of a range of cultural facilities, coupled with a good quality environment, can be a major attractor to businesses and workers. Cultural facilities and events, including the creation of a ‘cultural sector’ in a city, can enhance the image of an area, creating a sense of place and civic pride. A coherent “cultural offer” across a city region promotes the area on a regional, national and international stage and could provide a substantial attraction to businesses and individuals in taking location and investment decisions.

CULTURE AND WIDER AGENDAS

Place shaping

Local public sector organisations, the residential and business community and voluntary and community groups have shared ambitions that are reflected in their Sustainable Community Strategies. The aim is to create stronger local and national prosperity and to develop the distinctive nature of places and their communities. The general term for this approach is ‘Place Shaping’. It is the creative use of powers and influences to promote the general wellbeing of a community and its citizens and is only effectively delivered through partnership working. It includes the following components and clearly culture has an important role to play in contributing to these agendas:

- Building and shaping local identity
- Representing the community
- Regulating harmful and disruptive behaviours
- Maintaining the cohesiveness of the community and supporting debate within it, ensuring smaller voices are heard
- Helping to resolve disagreements
- Working to make the local economy more successful while being sensitive to pressures of the environment

- Understanding local needs and preferences and making sure that the right services are provided to local people

Health and Wellbeing

As well as the obvious benefits of fresh air and exercise, many forms of sport and countryside recreation have value in terms of social and mental health. Walking is Britain's most popular pastime and, as a sociable countryside activity, it is good for mental as well as physical health. A physically active lifestyle reduces the risk of coronary heart disease, obesity and has psychological benefits. The arts, play, tourism and spiritual activities have a demonstrably positive effect on the health and wellbeing of participants. Through play, many children begin to enjoy an active lifestyle that can stay with them through life. The Cultural Strategy will aim to ensure a better quality of life through the provision of a wide range of activities, resulting in a healthy, confident community with lower death rates.

Community Cohesion

Community cohesion is the way groups of people get on with one another and support each other. Supportive, positive communities are the result of a complex web of activities which focus on people both as individuals and groups and on the place they live, on their environment and their level of economic success and affluence.

Cultural activities have many social benefits, engendering a sense of self-worth, and encouraging individual and collective responsibility for everyone. Participation and involvement in the arts and other cultural activities increases the sense of social cohesion, brings communities together and builds a common sense of belonging. From sculptures to music festivals, the arts can generate pride and a sense of place for local people.

Protecting the Environment

Dealing with climate change is becoming an increasingly important issue. Actions that support both the climate change agenda and the cultural agendas include promoting green travel, and providing activities near to where people live so as to reduce the need to travel. More sustainable lifestyles are influenced by faith and cultural backgrounds. Changes such as an increase in take-up of allotments and 'grow your own food' initiatives are all part of the green agenda. Protecting the environment also includes looking after green spaces and making sure the air quality, water quality and state of the land are healthy and safe. Cultural activities contribute to a cleaner, more healthy environment and contribute to sustainable development. Good management of parks, countryside and open spaces encourages people to enjoy, cherish and learn about the environment.

Community Safety

Cultural activities have been successfully used to deter crime and anti-social behaviour. The provision of a range of cultural activities provides a diversion away from unlawful activity while at the same time creates an environment which itself acts as a disincentive to crime and disorder. Examples include: decorating the subways to discourage graffiti, the development of youth facilities and the provision of security officers to prevent car crime. The cultural providers will work closely with the Crime and Disorder Reduction

Partnership as it develops its own three-year plan to maximise opportunity and avoid duplication of effort.

Lifelong Learning

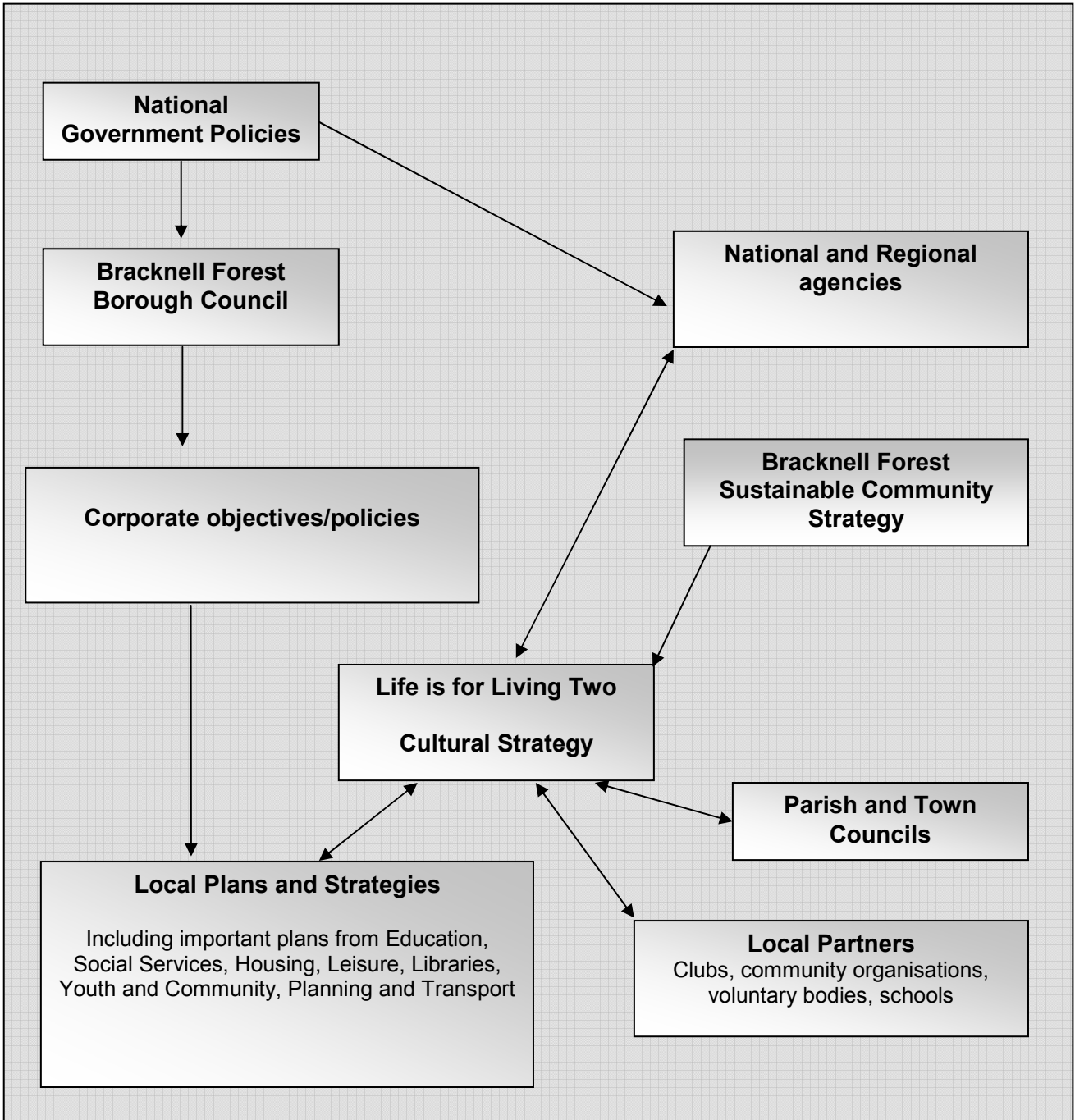
Cultural activities can and should be enjoyed throughout life, from early introductions to active involvement, perhaps on to high quality specialisms in particular fields, or through to recreational enjoyment in later life. The Cultural Strategy needs to ensure that opportunities and access are created for people to participate in different cultural activities throughout their lives. Arts Council research has shown that quality learning opportunities within the arts are an important feature of a rounded learning process. They make a significant contribution to the intellectual, professional and social development of the individual. Individuals learning new skills through sport and art are clearly showing a positive attitude to lifelong learning.

Developing the Economy

The economic benefits of the arts, countryside activities, voluntary work, adult education and community activities are widely recognised. Tourism is a significant part of the economy for the South East and it is also estimated that tourism supports some 125,000 jobs in the region. Also, when deciding where to locate, businesses will be drawn to areas that are attractive places to live and work.

Culture can contribute to dealing with worklessness, a term used to describe those are out of work but would like a job. Skills learnt through informal participation in cultural activities can be just as beneficial as more formal training, such as NVQs, as they can increase employability.





ABOUT BRACKNELL FOREST

ABOUT THE PEOPLE

Bracknell Forest is a unique Borough in that it consists of a New Town and old villages traditionally set in the midst of an ancient royal hunting forest. As such, in the rural areas and villages live many people whose families have resided in the Borough for many years. In the New Town, the vast majority of the residents have moved to the area since the 1950s and this has given rise to the rapid and steady expansion in population.

Many of the original residents of the new town moved from London in the 1950s with the attraction of new housing in a green and pleasant environment, combined with good employment prospects. In the early days of the new town, employment was primarily in manufacturing but gradually changed to the current situation where large global high-technology firms dominate the local employment scene. The Met Office was the most famous of the employers until it moved to Exeter in 2004. The Hadley Centre for Climate Change, one of the leading research bodies, also moved to Exeter from Bracknell.

The Borough's population is 112,200 (2006 estimate). Between 1991 and 2001, this grew twice as fast as the average for South East England (14% compared to 7%). The population is relatively young (average age 35.4 years compared to the UK average of 38.7). Only 11.5% is of pensionable age, compared to 18% nationally.

The population is relatively healthy. Average life expectancy is 80.15 years. Levels of smoking and circulatory diseases are lower than nationally, although the proportions of the population who are obese or with cancer are higher. However, neither of these figures is excessive in the national context.

Bracknell Forest is generally affluent (ranked 319 out of 354 on the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2004). Property prices and levels of car ownership are significantly higher than the national average and free school meals eligibility is low. However, these headline figures mask significant pockets of deprivation. Educational attainment of children and young people has improved significantly between 2001 and 2007. Overall results are consistently above the national averages for Key Stages 1 to 3. Crime levels are generally low, ranking 180 out of 354 districts in England. However, the number of crimes per 1,000 population increased by 2.9% over the period 2000 to 2005, against the decreasing national trends. This issue has been targeted and recent figures have shown a reduction of 15% in British Crime Survey crimes during the current year.

Bracknell Forest is less ethnically diverse than England as a whole. The vast majority of the population in Bracknell Forest are white (predominantly White British), while Asians account for the largest proportion of the population in minority ethnic groups.

The Asian or Asian British ethnic groups are skilled and employed in professional occupations and are relatively wealthy. Conversely the local mixed ethnic groups tend to be employed in the lower occupational categories. There are significant ethnic communities in wards such as College Town, Crown Wood, Wildridings and Central Bracknell. The speed of change in ethnicity is rapid. There are sixty-four different nationalities registered to vote in the Borough, the largest being South African. Two Polish shops have recently opened in Bracknell.

The Borough encourages the growth and development of faith communities. All the main Christian denominations are represented (Anglican 18, Baptist 5, Evangelical Free 2, Methodist 4, Pentecostal 3, Roman Catholic 4, Seventh Day Adventist, United Reformed and a Local Partnership). These have church buildings as well as community congregations meeting in schools and elsewhere. Some church buildings are also used as worship centres by other congregations including Filipino Catholic and Ghanaian Pentecostal groups. Both the Garrison Church of Sandhurst Military Academy and the International Seventh Day Adventist University are within the Borough. Christadelphians, Christian Scientists, Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons have their own building and congregations. Additional groups which meet regularly are the Bahi, the Nepalese Community, the Indian Community Association who undertake a range of Hindu Prayers and Festivals and the Islamic Cultural Society who pray at the Bracknell Leisure Centre.

Within schools, the curriculum programme of Personal, Social and Health Education, together with specific subject areas of English, arts and religious education, address spiritual matters.

Volunteers are an important element of any community and the voluntary sector is a key partner in delivering *Life is for Living Two*. The Voluntary Sector Compact recognises the role that the community and voluntary sector play in raising the quality of life in the area, mobilising resources and reaching those participating least. The Cultural Strategy encourages the involvement of new groups in volunteering, especially young people and local businesses, which are not well represented at present and training may be a supporting role. Bracknell Forest Voluntary Action (BFVA) is the central support agency for voluntary and community action in the Borough.

About half of all Bracknell Forest residents commute out of the Borough to work. About half of all workers commute into the Borough. Visitors come to the Borough to visit local businesses and family and friends who live in Bracknell Forest. The Borough is not a holiday destination in itself, but is a base for exploring nearby tourist facilities such as Windsor Castle and Legoland. The majority of users of Coral Reef and The Look Out come from outside the Borough. The Downshire Golf Course and South Hill Park Arts Centre are nationally recognised as excellent venues. As a result, tourism has been traditionally associated mainly with day visits. To inform residents and visitors alike, a Tourist Information Centre exists at The Look Out.

Apart from royalty, there are relatively few famous people associated with the Borough. Alexander Pope, the poet, lived at Popes Manor in Binfield. William Pitt, the Prime Minister, was associated with the founding of RMA Sandhurst and Wellington College. There is a holm oak tree at South Hill Park that was reputedly planted by William Gladstone, another former Prime Minister. Famous former inmates of Broadmoor Hospital include Dr W C Minor, a millionaire American Civil War surgeon and homicidal lunatic known as "The Surgeon of Crowthorne" who became one of the Oxford English Dictionary's most valued contributors, Richard Dadd, an artist and Peter Sutcliffe, the Yorkshire Ripper.

ABOUT THE PLACE

The Culture of Bracknell Forest is shaped to a significant extent by its location, population and geography. Bracknell Forest covers 109 sq km of central Berkshire and includes of Bracknell, Crowthorne and Sandhurst along with a number of smaller villages and settlements. The north and east of the Borough form part of the Metropolitan Green Belt whilst land south of Bracknell and Crowthorne is internationally important for nature conservation. The Borough is proud and protective of its green character, with a third of the area comprising woodland. The six Town and Parish Councils in the Borough provide a local outlook, with people in these areas identifying more with their local area than with Bracknell Forest.

The Built Heritage and Architecture

Bracknell Forest is characterised by a combination of major modern businesses, 1960s and 1970s buildings and shopping centres, and more historical features dating back to the 18th and 19th Centuries. A major challenge for the Borough is combining the old with the new, whilst simultaneously retaining the sense of character which makes the more rural areas of the Borough so special to the longer term residents.

The residential areas of the New Town provide excellent examples of different architectural styles and planning approaches to the public realm and date from the 1950s to the present day. The New Town was built using the neighbourhood principle. As each housing estate grew it was provided with its own shops, a pub, a primary school and a site for a church. This helped to establish a sense of place and a feeling of belonging to a community.

Priestwood, Easthampstead and Bullbrook were the first estates built by the Bracknell Development Corporation, were of low housing density and made very little provision for cars. Great Hollands was built in the 1960s, at a time when communal space was in fashion and so it has the communal squares and extensive areas of amenity landscaping and similar house styles throughout much of the estate. The most recent estate built is at Whitegrove and instead of a neighbourhood parade of shops, it has one large supermarket.

The Bracknell Development Corporation had a policy of including public art in new buildings and there are examples of this throughout the town. It is intended that a public art audit will be conducted and will be published on the Borough website and subsequently updated to improve awareness of the diversity of public art that already exists in the Borough. More recently, financial contribution towards public art has been sought by the Borough's planning department through application of the 'Per cent for the Arts' policy which seeks to ensure that one per cent of all construction works is spent on improving the visual appearance of buildings and the public realm. A Public Art Strategy was produced in 2004 and this sets out future aspirations particularly for the town centre. The planning approval for the £750 million redevelopment of Bracknell Town Centre requires that a specific art panel be established to coordinate the expenditure of at least £1million in public art.

Other aspects of the Borough are demonstrated through the older buildings such as the houses at Easthampstead Park and Foliejon Park whilst in surrounding villages there are some domestic and farm buildings which are several hundred years old, providing a completely different character to the area. There are 265 Listed Buildings in the Borough of which 254 are Grade II, 10 are Grade II* and 1 is Grade I which is

Point Royal, a tower block built in the early 1960s by Philip Dowson and Derek Sugden of Arup Associates who were responsible for the design of the Sydney Opera House. The block is notable for its bold sculptural form and integrated design and also for the precise and refined quality of the pre-cast external frame. Point Royal is a strong landmark character in Bracknell and the landscaping around it reinforces this. It is one of the most distinctive architectural features in any of the English New Towns. Four Conservation Areas were designated many years ago. Recently there has been a desire to designate more as high density infill development has affected the visual appearance of attractive street spaces.

Major companies such as Hewlett Packard, Boehringer Ingelheim, Fujitsu (formerly ICL), BMW, Honeywell and Novell have bases in the Borough, giving the environment surrounding Bracknell Town Centre the look and feel of a thriving major business centre. Syngenta Limited at Jealott's Hill is a well established world renowned International Crop Protection Research Centre. The site has been operating for 80 years and has a mixed arable and dairy farm at the Syngenta site that is a Leaf Demonstration farm supporting sustainable agricultural methods.

Landscape and archaeology

The southern half of the Borough has a landscape that is dominated by coniferous trees, large areas of commercial forest and the rare heathland habitats between Crowthorne and Sandhurst. The Blackwater River forms the southern boundary of the Borough. Fields alongside the river have been protected from housing development as they are in a flood plain.

The northern half of the Borough, with its clay soil, has a very different landscape as it is dominated by agricultural land (now used mainly for equestrian purposes), hedgerows and copses. The Cut River runs through the northern parishes on its way to join the Thames near Maidenhead.

Extensive tree cover is a major feature of the Borough and this arises from the historical context of being the Ancient Royal Hunting Forest that surrounded Windsor Castle. There are many ancient and veteran trees that may be of national importance but, because they have never been documented or assessed, there is a paucity of information on them and there is potential for a future heritage project. About a third of the land in the Borough is forest owned by The Crown Estate. Within the urban areas, lots of trees have been retained and this is reflected in the names of neighbourhoods such as Crown Wood, Birch Hill and Forest Park.

Within urban areas, there are large areas of green space and these are highly valued by local people. Some of this space is used for recreational purposes and other spaces have been retained for their visual amenity value or as buffer strips near to arterial roads.

There are five sites included on the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens: Ascot Place, Broadmoor Hospital, Newbold College, South Hill Park and Windsor Great Park. It is hoped that Lily Hill Park, with the completion of its £2million restoration, will be added to the Register.

There are 12 Scheduled Ancient Monuments in the Borough. The most well known is at Caesars Camp, an Iron Age hill fort. Archaeological digs have taken place prior to development at Temple Park, Binfield and at Jennetts Park. Recently an archaeological dig took place at Ambarrow Court and local school children had great fun exploring the foundations of an old house.

Transport and Travel

Within Bracknell Forest Borough there is a very good network of cycle routes that has been created utilising existing local roads, linked by specially designed segregated cycleways. Despite the extensive cycle network, there is still a heavy reliance on the car, and this has a negative effect on neighbourhood spirit and the development of a close-knit community. Further effects of increased use of cars include the reduction in viability of bus services and increased traffic, resulting in those without access to cars losing much of their ability to travel. Community transport is available through a range of service providers.

The local bus network runs inter-urban services. However, the local bus services are not as comprehensive as some people would wish. One comment that arises consistently from consultations in the Borough is that public transport is vital if people are to have equal opportunities to access leisure services, particularly young people.

Good road links such as the M3, M4 and M25 allow easy access to towns such as Reading, Woking and Guildford and result in many people travelling outside the Borough to take part in or enjoy attractions such as RHS Wisley, The Savill Garden, Virginia Water in Windsor Great Park, Thorpe Park and Ascot Racecourse.

Good transport links to London mean that many people travel there either for work or for a range of leisure and cultural facilities. Easy access to Reading Station enables travel to many destinations without the need to cross or enter London. There are smaller stations situated at both Sandhurst and Crowthorne, which run a frequent service between Reading and Guildford. This train line also serves many intermediate destinations such as Wokingham, Staines, Ascot and Richmond. The proposed east-west rail link and redevelopment of Reading Station will further improve transport opportunities in the region.

ABOUT FACILITIES AND SERVICES

Bracknell Forest has a range of varied and exciting cultural programmes and opportunities. This section of the Strategy summarises the main features of the cultural picture of the Borough. The range of providers is also identified, demonstrating the need for partnership working throughout the strategy. The activities outlined below are a selection of the main provision in the Borough; the subjects are comprehensive but not exhaustive.

Sports events, activities and development

In the Borough of Bracknell Forest opportunities to participate in sport are provided by three main deliverers: the local authorities, the private sector and the voluntary sector.

Bracknell Forest Borough Council owns and manages an extensive portfolio of 12 facilities. The flagship is Bracknell Leisure Centre, which has been developed in phases since the early 1960s and remains one of the largest multi-use leisure centres in the south of England. Community leisure is provided for by Edgbarrow and Sandhurst Sports Centres which are based on school sites within their local communities. The Borough Council also runs The Coral Reef, a free form leisure

pool, and Downshire Golf complex which is acknowledged as one of the best municipal courses in England.

Other organisations such as the Town and Parish Councils provide the more traditional recreation grounds. Typically, there are football pitches and tennis courts with maybe a cricket square.

Commercial leisure providers are also active in Bracknell Forest. The Royal Berkshire Racquets Centre provides tennis and ancillary facilities, whilst John Nike Leisuresport owns and manages an international-sized ice rink and ski slope. There are several private golf clubs including a 'pay and play' site at Blue Mountain. There are health and fitness clubs with both private and pay-as-you-go memberships. A number of local companies including 3M and Panasonic run sports facilities for the benefit of their employees.

The Borough is well provided for in terms of formal facilities in both the public and private sector, but arguably the biggest providers of sporting opportunities are the many voluntary sports clubs based in and around the area. A number of the Borough's teams compete in regional leagues including Bracknell Rugby Club, Bracknell Hockey Club, Bracknell Town Football Club and Bracknell Cricket Club. There are thriving junior leagues in which many of the local teams participate with the Bracknell & District Boys Football League, a good example. A number of clubs run strong junior sections. In 2007 Bracknell & Wokingham Swimming Club was 4th in the National Speedo League and Edgbarrow Trampolining Club were GB team champions. The Borough is also home to the national under-12 Baseball champions and the four times tug-of-war world champions.

In terms of facilities, some own their own (Bracknell Cricket Club, Bracknell Town Football Club), some operate from leased facilities (Bracknell Rugby Club) and some hire from statutory providers (Bracknell Hockey Club, Bracknell Athletics Club). Wherever possible the statutory organisations will help the clubs to meet their aspirations in terms of improved facilities.

The performing and visual arts, crafts

The Borough Council leases the land and provides a subsidy to South Hill Park Arts Centre. This is a regional venue with a national reputation for producing high quality arts activities. It is a charitable trust and is the main arts facility in the Borough. The complex includes the 330-seat Wilde Theatre, built in 1984, a cinema, recording studio, dance studio, art gallery, two bars and a restaurant. South Hill Park is situated in an extensive parkland setting and offers a wide variety of programmes and courses. Outdoor festivals are held every summer in the grounds. The Centre successfully applied to the Arts Council for a major Lottery grant to refurbish and expand the current premises to provide new facilities for the full range of performing and visual arts, media, film and literature. This was completed in March 2002.

A Community Arts Programme has been established. Initiatives so far include North Parishes Arts Week, Off Beat, Lift Off Dance Festival (for young people), Black History Month and From Here to Maturity (dance for older people), Mela. A multi-disciplined Public Art Advisory Group has been set up to drive forward the Council's public art strategy and the Borough schools provide significant opportunities for children to learn many forms of arts, crafts, technology and creative design.

This strategy recognises that private individual artists contribute to the richness of the Borough through exhibitions, tutoring, talks and work with schools and a Creative Network has been set up to promote co-operation between individuals. It is also recognised that there is a shortage of space for artists' studios and rehearsal space for musicians and the strategy seeks to address this issue, in the short term by successfully securing the use of empty shops in the town centre.

There is a wide range of voluntary clubs and community groups which play an important part in enriching the lives of thousands of Bracknell Forest residents. Groups and organisations range from painting and sculpting use in community centres around the Borough, to making use of the extensive facilities at South Hill Park. Most importantly, they cover the Borough geographically and there are opportunities for a range of groups including the young and old, experienced and novices.

The Point is home to an Odeon Cinema which is a major attraction in the centre of Bracknell, providing an important venue for individual, family and group entertainment with a range of popular films. There is also a 10-pin bowling alley and restaurant.

Archives, artefacts and heritage

The Berkshire Record Office in Reading holds many of the archives for the Borough. This is jointly funded by all the Unitary Authorities in the County who manage this facility through the Archives Board. Some records, and particularly photographs, are held in the Museum of English Rural Life (MERL) in Reading and are available online.

The Heritage Strategy for the Borough sets out the framework for dealing with matters of local historic interest. Local heritage is made available to the public through a heritage online website that provides information and is very accessible. A Heritage Forum provides a meeting place for those with an interest in local history. There is no Civic Society in Bracknell at present, nor is there a society that deals with local history in Bracknell; however there are moves to set one up.

The only museum in the Borough is at the RMA, Sandhurst and this is not open to the public except by appointment. However, there is a small museum collection housed at the Sandhurst Town Council offices and the Borough has an arrangement with Reading Museum not only to provide a museum storage facility for archaeological finds from the Borough but also to provide a loan service for Bracknell Forest schools.

Libraries and learning

The Borough offers a comprehensive library service through its 9 libraries and the Home Library Service which provides for those who for physical or mental health reasons are unable to visit a library in person.

The main library in Bracknell, which houses a fine collection of local history books, old photographs and old maps, provides the hub around which library services in the Borough are delivered. There are branch libraries in Binfield, North Ascot, Great Hollands, Birch Hill, Harmans Water and Sandhurst. A new replacement library was opened in Crowthorne in 2006. In addition to their primary function of lending books and encouraging reading, ancillary functions, such as the provision of

internet access, DVD and CD collections are available as well as assistance with study and research.

The Borough provides an electronic library catalogue which is available in all libraries and membership is dealt with through use of the e⁺ Smartcard developed in the Borough. Facilities are available for renewing books and searching online. In addition electronic information and reference sources are made available via the library service's web pages: <http://ww.bracknell-forest.go.uk/learning/learn-libraries/learn-libraries-weblinks.htm>

The library staff organise activities such as story-telling and school class visits, reading and writing groups, author events, reminiscence sessions and exhibitions about the locality.

The Borough Council's adult learning provision is managed by the Local Authority Lifelong Learning Team working alongside other providers, most notably Bracknell and Wokingham College. The College is a volume provider of good quality Personal and Community Development Learning opportunities, which is delivered from their own and local community venues. The College also provides an extensive range of short courses, and part-time courses, that cater for leisure and recreational needs and special interests and courses for adults with learning difficulties. In recognition of the Borough's growing ethnic population the College also provides courses in English for speakers of other languages and in citizenship.

Parks, open spaces, wildlife habitats, and countryside recreation

The Borough has an extensive network of accessible green spaces which serve a variety of purposes including visual amenity, nature conservation and outdoor recreation. The term "green infrastructure" is increasingly being used to describe these spaces as it also recognises their potential role in dealing with climate change and flood prevention. The term **Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space** (SANGs) is being used to refer to those areas which are not traditional urban parks but have an informal natural character and can attract people away from more sensitive sites.

In Bracknell Forest the green spaces are managed by local authorities and others, such as The Crown Estate, Berks, Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust and The National Trust. Over 70% of the Borough is countryside. Networking takes place with Town and Parish Councils through Parish Parks and Public Realm Group which promotes the exchange of ideas and information and encourages joint projects.

The Borough Council is also responsible for the maintenance of the Definitive Map of Public Rights of Way which provides the legal record for the 50 miles of public rights of way in the Borough. The Local Countryside Access Forum enables people to come together and influence countryside recreation in the Borough. Local groups such as the Friends of the Earth, Bracknell Forest Natural History Society, the Urban Wildlife Group, the Hedgerow and Woodland Conservationists, and the local Ramblers Association actively protect the environment and contribute to enhancing quality of life in Bracknell Forest.

There is a voluntary ranger service in the Borough's countryside parks and together with voluntary groups organise activities such as rambling, orienteering, fishing, horse-riding, mountain biking, cycling, and nature trails, which play an important part both in encouraging people to enjoy the countryside, and in protecting the environment.

The Borough also benefits from a continuous footpath running along the Blackwater River that stretches from Wokingham Borough to Aldershot and for those who enjoy walking, riding or mountain biking the 3,000 hectares of forest surrounding The Look Out is ideal.

The Borough Council manages over 300 hectares of land used for outdoor recreation and play. Sites managed include urban parks, recreation grounds, play areas, nature reserves, amenity open space and woodlands. The Council has, since 2002, won Green Flag Awards for Popes Meadow, Westmorland Park and Shepherd Meadows, the latter being a partnership project with Sandhurst Town Council, and holds Beacon Status for Maintaining a Quality Environment. The Borough takes customer satisfaction very seriously and promotes and encourages the use of Greenstat which is an online visitor survey that encourages feedback from users.

Lily Hill Park has been restored to its former glory with the help of £2million of grant aid from the Heritage Lottery Fund and an Access and Education Strategy has been produced as part of the project. The Borough has also been successful in securing Lottery grants for improvement projects at Snaprails Park and Ambarrow Court. A bid has been submitted for a £3.6million project to restore the heritage landscape in the grounds of South Hill Park.

The Biodiversity Action Plan describes in detail the wildlife of the Borough. The forest and surrounding heathland at The Look Out are classified as a Special Protection Area because of their international importance for ground-nesting birds. There are also within the Borough nine Sites of Special Scientific Interest denoting habitats of national importance. Biodiversity contributes to quality of life and place-making as access to land with diverse flora and fauna can enable much enjoyment.

The 79 sites of local wildlife importance are designated as Wildlife Heritage Sites. Overall, the Borough is extremely rich in wildlife and this is a local asset to be treasured, celebrated and enjoyed.

Within Bracknell there are extensive areas of amenity open space which were designed as part of the philosophy of creating a green and pleasant environment. The Council makes great efforts to improve the visual environment of Bracknell Town Centre with the colourful 'Bracknell Flowers' display. Great efforts are also made to create attractive roundabouts to cheer up passing motorists and present a positive image for the Borough.

Children's play and playgrounds

There are 45 early years providers in the private, voluntary and independent sectors supplying nurseries and playgroups which fulfil a valuable role in developing children's early experiences of games, play, arts and music. These early introductions are a crucial first step in developing lifelong habits of participation. The Early Years and Childcare Service runs a free resource centre for staff and parent/carers, a very popular facility for pre-school and play provision. It also provides access to an annual Borough-wide Play Day event.

Schools and maintained nurseries offer opportunities for play to all children and young people throughout the day and, with the current development of extended service schools, this could be enhanced by further opportunities both before and after school and during holiday periods. Schools have some of the safest, most

accessible open space provision placed in the heart of their communities and many are well resourced.

The Youth Service provides facilities, advice and support for young people through youth centres and a range of outreach programmes. Outdoor provision includes skate parks and teen shelters often designed and built in collaboration with the young people themselves.

There is an extremely good network of children's playgrounds across the Borough. On the basis that every child in Bracknell should have the right to easy access to a playground (ie not crossing a major road), there are no real gaps to fill.

All seven councils (Bracknell Forest Borough Council and the six parish or town councils) have actively managed their open spaces and facilities and the high quality ratings given to these spaces confirm this. There are 74 equipped play areas across the Borough. These include:

- 18 local areas of play (LAPs)
- 50 local equipped areas of play (LEAPS)
- 6 neighbourhood equipped areas of play (NEAPS)

An audit was undertaken in 2006 and, of the 66 play areas assessed, the key quality findings in these - areas looking at the discreet needs of toddlers, juniors and teenagers - were as follows:

- 33 sites are good or excellent
- 12 sites are rated as average
- 21 sites are considered to be poor or below average

The Council may need to consider site rationalisation, which may provide the opportunity for fewer but better quality sites.

The voluntary and community sector in Bracknell Forest

The voluntary and community sector in Bracknell Forest is very diverse ranging from branches of large national organisations down to small locally run community groups. There are 440+ groups and organisations which provide a wealth of vital services, many of a preventative nature, to the residents of the Borough. The majority of these organisations are run entirely by volunteers.

Groups cover many areas of work or interest including children and young people, disability, older people, health support, sport, arts, transport, social etc. They are funded in a variety of ways, through individual fundraising, through trusts and other grant givers and also through service level agreements with the local authority. All provide a valuable service within their own field of operation which complement and enhance those provided by partner agencies.

Bracknell Forest Voluntary Action supports voluntary and community activity by providing a variety of services for organisations and the residents of the Borough, including advice on funding, volunteer recruitment, training and development and carers' support.

Other organisations offer opportunities for voluntary and community groups by providing a coordinated voice for voluntary and community groups, encouraging and

enabling groups and communities to be more involved in local decision-making which impacts on their lives.

The Bracknell Forest Minority Alliance (formerly known as the Bracknell Forest Additional Support Programme) provides help and support to local Black Minority Ethnic, Small Faith and Traveller communities and groups through providing a channel of communication, enabling these communities to have a say and contribute to decisions on services that will affect them. Member groups arrange and participate in many local cultural events and activities across the Borough eg when The Filipino 'Barrio Festival', Black History Month and the Mela.

The Voluntary Sector Forum is a voice and representing body for voluntary and community groups, ensuring that their interests are heard and taken into account enabling wider participation of groups and their customers. Representatives are in place on many key decision-making bodies which enable people's voices to be heard and taken into account.

The Federation of Small Community Groups provides a link for small locally based community groups, including the 13 Community Associations which manage the Community Centres encouraging neighbourhood groups and residents to become more actively involved in their local communities.

Local companies and businesses also have an important support role for voluntary and community activities through staff participation and by providing essential financial support to the communities' sports clubs and arts events.

PROGRESS SINCE 2002

THE FIRST STRATEGY

The first strategy was produced in 2002 and was informed by consultants working with a team of local cultural providers. As a result of this strategy, the Cultural Partnership was set up and this has resulted in much improved networking, information exchange, mutual understanding and cooperation. A review of progress with this strategy has been undertaken so as to inform the refreshed strategy. A summary is given below together with a forward look.

Of the 94 action points included in the Strategy, 33 have been completed, 3 deferred and a further 55 have made good progress or are ongoing. Only 3 actions have made limited progress and these include transport issues. External funding of £5.5million has been levered in by the partners, with Lottery funding and developer contribution being the largest amounts. The Strategy was based around four strategic priorities and a summary of progress in relation to each theme is given below.

Theme 1 - Improving the sense of belonging and community spirit

The consultation for the 2002 strategy indicated that residents, workers and visitors feel very little sense of community, except in very local areas. Many people consulted did not have a full awareness of the large range of opportunities already open to them, possibly because they had not been encouraged to try new activities, they were not aware of them or because there were barriers to participation, especially transport and cost. This strategic priority was intended to address this issue through programmes of activity. Place-making is now considered a key role of local government.

Progress since 2002 includes:

- The e⁺ Smartcard has been introduced and is promoting access for all through targeted schemes
- A specialist website for young people has been set up called <http://www.xpresionz.co.uk/>
- Improved information on the Borough Council's website for events and community groups
- Disability access audits of all public buildings
- Artist used to design The Calibrated Ramp
- Introduction of neighbourhood policing and Police Community Support Officers
- Better use of local welcome packs for new residents
- Participation in Heritage Open Day Scheme
- An archaeological dig took place at Ambarrow Court
- A new library opened in Crowthorne

Looking forward, there is a continuing need to promote a sense of place and make feel welcome all those who live in and visit the Borough.

Theme 2 - Enhance town centres throughout the Borough

The Strategy recognised that an important element of economic wellbeing is the regeneration of Bracknell Town Centre and that we should seek to create an exciting urban centre in its own right. It also recognised the importance of Crowthorne and Sandhurst. Progress since 2002 includes:

- A Public Art Strategy for Bracknell Town Centre Regeneration has been approved.
- A Public Art Advisory Group and a Design Panel have been set up.
- Leading architectural practice has been employed on town centre design.
- Plans for a new library/cultural centre are well advanced.
- Art Plus Award for design of public spaces.
- Work has been undertaken on improving safety and security, access for the disabled, public transport and customer care.
- Street Life, Bracknell in Bloom and a range of events have helped to maintain vitality of the town centre in the short term.
- A new bingo hall and a new nightclub have opened.
- Community arts development work has been taking place in Crowthorne and Sandhurst.

Looking forward, the next five years are likely to see major construction work in Bracknell town centre. Work will start with the construction of the new civic office and library. Then a programme of demolition and reconstruction will gradually take place across the town. A new Jubilee Gardens/civic square will be constructed. The importance of architecture and design will be crucial to ensuring the long-term success, as will the need to ensure a mix of opportunities for cultural activities and participation. During this process of change there will be a need to maintain the short-term vitality of the town centre and ensure good information for the public. Transport links into town for buses, cars and pedestrians will be improved in accordance with a rolling programme. There are plans to improve the ambience of Bracknell Railway Station.

Although the Bracknell Town Centre will be a key focus, the importance of town centres in Crowthorne and Sandhurst and the neighbourhood centres will remain. These local centres are important for creating community spirit, for reducing the need to travel and for delivering services locally. Community centres and libraries provide links for cultural activity and meeting places.

Theme 3 - Undertake more outreach and community development work

Traditionally, cultural provision in the Borough has been mainly facility based and linked to the major centres. The first strategy identified the demand from community groups to extend the developing sports and arts programme in other venues and in some of the outlying towns and villages. Development and outreach work is highly valued as a complement to the Borough's own sports, arts and school provision. This work encourages participation and promotes access for all and it is considered that a continuation of this work is a key tool in achieving the objectives of equalities, agendas and community cohesion.

This theme also relates to environmental objectives as it reduces the need to travel through locally based provision. Limited public transport has been identified in consultation as a key issue in preventing access. By taking activities to local communities, this improves opportunities.

Progress since 2002 includes:

- Creation of County Sports Partnership, leveraging in £3million of Lottery funding for Berkshire
- Community Arts Development Officer appointed
- Community arts projects include Black History Month, Northern Parishes Arts Week, Mela, Lift Off Dance Festival
- Voluntary sports clubs given support with bids to Awards for All and other Lottery funds
- Youth open access provision improved at Sandhurst Sports Centre/The Greenway
- Parish Parks Partnership established
- Reading Clubs in schools and residential homes set up by library service
- Voluntary footpath warden scheme continues to be successful
- Neighbourhood newsletters produced by community groups
- More school sports and after-school sports development
- More sports leaders trained and supported
- Short mat bowls, keep fit, tai chi introduced in community centres
- Youth Arts Awards introduced
- Reminiscence sessions introduced in libraries and community centres

Theme 4 - Continue to support the range of high quality facilities and services and improve them where necessary

The Borough of Bracknell Forest already has an extensive range of built facilities and green spaces that provide the infrastructure to enable the extensive programme of activity to take place. Some of this built infrastructure is ageing, particularly those buildings that were established in the earlier phases of the new town – the so-called 'new town inheritance'. Technical expectation has changed particularly with regard to environmental issues such as energy and water conservation, renewable energy and cabling for the latest electronic equipment. The public, particularly young people, are much more likely to use modern attractive spaces.

The quantity of green space is steadily increasing as a result of new provision on new developments as well as acquisition of land to protect it from development. As more high density housing is built, this places greater demands on the recreational use of this space. This, together with the environmental and sustainability agendas, makes the management of these spaces more complex and demanding.

The services and activities taking place within buildings and green spaces need enthusiastic and skilled people to deliver quality and drive forward improvements.

Progress since 2002 includes:

- Major investment in sport and leisure facilities, and an ongoing programme of minor improvement works.
- Prioritised investment plan produced for Coral Reef and Bracknell Leisure Centre.
- £2m investment in Lily Hill Park as a result of grant and from Heritage Lottery Fund.
- Rolling programme of improvements to other parks and open spaces and community centres.

- Extended opening hours for libraries.
- Access audits completed for most facilities and actioned as appropriate.
- Public Rights of Way Improvement Plan produced.
- Ranelagh School has achieved specialist status for arts. Brakenhale School has applied for specialist status for sports.
- Brakenhale School has applied for specialist status for sports.
- Adult Learning Programme has increased participation.
- More user forums have been set up to involve users in improvement plans for facilities and services.
- New infrastructure document produced, PPG17 report completed and study of future sports needs completed.

Looking forward, it is essential that adequate capital investment funding be found to prevent a decline in infrastructure if adequate capital investment funding cannot be found. The decreasing availability of Council capital funding makes it all the more important that opportunities are taken to attract external funding.

Investment in people through training and support is crucial if cultural opportunities are to be maximised. Increasing legislative requirements, particularly regarding health and safety, place greater burdens on volunteers. It is on the many residents active in the community that the vast majority of local cultural activity depends. As people's lives become busier and busier with the many pressures in the modern world, there is a trend towards people having less time and inclination to volunteer. This potentially forms a challenge for many small organisations.

Looking forward, the four Local Area Agreement themes described later in this report all contribute to this priority.

CULTURAL INFLUENCES

NATIONAL

National, regional and local influences have an impact on what is appropriate provision in this Borough as they present both opportunities and pressures. This section gives details of national issues that have an impact on local services and their providers.

National policies and papers have resulted in an increasingly high profile for cultural services in recent years. There is a recognition of the significant contribution sport, the arts and other cultural services make to wider issues such as tackling social exclusion, regeneration and economic development. Key themes from the national agenda need to be adapted to suit the local circumstances in Bracknell Forest. We need to ensure that the full economic and social benefits of culture are recognised at the local level. In refreshing the strategy, we need to review changes in the last five years.

Since 2002, the events of 9/11 and 7/7 have emphasised the need to ensure that all sectors of society are integrated into our community, in particular ethnic minority groups. The expansion of the European Union has resulted in much immigration from Eastern Europe and this has caused further changes in the demographic characteristics of society. The need to promote tolerance and understanding and maximise the opportunities created by these changes is reflected in many national initiatives. A new national outcome and performance indicator set has recently been produced and this includes two new measures relevant to community cohesion:

- Percentage of people who believe people from different backgrounds get on well together in their local area
- Percentage of people who feel they belong to their neighbourhood

Other measures included in the new performance indicator set relate to sense of place and reflect national priorities:

- Civic participation in the local area
- Percentage of people who feel they can influence decisions in their locality
- Overall/general satisfaction with local area
- Participation in regular volunteering
- Environment for a thriving third sector

There are four new performance indicators that relate directly to cultural activities:

- Adult participation in sport
- Use of public libraries
- Visits to museums or galleries
- Engagement in the arts

Since 2002 society has become generally wealthier and this has raised aspirations and expectations for standards of cultural services. This is particularly relevant in Bracknell Forest which is affluent by national standards. Worn out, tired old buildings may not meet the aspirations of today's young people. The cheapness of foreign air travel has opened up new horizons for many people and this has resulted in more internationalism. This is reflected in tastes for food, entertainment and media.

The continued advance of technology affects cultural services. Digital TV means that a much broader range of films and programmes is available at home at times that suit the user. Free DVDs are given out with newspapers. Smartcard technology enables more sophisticated opportunities for accessing services and for promoting equal opportunities. Online booking of tickets and good web-based information on services and events is now an expectation.

The affluence of many has resulted in a greater need to target services and facilitate opportunities for low income and vulnerable groups, such as young people and those with learning disabilities.

The number of older people in society is growing. This group has lots of free time to partake in cultural activities and in some cases they have high disposable income. Preventative health activities are increasingly important to maintain physical and mental health in old age. Health initiatives are also being targeted at the population in general with campaigns on smoking cessation, avoiding obesity and promoting health in the workplace.

The Children Act 2004 changed the legislative framework for the whole system of supporting children. It recognised that play serves as a significant tool in the delivery of recreational activity for children and young people. The framework for action that underpins the Act is the document '*Every Child Matters: Change for Children*' and this has 5 key themes:

- Be healthy
- Stay safe
- Enjoy and achieve
- Make a positive contribution
- Achieve economic wellbeing

The desire to avoid building on greenfield sites and to protect open countryside has led to planning policies that encourage infill development in urban areas. Blocks of apartments are being built in place of low density housing. This new high density housing places new pressures on the cultural services. In particular, children may not have gardens to play in and so there is an increasing need for informal play to take place in parks and open spaces. More robust facilities such as hard-surface multi-use kick-about areas increase the capacity of green spaces to absorb visitor pressure.

The climate change agenda will influence future provision and need. Increased tendencies to buy local foods and organic foods are occurring and this is reflected in the growth of activities such as farmers' markets. This may also affect demand for allotments and 'grow your own food' initiatives which meet health as well as environmental agendas. Other initiatives are connected with green travel plans and encourage people to walk or cycle to work and school. Research conducted for a document produced on children's play highlighted the need to encourage play in the natural environment so as to promote health, social skills, environmental awareness and creativity.

REGIONAL

The South East has over 8 million people – equivalent to the populations of Wales and Scotland combined. It is one of the largest regions in the UK and is a dynamic and creative place in which to live and work. The area is growing rapidly and the government is embarking on a massive house-building programme. The South East Regional Assembly (SEERA) is producing a Regional Spatial Strategy for the South East and this is expected in the autumn of 2008.

The South East England Development Agency (SEEDA) has produced a Regional Economic Strategy that was published in 2007. Within this strategy the role that culture plays in making successful places, successful economies and successful communities is clearly identified. The strategy is built around three themes:

- Global Competitiveness – investing in success
- Smart Growth – lifting underperformance
- Sustainable Prosperity – supporting quality of life

SEEDA has worked with partners on setting up the Art Plus award scheme which seeks to improve the design of public spaces through use of artists. SEEDA has been working with other partners on taking forward a major sports events strategy. SEEDA has worked with partners in the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council to develop the commercial potential of audio-visual collections for use in film and broadcasting industries.

Recently, the McMaster Review: Supporting Excellence in the Arts – from measurement to judgement (DCMS 2008) has looked at the role of art and culture and states that 'excellent culture goes to the root of living and is therefore relevant to every single one of us'. The report emphasises the potential for fostering even more vibrant and exciting cultural provision in this country and the need to make the cultural sector truly relevant to 21st century Britain and its audiences.

Of the 8 million people employed in the South East 0.5 million are employed in the creative industries. Nationally, the creative industries are growing at 6% per year and in London and the South East the sector rivals the financial industry in scale. The agenda for Arts Council South East includes the following six themes:

- Taking Part
- Children and Young People
- The Creative Economy
- Vibrant Communities
- Internationalism
- Celebrating Diversity

The 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games will create major opportunities for cultural provision. Rowing is to be hosted at Dorney Lake near Eton. The Olympics provide opportunities to promote tourism, sporting excellence in cultural events as well as generating economic activity. The Legacy Trust has been set up to fund and support projects which create a lasting legacy from the 2012 Games.

Sport England is focused on maximising opportunities for the Olympics from the Building Schools for the Future and on the Extended Schools agenda. Sport has

clear links with the obesity agenda which is predicted to be one of the major health issues in years ahead.

Sport England has regional targets that focus primarily around actions which promote health. The 'Active People' Agenda encourages adults to undertake 30 minutes of physical exercise three times a week. Apart from benefits to the individual by reducing health risks, this also benefits the local economy as active people take fewer days off sick than inactive employees. One of their campaigns is entitled 'Creating a healthy, active workplace'. Another is to promote 5 hours' school sport each week.

Sport England has recently published a review document that suggests they should have a narrower focus on sport whereas in the past they have aimed to deal with sport and physical activity in a wider context, as well as both elite provision and mass participation. The outcome of the consultation on this review could affect future funding opportunities and while the outcomes are still uncertain, the strategy will evolve to take account of any new objectives.

The Museums, Libraries and Archives Council has produced a strategic statement for the period 2007-10. Themes included in this are:

- Inspiring creativity, celebrating identity
- Renaissance of museums – understanding the future
- Libraries – framework for the future
- People and communities
- Improvement and innovation

The Museums, Libraries and Archives Council emphasises the role that libraries play as a community delivery point for health initiatives. There is a South East Reading Development Partnership. The Wider Libraries Programme promotes awareness of non-public libraries. They have produced proposals for a South East Library Tariff to be applied to new housing developments so as to ensure book stocks and other facilities rise with the expanding population.

Regional changes can result in a greater demand for archives storage and access to it. An archives development programme, produced by the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council, sets out ambitions for this.

Natural England has recently been set up to look after our heritage of green spaces and countryside. In the South East there is a very varied and rich natural heritage that supports landscape, wildlife and recreation and is a key component of creating a sense of place. The importance of taking an integrated approach to the planning and management of green infrastructure is a key part of their agenda.

LOCAL

During 2007, Bracknell Forest Borough Council signed the Nottingham Declaration. This commits the Council to publishing a Climate Change Strategy by 2009 and to working with the local community to implement the ensuing action plan. Key topics to be covered include energy consumption, renewable energy, water consumption, waste and recycling and transport. The cultural sector is a big user of energy and there is great scope for improving environmental performance standards, particularly in older buildings.

The Council's draft Community Cohesion Strategy, 'All of Us', sets out the following objectives:

- Everyone has similar life opportunities
- The diversity of people, their circumstances and their communities is respected and valued
- There are positive relations between people
- It assists with building and strengthening communities

This Strategy recognises partnership work as a key to enabling a much broader set of voices to be heard and taken into account when decisions are made, rather than everyone shouting together when only the loudest voices might be heard. It emphasises the need to listen to people.

Many of the Borough's leisure buildings are showing signs of ageing, and will require significant investment to maintain them. As new buildings are constructed using modern technology, there is a possibility that existing facilities will fall further behind in terms of repairs and maintenance. All options need to be investigated to ensure that current levels of provision are at least maintained.

In early 2008, work will commence on the rebuilding of Garth Hill College as part of the Government's Building Schools for the Future Programme. Detailed design of the new school includes provision for community use of sports and cultural facilities.

At Brakenhale School, a piece of land currently occupied by an obsolete Redgra hockey pitch is to be sold for housing. Part of the capital receipt will be used to develop new sports facilities on the site including an artificial turf pitch and a dedicated trampolining centre.

The health agenda is becoming increasingly important with physical activity an important part of developing health lifestyles. Much of the work is important in preventing ill health, particularly obesity and diabetes. However equally important is the curative work such as GP referrals, cardiac rehabilitation and the Activate programme.

In 2006, Sports England's Active People Survey produced a baseline for the proportion of adults in the Borough participating in 3 x 30 minutes' moderate intensity physical activity per week. Work is being carried out to increase the baseline figure by 4% over 3 years as the importance of regular exercise is recognised. The percentage of the adult population participating in 30 minutes of moderate intensity sport and active recreation on three or more days in any week was measured through Sport England's Active People Survey. The results were announced in December 2006. The National Average was 21% and the average for the South East Region was 22.6%. Bracknell Forest performed well with 24% of the adult population reaching or exceeding the target.

As part of the PESSCL (Physical Education, School Sport and Club Links) scheme, important work is being carried out with the schools and clubs to create a sports development pathway for young people. The scheme in the local senior schools is creating a number of sports leaders who will be able to ensure that the "Young People in Sport" scheme continues, subject to continued funding, to provide opportunities at grass root level, but is dependent on continued funding in order to

survive. Many of the Borough's primary age children get their first experience of competitive sport through this scheme.

The Borough of Bracknell Forest is extremely rich in wildlife and has a high proportion of land designated as of local, national or international importance. The Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA) has been designated as of international importance under EU legislation because of its rare ground-nesting birds. The SPA is predominantly on heathland and is spread over land in several local authorities stretching from Wokingham to Elmbridge to Guildford. In order to ensure the long-term survival and protection of these birds in the face of housing growth and greater recreational pressures, a mitigation strategy has been produced. This seeks to direct countryside recreation away from the sensitive heathland areas such as land at The Look Out, towards green space that has the capacity to withstand more recreational pressure.

Within the new town area are two parks with high historic landscape value. Lily Hill Park has recently been restored with a £2million grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund. A bid for a £3.6million project to restore the landscape at South Hill Park has been submitted.

The Council places high priority on providing opportunities for Children and Young People. The Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership has established a vision that they:

- Maintain healthy lifestyles that promote good physical, emotional and spiritual wellbeing.
- Live in a safe, secure and tolerant community where they are protected from harm, abuse, harassment and neglect.
- Achieve their full potential, with appropriate opportunities for learning and participation in a range of sporting and cultural activities within the Borough.
- Contribute to their local community, are enabled to have their voice heard and are valued as responsible citizens.
- Are able to grow up in a loving stable environment.

The Play Strategy produced in 2007 is about creating fun, enjoyment and opportunities for young people. It emphasises that if children and young people play well, play together and explore the opportunities presented to them, in later life they make more confident adults and better citizens and are able to play an active part in the life of their communities. Key action points from the strategy are:

- Appoint Play Rangers to encourage children and parents to play outdoors in the natural environment
- To provide training opportunities for all adults working with children
- Ensure provision of good accessible play areas
- Recognise the role of parks and open spaces in creating facilities for children's play
- Opening up school grounds for play

Children's Centres are being set up in Bracknell Forest as places where mums, dads, and carers of children aged 0-5 will be able to access services, support and information in one place. This creates opportunities for providing information on cultural services. Children's Centres with a central building planned so far are:

- The Rowans based on the site of Fox Hill Primary School serving the communities of Easthampstead, Wildridings, Harmans Water, Crown Wood, Forest Park and Martins Heron.
- The Oaks based on the site of Great Hollands School serving the communities of Great Hollands, Birch Hill and Hanworth
- The Family Tree based at the town centre nursery and local venues serving the communities of Priestwood, Bullbrook and the town centre.

The other extended services will be based from a range of community buildings such as schools, pre-schools, community halls etc and are:

- The Alders serving the communities of College Town, Owlsmoor and Central Sandhurst
- The Chestnuts serving the communities of Crowthorne and Little Sandhurst
- The Maples serving the communities of Binfield, Warfield, North Ascot, Winkfield and Cranbourne.

The Government is encouraging all schools to provide extended services in schools by 2010. In Bracknell, this work is being coordinated by eight Area Steering Groups. They are expected to make access available in five main areas:

- Childcare in primary schools and a 'safe place to be' in secondary schools
- A wide range of study support activities for children – which will complement childcare provision
- Information for parents, access to parenting groups and programmes and family learning
- If there is local demand, community use of suitable school premises
- Effective arrangements for identifying and reviewing children and young people in need of support.

Bracknell Forest is a very dynamic area, with a number of new housing developments planned for the next few years. As part of the development process, provision is made for open space, community facilities and libraries either on site or off site. In 2006, Sport England's planning section produced a paper justifying the level of contributions to recreational facilities the Borough Council may expect from the developers of the new housing. Whilst the contributions may be significant, no one development is large enough to generate the finance for new stand-alone facilities. It is therefore important that the contributions are used to make existing facilities more accessible to new residents whilst maintaining the level of service for existing customers.

Two major housing estates are currently being built at Jennetts Park and the RAF Staff College Site. At Jennetts Park a new community centre and a primary school are being built as part of the neighbourhood centre. Prior to their completion, a temporary community centre is being provided and some community development work will be undertaken to seek to establish a sense of belonging and community spirit. Within the overall development, a large country park is to be created, an ancient woodland is to be retained and an open space with sports facilities will be created. At the RAF Staff College, there are plans to create a large playing field area, changing rooms, tennis courts, play areas and a community centre. The Local Development Framework identifies the possibility of forming another new settlement to the north of Bracknell. Development is also proposed for Amen Corner. During the period of this Cultural Strategy, plans for cultural facilities within this area will be formulated.

Local Area Agreements (LAAs) are negotiated between the local authority and GOSE to ensure that the local authority delivers on policies that are set nationally. Additional funding is paid to the local authority if the targets are successfully achieved. Culture is particularly well placed in the Bracknell Forest LAA as there are four LAA targets that are relevant. Of these, two LAA targets are Local Public Service Agreement (LPSA) targets with a stretch element:

- 'Improve the health and well being of BFBC adult residents' will include an input from Sport and Parks
- 'Improve community cohesion through culture and sport' which will include an input from Sport and Art

The remaining two LAA targets, both of which have a cultural/physical activity aspect to delivery are:

- Positive activities for children and young people
- Volunteering for stronger communities

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

In line with government guidance on the production of cultural strategies, there were two periods of consultation during the production of this refreshed strategy. The first consultation took place with local residents through a residents' panel of 1500, local organisations and staff. In addition a questionnaire was put on the Council's website. Replies were received from 734 members of the general public, 23 organisations and 12 members of Borough Council staff. Following analysis and incorporation of the comments and observations from the first consultation, a draft strategy was produced and a second phase of consultation has been embarked upon.

Residents Panel 1500

Results from the 531 residents who responded to the Residents' Panel questionnaire showed very strong support for cultural facilities in the Borough. Residents were asked about the strategic priorities that were identified in the 2002 Cultural Strategy.

95.3%	Agreed that we should continue to support and improve the range of high quality facilities and improve the range of high quality facilities and services.
90.8%	Agreed that we should enhance town centres throughout.
89.5%	Agreed that we should improve sense of belonging and community spirit.
77.7%	Agreed that we should undertake more outreach and community development work.

Respondents were asked about their satisfaction levels with cultural activities. Satisfaction with parks, sports, arts and libraries is high whereas it is low for architecture/archaeology.

The performing and visual arts	69.4%
Media and films	70.1%
Libraries and heritage	78.1%
Architecture and archaeology	31%

Sports and events	71.5%
Parks and the Countryside	91.5%
Children's Play	68%
Tourism and Festivals	49.5%
Informal leisure	61.3%

Respondents were asked for their views on some of the action points included in the first strategy. Issues which the majority of respondents felt should be carried forward into the next strategy include:

- Reduce fear of crime 83%
- Provide facilities for young people 70%
- Support South Hill Park 70%
- Involve residents in planning 67%
- Review public transport needs 65%
- Improve transport and access 64%
- Increase the sense of security at all venues 60%
- Continue voluntary footpath warden scheme 57%
- Improve access for disabled people to parks and countryside areas 57%
- Local welcome packs for new residents 55%
- Increase health awareness 55%
- Encourage community use of schools 54%
- Provide facilities close to people's homes 53%
- Increase community involvement in parks 51%
- Expand healthy schools initiative 51%
- Work with the commercial sector to provide complementary leisure facilities 51%
- Involve users in creating improvement plans 50%

Respondents were asked for suggestions for improving cultural services and a huge number of comments were received and samples of these are given below:

- More and better facilities at South Hill Park
- Concern about the state of the cinema at The Point
- Improve range and stock of books in libraries
- Improve information on and awareness of architecture in Bracknell Forest Borough Council
- Cleanliness/litter/dog issues in parks
- Better play equipment
- More/better festivals
- More restaurants/cafés/entertainment
- Publish a Good Neighbour Guide
- Better roads and pavements for mobility scooters
- More information on what is available
- Plaques giving details of old buildings
- Overhaul pool at Bracknell Leisure Centre
- More fun sports events to reduce boredom
- Sport in Bracknell is provided for - we have everything
- Costs are too high
- Lily Hill Park is superb
- Encourage local food producers to sell locally
- I am a 75-year old widow and have no-one to go with

- There is so much to do – people are spoiled for choice
- Put symbol up where Edge Card can be used
- Encourage people to walk more
- Preserve the old buildings we have left
- Price of buses for young people is far too high
- Encourage use of allotment sites

Organisations and staff

Of the 23 organisations that responded, 74% thought that it was important to improve the sense of belonging and community spirit. Only 35% thought it was important to enhance the town centre. Satisfaction levels with cultural activities were not dissimilar to those recorded by residents. A range of comments was received and most of these had already been raised by the residents' survey, but a few are as follows:

- More sponsorship for ethnic minority festivals
- More funding for low income disabled groups
- Get rid of chewing gum
- Improve parenting skills
- Better central information needed on clubs

12 responses were received to the staff survey. Comments included:

- Develop low cost rehearsal space for musicians
- Stress equal opportunities
- Would like to participate in Architecture Week
- Place greater emphasis on the unique positives of Bracknell

Children and Young people

The consultation above was undertaken with adult residents only. In the past, extensive consultations have been undertaken with children and young people. Through locally conducted surveys and events such as Tell Us and the Play Strategy Consultation, there have always been positive responses to the benefits of living in Bracknell Forest and the opportunities that are available for enjoying facilities in the local area. Parks and open spaces are regarded highly for their quality and accessibility but there are issues that have been highlighted by younger children about their concerns about the abuse of some facilities by older young people. The most recurrent themes, in consultation with young people, are the high entry cost of some facilities and difficulties in using public transport to access them.

THE REFRESHED STRATEGY

THE NEW STRATEGIC THEMES

Of the four strategic themes included in the first Cultural Strategy, two related to community issues. The theme of '*undertake more community outreach and community development work*' produced the lowest score in the public consultation perhaps because of a lack of understanding of the terminology. One respondent asked "Why are we interested in out-of-reach facilities?" Therefore it has been decided to amalgamate the two community themes and to add the 'for all' to reflect the importance of the community cohesion agenda resulting in: **Improve the sense of belonging and community spirit for all**

The first strategy had a theme '*Enhance town centres throughout*'. The importance of regenerating Bracknell Town Centre is well recognised. Crowthorne and Sandhurst also have town centres and so were included in this theme. However, this did not acknowledge the role that the rural villages and urban neighbourhoods play in creating a sense of place. Therefore the theme has been broadened to: **Enhance town centres, villages and neighbourhoods**

The final theme has been unchanged as it felt that it is still valid. Within the Borough there is an extensive infrastructure of cultural facilities and services that are highly valued. This strategy needs to achieve a balance between instigating new initiatives and responding to trends whilst retaining the best of what already exists: **Continue to support and improve the range of high quality facilities and services**

AMBITIONS AND ACTIONS

Within the framework of the above themes, the refreshed strategy is presented as a set of ambitions and proposed actions.

The aim is to promote a cross-cutting, multi-agency approach, which will encourage initiatives reflecting the priorities of localities and of Bracknell Forest as a whole. There is a balance between deliverable action plans and the development of processes, which will further develop cultural activity and partnership.

The revised actions are based on that produced in 2002. Activities which have been completed have been deleted. Ongoing actions have been deleted where it is felt that they are now embedded in the system or retained if it is felt the profile of these activities needs to remain high. New activities drawn from national, regional or local trends have been added. Other new activities were suggested by residents through the public consultation exercise. Input was also received from the Local Strategic Partnership and the Cultural Partnership. It is felt that the refreshed action plan provides a sound basis for guiding the delivery of cultural services in the next five years.

FUNDING AND RESOURCES

In formulating the new action plan, much consideration has been given to the future availability of resources. Some of the actions are aspirational and will depend on additional resources. Experience from the last Cultural Strategy is that an

opportunistic approach to funding can be very successful. The criteria for grant schemes, Lottery funds and new government initiatives can change and a proactive approach to seeking funding is appropriate. Other actions can be achieved by re-prioritising existing resources. So often progress depends on the efforts, enthusiasm, dedication and innovation of those people involved in creating cultural opportunities, either as volunteers or professionals, therefore, details of funding have not been included for each individual action.

Methods of service delivery are kept under review with the aim of achieving best value. For instance, at the time of writing this, an options appraisal is being carried out as to how best to manage the sports and leisure centre and other facilities.

Provision of infrastructure associated with new house building has been addressed in a document entitled 'Limiting the impact of development' (LID) produced by BFBC Planning Department. This seeks to ensure that developers fund provision of new infrastructure and the sustainable maintenance of this infrastructure.

The concept of Corporate Social Responsibility has increasingly led major employers to participate in schemes which may involve direct community action or sponsorship of events. It is felt that there are further opportunities to build links with local retailers and business to the mutual advantage of all.

WORKING TOGETHER

It is intended that the Cultural Partnership will continue to be the main group that promotes working together by the key cultural stakeholders in the Borough. Other groups exist that promote joined-up working including:

- Bracknell Forest Federation of Small Community Groups
- Heritage Forum
- Biodiversity Forum
- Public Art Advisory Group
- The Creative Network
- Public Health Working Group

Professional networks that disseminate ideas, promote best practice and encourage innovation are:

- Thames Valley Cultural Forum
- Greenspace South East
- Berkshire Arts Partnership
- Berkshire Sports Partnership
- Berks, Bucks, Oxon and Milton Keynes Urban Design Network

The Parish and Town Councils are very important providers of cultural services in this Borough, particularly with regard to open space and play areas. Co-ordination between the Borough Council and Parish/Town Councils takes place through:

- Parks and Public Realm Group and
- Parish/Town Councils' Liaison Committee

MEASURING PERFORMANCE

The Audit Commission measures the performance of local government through the Comprehensive Performance Assessment. Within this is a section known as the Culture CPA. During 2006, this was assessed as 2 stars out of a possible score of 4 stars. This rating had fallen compared with previous assessments largely because of changes to the detail of the performance indicators used, since all the original performance indicators had improved significantly. In future, changes to national performance indicators and the move to Comprehensive Area Assessment will affect the way performance is measured.

In 2006 the Audit Commission carried out a Best Value User Satisfaction Survey which measured usage and satisfaction of various cultural services. If the ambitions and actions of the cultural strategy are delivered there should be a positive effect on those indicators when the next survey takes place in (?), and a 5% improvement across all indicators is a target.

During 2007, a 'Regional Commentary' was produced by the regional cultural agencies. This is intended to contribute to developing improved working relationships between the local authorities and regional cultural agencies monitoring. In future, it is intended to hold annual meetings with each agency to monitor progress.

Facility and service accreditation schemes play a significant and valuable role in setting standards of service offered to the public. In Bracknell Forest, there is active participation in these with the following results:

- Unbroken 15-year Charter Mark accreditation for Bracknell Leisure Centre, Coral Reef and The Look Out
- Green Flag Awards since 2002 for three parks
- Beacon Status for Maintaining a Quality Environment
- OHSAS 18001 accreditation for health and safety management

Winning awards is also a measure of good performance and recent results include:

- Green Apple Award for built environment and architectural heritage
- Art Plus Award for art in public spaces
- National winners in Britain in Bloom
- Shortlisted for TMA Eclipse Award for outstanding achievement in Cultural Diversity (South Hill Park)
- Shortlisted for RICS Award
- Runners-up in Open Spaces Team of the Year Award

Nationally, a methodology for producing self-improvement plans has been produced by IDeA and local services will be encouraged to adopt this methodology. It includes data and evidence collection, self-assessment, peer review, challenge and support. Continued strong political and managerial leadership is also needed if the capacity of the sector for self-improvement is to increase.

Locally, public consultation through surveys, forums and user groups provides ongoing feedback on local services. This enables the concept of continuous improvement to become an inherent part of the ethos of service delivery. In addition, there are four new National Performance Indicators (sport, libraries, museums/galleries, and arts) that are directly related to culture. Benchmarks and

targets will be set and monitored in due course. Additionally there are 7 other national performance indicators that relate to community cohesion and a sense of place where it is felt that culture can influence.

Monitoring progress with implementing the Cultural Strategy itself is done by producing regular progress reports showing what has been achieved in relation to action points. The Strategy contains 131 potential actions and progress reports will list each action and give details of whether it is completed, deferred, ongoing, good progress or limited progress. A written commentary will be attached to each action point giving details. The strategy will be reviewed in full in 2012.

CULTURAL STRATEGY AMBITIONS
MAKING THINGS HAPPEN

Potential actions in Bracknell Forest

Working together

- Continue the Cultural Partnership
- Promote cultural advocacy, leadership and partnership - working skills
- Ensure that culture is embedded within the Local Strategic Partnership and in Corporate Plans
- Liaise with regional agencies to ensure joined-up agendas
- Support Parish and Town Councils with implementation of their plans
- Encourage cross-boundary working with neighbouring authorities
- Support local clubs and societies in achieving their ambitions
- Provide additional support and training for the voluntary sector
- Improve links with local businesses
- Work with the commercial leisure sector to provide complementary facilities
- Develop effective partnerships with other key stakeholders
- Encourage networks that promote best practice and innovation

Funding and Resources

- Work with local internal and external partners to maximise the opportunities for external funding created by partnership working
- Keep under review availability of Lottery funds and make bids as appropriate
- Ensure that developers fund the costs associated with providing good cultural infrastructure for new residents
- Work with the private sector to increase investment in the area
- Provide opportunities for local businesses to meet their Corporate Social Responsibility agendas
- Maximise the opportunities created by Local Area Agreements
- Maximise the opportunities created by Multi Area Agreements
- Optimise contribution by the voluntary sector
- Ensure value for money is achieved by effective partnership working and ongoing modernization initiatives
- Explore feasibility options for the management of local leisure centres

Monitoring Progress

- Create regular cultural progress reports
- Seek to improve the Culture CPA assessment
- Undertake effective research on participation/non-participation

THEME 1

ENHANCE TOWN CENTRES, VILLAGES AND NEIGHBOURHOODS

Potential Actions in Bracknell Forest

Throughout the Borough we will seek to:

- Improve security and reduce fear of crime
- Provide appropriate facilities and activities for young people
- Providing purposeful leisure opportunities as diversionary activities
- Encourage residents to care for their local environment
- Increase participation in and enjoyment of art, sport and recreation
- Ensure town centres are fully accessible for all
- Encourage high standards of architecture and design
- Promote understanding and appreciation of new town architecture
- Start Blue Plaque Scheme for buildings of historic interest
- Participate in Architecture Week
- Continue the Design Award scheme
- Link in with Crowthorne Initiatives that unite Crowthorne as a village
- Implement public art strategy in villages and neighbourhoods
- Ensure neighbourhoods have appropriate cultural provision
- Encourage best practice in street design
- Promote a sense of place in all new developments through good urban design
- Encourage best practice in conservation management of archaeological sites
- Safeguard and enhance the natural environment
- Create new Conservation Areas

In Bracknell Town Centre we will seek to:

- Establish a new library and cultural facility in Bracknell Town Centre
- Create a new Jubilee Gardens
- Be proactive with the implementation of the Public Art Strategy
- Encourage provision of quality cinema and other leisure facilities
- Continue to promote customer care in shops
- Continue to promote disability awareness training in shops/other venues
- Encourage a coherent and improved range of events, markets and street entertainment
- Encourage provision of more cafés, restaurants and shops
- Seek to ensure continuation of artists studio facilities
- Improve the ambience of Bracknell Railway Station
- Improve transport to and from the town centre
- Create a heritage trail into the town centre
- Improve 'Gateways' to the town/first impressions

THEME 2

IMPROVE THE SENSE OF BELONGING AND COMMUNITY SPIRIT FOR ALL

Potential Actions in Bracknell Forest

Encouraging participation and enjoyment

- Undertake more outreach and community development work
- Improve community cohesion through culture and sport (LAA)
- Improve the health and wellbeing of adult residents (LAA)
- Recognise the role of faith groups in promoting community spirit
- Improve health and wellbeing in the community and in the workplace
- Explore the potential for additional targeted health initiatives
- Encourage schools to take part in the Creative Partnership initiative
- Support schools with increasing the cultural content of after-school and holiday activities
- Work with schools to promote and encourage community use of schools
- Develop the cultural elements of the Adult Learning Programme and increase participation
- Appoint new part-time sports development officer to work with community/voluntary groups
- Seek to encourage participation and then develop links to clubs
- Maximise cultural opportunities arising from the Olympics and Paralympics
- Encourage the development of creative industries as local small businesses
- Encourage social enterprises with a cultural theme
- Implement the Play Strategy
- Seek to provide rehearsal space for musicians
- Write a Community Arts Development Plan
- Encourage sustainable food production and consumption by local residents
- Support 'grow your own' initiatives and allotments
- Establish woodland crafts and forest heritage project to enhance local identity and skills
- Encourage the voluntary sector to increase quality and range of activities
- Refresh the Heritage Strategy
- Seek to establish a Civic Society
- Increase community involvement in parks by establishing liaison and Friends of Groups
- Seek to provide community development in new neighbourhoods

Reducing Barriers to Access

- Utilise the e+ Smartcard to encourage access for low income groups
- Remove physical barriers that prevent access by those with physical disabilities
- Seek to ensure that all sections of the community enjoy equal opportunities for accessing cultural services
- Seek to make available employment opportunities in the cultural sector for those with learning difficulties
- Seek to provide facilities close to where people live
- Provide more community arts activities in local community venues
- Review public transport needs and requirements

- Work with transport providers to devise innovative schemes to improve access to cultural facilities

Celebrating

- Encourage civic pride and civic participation in the local area
- Encourage community groups to celebrate local historic events
- Celebrate diversity and internationalism
- Support nationally significant initiatives such as Heritage Open Days, China 2008 and Love Parks Week
- Celebrate achievement with awards schemes such as Youth Arts Awards, Sportsmark and the Pride of Bracknell Awards
- Encourage other celebratory events

Improving information and awareness

- Continue to improve cultural content of Borough web pages
- Continue to improve the young people's website
- Publish a Good Neighbour Guide
- Improve information in the Visitor Welcome Pack
- Promote sense of place through raising awareness of local parks, countryside and heritage resources
- Explore potential for increasing health information in libraries
- Raise awareness of Bracknell New Town's recent heritage
- Promote awareness and care of the Borough's splendid tree stock and landscape character
- Continue digitization of historic and other records
- Create a Borough-wide arts and heritage trail
- Keep under review the need to provide information in foreign languages, particularly in libraries

THEME 3

CONTINUE TO SUPPORT AND IMPROVE THE RANGE OF HIGH QUALITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES

Potential Actions in Bracknell Forest

Improving infrastructure

- Maintain investment in cultural infrastructure to meet aspirations of the community
- Improve energy efficiency of buildings used for cultural activity
- Progress plans to restore the historic landscape at South Hill Park
- Ensure maintenance plan for Lily Hill Park is implemented
- Implement the Rights of Way Improvement Plan
- Continually improve green spaces using the 'plus one' principle
- Maximise cultural opportunities created by Building Schools for the Future
- Support the redevelopment of Bracknell and Wokingham College
- Establish a regional standard trampolining centre
- Build a new community centre at Jennetts Park
- Ensure that adequate open space and cultural facilities are integral to all new housing development
- Ensure maintenance of public art
- Support the Berkshire Record Office as an archive for historic records
- Explore feasibility of increasing archive storage facilities
- Improve non-car access to sites by improving facilities for walking and cycling

Encouraging use

- Support South Hill Park as a local and regional arts venue
- Maximise opportunities for inspiring cultural activity created by the 2012 Olympics
- Support appropriate local sports clubs to achieve improvements in their facilities and services
- Encourage sports development through community and voluntary groups
- Increase levels of physical activity (LAA)
- Maximise benefits from the extended services agenda
- Support schools striving for specialist status in cultural area
- Increase use of libraries
- Promote learning through cultural activity
- Encourage use of parks and community centres by older people
- Improve access for disabled people to all buildings and to green spaces
- Encourage countryside recreation on low impact sites so as to meet the needs of the SPA Mitigation Strategy
- Ensure Access and Education Plan for Lily Hill Park is implemented
- Continue to support the voluntary footpath warden scheme and local conservation volunteers
- Improve consultation and community engagement in shaping the future of services
- Promote good practice through cultural accreditation schemes eg: Chartermark, Green Flag

LOCAL PLANS, STRATEGIES AND POLICIES

Environment, Culture and Communities

- Local Transport Plan
- Local Development Framework
- Public Art Strategy
- Heritage Strategy
- Community Arts Development Plan (in progress)
- Sports Development Strategy
- Annual Library Plan
- Thames Basin Heaths SPA Mitigation Strategy
- Biodiversity Action Plan
- Rights of Way Improvement Plan
- Lily Hill Park – Management and Maintenance Plan
- Lily Hill Park – Access and Education Strategy
- South Hill Park Conservation Management Plan
- Blackwater Valley Strategy
- PPG 17 report (Planning Policy Guidance 17)
- Parks and Open Spaces Strategy (under review)
- Management Plans for Green Flag Award Sites

Other Directorates

- Sustainable Community Strategy
- Community Cohesion Strategy
- Health and Wellbeing Strategy
- Community Safety Strategy
- Lifelong Learning Strategy
- Children and Young People's Plan
- Play Strategy
- Older People's Strategy