



THE ROYAL BOROUGH OF  
KENSINGTON  
AND CHELSEA

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## **ARTS AND CULTURE POLICY 2009-20 – SHORT VERSION**

**June 2009**

## **ARTS AND CULTURE POLICY 2009-20 – SHORT VERSION**

This is a short version of a report to the Council's Cabinet proposing a new Arts and Culture Policy. The Cabinet debated and agreed the Policy at its meeting on 24 March 2009. In doing so the Cabinet took account of a consultant's report entitled 'Understanding the creative and cultural sector in Kensington and Chelsea'. This and other reports relating to the development of the Policy are available in full on the Council's website – see Quicklinks 'Arts and Culture'.

### **The importance of arts and culture**

1. Arts and culture are woven into the fabric of our lives. They give us the potential to discover who we are through what we wear, watch, read, listen to, or make. They give us the opportunity to share our insights and our sense of ourselves with others. Our roots and sense of home can be defined by the culture of time and place; by prints and paintings; sculpture; architectural styles; fashion and costume; music; poetry; and theatre.

### **Arts and culture in Kensington and Chelsea**

2. Kensington and Chelsea is rich in art and culture. We host national institutions. The Victoria and Albert Museum and the Royal Court Theatre are at the heart of the local cultural offer. The Saatchi Gallery opened in Chelsea last year. Other major cultural institutions like the Serpentine Gallery, the Albert Hall, and the Louise T Blouin Institute are close by. Major cultural and creative industry businesses such as the BBC, EMI, and Granta are in or near the borough. We are home to significant cultural events. The Chelsea Flower Show, London Fashion Week, and the Notting Hill Carnival shape our residents' and others' perception of Kensington and Chelsea. Designers, artists, writers, and musicians live and work in Kensington and Chelsea, giving us a vibrant and inclusive creative and cultural industries sector. This sector accounts for around 15% of employment (London average 11%), within around 30% of the borough's business units (London average 24%).

### **The Council and the arts and culture**

3. The Council is committed to excellence in its own arts and cultural services. We have invested heavily in Opera Holland Park's new seating and canopy, in the built environment of Exhibition Road, and in the refurbishment of Leighton House. We have provided significant revenue support to a range of reading, opera, museum, and arts programmes, as well as continuing or increasing our support for Notting Hill Carnival, the Tabernacle Arts Centre, and local festivals. This history of

commitment and investment gives us a good starting place to renew our vision for arts and culture in Kensington and Chelsea and how we might deliver that vision.

### **The value of arts and culture**

4. Research tells us that:
  - cultural activity can contribute to neighbourhood renewal and make a real difference to health, crime, employment, and education in deprived communities
  - the arts can be a tool for community development and civic engagement, and engender a sense of civic pride
  - well designed, well cared for, and culturally plural places can be attractive to businesses and their employees
  - culture and arts can provide direct economic benefits to communities, and investment through grants awarded by public bodies can generate further inward investment
  - participation in the arts can increase people's self confidence, and bring medical and psychological benefits
  - the arts can provide an opportunity for people to develop their creativity and have fun
  
5. We acknowledge these functional arguments for the arts. But we go further and support the view set out in the McMaster Report (DCMS: 2008) that excellent culture goes to the root of living and is therefore relevant to every single one of us. We support his advocacy of excellence, innovation, and risk-taking, and his view that everyone should have opportunities to deepen their experience of complex art.
  
6. Our own Residents' Survey tells us that most of our residents appreciate the value of the arts and culture. 84% think that art and culture is an important part of modern urban life, and 79% agree that being involved in arts and culture improves the quality of their lives. Our residents value well designed public places (96%), and recognise that art and culture plays a role in promoting positive relationships between people (74%).

### **The business of art**

7. In February 2008 we commissioned Burns Owen Partnership Consulting (BOP) to conduct research to help us understand the creative and cultural sector in the borough. In particular, we wanted evidence on which to base this arts and culture policy.

8. BOP found that the cultural and creative sector is a significant employer in Kensington and Chelsea, with three times the national average number of people employed in this sector. Kensington and Chelsea's particular strengths include music, museums, newspaper publishing, antiques, and fashion design. BOP found that creative and cultural business people see Kensington and Chelsea as a safe, attractive, good-quality environment in which to work. Good public transport links also matter a lot to these businesses. The 'buzz' of the borough is valued. People see the north of the borough as having a hip, grungy, tolerant feel that is appealing to media firms. The centre and south of the borough were seen as more staid, and there was a sense that Chelsea, in particular, had lost much of its creative spark. Despite this, the reputation of Chelsea remains good and has played an important part in attracting customers, especially foreign visitors.
9. Being close to customers generally mattered more to firms in the borough than being close to suppliers or to similar businesses. The borough is an important part of a wider central London market of wealthy, intellectually sophisticated, culturally diverse consumers.
10. The small non-commercial arts organisations in the borough have chosen to be in the borough for a mixture of reasons, including proximity to the manager's home and to their customers. But few of the employees of creative firms live in the borough – Kensington and Chelsea is part of a wider labour market which stretches across London, and the cost of property in the borough makes it difficult for staff to live here. Nevertheless, the majority of firms find it easy to recruit employees. People like the borough, and many of the creative industries are competitive, popular fields in which to work. In addition, it seems that many local firms have good reputations in their particular industry.
11. We asked BOP to look at the art business in Kensington and Chelsea. They found that, although there is still a local demand for portrait painting and portrait sculpting, few young artists work here – instead they head for the East End. Artists noted that there was little non-commercial exhibition space in the borough. Local commercial galleries had no particular policy of showing local artists, choosing to exhibit work from around the world. This sub-sector could be hit particularly hard by the

recession, and indeed a couple of the galleries said they were already struggling.

12. The bigger cultural institutions, such as the Exhibition Road museums and the Royal Court Theatre, draw in huge numbers of visitors and contribute to the local economy. However BOP found there were few formal or commercial links between them and small creative businesses in Kensington and Chelsea.
13. Kensington and Chelsea might best be thought of as a mature, 'grown-up' cultural quarter. It is not the driver of youth trends that it was in the 1960s and 1970s, and it is not seen as cutting-edge by people in the business. Nonetheless, the professionals who have established their creative businesses here have ties to the area which go beyond the purely economic, and have built a sizeable cultural and creative sector in the borough.
14. The weaknesses of the sector are the lack of networking, the lack of profile, and the vulnerability of marginal and small businesses to the recession. Threats include increasing rental and property costs; the perception of the south of the borough as staid; the loss of individual and distinctive cafes, shops, and bars; and the attractions of the East End for young businesses.
15. The Council's long term aim to regenerate North Kensington presents opportunities for creative and cultural businesses. Creative and cultural businesses could thrive if that regeneration can provide data connectivity, affordable workshop and studio space, good transport linkage, and a creative, individual, and quirky urban scene.

### **The arts and our residents**

16. This policy proposes that the Council should be interested in our residents' active participation in arts and culture because such participation can:
  - shape place and change perception of place
  - help build an actively engaged society
  - help promote health and well-being
17. Residents' participation in active planning, community history, and public art can help cement local identity and the ownership of public space. Working together to a common end can help isolated residents feel part of the community. Using arts and



culture to explore options for community futures can de-stress the process and make it accessible. Sharing local histories can help give marginalised people a voice, and help all residents understand better the borough's richness and complexity.

18. People who actively participate in arts and cultural activity tend to be more engaged in the civic life of their communities than those who do not. We want to promote active participation in arts and cultural activities among those groups of people where there is evidence of low engagement in the life of the borough.
19. Active participation in arts and cultural activity is good for residents' physical and mental health, and their well being. Hospitals and residential homes regularly commission arts and cultural activity to complement therapy for their patients and residents. For example, dancing can prolong healthy life for older people, give opportunities for self-expression for marginalised young people, reinforce bonds within diaspora communities, and bring isolated people together in social activity.
20. However we want the quality of the artistic experience to be assured. We want to challenge the expectations of participants and concentrate on reaching the highest standards of excellence and creative innovation in all the arts and culture we support. In particular we want to direct resources to those who have the potential to achieve excellence with a little more support.
21. We will redirect resources from other services to promote excellence in our own arts and cultural offer, focusing in particular on Opera Holland Park, Leighton House Museum, the sculpture programme in the Napoleon Garden, our 'Across the Street, Around the World' and 'In Transit' programmes, and commissioned public art. We are committed to achieving excellence in the public realm, and have produced style guides for the reconstruction of our streetscape and for improvement works in our parks. We also have an expert group to advise on the commissioning and installation of permanent works of public art.

## **Our Arts and Culture policy statement and action plans**

**Policy 1.** Kensington and Chelsea is rich in arts and cultural organisations, institutions and individuals. Our history and sense of place are shaped by artists, museums, musicians and designers. We recognise that the cultural life of Kensington and Chelsea does not exist in isolation and sits in a web of London wide and international arts and cultural opportunities. So, we want to ensure that those arts and cultural activities, organisations and institutions we support further the wider aims of the Council to make better city life in Kensington and Chelsea.

To that end we will prioritise those arts and culture activities and associated practices that:

- develop a stronger and more sustainable creative economy
- help promote the reputation and values of Kensington and Chelsea as a place of creativity and innovation
- demonstrate excellence in ambition, creativity, and delivery
- encourage better health, engagement, and well being for our residents

**Policy 2.** In delivering this policy the Council will support a wide range of creative and cultural businesses, but will give particular care to ensuring the stability and growth of music and fashion businesses, and encouraging conditions and activity that will encourage architects, creative advertising agencies, and fine artists to locate their workspace in Kensington and Chelsea.

**Policy 3.** The Council will seek, wherever practical, to encourage the creation of new studio and workshop space, particularly in Earl's Court and North Kensington, in partnership with developers, and by using grant and its own resources as appropriate. These workshops and studios will be designed for rent at market or below rents and targeted in particular at the creative and cultural businesses identified in Policy 2

**Policy 4.** The Council will commission a report from the Director for Property and the Head of Community Engagement and Regeneration on the feasibility of encouraging and supporting creative and cultural businesses in Kensington and Chelsea, including:

- the use of temporarily vacant property, both within and outside the Council's portfolio
- what elements of the wider regeneration of North Kensington would support existing creative and cultural businesses and encourage new businesses to locate there

The Executive Director of Planning and Borough Development should explore through the Local Development Framework how any variations to planning policy could enable the growth of the creative economy in Kensington and Chelsea.

**Policy 5.** Over the next 10 years, the Council will ensure that 50% of its portfolio of artists' studios is let to new and emerging artists and creative practitioners. We will do this by selective advertising, subsidised studios and revising letting policies.

**Policy 6.** The Council will plan and undertake a 3 year London wide promotion campaign to publicise and promote the creative and cultural businesses in Kensington and Chelsea to change some perceptions of the borough and encourage new businesses to locate here

**Policy 7.** The Council will allocate finance to continuing a programme of active participation over the next 3 years. The Council will redirect internal resources to promoting excellence in its own arts and cultural offer over the next three years.

**Policy 8.** The council will undertake a mapping exercise to understand better the range of active participation programmes in schools (independent as well as within the aegis of the local authority), libraries, the health services, adult social care, and the voluntary sector.

**Policy 9.** The Council will fund active participation programmes where they can demonstrate how they:

- shape place and change perception of place
- help build actively engaged people
- help promote health and well-being

**Policy 10.** The Council will consider, where appropriate, the value of longer and more creative planning and consultation processes when designing parks and other contested high profile public spaces.



**Policy 11.** The Council will direct the Town Centre Initiatives Officer and Markets Development Officer and other officers responsible for planning, street management, and licensing to consider how they can preserve and help establish creative streets in and around the King's Road, Kensington High Street, and North Kensington.

**Policy 12.** The Public Art Advisory Group will consider if its remit should be restated to include all permanent works of public art (permanent being defined as having a life in situ of over 5 years) or if its remit should be expanded to include temporary and fleeting works of art in the public domain.

**Policy 13.** The Council will continue to support the Architecture Appraisal Panel (AAP) and will put all major development proposals to the AAP for consideration. The Council will also take into account the importance of high quality architecture in all of its own developments to further encourage architectural creativity and/or consider how new architecture might support creative and cultural businesses.

**Policy 14.** The Council will retain its existing arrangements in the governance of arts and culture programmes.

**Policy 15.** The Council will consider expanding the existing cultural and creative networks in Kensington and Chelsea to provide a network of comprehensive forums to promote and encourage arts and culture.

## Our action plans

### **Action in support of policy 2**

In delivering this policy the Council will support a wide range of creative and cultural businesses, but will give particular care to ensuring the stability and growth of music and fashion businesses, and encouraging conditions and activity that will encourage architects, creative advertising agencies, and fine artists to locate their workspace in Kensington and Chelsea.

Owners: Director for Property, Head of Community Engagement and Regeneration, and the Executive Director of Planning and Borough Development

### **Action in support of policy 3**

The Council will seek, wherever practical, to encourage the creation of new studio and workshop space, particularly in Earl's Court and North Kensington, in partnership with developers, and by using grant and its own resources as appropriate. These workshops and studios will be designed for rent at market or below rents and targeted in particular at the creative and cultural businesses identified in policy 2

Owners: Director for Property and the Executive Director of Planning and Borough Development

### **Action in support of policy 4**

The Council will commission a report from the Director for Property and the Head of Community Engagement and Regeneration on the feasibility of encouraging and supporting creative and cultural businesses in Kensington and Chelsea, including

- the use of temporarily vacant property, both within and outside the Council's portfolio
- what elements of the wider regeneration of North Kensington would support existing creative and cultural businesses and encourage new businesses to locate there.

The Executive Director of Planning and Borough Development should explore through the Local Development Framework how any variations to planning policy could enable the growth of the creative economy in Kensington and Chelsea.

Owners: Director for Property, Head of Community Engagement and Regeneration, and the Executive Director of Planning and Borough Development

**Action in support of policy 5**

Over the next 10 years, the Council will ensure that 50% of its portfolio of artists' studios is let to new and emerging artists and creative practitioners. We will do this by selective advertising, subsidised studios, and revising letting policies.

Owners: Director for Property and the Executive Director of Transport, Environment and Leisure Services

**Action in support of policy 6**

The Council will plan and undertake a 3 year London wide promotion campaign to publicise and promote the creative and cultural businesses in Kensington and Chelsea to change some perceptions and encourage new businesses to locate here

Owners: Head of Media and Communications

**Action in support of policies 7 and 9**

The Council will allocate finance to continuing a programme of active participation over the next 3 years.

The Council will fund active participation programmes where they can demonstrate how they:

- shape place and change perception of place
- help build an actively engaged society
- promote health and well-being

Owner: Executive Director Transport, Environment and Leisure Services

**Action in support of policy 8**

The Council will undertake a mapping exercise to better understand the range of active participation programmes in schools (independent as well as within the aegis of the local authority), libraries, the health services, adult social care, and the voluntary sector.

Owner: Executive Director Transport, Environment and Leisure Services

**Action in support of policy 10**

The Council will consider, where appropriate, the value of longer and more creative planning and consultation processes when designing parks and other contested high profile public spaces.

Owner: Executive Director Transport, Environment and Leisure Services and others

**Action in support of policy 11**

The Council will task the Town Centre Initiatives Officer and Markets Development Officer and other officers responsible for planning, street management, and licensing to consider how they can preserve and help establish creative streets in and around the King's Road, Kensington High Street and North Kensington.

Owners: Executive Director for Transport, Environment and Leisure Services and Executive Director of Planning and Borough Development

**Action in support of policy 12**

The Public Art Advisory Group will consider if its remit should be restated to include all permanent works of public art (permanent being defined as having a life in situ of over 5 years) or if its remit should be expanded to include temporary and fleeting works of art in the public domain.

Owners: Executive Director for Transport, Environment and Leisure Services and Executive Director of Planning and Borough Development

**Action in support of policy 13**

The Council will continue to support the Architecture Appraisal Panel (AAP) and will put all major development proposals to the AAP for consideration. The Council will also take into account the importance of high quality architecture in all of its own developments to further encourage architectural creativity and/or consider how new architecture might support creative and cultural businesses.

Owner: Executive Director of Planning and Borough Development

**Action in support of policy 14**

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Owner: Executive Director for Transport, Environment and Leisure Services

**Action in support of policy 15**

The Council will consider expanding the existing cultural and creative networks in Kensington and Chelsea to provide a network of comprehensive forums to promote and encourage arts and culture.

Owner: Executive Director Transport, Environment and Leisure Services