



Mayor and Cabinet

Report title: We are Lewisham – A cultural strategy for Lewisham 2023 - 2028

Date: 19 July 2023

Key decision: Yes

Class: Part 1

Ward(s) affected: All

Contributors: James Lee, Director of Communities, Partnership, and Leisure
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Outline and recommendations

Lewisham was the Mayor's London Borough of Culture 2022. The year-long cultural programme, *We Are Lewisham*, was a celebration of the borough's history, people, and place. Cultural partners in Lewisham have come together to develop a cultural strategy that extends the benefits and legacy of London Borough of Culture into the future.

The Mayor and Cabinet are asked to:

- Note that *We are Lewisham – A cultural strategy for Lewisham 2023 – 2028* is a partnership strategy for culture in Lewisham.
- Adopt the attached strategy document *We are Lewisham – A cultural strategy for Lewisham 2023 - 2028*

Timeline of engagement and decision-making

Related previous decisions

- There are no previous decisions that are directly related to this report. Previous decisions taken related to the bidding process for and delivery of Lewisham's year as London Borough of Culture 2022.

Engagement

- London Borough of Culture programme 2022
- 1-2-1 interviews and focus groups with internal and external stakeholders – February to May 2023
- Cultural Strategy Steering Group x 2 meetings in March and April 2023 followed by online engagement
- Creative and cultural sector online survey – late March to early May 2023
- Resident and visitor online survey – late March to early May 2023
- Scrutiny committee leads workshop – 28 March 2023
- London Borough of Culture closure event and impact report – 30 March 2023
- Creative and cultural sector summit – 25 April 2023
- Intergenerational focus group – 15 May 2023

1. Summary

- 1.1. Lewisham was the London Borough of Culture (LBoC) in 2022. The theme for the year was We are Lewisham. The programme celebrated our history, people, and place. It was created by the people of Lewisham. The year was inspired by our history of activism. It showed how culture can change lives.
- 1.2. The year had a big impact across the borough. It has led to new partnerships and new ways of working. It has shown that by investing in culture we invest in the local economy, in people's wellbeing, and in future generations.
- 1.3. In the bid to become LBoC we said that we wanted to create a legacy after the year. This report explains how we have worked with partners to write a cultural strategy. The cultural strategy explains how we plan to deliver the legacy.
- 1.4. We wrote the strategy with cultural organisations, universities, different council departments, and others. We listened to residents, visitors, and people working in the cultural sector.
- 1.5. The strategy is about more than culture. It explains how culture helps the local economy grow and how it can be good for people's health. This strategy is not just for the council. It is a partnership strategy, and we will deliver it with Lewisham's communities.

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2. Recommendations

2.1. The Mayor and Cabinet are asked to:

2.1.1. Note that *We are Lewisham – A cultural strategy for Lewisham 2023 – 2028* is a partnership strategy for culture in Lewisham.

2.1.2. Adopt the attached strategy document *We are Lewisham – A cultural strategy for Lewisham 2023 – 2028*.

3. Policy Context

3.1. *Local policy context*

3.1.1. The cultural strategy has been developed taking a place-based approach, identifying the contribution culture can make to wider outcomes for Lewisham. It is about more than culture and aligns with Lewisham's Corporate Priorities, as set out in the council's [Corporate Strategy \(2022-2026\)](#).

In particular, this report is closely aligned to the following priorities.

- Cleaner and Greener
- A Strong Local Economy
- Children and Young People
- Open Lewisham
- Health and Wellbeing

3.1.2. The outcomes framework in Appendix D shows how the actions and outcomes for culture support the corporate priorities.

3.2. *Regional policy context*

3.2.1. The Mayor of London's culture strategy, *Culture for Londoners*, sets the regional policy framework. It seeks to widen access to culture locally, support and sustain cultural spaces, invest in a diverse creative workforce, and maintain London's status as a global cultural hub. The LBoC award and the designation of a Creative Enterprise Zone in the north of the borough are two of the London-wide programmes that have recognised and strengthened Lewisham's role in the wider London cultural economy.

3.2.2. As part of the bid to become LBoC, the Mayor of London asks applicants to explain how they will embed the legacy from the year into their ongoing work. Lewisham's original bid set out the legacy ambition of the LBoC delivery partners. The cultural strategy sets out how partners will deliver the legacy ambition and how they will create the conditions which allow the cultural and creative legacy from the year to thrive for years to come.

3.3. *National policy context*

3.3.1. Central government and national development agencies for culture and

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creativity like Arts Council England (ACE) are increasingly taking place-based approaches to investing in culture to support wider outcomes. This is reflected in ACE's strategy, Let's Create, which seeks to support villages, towns and cities that thrive through a collaborative approach to culture. It is also reflected in the government's approach to support for cultural infrastructure through the Levelling Up Fund. Taking a place-based approach to the cultural strategy which is focused on delivering wider outcomes ensures that Lewisham is well placed to respond to national investment priorities.

- 3.3.2. In 2022, the Local Government Association (LGA) brought together the Commission on Culture and Local Government. Its aim was to explore the contribution of local culture, the barriers it faces, and the conditions that are essential for a healthy local cultural ecosystem. It identified the need for place-based planning for culture and partnership and co-production approaches. The cultural strategy has been developed in line with the Commission's recommendations.

4. Background

- 4.1. Lewisham has a long history as a cultural and creative hub in London. It is home to influential cultural institutions Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance; Goldsmiths, University of London; the Horniman Museum and Gardens; and The Albany, with over 3,000 visual artists living and making work in the borough. There are many smaller cultural organisations, who are recognised nationally and internationally for their work.
- 4.2. Lewisham has a rich social history, influenced by waves of migration. From the work of Lewisham suffragette Rosa-May Billinghurst, to the 1977 Battle of Lewisham and the Rock Against Racism movement, instances of activism have gone on to spark change felt across the UK and internationally.
- 4.3. Building on these foundations, in 2019 partners in Lewisham came together to bid for LBoC status to widen participation in culture, assert Lewisham's place as a cultural hub in the capital, attract inward investment, and develop new career paths into the cultural sector for young people in the borough. Lewisham was named as LBoC 2021 but due to the pandemic this was delayed to 2022 under the theme *We are Lewisham*.
- 4.4. The programme celebrated the borough's history, people, and place. The year was inspired by Lewisham's history of activism and highlighted the power of culture to create change locally and globally.
- 4.5. The year made a significant impact across the borough:
- There were 696 events.
 - More than 436k audience members and participants took part in person.
 - More than 474k audience members attended digitally.
 - The programme was delivered by over 200 partner organisations.
 - There were over 1,800 volunteers.

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- 92% of schools were involved.
 - 8,854 young people were supported with career and development opportunities.
- 4.6. During the year, partners began to plan for the transition from the LBoC programme into ongoing legacy delivery, ensuring that there was a clear and seamless transition between the programme, the programme evaluation, and the legacy. This report presents the resulting legacy approach, set out in a new cultural strategy for Lewisham.

5. Embedding the legacy from LBoC

- 5.1. 2022 was one of the most exciting years yet for culture in Lewisham. The *We are Lewisham* impact report shows that the year had a significant impact across the borough. It has led to new partnerships and new ways of working. It has shown that investing in culture is investing in the local economy, in people's wellbeing, and in future generations.
- 5.2. Legacy was a fundamental ambition of the original bid to become LBoC and LBoC partners want to cultivate a legacy that promotes the borough's rich history, culture, and community spirit, bringing in more investment and opportunities and inviting both private sector partners and visitors to see what Lewisham has to offer.
- 5.3. The legacy is rooted in *We are Lewisham* but will extend beyond the borough boundaries and across London. It will enable new partnerships with others to develop, and open new opportunities for culture and creativity in Lewisham.
- 5.4. *We are Lewisham – A cultural strategy for Lewisham 2023 – 2028* is a partnership call to action and a plan for keeping the spirit of *We are Lewisham* alive.

6. Vision and outcomes for culture

- 6.1. The cultural strategy sets the vision for culture in Lewisham and identifies four outcomes for culture that support the delivery of the vision. The outcomes framework in Appendix D shows how the vision and outcomes for culture link and how together they support the corporate priorities.
- 6.2. Partners' shared vision for culture in Lewisham builds on the foundations laid during 2022. The vision is about making positive social change happen in Lewisham and about telling the borough's story to the rest of London and the world:

Lewisham: Our place in London where the power of culture and creativity unite us to imagine and build a better future for everyone.

- 6.3. Underpinning the vision are four outcomes for culture that describe the difference partners expect the strategy to make and the impact they want it to have:

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- Creative Communities: Everyone has access to the positive benefits of engaging with cultural and creative activities.
- Creative Places: Cultural and creative places meet the changing needs of Lewisham's communities and creatives.
- Creative Enterprise: The conditions are right for the cultural and creative industries to thrive and be more accessible to a broader range of communities in Lewisham.
- Creative Connections: Creative ways of connecting public sector organisations and communities tested during our year as London Borough of Culture will become part of the way we work together.

6.4. The cultural strategy identifies what partners are already doing and what additional actions they will take together to work towards the vision and outcomes.

7. Cultural strategy engagement

7.1. *We are Lewisham*, the borough's year as LBoC, was probably the biggest cultural engagement programme ever undertaken in Lewisham. *We are Lewisham* was developed in partnership with communities and the local cultural sector. It tested new ideas for increasing participation in cultural activity, developing new routes into cultural sector employment, and developing conversations about the big issues facing Lewisham, such as climate change or young people's mental wellbeing. Throughout the programme, those who participated shaped it and gave their views on what worked and didn't work. The final evaluation reports brought together the learning from the year and have informed the cultural strategy.

7.2. In addition to engaging throughout 2022, the development of the strategy was informed by a range of dedicated engagement activities:

- A Cultural Strategy Steering Group to oversee and guide the development of the strategy, bringing together a cross section of cultural organisations, universities, creative workspace providers, and Lewisham Council.
- Interviews and focus groups with internal and external stakeholders, including cultural organisations, universities, Arts Council England, the Greater London Authority, health and social care system partners, regeneration, planning, and local economy staff in the council.
- A residents' and visitors' online survey to better understand people's reason for participating in culture, any barriers they may face, and why they participate in cultural activities.
- A creative and cultural sector online survey to better understand the conditions that make creativity and culture thrive, including any opportunities for a thriving local cultural ecosystem.
- A workshop with scrutiny lead councillors to identify any connections to the current scrutiny programme, including the affordable workspace task and finish group which is reporting its recommendations to the Mayor

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and Cabinet elsewhere on the agenda for today's meeting.

- The LBoC closure event designed for cultural and local authority decision makers to learn about the impact of Lewisham's year as LBoC and which explored how learnings can impact the future of the creative sector.
- The creative and cultural sector summit which brought together representatives from cultural organisations as well as freelancers to network and explore the opportunities and challenges that a cultural strategy should address.
- An intergenerational focus group to hear the voices of younger and older people and to understand any similarities or differences in barriers to participation both groups may experience.

7.3. Findings from the engagement activities are included in the strategy and have informed the outcomes and actions.

8. Alternative options considered

8.1. Do nothing – Mayor and Cabinet may choose not to adopt the cultural strategy. This option is not recommended. The cultural strategy sets out how the benefits emerging from LBoC can be further developed. This includes how culture can be a driver for inward investment, good growth, community cohesion, and better health and wellbeing. A cultural strategy also provides a platform for securing funding for cultural activity and infrastructure from a range of external sources, as it demonstrates to funders how culture contributes to wider outcomes in Lewisham. A more ad hoc approach is unlikely to realise the same benefits that can be secured through a co-ordinated and strategic partnership approach.

9. Methodology and partnership approach

9.1. The cultural strategy takes a place-based and partnership approach to planning for culture, working with a wide range of partners to ensure culture in Lewisham contributes effectively to wider outcomes, including health, cohesion, good growth, and community engagement.

9.2. Partners followed ACEs' Joint Cultural Needs Assessment guidance, which includes the following steps:

- Convening: Bringing together a broad range of stakeholders from the cultural, community, education, health, local government, higher education, and commercial sectors.
- Collecting: Building a place profile of cultural and non-cultural data to inform needs identification and consultation.
- Consulting: Engaging, communicating and agreeing on resources, activities, outputs and planned outcomes for culture with partners, funders, communities.
- Co-ordinating a framework of potential cultural activities and outputs that capture local needs and lead to the outcomes for culture.

9.3. The strategy is not a council strategy. It is a partnership strategy that will be

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overseen and delivered by a new cultural partnership for Lewisham, building on the steering group that guided the strategy development.

- 9.4. In addition to the outcomes for culture, the strategy includes a cross-cutting focus on children and young people as well as music. Lewisham is a young place with a rich musical heritage. Young creatives and music were at the heart of LBoC. In shaping the legacy, partners will increase cultural opportunities for children and young people and sustain and grow the music scene.

10. Financial implications

- 10.1. The cultural strategy has been developed to be contained within existing resources and actions in the strategy can be scaled depending on financial resources available. Where actions create additional resource needs, these are subject to securing funding from a variety of sources. Mayor and Cabinet will receive separate reports on any projects requiring additional resources when they come forward for delivery. These reports would include the consideration of financial implications specific to the projects or decisions to be taken.

11. Legal implications

- 11.1. There are no legal implications arising directly from this report.

12. Equalities implications

- 12.1. The cultural strategy is fundamentally a strategy aimed at reducing inequalities. The evidence base underpinning the strategy has identified inequalities in access to and participation in culture. The strategy has identified several actions to reduce inequalities in participation to ensure everyone can benefit from the positive impacts of culture.
- 12.2. The cultural strategy outcomes directly support delivery of the council's equalities objectives identified in the Single Equality Framework 2020 – 2024 (SEF):
- 12.3. SEF Objective 1: To ensure equal opportunities for marginalised and seldom heard communities
- The Creative Connections outcome seeks to embed the creative engagement techniques developed during LBoC into council and partner working. During LBoC partners tested a range of ways of engaging communities in conversations about what mattered to them, using culture and creativity to amplify seldom heard voices.
- 12.4. SEF Objective 2: To reduce the number of vulnerable people in the borough by tackling socio-economic inequality
- The Creative Enterprise outcome recognises the power of culture to achieve social mobility through skills development and employment in a key sector for the UK and local economy. It recognises that the sector workforce is not reflective of the borough population and has identified

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actions to address this.

- 12.5. SEF Objective 3: To improve the quality of life of residents by tackling preventable illnesses and diseases
- The Creative Communities outcomes focuses on bringing people together through culture and to help people make sense of the world around them through cultural activity. It identifies actions to foster creative health approaches in the local health and social care system, including social prescribing, prevention, and early intervention to achieve better mental health.
- 12.6. SEF Objective 4: To ensure that services are designed and delivered to meet the needs of Lewisham's diverse population
- The Creative Communities outcome seeks to celebrate Lewisham as a great place to live. It includes actions to celebrate all communities to promote understanding, increase pride of place, and showcase Lewisham as a welcoming place. It also includes specific actions to support the borough of sanctuary approach.
- 12.7. SEF Objective 5: To increase the number of people we support to become active citizens
- Both the Creative Communities and the Creative Connections outcomes support active citizenship and participation in social life. Creative Communities includes specific actions to promote active participation in cultural activity, including outdoor community events, while Creative Connections seeks to empower people to make change in their area happen through creative activism.

13. Climate change and environmental implications

- 13.1. There are no direct or immediate carbon, energy or environmental implications arising from this report. Any potential implications related to specific projects brought forward to deliver the strategy will be considered at the time of decision-making.
- 13.2. While there are no direct implications, creative activism and making change happen together with the communities of Lewisham was central to LBoC, with a specific focus on the climate emergency and social justice. The cultural strategy takes the learning from creative activism approaches tested during LBoC and seeks to embed them in ongoing work to tackle the climate emergency and other major issues facing Lewisham and the wider world.

14. Crime and disorder implications

- 14.1. The cultural strategy highlights the benefits of cultural activity for community cohesion. The Creative Communities theme includes actions to bring people together through events, including festivals and community parties, celebrate the many different communities that make up the borough, and explore the heritage and contribution of everyone who lives, works, studies, or visits Lewisham.

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15. Health and wellbeing implications

15.1. There is a broad body of evidence demonstrating that creativity and culture are integral to health and wellbeing. The cultural strategy includes actions to support a creative health approach that engages with prevention and health-creation - not just treatment and disease. It includes actions to address loneliness, improve mental wellbeing, build social capital, and integrate creativity and culture in the local health and social care system.

16. Background papers

16.1. There are no background papers. Details of the surveys that informed the cultural strategy can be found on the council's resident engagement portal:

- [Residents' and visitors' survey](#)
- [Creative and cultural sector survey](#)

17. Glossary

Term	Definition
Arts Council England (ACE)	Arts Council England is the national development agency for creativity and culture. It funds cultural organisations and cultural projects across England.
Greater London Authority (GLA)	The Greater London Authority is the regional government body for London. There two parts to the GLA: the Mayor of London and the London Assembly. The Mayor provides citywide leadership and creates policies to improve London for all. The London Assembly holds the Mayor and Mayoral advisers to account by publicly examining policies and programmes.
Local Government Association (LGA)	The Local Government Association is the national membership body for local authorities. It works on behalf of its member councils to support, promote and improve local government.
London Borough of Culture (LBoC)	London Borough of Culture is a status awarded by the Mayor of London to one London borough each year. The chosen borough receives funding from the Mayor of London and secures other funding to deliver a year-long cultural programme.

18. Report author(s) and contact

18.1. Report authors:

- James Lee, Director of Communities, Partnerships, and Leisure, james.lee@lewisham.gov.uk
- Thorsten Dreyer, Cultural Strategy Advisor, thorsten.dreyer@lewisham.gov.uk

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18.2. Comments for and on behalf of the Executive Director for Corporate Resources were provided by:

- Yusuf O. Shaibu, Strategic Finance Business Partner (Community Services)

18.3. Comments for and on behalf of the Director of Law and Corporate Governance were provided by:

- Jeremy Chambers, Director of Law and Corporate Governance

19. Appendices

19.1. This report is accompanied by the following appendices:

- Appendix A: We are Lewisham – A cultural strategy for Lewisham 2023 – 2028 (full strategy)
- Appendix B: We are Lewisham – A cultural strategy for Lewisham 2023 – 2028 (summary strategy)
- Appendix C: Cultural strategy insights pack
- Appendix D: Cultural strategy outcomes framework
- Appendix E: Equalities Analysis Assessment

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