

## **Milton Keynes Arts Strategy 2008 - 2013**

### **Focus for the Arts**

#### **3.1 Arts Focus**

After testing a number of statements for the arts, the following was welcomed by the arts community as supporting current achievement as well as future aspiration. The arts statement is:

#### **Milton Keynes flourishes with artistic energy**

This statement recognises that in areas we already flourish with artistic energy. This strategy embraces these successes and builds upon them. The strategy also addresses the barriers which prevent flourishing.

Through consultation, it was evident that artists, arts organisations and community members in Milton Keynes have an aspiration to invest in and increase the impact of the arts in Milton Keynes.

The consulted arts community felt comfortable with the term 'flourish', defining its meaning as:

- "Blossoming not growing"
- "Has external recognition"
- "The difference between flourishing and just growing at a pleasant steady rate and never making anyone go ooohh! ;0)"
- "Able to realise all of the good ideas without artificial barriers"

"Flourish" as defined by the Oxford Dictionary<sup>i</sup> states it is to:

- "grow or develop in a healthy or vigorous way"
- "be working or at the height of one's career during a specified period"

In areas (both arts specific and geographically) we already flourish with artistic energy. We will embrace this; relieving blockages which may negate people from flourishing and developing projects which expand our artistic energy.

This statement summarises the pride people feel towards arts in Milton Keynes and provides direction for what we do and why we do it. We will deliver the aspiration to flourish through this strategy by focusing our attention to the following:

- A. Creativity & Experimentation
- B. Engagement
- C. Collaboration
- D. Commitment
- E. Recognition

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<sup>i</sup> [www.askoxford.com](http://www.askoxford.com)

These focuses will be addressed through projects which are outlined below (section 3.2). The action plan (section 4) presents a structure for funding, partners and specific actions for each project.

### **3.2 Projects**

For details of how these projects will be delivered, the Arts Team role, partners and funding, please refer to the action plan (section 4)

#### **A. Enabling creativity and experimentation**

A.1 Animate - With events organisers and space owners, engage the best artists to perform, exhibit and animate our city centre. The scheme will be high profile and will further enhance the city centre as a cultural destination.

A.2 Idea Awards - In partnership with the private sector, a series of Awards will be developed which artists and arts organisations can apply for. The Idea Awards will support projects which are experimental and integrate creative practices to their work.

A.3 Arts School - Working with higher and further educational providers we will contribute towards Milton Keynes having a more diverse offer of arts courses and programmes. Ultimately, these would contribute to the development of an arts & design school/faculty in Milton Keynes.

A4. Arts for Young People - Utilising opportunities to engage young people in the arts, both in and out of school. Identifying ways in which educational activities can be enhanced by the arts, young people can get involved in voluntary and community sector arts activities and the arts can be made more accessible.

#### **B. Engaging our growing audiences**

B.1 Arts Agents - We will inspire and engage officers from across Milton Keynes Council departments to become Arts Agents. These Agents will be supported to engage the arts with their non-arts agendas. Artists and arts organisations from Milton Keynes will be invited to 'buddy' the Agents and support them in the development of project ideas and delivery.

B.2 Arts Forum - We will work with the arts community to develop a strategic forum. The Arts forum will identify its own priorities, but should maintain a key function towards working together to raise the profile of the arts locally, regionally and nationally.

B.3 Artists in Schools - We will work with the Schools across Milton Keynes to engage artists to work in unused classrooms, available whilst schools are enhancing their pupil intake. Artists will use the space to develop their creative practice as well as working with school on delivering their arts curriculum and Extended Schools programmes.

B.4 Artists in Communities – Working alongside the Community Mobilisor programme, we will connect artists with the community to engage and inspire communities through participation in the arts. This work will mirror the early work by the MK Development Corporation which placed community artists into new estates as the city grew.

**C. Creating and enabling collaboration between artists**

C.1 Edge – We will work with the landowners in Central Milton Keynes to undertake research and identify an area which could be used by artists (cross-artform) to develop and share their work. A creative energy centre for our artists to work collaboratively and welcome national/international artists. Further work will include type of place needed, function, form and sustainability.

C.2 Networking – We will work with partners to identify opportunities for networking both physically and within the virtual (web-based) medium. This will explore digital technologies as both a creative and functional mechanism.

C.3 Cultural Exchange- We will develop opportunities to encourage artists to work in and visit Milton Keynes and to collaborate with our arts community.

**D. Demonstrating a commitment to the arts long term**

D.1 Grants – We will provide revenue and project grants to artists and arts organisations within the Borough.

D.2 Endowment – We will seek to secure an endowment which would offer security to the Milton Keynes Council Cultural Grant-Aid scheme, support the arts team, fund project delivery, revenue support and commissioning.

D.3 Venues – The Culture Team will support our existing arts organisations to develop their venues as well as look for opportunities for new venues across the Borough.

D.4. Performance Indicators – We will work with our regional partners and development agencies to develop common and appropriate Performance Indicators for the arts, and engagement in the arts. This will include identifying robust outcomes, action plan for improvement and triple bottom line reporting.

**E. Recognition locally, regionally and nationally**

E.1 Skill-share – Organisations with capacity and expertise in specialised areas will be encouraged to share their knowledge with others in Milton Keynes. This would initially support skills to

enhance the development of audiences, but would expand to include a programme of training, by and for the arts community.

E.2 Arts News – We will support the development of an arts specific medium for marketing activities/services to the broad community. This will include a hard-copy arts publication which is circulated widely as well as web based media which has a broad audience base.

E.3 Volunteers – We will work with other Awards Ceremonies to appropriately celebrate the achievements and contributions that our arts volunteers make.

### **3.3 Our commitment**

Milton Keynes Council will drive forward the delivery of these projects in partnership with others; the Arts Team will take on a delivery of some strategic projects (see action plan Section 4). Milton Keynes Council recognises that resources must not only provide wide-spread advice and guidance for the arts, but also to deliver essential and strategically important projects to raise the profile of arts in Milton Keynes.

This strategy demonstrates that Milton Keynes Council is committed to delivering arts strategically. The Arts Team will be responsible for the delivery of the arts strategy.

### **3.4 Partnerships**

The Arts Team recognise the importance of partnerships in making this strategy achievable. The team are working with partners who have the expertise and practical experience to develop and deliver the projects. Working with partners will ensure the projects engage our target audiences<sup>ii</sup> for public benefit.

The Arts Team work with partners who share the aspiration for Milton Keynes to flourish with artistic energy, and who demonstrate a commitment to the strategic priorities within this strategy.

### **3.5 How we will deliver the projects**

Section 4 is an action plan for delivery of the above projects. The projects have been prioritised with High, Medium & Low ratings. The projects which are rated high (our priority projects) have project briefs, funding sources and partners identified.

The action plan states the Arts Team role in project delivery as well as the partners which it will work with. Partners have been identified as part of consultation and in consideration of organisations core business and expertise.

The Arts Team is committed to the projects within the action plan and their work plans will align directly to ensure this strategy is achieved.

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<sup>ii</sup> ABL report [www.culturemk.org/arts-strategy.htm](http://www.culturemk.org/arts-strategy.htm)