

## Milton Keynes Arts Strategy 2008 – 2013

### Research

The development of an arts strategy has been identified as a priority through self-assessments, research, evidence gathering and recognition from strategic partners.

The following section outlines the key drivers which have informed the strategic focus for arts in Milton Keynes.

### **6.1 Arts @ Strategic Centre**

Author: Milton Keynes Culture Team

Date: January 2007

Web: [www.culturemk.org/arts-strategy.htm](http://www.culturemk.org/arts-strategy.htm)

For full report see Annex I

In 2006 Milton Keynes Council (MKC) took part in 'Arts @ Strategic Centre' to assess arts provision in the Borough. The work was initiated by Arts Council England<sup>i</sup> and project managed by IDeA<sup>ii</sup>; IDeA mentored the local authority through the process with regular meetings and focus groups.

The programme is a self-assessment tool for positioning and embedding the arts at the strategic centre of a local authority. It assessed how the local authority was considering arts across its delivery, visioning, budgeting and project planning.

Thirty-six people were interviewed which represented senior managers and Councillors from Milton Keynes Council, current recipients of MKC grant funding, arts and heritage members from the Cultural Alliance, officers from Arts Council England South East and Milton Keynes Theatre & Gallery Company.

Arts @ Strategic Centre benchmarks the authority against an 'ideal model', which helps us to identify where improvements need to be made. These are:

- investment (both financial and developmental) for the arts community was sporadic and unconsidered
- an arts development officer was critical for the future growth of arts
- the arts are not satisfactorily profiled across Milton Keynes
- arts can be used to achieve cross-departmental priorities but non-arts officers are often unsure of how to engage
- the arts are not strategically led
- relationships with the private sector need to be enhanced and embraced
- the arts should be used as a 'selling' tool for Milton Keynes

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<sup>i</sup> [www.artscouncil.org.uk](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk)

<sup>ii</sup> [www.idea.gov.uk](http://www.idea.gov.uk)

- the arts need Performance Indicators to embed itself in the Local Area Agreement targets
- the arts should be embedded in the Council priorities

Milton Keynes Council made some initial changes in response to these findings, including building capacity within the arts team.

## **6.2 Arts Annex to Milton Keynes Cultural Strategy**

Author: Milton Keynes Culture Team

Date: November 2006

Web: [www.culturemk.org/cultural-strategy.htm](http://www.culturemk.org/cultural-strategy.htm)

For full report see Annex II

The Milton Keynes Cultural Strategy was formulated with and for stakeholders and partners, including the arts sector. The need for an arts strategy was highlighted in the Scope & Purpose section and within the Action Plans as follows:

- an arts strategy must be drafted to offer the sector strategic direction
- funds need to be allocated for an arts development officer to take forward the arts action plan and to develop an Arts Strategy
- the arts should be used to support cross-sector agendas such as education, health and crime prevention
- Milton Keynes needs to be programmed with vibrant events, activities and festivals
- there needs to be new and continued support and investment for arts venues and spaces
- artists should be engaged across the city, offering artist-in-residences and live:work opportunities

## **6.3 Audience Development Strategy**

Author: ABL Consulting

Date: December 2007

Web: [www.culturemk.org/arts-strategy.htm](http://www.culturemk.org/arts-strategy.htm)

For full report see Annex III

Milton Keynes Cultural Alliance; a strategic forum of 24 arts and heritage organisations, commissioned ABL Consulting<sup>iii</sup> to research, evaluate and then draft an Audience Development Strategy for its members.

ABL consulted through focus groups, questionnaires, one-to-one discussions and sessions with each member of the Cultural Alliance. The resulting strategy identifies the gaps and opportunities for arts service providers to enhance their 'offer' and develop their audiences. The key issues within the strategy are:

- the Cultural Alliance brand needed to be developed to better advocate the arts for its members
- a training programme needs to be developed by and for the members

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<sup>iii</sup> [www.ablconsulting.com](http://www.ablconsulting.com)

- there is not a medium to share and profile good practises i.e. through case studies
- arts organisations are not aware of what each other is doing
- advocacy for the arts is not joined up
- arts organisations do not work collaboratively, therefore do not make good use of each others expertise
- arts organisations should better connect with education services

#### **6.4 Situation analysis**

Author: Milton Keynes Culture Team

Date: November 2007

Web: [www.culturemk.org/arts-strategy.htm](http://www.culturemk.org/arts-strategy.htm)

For full report see Annex IV

Members from the arts community were invited to attend a workshop, with invites sent out to via the COIN database to 127 arts organisations; and through the Media Circle and MK Arts Association e-bulletin. In total 29 people attended the workshop, representing a wide spectrum of the arts. The session was split into three sections which created a situation analysis of the arts in Milton Keynes.

The key identified issues are:

- marketing & promotion of the arts in Milton Keynes is not easy and therefore is not done to a satisfactory level
- the arts need to expand to keep up with the growing city
- formal avenues are needed to bridge the gap between school pupils and professional arts jobs
- arts need to be considered strategically
- the community needs to be able to take more risks with their art
- additional venues are needed for performing arts, exhibition, film, studios, gigs etc
- further educational opportunities and arts courses need to be created
- commitment and recognition is needed from Members at Milton Keynes Council
- artists need to work cross art forms i.e fine art & contemporary, film & dance etc
- artists want to be able to network free and easily with each other
- the relationship with the private sector is weak
- arts organisations need funding to enable them to take risks
- more arts events should be taking place across Milton Keynes
- volunteers contributions within the sector are not recognised or celebrated

#### **6.5 Creative & Cultural Industries in Milton Keynes South Midlands**

Author: nmp<sup>iv</sup>

Date: January 2008

Web: [www.culturemk.org/arts-strategy.htm](http://www.culturemk.org/arts-strategy.htm)

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<sup>iv</sup> [www.nmp.biz](http://www.nmp.biz)

For full report see Annex V

The future growth of Milton Keynes is considered in tandem with the geographic area surrounding it which is also experiencing rapid growth. This area is called Milton Keynes South Midlands (MKSM) and includes Milton Keynes, Northamptonshire, Luton, Bedfordshire and part of Buckinghamshire.

This study was commissioned by the three regional Arts Council Offices (East Midlands, East and South East) with a remit for the Milton Keynes South Midlands growth area. This study aims to provide a detailed picture of the creative industries sector in the growth area, potential for growth and specialist support provision.

In essence, the Creative Industries in Milton Keynes were found to be vibrant with the Borough having more creative & cultural industry than the other areas of MKSM. Milton Keynes has a number of support services which encourages the dynamic DIY business culture, with creative businesses heavily involved in networking and sector-led initiatives.

The key identified issues are:

- Milton Keynes needs to be promoted; its external perceptions need to be changed
- the creative industries are not strategically led
- the profile of creative industries needs to be raised
- skills in formal education need to be structured to feed this sector
- creative workspaces need to be developed
- Milton Keynes should work with its neighbouring authorities to enhance the offer

## **6.6 The Arts Debate**

Author: Arts Council England

Date: September 2007

Web: [www.artscouncil.org.uk/artsdebate](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/artsdebate)

In 2006 Arts Council England undertook a public value inquiry of the arts; The Arts Debate. The work focussed on their service delivery but also offered findings of the arts in general terms.

The key findings found were:

- The arts are seen as part of our fundamental capacity for life; enabling us to interpret, adapt and understand the world around us, helping us to express ourselves, communicate with others and broaden our collective horizons
- The arts enrich our experience of life; they bring colour, passion, beauty and intensity to our lives. They are a source of pleasure, entertainment and relaxation and a means of escape from the day to day
- The arts offer powerful applications in other contexts; contributing to health and well being, to education and learning, a sense of

belonging and community and so to social cohesion and a healthy economy

The key identified issues are:

- the wide social benefits of the arts are not always recognised
- the arts can and should cross agendas and contexts
- arts should be available for as many people as possible
- quality must not be compromised
- arts have an important role in education
- the arts are valuable in internationalism and its ability to cross cultural boundaries
- the arts are politically driven
- arts must challenge people, take risks, and innovate

## **6.7 Feedback to Public Consultation**

*Information to be gathered at Public Consultation (18<sup>th</sup> Feb. – 11<sup>th</sup> May)*

## **7. Priorities**

The priorities of the arts strategy have been informed by the research and evidence collected. The key issues from the research (Section 6) have been grouped, and the following themes have been identified as priorities:

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

Below is an explanation of the priorities. Evidence which has built up throughout the strategy has been included. This evidence has been regrouped, identifying how all responses have fed our five priorities.

### **A. Creativity & Experimentation**

This supports the arts community's desire to enhance and embrace the opportunity to be creative; offering more opportunities for creativity and supporting projects.

As a new town we have the opportunity of flexibility, to be experimental and to take risks. It is acknowledged that we must embrace and create opportunities to take risks; enabling the arts community to develop high quality, new and experimental arts initiatives.

The following issues fed directly into this priority:

Issues taken from Section 6 (research)	Source
Artists should be engaged across the city, offering artist-in-residences and live:work opportunities	Arts Annex – Cultural Strategy
Milton Keynes needs to be programmed with vibrant events, activities and festivals	Arts Annex – Cultural Strategy
More arts events should be taking place across Milton Keynes	Situation Analysis
Arts organisations need funding to enable them to take risks	Situation Analysis
Artists need to work cross art forms i.e. fine art & contemporary, film & dance etc	Situation Analysis
The community needs to be able to take more risks with their art	Situation Analysis
Further educational opportunities and arts courses need to be created	Situation Analysis
Arts must challenge people, take risks, and innovate	The Arts Debate
The arts are valuable in internationalism and its ability to cross cultural boundaries	The Arts Debate
Quality must not be compromised	The Arts Debate
For Public Art priorities and project 'C1 –Edge', within MKP's business plan to continue to flourish through the Arts Team.	Growth & Planning (section 5.2)

## **B. Engagement**

It is acknowledged universally that arts should be engaging. Milton Keynes has a strong history of engaging people in the arts but is keen to expand and broaden engagement opportunities for new communities, schools and public spaces.

A large number of the identified issues of engagement were in relation to education; in particular the lack of opportunities for young people.

The following issues fed directly into this priority:

Issues taken from Section 6 (research)	Source
More arts events should be taking place across Milton Keynes	Situation Analysis
Artists should be engaged across the city, offering artist-in-residences and live:work opportunities	Arts Annex – Cultural Strategy
Arts organisations should better connect with education services	Audience Dev Strategy
Further educational opportunities and arts courses need to be created	Situation Analysis
Formal avenues are needed to bridge the gap between school pupils and professional arts jobs	Situation Analysis
skills in formal education need to be structured to feed this sector	Creative Industries Audit
The arts are valuable in internationalism and its ability to cross cultural boundaries	The Arts Debate
The arts can and should cross agendas and contexts	The Arts Debate
Arts have an important role in education	The Arts Debate
Arts should be available for as many people as possible	The Arts Debate

## **C. Collaboration**

Research identified that artists and arts organisations can feel disconnected and that they seek opportunities to share experiences, expertise, training and ideas for more collaborative working and cross fertilisation of art forms.

Additionally the arts community seek to collaborate and work across non arts services supporting agendas through creative activity and developing partnerships for mutual benefit.

The following issues fed directly into this priority:

Issues taken from Section 6 (research)	Source
Arts organisations should better connect with education services	Audience Dev Strategy
Arts can be used to achieve cross-departmental priorities but non-arts officers are often unsure of how to engage	Arts @ Strategic Centre
Relationships with the private sector need to be enhanced and embraced	Arts @ Strategic Centre
The arts should be used to support cross-sector agendas	Arts Annex –

such as education, health and crime	Cultural Strategy
Arts organisations do not work collaboratively, therefore do not make good use of each others expertise	Audience Dev Strategy
Milton Keynes should work with its neighbouring authorities to enhance the offer	Creative Industries Audit
Advocacy for the arts is not joined up	Audience Dev Strategy
Arts organisations are not aware of what each other is doing	Audience Dev Strategy
There is not a medium to share and profile good practises i.e. Through case studies	Audience Dev Strategy
A training programme needs to be developed by and for the members	Audience Dev Strategy
The relationship with the private sector is weak	Situation Analysis
Artists want to be able to network free and easily with each other	Situation Analysis
The wide social benefits of the arts are not always recognised	The Arts Debate
The arts are valuable in internationalism and its ability to cross cultural boundaries	The Arts Debate
Additional venues are needed for performing arts, exhibition, film, studios, gigs etc	Situation Analysis
Artists need to work cross art forms i.e. fine art & contemporary, film & dance etc	Situation Analysis
The arts can and should cross agendas and contexts	The Arts Debate

#### **D. Commitment**

Research showed a need for strategic direction and investment in the arts to enable them to have a vibrant and sustainable future. There is a need for commitment and investment in resources so that artists and arts organisations can flourish and grow.

The following issues fed directly into this priority:

Issues taken from Section 6 (research)	Source
Arts organisations need funding to enable them to take risks	Situation Analysis
Investment (both financial and developmental) for the arts community was sporadic and unconsidered	Arts @ Strategic Centre
Milton Keynes needs to be programmed with vibrant events, activities and festivals	Arts Annex – Cultural Strategy
An arts development officer was critical for the future growth of arts	Arts @ Strategic Centre
The arts are not strategically led	Arts @ Strategic Centre
The arts need Performance Indicators to embed itself in the Local Area Agreement targets	Arts @ Strategic Centre
The arts should be embedded in the Council priorities	Arts @ Strategic Centre
An arts strategy must be drafted to offer the sector strategic direction	Arts Annex – Cultural Strategy
There needs to be new and continued support and investment for arts venues and spaces	Arts Annex – Cultural Strategy

The Cultural Alliance brand needed to be developed to better advocate the arts for its members	Audience Dev Strategy
Funds need to be allocated for an arts development officer to take forward the arts action plan and to develop an arts strategy	Arts Annex – Cultural Strategy
the creative industries are not strategically led	Creative Industries Audit
creative workspaces need to be developed	Creative Industries Audit
Commitment and recognition is needed from Members at Milton Keynes Council	Situation Analysis
Additional venues are needed for performing arts, exhibition, film, studios, gigs etc	Situation Analysis
Arts need to be considered strategically	Situation Analysis
The arts need to expand to keep up with the growing city	Situation Analysis
The arts are politically driven	The Arts Debate
A dedicated team placed within the council will enable greater cross-team working.	Resources (section 5.1)
Sustaining the arts team, through retention of staff and funding for posts will lead to the consistent delivery of the strategy and more effective partnership working	Resources (section 5.1)
To ensure arts and the projects in this strategy are recognised as an important part of growth and the local strategic infrastructure.	Growth & Planning (section 5.2)
To raise the profile of arts within the Council to strengthen the status of the grants and funding for the arts (please add into the chart )	Grants & Awards (section 5.3)
To develop an endowment to further support the arts team, arts grants and sustainability.	Grants & Awards (section 5.3)
To have an arts specific indicator in the Local Area Agreement	Performance Indicators (section 8.5.1)
To provide evidence for how the arts are meeting the non-arts indicators	Performance Indicators (section 8.5.1)

### **E. Recognition**

The arts in Milton Keynes are often not recognised for their achievements and contributions to the cultural life of the Borough and wider region. This priority aims to celebrate, communicate and demonstrate success at local, regional and national levels.

The following issues fed directly into this priority:

Issues taken from Section 6 (research)	Source
The arts are not satisfactorily profiled across Milton Keynes	Arts @ Strategic Centre
The arts should be used as a 'selling' tool for Milton Keynes	Arts @ Strategic Centre
Volunteers contributions within the sector are not recognised or celebrated	Situation Analysis
Marketing & promotion of the arts in Milton Keynes is not easy and therefore is not done to a satisfactory level	Situation Analysis

the profile of creative industries needs to be raised	Creative Industries Audit
Milton Keynes needs to be promoted; its external perceptions need to be changed	Creative Industries Audit
The wide social benefits of the arts are not always recognised	The Arts Debate
There is not a medium to share and profile good practises i.e. Through case studies	Audience Dev Strategy
Commitment and recognition is needed from Members at Milton Keynes Council	Situation Analysis
The Arts Team need to 'catch up' on raising the profile of the arts and advocacy for the strategic importance of the arts, which is lagging behind.	Resources (section 5.1)
For the Arts Team to raise the profile of arts and growth once more, to ensure arts is strategically embedded into future planning guidance (for Tariffs, SPG etc).	Growth & Planning (section 5.2)

## **8. Strategic Overview**

It is necessary to identify key strategic documents which may impact on or guide this arts strategy and arts delivery in Milton Keynes.

The Milton Keynes Cultural Strategy sets the local, national and regional context for culture and the arts (2006-12); we look not to replicate this information but add content which is specific to the arts.

### **8.1 Milton Keynes Cultural Strategy (2006-12)**

Author: Milton Keynes Council

Date: November 2006

Web: [www.culturemk.org/cultural-strategy.htm](http://www.culturemk.org/cultural-strategy.htm)

In 2007, Milton Keynes Council adopted the Cultural Strategy, which was developed through extensive consultation with the cultural sector. The strategy considers the broad cultural perspective, representing the Department of Culture Media & Sport (DCMS)<sup>v</sup> definition of culture which is all embracing.

The strategy offers the over-arching framework supporting a common strategic direction for culture across all of Milton Keynes. It provides direction for developers, planners, cultural organisations, business and the wider community.

The action points are:

- Developing Cultural Participation
- Enhancing Environments
- Supporting Cultural Vibrancy
- Harnessing Change Creatively
- Supporting Economic Growth through Culture
- Measuring Cultural Excellence
- Expanding Cultural Resources
- Supporting Cultural Talent and Achievement
- Celebrating Culture and communities

### **8.2 MK Public Art Strategy (2006-2012)**

Author: Milton Keynes Council

Date: October 2006

Web: [www.culturemk.org/public-art-strategy.htm](http://www.culturemk.org/public-art-strategy.htm)

Milton Keynes benefits from funding through planning gain to integrate public artwork into new and regenerating areas across the city including the growth areas and Central Milton Keynes.

The Public Art Strategy recommends the commissioning process for working with artists, public engagement, interpretation and care. At Milton Keynes Council there is a dedicated Public Art Unit which oversees all of these commissions and manages the delivery of the Public Art Strategy. This unit is part of the arts team.

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<sup>v</sup> [www.culture.gov.uk](http://www.culture.gov.uk)

The strategy objectives are:

- **Artists:** to develop opportunities and commissions that attract the best artists to further enhance Milton Keynes as a creative, vibrant place with people who welcome artists and value Public Art
- **Collection:** to promote and build on the success of Milton Keynes' Public Art collection and to interpret and care for these works through public engagement opportunities and collections management
- **Community:** to commission artists to involve and empower communities in creating places and spaces that reflect the achievement, diversity and pride of people living and visiting Milton Keynes through Public Art
- **Engagement:** to develop an engagement programme that provides informative, interesting and memorable interactions between Public Art, place, people and future developments
- **Guidance:** to provide a best practice resource for public art which offers advice, guidance and inspiration for partners, developers and others interested in developing Public Art projects.

### **8.3 Milton Keynes Council Plan (2006-09)**

Author: Milton Keynes Council

Date: April 2007

Web: [www.miltonkeynes.gov.uk/best%2Dvalue/DisplayArticle.asp?ID=47722](http://www.miltonkeynes.gov.uk/best%2Dvalue/DisplayArticle.asp?ID=47722)

The MK Council Plan sets the context, priorities and objectives which underpins the local authority's service delivery. The strategy defines arts as a contributor to culture; culture is profiled within the document as key for community development and ownership. It also recognises the benefits that the arts have to other services in the Council; understanding that statutory targets and services can be met through the arts.

The objectives are:

- to ensure that our communities are sustainable
- to be inclusive and welcoming to all
- to support our children and families
- to promote health and social well-being
- to provide high quality services and community leadership

### **8.4 Milton Keynes Community Strategy (2004-34)**

Author: Milton Keynes Council

Date: April 2004

Web: [www.miltonkeynes.gov.uk](http://www.miltonkeynes.gov.uk)

The Milton Keynes Community Strategy includes a set of values that will guide the growth of the Borough. It is an important document that contains a vision for Milton Keynes and outlines the work that is required to build the city over the next thirty years.

This strategy supports the work undertaken by the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) and identifies the priorities for the Local Area Agreements. The strategy is dynamic in outlook and offers numerous opportunities to involve the arts.

The objectives are:

- reinventing our city places and spaces
- delivering the best services
- facilitating participative communities
- managing change together

## **8.5 Local Area Agreements**

Author: Arts Council England

Date: [March 2008\\*\\*](#)

Web: [www.go-se.gov.uk/gose/localGovt](http://www.go-se.gov.uk/gose/localGovt)

A Local Area Agreement (LAA) is a three year agreement that sets out the priorities for a local area agreed between Central Government and a local area. The primary objective of an LAA is to deliver better outcomes for local people.

Local Area Agreements (LAAs) are a new way of working between Central Government, local authorities and major local delivery partners in an area. They strive to improve local and national priorities in order to deliver a service that will enable a better quality of life.

The priorities are:

- Children and young people
- Safer and stronger communities
- Healthier communities and older people
- Economic development and environment

### **8.5.1 Performance Indicators**

The Local Government White Paper 'Strong and Prosperous Communities' published in October last year, committed to introducing a set of streamlined indicators that would reflect national priority outcomes for local authorities working alone or in partnership.

A single set of 198 national indicators was announced as part of the Comprehensive Spending Review 2007. The national indicators will be the only measures on which central Government will performance manage outcomes delivered by local government. These will replace all other existing sets of indicators.

Performance data will be collected for all of the 198 indicators; however, targets against the set of national indicators will be negotiated through new Local Area Agreements (LAAs). Each Agreement will include up to 35 targets from among the national indicators, complemented by statutory targets on educational attainment and early years.

There are 2 art specific indicators:

- NI 10 - Visits to museums and galleries
- NI 11 - Engagement in the arts

And there are 11 indicators for which arts in Milton Keynes will contribute to:

- NI 1 - % of people who believe people from different backgrounds get on well together in their local area
- NI 2 - %of people who feel that they belong to their neighbourhood
- NI 5 - Overall good satisfaction with local area
- NI 6 - Participation in regular volunteering
- NI 7 - Environment for a thriving third sector
- NI 9 - Use of public libraries
- NI 91 Participation of 17 year-olds in education or training
- NI 110 – Young peoples participation in positive activities
- NI 117 16 to 18 year olds who are not in education, training or employment
- NI 119 – Self-reported measure of people’s overall health & well-being
- NI 161 – Learners gaining Level 1 qualification in literacy

The Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) is the lead agency developing the Local Area Agreement and agreeing the 35 indicators for Milton Keynes. We will work with this partnership to provide evidence proving the importance of the arts.

Performance indicator issues:

- To have an arts specific indicator in the Local Area Agreement
- To provide evidence for how the arts are meeting the non-arts indicators

## **8.6 Arts Council England, South East**

Author: Arts Council England

Date: awaiting final approval

Web: [www.artscouncil.org.uk](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk)

Arts Council England is the National Development Agency for the arts which supports projects across the UK, with over £1.1 billion investment between 2006 & 2008.

Arts Council England South East (ACESE) invested seed funding (along with Milton Keynes Theatre & Gallery Company) to establish the Milton Keynes Culture Team and as part of the growth agenda, ACESE has identified Milton Keynes & Aylesbury Vale as a priority area for 2008/09.

For Milton Keynes, this will mean that Grants for the Arts application will receive additional points during its assessment and that ACESE will be looking to invest in the area through their Managed Funds and partnership working.

The ACE Corporate Plan was adopted in **\*\*March 2008\*\*** and has 2 themes and 4 objectives which will underpin the work of ACE for the next 10 years.

The themes are:

- Engagement
- Excellence

The objectives are:

- Cultural Olympiad
- Cultural offer for young people
- Digital challenge
- Turning point (visual arts)

(The themes and objectives are not fully confirmed, so may change)