

Ipswich Cultural Strategy 2011 – 2014

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Introduction

It is now widely recognised that cultural activities, interests and places generate vitality and increase the health, wellbeing and quality of life for both individuals and communities. It can also play a significant role in supporting other local priorities such as reducing crime and improving access to education, employment and training.

In Ipswich Borough Council's first cultural strategy we set out ambitious actions to create a vibrant Ipswich and address the need for investment in Ipswich's cultural heritage. Many of the aims of that strategy have been achieved and Ipswich's cultural offer transformed.

With a new national Government, new local portfolio holders and changed economic circumstances it is timely to take stock of what we have done and what we can go on to achieve over the next phase of the town's development.

The next few years present new challenges. Progress will be in the context of the public sectors need to become more efficient and embrace the opportunities presented by the new Government's 'Big Society' ideals. IBC's revised cultural strategy recognises this reality and covers a relatively short period of three years – after which we hope economic prospects will have improved and new opportunities will have opened up.

This three year strategy sets out how Ipswich Borough Council will focus on six key objectives to further improve our cultural assets while facilitating the development of others. The strategy identifies major improvements, including a refurbishment of Crown Pools. It also highlights big ambitions for the future including a new Centre of Excellence for the arts focussed on the Ipswich Museum and Art School. The success of these will be dependent on winning support from local residents and stakeholders as well as achieving external funding.

We will also work closely with stakeholders to develop a shared vision of how culture can be taken to a new level in Ipswich to encourage more visitors, raise local aspirations and strengthen the local economy.

What defines Culture?

The Government Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) advocates a wide definition of culture. In its broadest sense, the cultural sector provides a range of opportunities and experiences that enrich our lives and includes; architecture and design, art, the built environment, dance, faith, heritage, landscape and wildlife, media and film, museums, music, parks, play, open spaces and allotments, recreation and leisure, sport and theatre.

- Culture is a catalyst for, and major component of, the economic and social revival of towns and rural areas. According to the Heritage Lottery Fund, every £10,000 of heritage investment levers £45,000 of private and public sector funding into regeneration areas.
- The English Tourism Board has indicated that Tourism is worth £5 billion a year to the Eastern Region. The tourism sector now employs 185,000 people (and accounts for one in four new jobs). Tourism is one of the fastest growing sectors of the global economy.
- Choose Suffolk has identified that 2m tourists visit Suffolk every year, spending £1.63bn and employing over 30,000 people (ChooseSuffolk).
- The Association of Leading Visitor Attractions, 2009, states that Museums, galleries and heritage sites reported increase in visitor numbers - the median increase

across the culture/leisure sector was 10.9% and particularly marked in attractions with free entry as consumers sought good value days out in the recession.

Why culture is important in Ipswich

Located in the very heart of the sub-region, Ipswich is a growing town with a strong cultural focus. Ipswich has long been proud of its diverse communities, and already boasts the attributes and infrastructure of a much larger conurbation.

- Ipswich has good road and rail links to London and the Midlands, is within easy reach of London Stansted Airport and has direct sea links to Northern Europe.
- Ipswich has excellent educational provision with England's newest university, University Campus Suffolk, complementing other Further and Higher Education new-build facilities, including Suffolk New College and Suffolk One.
- Ipswich is rich in arts with high quality museums and heritage facilities. New acquisitions such as the Jerwood DanceHouse, complement well known and established facilities such as the New Wolsey and Regent Theatres. Other assets include Ipswich Museum, attracting 40,000 + visitors per annum, the Sir John Mills Theatre and the Ipswich Transport Museum, which has the largest collection of transport items in Britain devoted to just one town.
- The town enjoys a wealth of experience of partnership working across the public, private and voluntary sectors and our community shares a passion for culture that is demonstrated through a vibrant non-professional infrastructure.

Ipswich Borough Council understands the contribution that the cultural sector, in its widest sense, makes to its primary aim to enhance the social, economic and environmental well-being of the town. Culture helps to define the unique character of place that shapes our sense of identity and can:

- Raise the regional and national profile;
- Increase visitor and tourist numbers and length of stay;
- Provide opportunities for people to participate in many ways;
- Improve the skills and education base;
- Support community health and wellbeing;
- Strengthen the local economy.

There is clear evidence of an appetite for culture-related tourism in Ipswich. For example more than 1m visitors have attended the Ip-art Festival since 2003, bringing an estimated £13m into the local economy (Arts Council England Economic Impact Study, 2004).

Ipswich Borough Council recognises the benefit that investment in culture can bring to our most disadvantaged. Whilst being part of the Haven Gateway Partnership growth area Ipswich has some of the most deprived wards in the region. IBC is utilising this growth status through culture to address these place-specific economic issues. An example of culture making a difference to our economic prosperity is the plan to establish an arts attraction of national significance in the centre of the town. The Ipswich Art School will not only contribute to the distinctiveness of Ipswich and Suffolk as a place for high quality culture, tourism and standard of life, it will address some of the locality's real need to develop or attract people and businesses to the area, provide new exciting education and skills programmes and increase opportunities for employment and entrepreneurship.

Consultation and needs analysis

Ipswich Borough Council appointed consultants PMPgenesis to complete an analysis of current and future cultural and leisure facility need in the Borough.

The Cultural offer in Ipswich is broad and deep including facilities such as leisure centres, theatres, parks, museums and art galleries. It covers a wide range of events – sports competitions, festivals, markets and exhibitions. It includes the public sector, private sector and voluntary groups - often working hand in hand. It is a vibrant and dynamic sector where inclusion, investment and innovation are demonstrated across a strong cultural community.

The primary aim of the needs analysis was to support the Council in developing a new cultural strategy, particularly looking at the provision of cultural facilities both for the short-term and also the longer-term taking into consideration the expected population growth. The needs analysis is primarily focussed on Ipswich Borough and its resident population, whilst also taking into account visitors to the borough and those living close to the boundaries.

The information from this analysis has also been used to inform the then Building Schools for the Future programme and ensure that the borough is in a position to utilise any future opportunities in a strategic manner.

As part of the needs analysis consultative workshops were held at the Town Hall for key cultural stakeholders (a list of approximately 50 consultees attended, of which details can be seen in appendix 3 of the needs analysis) from the public, private and voluntary sectors.

A questionnaire was advertised in the local press and within IBC's own publication, 'The Angle', and was also available online. A telephone number was available for people to call if they required a hard copy to complete. In total 120 consultation responses were received.

The key objectives of the needs analysis were:

- Identify need for cultural facilities from now through to 2025, taking into account the anticipated population growth based upon a comprehensive review of current and future supply and demand;
- Prioritise need to inform the Council's strategic priorities for investment in culture over the next 15 years, and ensure that any investment is directed towards areas of greatest benefit;
- Ensure scope of the analysis process included public, private and voluntary sector provision.

The leisure needs analysis identified what the current provision is and what the gaps in provision are and if improvements to current provision are required. This information has been used as a base in shaping the cultural strategy. Key headlines from the report include:

Sports Facilities:

- There is a high level of sport hall provision per capita.
- There is a strategic need for an 8-court sports hall with spectator seating.
- Health and fitness provision is broadly in line with the national average but there is potential to expand public sector provision alongside other sports facilities.
- Athletics facilities currently meet local needs for training and lower level competition but accessibility is limited.
- The current level of pool provision needs to be retained to meet demand going forward but the quality requires improving (Fore Street has since been refurbished and the first of a 2 phase refurbishment of Crown Pools completed).
- There is continued support for Broomhill Pool to reopen.

Cultural Facilities:

- Recommended that the Regent Theatre front of house refurbishment be explored further.
- The new Jerwood DanceHouse facility provides Ipswich with a dance space of great regional value and of national significance. Combined with existing space current provision is likely to meet current and future demand.
- Ipswich has a rich artistic history and pedigree and there is potential to use existing venues more creatively and extensively to include art exhibitions.

Heritage Facilities:

- Pursue an HLF application and investigate additional funding sources to enable Ipswich Museum to be developed as a major museum attraction.

Other Facilities:

- There is not considered to be sufficient need to justify any additional community hall provision in Ipswich.
- The Council should not be seeking to invest public funds in commercial leisure but may seek to facilitate their delivery through the planning process and encouraging outside investment.

The full detailed Culture and Leisure needs analysis goes into considerable detail into each area and can be viewed on the IBC website.

Cultural Objectives

We hope that the objectives identified within this strategy will make Ipswich somewhere that people can be proud to live, work, socialise and visit, that will give people a sense of pride in their town.

We aim to create a sustainable legacy and to continue to inspire future generations through greater involvement and decision making of local people. For example; building a more comprehensive network of 'Friends' groups to encourage more frequent and responsible use of our parks and Open spaces.

The new strategy has six themes with key actions to provide a focus for investment and decision-making over the next 3 years:

1. Responding to the national pressure on public spend;
2. Developing the Cultural Economy;
3. Improving and sustaining what we have;
4. Increasing participation in cultural activity;
5. 2012 Olympic Legacy;
6. Ambitions for the future.

1. Responding to the national pressure on public sector spend

1.1 Context

Culture is a big sector in Ipswich - IBC has invested over £30m over the past 3 years alone, representing 27% revenue and 10% capital of the total IBC budget during this period. This demonstrates our commitment and ambition, but we are not the only organisations who think that investing in culture in Ipswich is important; our partners and supporters also invested nearly £3m in IBC managed cultural services during the past three years.

Residents rightly expect culture to be run efficiently and as a non-statutory service to take its share of the savings facing the public sector. We have already delivered efficiencies of some £2.5m since 2008/09 and are set to make further efficiency savings of £4m by 2013.

1.2 Strategic objective

We will focus activity on key local assets and aim to reduce duplication and improve efficiency through better co-ordination and management of linked services. We will make better use of partnerships and voluntary provision, maximise income and seek external funding where available.

1.3 Key actions:

- Create a Cultural Network for stakeholders to identify options for more streamlined administration and map out a shared vision for culture in Ipswich for the next ten years;
- Make our flagship parks - Christchurch, Holywells and Chantry - hubs for the efficient support of the rest of our open spaces;
- Focus on developing Ipswich Museum and Christchurch Mansion and review opportunities for the Town Hall complex;

- Consolidate grant support on the Arts Council supported centres of excellence - New Wolsey Theatre, Dance East's Jerwood DanceHouse and Eastern Angles Sir John Mills Theatre;
- Improve our major sporting facilities: Gainsborough and Northgate Sports Centres and Crown Pools, providing modern multi activity facilities that will meet the needs of a growing population;
- Develop alternative arrangements for delivering community activity at Whitton and Maidenhall Sports Centres;
- Maximise commercial sponsorship opportunities for cultural services including fully funding the annual Ip-Art festival;
- Provide a better managed and cost-effective programme of live entertainment at the Corn Exchange and Regent whilst providing a varied programme and continuing to reduce the cost to local taxpayers.

2. Developing the cultural economy

2.1 Context

Ipswich is a key partner in the Haven Gateway partnership whose cultural strategy recognises that creativity and innovation are key drivers for the sub-regional economy.

The cultural economy is strong in the sub-region with over 1600 active creative businesses, 18,000 employees and a turnover of £1.2bn. It welcomes more than 17m visitors a year, bringing some £270m of tourism business and also plays a significant role in driving the local economy. For example:

- The value of visits to the Ipswich Regent and Corn Exchange in 2008/09 (not including ticket sales) was £1.55m, based on an average spend of £7.77 per visitor to UK theatres outside of the West End (Arts Council England Economic impact study, 2004);
- More than 1m visitors have attended the Ip-Art Festival since 2003, estimated at a value of £13m to the Suffolk economy (Arts Council England Economic Impact Study, 2004);
- The value of volunteering through IBC cultural activity in 2008/09 was £100,000, based on volunteer hours x minimum wage (Volunteer England, 2009).

2.2 Strategic Objective

We will promote the town's cultural facilities and develop its cultural economy to attract more visitors (especially those who stay more than one day) and boost the local economy.

2.3 Key Actions:

- Raise the profile of Ipswich as a centre of regional and national significance for its;
 - Museums and art galleries
 - High profile performances and artists
 - High quality public art programmes and commissions
 - Learning opportunities
 - Parks and open spaces
 - Excellent sporting facilities and events
- Support the continued regeneration of the town with a strong arts sector and cultural economy;
- Facilitate the success of key sporting facilities and events of regional and national significance including; Ipswich Town Football Club, Northgate Sports Centre Athletics Facility, Whitton Sports Centre Cycling Track, Pipers Vale Gymnastics Centre, Ipswich Half Marathon, and Regional Cyclo Cross;
- Promote Ipswich as a 'cultural experience' where there are new, creative and imaginative events and festivals through an established Ipswich Festival season.
- Pursue an HLF application to support the restoration of Holywells Park and to improve the cultural experience for visitors to our park

3. Improving and sustaining what we have

3.1 Context

Significant investment has taken place in our cultural facilities in recent years including Crown and Fore Street Pools, the refurbishment of the Regent and Corn Exchange, a new Egyptian Gallery at Ipswich Museum and the delivery of an HLF funded project for Christchurch Park.

Further investment is likely to be difficult in the coming years but we will work to ensure that existing facilities are kept in good condition with well qualified staff focussed on an excellent customer experience.

3.2 Strategic Objective

We will seek to improve our facilities where we can and ensure they are well maintained and run by qualified customer focussed staff.

3.3 Key Actions:

- Retain Green Flag Accreditation for Christchurch Park and achieve Green Flag status for Holywells Park in 2011 and Chantry Park in 2013;
- Improve accessibility to services and review park bylaws;
- Establish Christchurch Mansion as the regional centre to view the works and understand the life of John Constable;
- Complete the refurbishment of Crown Pools (second phase from April 2010);
- Invest in Northgate Sports Centre, adding a 40-station Profiles gym;
- Trained staff and apprenticeships;
- Coordinate an effective marketing and promotion strategy to support the Towns cultural offer.

4. Increasing participation in cultural activity

4.1 Context

Culture in Ipswich already benefits from increasing levels of participation – both directly in taking part in sports and arts and in volunteering to support such activity:

- Ipswich has seen a 2.9% increase in adult participation in sport and physical activity (including light intensity sports) from 2007 to 2010 according to Active People Survey results;
- The same survey results have shown an increase in regular volunteering to 3.8% and in increase in club membership to 23.9%.

We have a varied programme of activity at all levels, with many athletes and artists recognised on a national stage, but still need to do more to encourage wider participation.

4.2 Strategic objective

We will encourage communities to become involved in the management and maintenance of their local facilities.

4.2 Key Actions

- Attract and retain more volunteers, reduce the burdens faced by volunteers and ensure professional support enhances voluntary systems;
- Encourage support for community sporting assets, eg. self-management of Holywells Bowls Club green;
- Explore management options for allotment gardens;
- Encourage input and assistance from individuals, the voluntary sector, community payback, business sector and other groups in our work;
- Review Park management Boards;
- Support sports teams and clubs to achieve Club Charter, improve coaching and access funding to support the clubs development targets;
- Support initiatives from grassroots, community celebrations, sporting events and exhibitions, which bring life to the town's streets, diverse venues and communities;
- Continue to support the development of Ipswich film theatre trust.

4.3 Strategic objective

We will increase participation and support excellence in athletes and artists.

4.4 Key actions:

- Increase participation in cultural activity and attendances at cultural events, shows and productions by 1% year-on-year;
- Raise awareness and aspirations within the arts;
- Enable athletes in Ipswich to reach their potential through fundraising and development of elite athlete support package;
- Increase participation in physical activity, particularly in the areas of walking and cycling;
- Ensure that our cultural projects and initiatives engage the community at a grass roots level, including minority and under-represented groups.

5. 2012 Olympic Legacy

5.1 Context

The London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games offers a 'once in a lifetime' opportunity to Ipswich, and Suffolk.

The sporting and cultural events already started, or being planned for the Games open up additional opportunities for social, economic, health, education and tourism benefits for the town. For example, Ipswich is working with LOCOG (London Organising Committee for the Olympic Games) to enable our town's involvement in the Olympic Torch Relay route, ensuring that the London 2012 Games reaches and inspires as many communities in Ipswich as possible.

A number of actions in this strategy support the Olympic Legacy for Ipswich including investment in Cultural Facilities owned by IBC and other stakeholders.

5.2 Strategic objective

The Council will work with partners, including the County Council, Nations and Regions East, private providers and the third sector to provide opportunities and a lasting legacy linked to 2012.

5.3 Key actions:

- Increase the number of Volunteers recruited to cultural activity through the Games Time Volunteering Programme;
- Provide a hand-book which can be used by local organisations giving advice on how they can run and organise local community events;
- Ensure that Ipswich is on the London 2012 torch relay route;
- Increase the number of people attending festivals and events in Ipswich through a Cultural Olympiad activity programme;
- Work with committed Pre-Games Training Camp partners Azerbaijan and Brazil to develop sport, culture and education links.

6. Ambitions for the future

6.1 Context

As resources, local circumstances and opportunities allow we will look to progress on the following key ambitions:

6.2 Key Ambitions:

- We will work with other stakeholders to map out a shared vision of how culture can be taken to the next level in Ipswich and position the town as a future "UK capital of culture";
- Explore possibility of new visitor centre at Orwell Country Park;
- Secure £10m investment in a new Centre of Excellence for Arts & Culture, combining the existing Ipswich Museum with adjacent buildings: Ipswich Art School; Wolsey Studio and; High Street Exhibition Gallery, to create a truly world class facility and tourist attraction, providing a source of pride and inspiration for the community.;
- Establish a new sports village focussed on Gainsborough Sports Centre with more sporting facilities including improved football/all weather pitches, cycling facilities etc;
- Provide capital support to assist a partner(s) to lead and operate the restored Broomhill lido;
- Secure a major mass participation event for Ipswich;
- Develop a maritime festival from 2011;
- Improve the Regent offer by exploring opportunities to increase parking provision for the venue and investigate funding opportunities to enable three significant refurbishment projects to be undertaken: 1) Heating / Air Conditioning, 2) Foyer & Crush Hall Ceilings, 3) Toilets;
- Seek proposals for the redevelopment of the Corn Exchange in conjunction with investment partners and develop its under utilized areas.
- Seek to secure the provision of a medium-sized live entertainment venue near the waterfront which could support a number of companies as well as the town's strong amateur community
- Support the ambitions of key Arts Council England funded organisations Dance East and New Wolsey Theatre to improve their facilities.

Case Studies

Crown Pools/Fore Street Swimming Improvements:

- Fore Street Swimming Pool and Crown Pools have been refurbished as part of Ipswich Borough Council's £4million investment in swimming in Ipswich. The refurbishment included a full refurbishment of the changing facilities and customer experience in both pools and a new roof on Fore St Swimming Pool.

Regent Theatre & corn exchange:

- The Ipswich Regent is East Anglia's largest seated entertainment venue. The Borough Council-owned theatre attracts audiences from across the region and offers everything from professional pantos and top comedy to rock concerts and the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and top opera;
- In 2009 the council spent £500,000 in a major refurbishment of the auditorium, including new seating and lighting;
- The facilities have undergone a strategic review that has enabled the successful implementation of a shared management and programming team.

Development of Parks:

- Christchurch Park "reopened" after a £4.5 million Heritage Lottery Fund refurbishment. A new visitor and education centre, restored historic buildings, new paths and planting and a basketball court have helped the park win a national Green Flag award, In 2004. This renovation included in 2006 draining of both the 'round' and 'wilderness' ponds in order to remove the five foot of silt that has collected over the past 80 years.

Museum Service:

- Ipswich museums and Colchester museums successfully merged in 2007 to form the only service of it's kind in the UK, bringing together two rich historic towns, Now Colchester & Ipswich Museum service runs and promotes nationally important facilities such as Christchurch Mansion and the High Street Museum (Ipswich) and the Castle, Hollytrees Museum and Natural History Museum.

Ipswich Art School:

- The Ipswich Art School re-opened as a temporary modern and contemporary gallery space in the centre of Ipswich in July 2010 with the support of £50,000 grant fund from the Arts Council England;
- An initial 6-month exhibition loaned by the world-renowned Saatchi gallery, and with support from Ipswich Art School patron and celebrated artist Maggi Hambling, the project achieved 4500 visitors and recruited 150 volunteers in the opening three months the project;
- A fundraising appeal has been launched to enable the purchase and renovation of the building by March 2012.

Sport & Play Development:

- In 2005 IBC was successful in their bid to the Football Foundation for a third Generation all weather pitch at Whitton Sports Centre and funding to deliver a community programme within Ipswich;
- The Team Ipswich Sports Foundation achieved charitable status. Over £10k in grants has been awarded to 31 local athletes since 2008, helping individuals each their potential;
- Game On, including the iconic Jumpers for Goalpost initiative, is a summer-based programme of sporting and leisure activities designed to get local youngsters involved away from anti-social behaviour (ASB). The Council works closely in partnership with the Police, Positive Futures, Safer Neighbourhood

Teams and local sports clubs and businesses to help deliver a project that statistics show a significant fall in ASB during Game On;

Waterfront:

- Ipswich Waterfront is the home for Dance East's new national Jerwood DanceHouse, which opened in 2009, offering dance activities to professionals and the Ipswich community. It will be a cultural hub, with classes, workshops, master classes, residencies and performances. Ipswich Borough Council provided financial support to the DanceHouse capital project.

Festivals & Events:

- For two weeks in the summer Ipswich becomes the cultural focus for the arts in the region, with a programme that reflects the contrasts and dynamism of Ipswich. Ip-art the regional award winning festival has been successful because it appeals to a wide audience, offering dance, visual arts, poetry, music, theatre, literature, opera, carnival and film for an audience of more than 100,000 per year;
- Ipswich Half Marathon was created in 2009 by a successful tri partnership agreement between IBC, Larkin Gowen and Ipswich Jaffa Club to deliver four mass participant events. Since 2009 Ipswich has had great success with this community event with over 2500 entrants and £10,000 raised for worthy causes.

Film Theatre:

- Run by a not-for-profit trust and staffed by volunteers, the Ipswich Film Theatre (IFT) was re-opened in 2010 as an independent cinema, located in the basement of the Ipswich Borough Council owned Corn Exchange facility;
- IFT provides a community-based two-screen cinema specializing in independent and world cinema. It presents films for people who are looking for something different from the mainstream experience;
- A new contract with IFT will see screening opportunities and hence programme and audiences expand with declining marginal commercial risk to this successful voluntary group.

St Lawrence Centre:

- Opened May 2008 as a Town centre venue offering a conference and community centre and daytime café. Managed by a local social enterprise scheme that employ and train members of the public with mental and physical health difficulties. This initiative is on course following overwhelming success to become a fully sustainable social enterprise business.

New Wolsey Theatre

- The New Wolsey Theatre is a regional theatre with a national reputation for the quality, range and reach of its work and for embracing cultural diversity in the widest sense. The theatre is central to the creative life of Suffolk and seeks to expand the horizons of audiences and artists by presenting a programme designed to entertain, enrich and challenge. The New Wolsey's programme combines its own productions, projects, collaborations with other partners and touring work, to present performances and creative learning projects of the highest quality, maximum diversity and greatest possible accessibility, within a sound and sustainable financial framework.

- The theatre is a not-for-profit organisation that relies on part funding through Ipswich Borough Council. In 2009/10 this financial contribution levered £921,913 from other funding partners; provided significant added value with 78 volunteer ushers and marketing support mailers generating 4,728 hours with an in-kind income value of £30,000; resulted in over 22,000 opportunities for the local community to participate in Creative Learning activities and employed 47 equivalent full time staff.
- Dedicated to providing full access to all shows, events, and information, Ipswich Borough Council funding also helped the theatre to attract artists with physical and sensory impairments to work in Ipswich, whilst making sure that any person with a disability can participate fully in their activities. Facilities were upgraded providing access throughout the venue and BSL Interpreted, Audio-Described and Captioned Performances.