

The development of a Cultural Vision for Brentwood 2023-2027

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Executive Summary

This paper sets out the engagement and consultation approach to developing a vision for creativity and culture in Brentwood for the next five years. Shaped by the voices of the creative community, young people, businesses and wider communities, this paper outlines co-designed priorities and provides a sense of direction for a new, five-year cultural strategy.

Creativity and culture are core to the borough's plans and the role of a new strategy over the next five years will be to ensure that these priorities and goals are measured, and success is shared across the sector.

Through roundtable consultation exercises, online surveys and in person voting, the intended outcome of this period of engagement in Brentwood's cultural future was ensure that the voices of everyone who took part led the decisions and designed the priorities for the next five years.

We started by asking people to imagine the future, to dream big and to share what they valued about Brentwood as well as their challenges. Through this exercise, we were able to craft a series of purpose statements which focused on four main areas: nurturing our creative sector, focusing on our young people, developing our creative placemaking and creative tourism.

It was very clear that all our consultees felt more strongly about nurturing our creative sector, focusing on young people and developing our creative places and spaces. These themes have formed the outline priorities for the vision and will be the focus of the new strategy and action plan.

Recommendations for consideration

Over the next five years, Brentwood Borough Council should consider the following recommendations:

- **Write a one statement vision** that embodies the priorities observed through the consultation:
 - Nurturing our Creative sector
 - Giving Young people a voice
 - Creative placemaking

- **Write a simple but ambitious cultural and creative Strategy**, with a vision that sets the north star for the borough and puts culture at the heart of plans, policies and strategies. Create a strategy that can also attract inward investment to Brentwood, connect to Local Plans, Corporate Plans and other policies and strategies.
- **Develop a five year action plan**, to demonstrate a commitment to change, with clear, strategic goals and actions. Deliver these actions in partnership with the sector, create an appetite for investment from businesses (through the Business Improvement District and others), join up efforts and increase fundraising skills and knowledge and signify a collective responsibility for culture beyond Brentwood Borough Council.
- **Connect to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund** through the strategy and action plan, making it clear where the priorities are and support local cultural businesses, organisations and individuals to make successful applications which meet the goals and needs of the borough.
- **Develop an engagement plan for 2023-2027**, which encompasses the different stakeholders and partners from the creative sector to businesses and audiences. Undertake annual engagement to understand needs through surveys, creative workshops and events, building a knowledge base each year to benchmark against success delivered by the cultural strategy. Consider working in partnership to develop or commission work that will raise awareness of what is already available in the borough, such as a comprehensive events listing, or mapping of creative and cultural spaces.
- **Share the stories of Brentwood's past, present and future.** Showcase our heritage, cultural talent, creative community and civic champions, to increase a sense of civic pride, wellbeing and fulfillment in Brentwood. Consider co-creation and co-delivery approaches to cultural participation, engaging and guiding communities in defining their own outcomes and outputs from creative experiences.
- With partners, **support the existing creative sector to thrive** by deepening an understanding of its needs and targeting investment towards those priorities. Invest in the existing creative infrastructure venues, activities, festivals and events over longer periods of time, to raise the profile of Brentwood as a culturally active and ambitious place. This will increase the likelihood of attracting more businesses to the borough and improve links with higher and further education, creating more sustainable and flexible creative pathways through education and into workplaces.
- **Build a network** of boroughs and towns of similar size and scale to Brentwood across England to share knowledge, peer review and support and exchange best practice in cultural placemaking.

1. Introduction

Brentwood Borough Council (BBC) wished to undertake an exercise which would result in:

- an increased understanding of the ambitions and needs of the community in the borough,
- an understanding of the challenges and opportunities in the borough,
- a range of priorities that could be voted on by the public to inform the development of a cultural framework for Brentwood and influence future investment, policy and strategy.

Phase one – interactive visioning workshops

The start of the consultation approach was through a series of interactive workshops with a range of different stakeholders. As a result of this phase, a series of vision statements and priorities were generated which could then be voted on by a wider audience, through social media and in-person events.

Invitations to the workshops were made by BBC through mailing lists, Eventbrite, social media and word of mouth referrals. Three workshops were held during February for the public, with one workshop for BBC Extended Leadership Team and a further workshop for young people held in April.

Attendees at the workshops:

- 7 February – 10 attendees (public workshop) at BBC
- 10 February – 18 attendees (public workshop) at Brentwood Theatre
- 21 February – 14 attendees (public workshop) at BBC
- 6 March – 14 attendees (Extended Leadership Team) at BBC
- 18 April – 8 attendees (Endeavour group with Essex Youth services) at The Hermit

Total attendees: 64

In addition, the artwork created by the Endeavour Group was also displayed in the Brentwood Library as part of the Brentwood Art Trail.

This paper provides an overview of the consultation workshops and the proposed vision statements.

Phase two – public consultation of co-designed vision statements

It was recognised that further public engagement with the proposed vision statements would help achieve a broader awareness of the aspirations of the council to develop its strategy, to raise ambitions in the borough and to give a wider community response to the initial consultation.

Over the summer, 97 people responded to an online survey (hard copies were available on request) and 60 young people took part in a creative exercise about the priorities.

Widening the engagement has allowed the team to develop a deeper understanding of what our communities have said is most important to them and gives a direction to BBC on what to prioritise in the strategy and future plans.

2. Interactive visioning workshops - aims and outcomes

The aim of the session was shared at the beginning of each workshop:

- To create a draft cultural vision for Brentwood which can be:
 - Tested more widely across different communities in Brentwood
 - Used as the core purpose for a cultural strategy
- To galvanise the town with a collective vision that is future focused, aspirational and shows what change will look like in 10 years.
- To get a deeper understanding of what are the strengths and opportunities in Brentwood

The outcomes of the workshop were communicated to each group:

- Felt that you've contributed to the creative vision and future of Brentwood
- Felt that you have helped to influence and shape the future strategy and approach to investing in cultural future of Brentwood
- Have met someone you haven't met before and felt connected to other creative people in Brentwood
- Felt your voice has been heard equitably as one of three workshops taking place over the next week

The workshop approach was designed to ask people to think about big, dreams first, focusing on what the future could look like. It encouraged people to remove any perceived barriers and just focus on an idyllic view of the future. This encouragement to think big and be bold helped the vision statements to be innovative, distinctive and potentially revolutionary. The middle part of the workshop asked people to think about what's missing in Brentwood now, where the gaps and challenge are. This was countered by the next exercise which discussed what participants love about Brentwood, what's distinctive and special. Finally, the exercise asked attendees to take a challenge and use what's special about Brentwood that addresses some of those gaps. This resulted in a series of co-created purpose statements, which can be developed into a vision.

3. Interactive visioning workshops - time travel to 2033

After discussing what a vision is and what it is not, the groups were asked to first consider the future, to be aspirational and to dream what Brentwood might look like in 2033 with a cultural vision. The groups were asked to answer the question 'in 2033, wouldn't it be fantastic if...'

Grouped into a series of themes, the following are some highlighted thoughts:

Spaces: creative workspace, community hub, pop up spaces, more visibility of art in existing buildings, greater investment in technology and visual identity of spaces.

Transport & geography: ample parking, pedestrianised zones, better/free access between areas.

Environmental: sensory experiences in our green spaces, high street allotments, interactive green trails.

Skills & talent development: workshops for everyone, identifiable creative career paths, thriving local creative industries.

Wellbeing: mental health support for young people, art therapy centre.

Business: thriving retail offer, independent shopping, business hub, lively music scene.

Festivals & events: vibrant programme of events and activities, outdoor dining, night time economy for everyone, regular festivals.

Community: places to connect with each other, improved public realm, connected creative network, co-designed urban planning.

Participants also shared emotive words to describe the future such as vibrant, thriving, ambitious, distinctive, inclusive.

4. Interactive visioning workshops - what is missing from Brentwood now?

Participants looked at the current challenges of Brentwood, where the missing gaps and challenges are.

Some of the highlighted thoughts include:

Spaces: dated and tired, limited spaces and resources.

Transport & geography: limited local transport connections, divided by infrastructure, proximity to London, parking.

Environmental: no drive for environmental impact.

Skills & talent development: fragmented network for creatives, lack of further education/ higher education, lack of opportunities for young people, schools don't value working with artists, lack of employment opportunities in creative sector.

Wellbeing: lack of joined up provision, limited resources.

Business: competition, high business rates, no varied retail offer, no investment in businesses or entrepreneurs, funding is often directed to less affluent places.

Festivals & events: existing events are not well supported or developed, there is a lack of investment in cultural experiences across green spaces, lack of joined up events guide.

Community: safety, perceptions of affluence and cultural awareness, no central information place for creative network, TOWIE effect, better understanding of residents' stories and needs, more ambitious local plans.

5. Interactive visioning workshops - what is special about Brentwood now?

Participants were then asked to share what they thought was special about Brentwood, what's distinctive, or emerging. What drives and motivates people to live, work, study and visit the borough? Highlighted thoughts include:

Spaces: heritage buildings, spaces and halls for community use, cultural venues, tourists come to see heritage (nuclear bunker).

Transport & geography: great transport links to London, access to motorways, gateway to the East of England.

Environmental: there has been investment in green spaces, good mix of rural and town, forests and parks are a huge asset and draw in tourists.

Skills & talent development: we have the best schools in Essex with a huge choice, hidden talent, network of creative people.

Wellbeing: good leisure facilities, lots of walking routes and sporting events.

Business: promising high street investment in Bay Tree Centre, great market, digital/media companies, Brentwood Business Awards and other groups, independent book shops and cafes, UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

Festivals & events: variety of community focused events and festivals, Brentwood Art Trail, Film Festival

Community: people feel safe, communities who care about belonging, becoming more diverse, community spirit, YAY Mates and creative networks.

Participants also thought that BBC invests in leisure projects such as King George's Playing Fields, which has had a huge benefit to the town. Dedicated arts officer in the council is important connector and supporter of the local economy but it needs to be widely felt across the whole council not just one post. The Council is investing in a cultural strategy which is a great starting point.

6. Interactive visioning workshops - purpose statements

Participants were asked to look at what is special about Brentwood that can address some of the missing gaps and challenges. For example, one of the challenges was that 'Brentwood doesn't have a thriving creative community' and a distinctiveness of Brentwood that a participant identified, is that 'the creative community takes part in regular activities showcasing their work and practice'. These can cancel each other out and we could summarise it as:

"Brentwood has a growing, creative community, open to everyone".

Through this matching exercise, the groups ended up with a series of purpose statements across the following themes:

Young People

- Our young people are proud of the unique heritage of Brentwood.
- Brentwood offers pathways into creative industries for all young people.
- We showcase our young talent at work.
- Schools are a valuable partner in linking young people to creative industries and role models.
- Young people in Brentwood have a say in how they participate in culture & creativity.

Making Connections

- We are committed to communicating events and connecting audiences.
- We connect people and businesses to share entrepreneurial and cultural ideas.
- We promote cultural and creative activities in Brentwood.
- We promote and celebrate our heritage and key attractions.
- We maximise our community connections to promote cultural activities through word of mouth.

Accessible and inclusive

- Everyone can access arts and culture in Brentwood.
- There are creative opportunities and activities for the whole community.
- Art is in every space in Brentwood.

Creative communities

- We are a growing community of artists and makers, and we are a valued network of creative industries in Brentwood.
- We are empowering artists to take the lead and become a self-sustaining network.
- The only way is artists.
- Open House Brentwood (a way of working rather than an event).
- Brentwood ringfences resources for culture.
- Strengthened links in the arts community enable it to thrive.

- Existing creative spaces and people are nurtured to grow and thrive.
- Brentwood makes art and culture more visible.
- We showcase high quality cultural experiences through local, national and international artists in Brentwood.
- We are the creative hub for East England.
- Brentwood becoming creative (B.B.C).
- Providing ample opportunities to our local creative sector to thrive and create Brentwood as a cultural, vibrant place to be.

Geography and environment

- Our high streets reflect the green environment around us.
- Embrace Brentwood as the London to Essex hinterland.
- #Destination Brentwood.
- We maximise and invest in our green spaces for arts and culture.
- We are a connected place with great transport links in and out of the borough.
- Brentwood will continue to encourage and promote active travel and improve local transport infrastructure.

Values

- Brentwood is a welcoming place.
- Brentwood is ambitious.
- Always moving forward to deliver.

Place Making

- Brentwood has vibrant high streets that support a mix of national and independent businesses that attract visitors.
- We work with developers and planners to ensure arts and culture is integrated into place making and deliver wider socio economic outcomes for the borough.
- We provide quality place and venues where people can come together for cultural activity.
- Our local spaces come alive with creative activities for social gathering and learning skills.
- We build on our current independent offer to attract people to our high streets and create an experience that is shaped by culture and creativity.

Community

- Brentwood inspires people to volunteer.
- Brentwood has a rich community spirit.
- Residents and businesses are engaged and active in their communities.
- A thriving voluntary sector is stepping up.

Investing/funding/economy

- We encourage innovative funding solutions from larger organisations.

- We invest in our local entrepreneurs - we support them and provide a platform for them to think.

To summarise this range of statements, four suggested vision statements were prepared and shared with wider community groups and on social media to test out which people feel most aligned to (in phase 2 of the consultation).

Wellbeing and the environment did not come through strongly enough to be part of a vision. However, these themes can be included in delivery across the final three priority areas. For example, as environmental priorities didn't come across strongly, there hasn't been a specific example relating to green spaces and the events and activities that might take place there. This could be added in if it was felt this was a missing or it could become part of the objectives to deliver under a broader strategic vision.

As a reminder, a vision is the difference you want to make in the world. It is your version of an ideal future:

- Vision is future, mission is present.
- It is authentic to your purpose as an individual or organisation.
- It is open -bring own beliefs and values to it.
- It describes your purpose - the 'why' rather than the 'what' or 'who'.
- Visions are a way of connecting people to a common goal and being clear that the direction we're all heading in is the same.
- A vision should be inspiring to read and can help to empathise your organisation or place identity.

What it's not:

- A list of things to do,
- Focused on the present or past,
- Something that sits in a cupboard and never sees the light of day.

7. Draft vision statements

Following the purpose statements, the following draft vision statements were suggested:

Young people focused:

1. Young people are included as a statement of purpose about their future and the investment in Brentwood's next generation:

'All young people in Brentwood will access diverse creative experiences, enriching their lives, strengthening our creative industries and improving our borough's wellbeing'.

Creative sector focused:

2. Our creative community is important to our borough's identity. It is the connections and talent in our borough that make Brentwood an inspiring and attractive place to live, work and play. We also recognise that we need more anchor creative industries and individuals in Brentwood and the need for more cultural leadership. ASELA-led consultations also identified a need for workspace and creative project space.

'By nurturing our creative industries we will have thriving, connected town centres increasing our sense of belonging for everyone who lives, works, studies and visits Brentwood. The only way is creative'.

Creative placemaking focused:

3. We're focused on making Brentwood a place better for everyone, by investing in our spaces and places with joined up thinking and investing in the vibrancy of our towns and urban areas. Heritage was referred to fairly frequently and possibly to move away from TOWIE identity.

'By celebrating our rich, cultural heritage, we will transform our borough, putting culture at the heart of our investment with vibrant towns and villages, increasing the happiness of our communities'.

Connecting tourism, inward investment and geography focused:

4. As a creative hub, this is a tourism focused approach to investing in a cultural offer that everyone can benefit from and attracts people into Brentwood. Maximising our proximity as the closest borough to London, recognising the diversity of our population and how that may change over the next 10 years. 'Geography' might feel limiting within this statement, so it could be removed.

'Brentwood is the gateway to East England, connecting our diverse communities through a rich cultural offer that proudly draws people to our borough to live, work and visit from across the region and beyond.'

8. Phase 2 – Further public engagement with the vision statements (July - August 2023)

It was recognised that further public engagement with the proposed vision statements would help achieve a broader awareness of the aspirations of the council to develop a cultural strategy. This will raise ambitions in the borough and give a wider community response to the initial consultation.

Widening the engagement has allowed a deeper understanding of what our communities have said is most important to them and gives a clear direction to BBC on what to prioritise in the strategy and future action plans.

The engagement was done through two mechanisms, an online survey and an in person voting at a series of family and children focused events over the August 2023 holiday period. In both engagement activities, people were asked to share what they thought was most important for creativity and culture in Brentwood, based on the themes explored through the draft vision statements and an example of what that might look like in delivery (*themes and examples are overleaf*):

<p>Theme 1: Young people</p> <p>'All young people in Brentwood will access diverse creative experiences, enriching their lives, strengthening our creative industries and improving our borough's wellbeing'.</p> <p>Examples of how this vision could become a reality:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting skills development, career pathways and showcasing young talent for all young people. • Every young person can participate in creativity to support positive wellbeing. • All young people can have a say in how they participate in culture and creativity. 	<p>Theme 2: Nurturing our creative sector</p> <p>'By nurturing our creative industries we will have thriving, connected town centres increasing our sense of belonging for everyone who lives, works, studies and visits Brentwood. The only way is creative'.</p> <p>Examples of how this vision could become a reality:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing creative assets, businesses and people are nurtured to grow. • Making creativity and culture more visible to everyone. • Providing spaces for collaborative creative hubs for all. • Developing cultural leadership opportunities.
<p>Theme 3: Creative placemaking</p> <p>'By celebrating our rich, cultural heritage, we will transform our borough, putting culture at the heart of our investment with vibrant towns and villages, increasing the happiness of our communities'.</p> <p>Examples of how this vision could become a reality:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximising culture and creativity in our green spaces. • Supporting vibrant high streets. • Integrating arts and culture into planning policy. • Supporting our local spaces to come alive with events and creative experiences for everyone. • Supporting inclusive, creative volunteering opportunities. 	<p>Theme 4: Connecting, creative tourism and inward investment</p> <p>'Brentwood is the gateway to East England, connecting our diverse communities through a rich cultural offer that proudly draws people to our borough to live, work and visit from across the region and beyond.'</p> <p>Examples of how this vision could become a reality:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximising our proximity to London to draw visitors to our creative and cultural offer. • Promoting Brentwood as distinctive and a vibrant place to visit. • Connecting diverse audiences and creatives. • Creating experiences that are shaped by culture and creativity. • Encouraging innovative funding solutions from larger organisations.

Online survey

A survey was developed to be quick, completed within 10 minutes and offer a chance for a wider group of people to vote. The survey was issued on 17 July 2023 and closed on 22 August 2023 and was circulated through BBC's networks and mailing lists as well as social media channels.

The online survey asked people to vote which three of the four themes that were most important to them. Then, it asked participants to rank these three in order of importance from most to least. The final open text question invited people to share any other comments.

Results of the survey:

- 97 survey responses were recorded.
- Of the three themes, 'Nurturing our creative sector', 'Creative placemaking' and 'Young people' were voted the most important as seen in figure 1 and the text below:

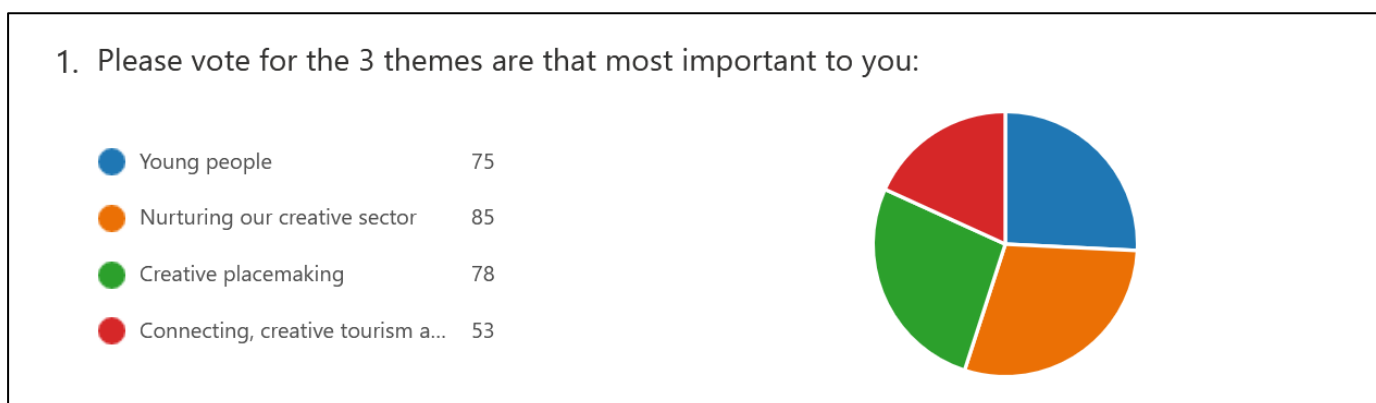


Figure 1 Vote for the three themes that are most important to you.

- 'Young People' was in the top 3 for 75 respondents.
- 'Nurturing our creative sector' was in the top 3 for 85 respondents.
- 'Creative placemaking' was in the top 3 for 78 respondents.
- 'Connection, creative tourism and inward investment' was in the top 3 for 53 respondents.

When ranked in order, the survey showed that of their first choice:

- 30.9% of respondents voted for 'Young people'.
- 27.8% of respondents voted for both 'Nurturing' our creative sector' and 'Creative placemaking'.
- 13.5 % of respondents voted for 'Connecting, creative tourism and inward investment'.

When aggregated across first and second choices, following results can be seen:

- 'Nurturing our creative sector' was most important.
- 'Connecting, creative tourism and inward investment' was least important.

See table below:

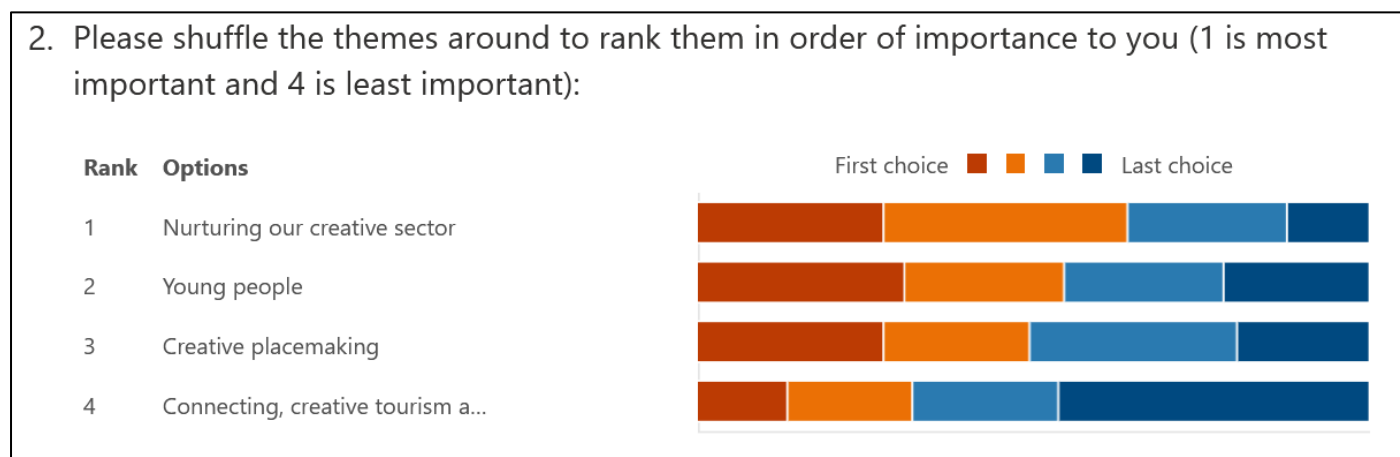


Figure 2 Themes in order of ranking, most important to least important

Thirty-eight people left comments which ranged from general remarks to suggestions. There were also quite a few comments which were questioning what has happened to some of the cultural activities in Brentwood, where to find out about cultural events and activities and some misconceptions that things either aren't progressing (Bay Tree Centre) or have disappeared (the Theatre). Some of these comments have informed the recommendations as it's clear that the lack of borough-wide, joined up marketing or events listing and the promotion of events, is a key factor in increasing people's engagement and enjoyment with creative activities.

Comments included:

- 'This is a brilliant opportunity to put culture at the heart of Brentwood's future'.
- 'You need a thriving creative sector to deliver all the other elements, it has to be top priority'.
- 'All these areas are important, and changing and improving one will reflect and change the others. I look forward to seeing these changes in our creative culture in Brentwood'.
- 'There should be more creative opportunities of employment – freelance etc, so we don't always have to look to London.'
- 'I think there is already a great creative community in Brentwood, and we need to nurture and widen this to encompass all that it could offer. For example, there are several creative workshops etc open to adults, but these are often at times that are inaccessible to people who work. Similarly, more could be on offer for young people, such as collaborative work experience placements across a variety of creative institutions'.
- 'I do believe that community events are very good for some lonely people to feel comfortable at venturing out and enjoying their surroundings also giving them the opportunity to meet their neighbours'.
- 'Pop up shops could provide showcasing opportunities for young talent'.
- 'Doing more activities to connect the community would be a plus for Brentwood'.
- 'More cultural activities in parks for adults'.

Engagement with young people and families

During August 2023, the council undertook a creative consultation activity at 4 Family Fun Days and at a Skate Jam event in King George's Playing Fields. An attractively designed board was created and toured the borough throughout the month. The board asked people to use a different coloured sticker to show what was most important to least important across the four themes. The four themes were simplified for a wider audience.

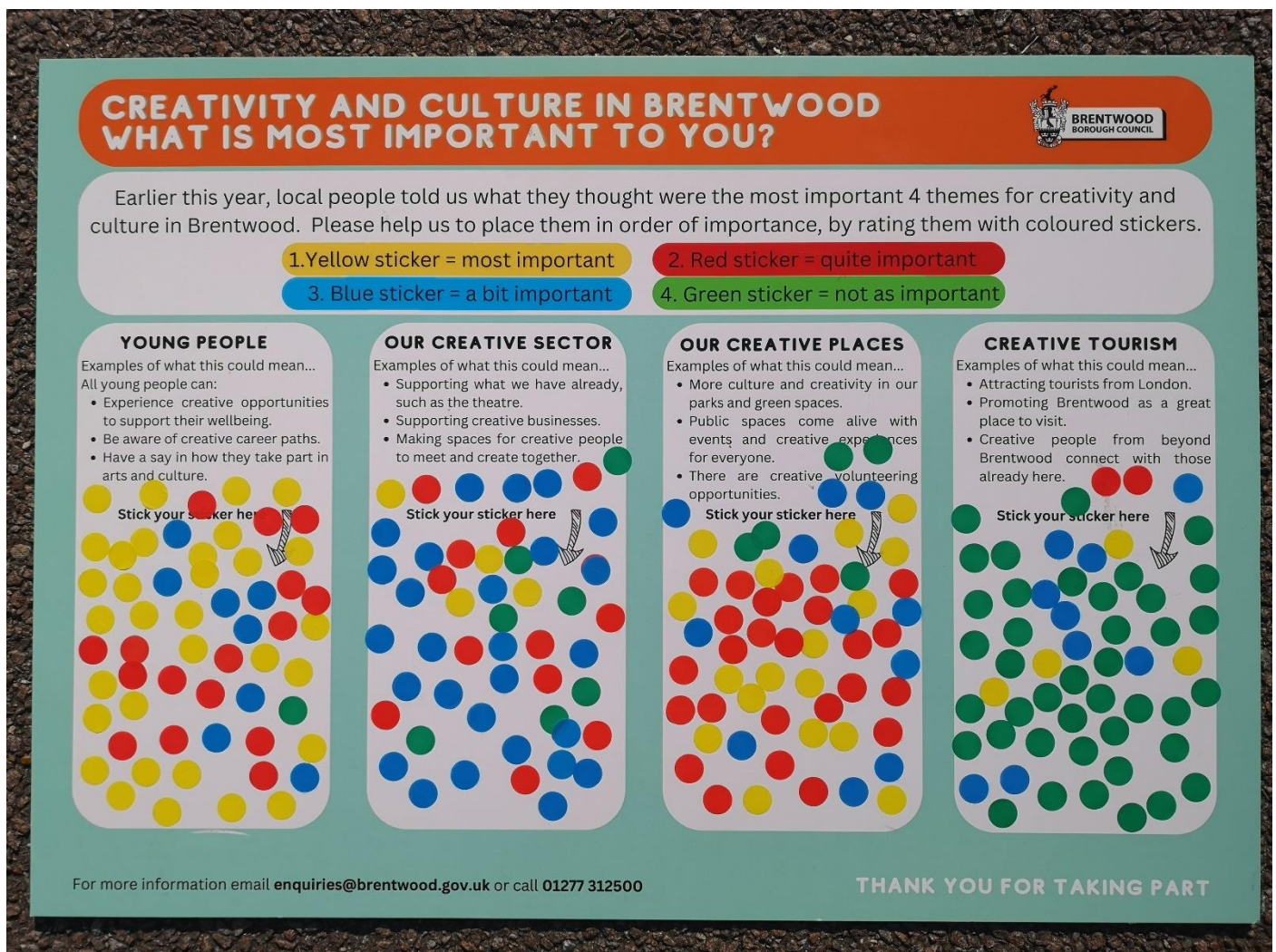


Figure 3 Youth Engagement in Cultural Strategy responses

- Around 60 young people took part in the activity and the top theme was 'Young People' with 32 putting it at the top, 16 people putting it second, 8 people putting third and 1 person putting it last.
- The second most important theme was 'Creative Places' with 17 putting it top, 25 putting it in second place, 11 putting it third, 5 putting it last.
- The third most important theme was 'Creative Sector' with 4 people putting it top, 12 people putting it second, 27 putting it third place, 7 putting it last

- And the least important theme was 'Creative Tourism' with 4 people putting it first, 2 people putting it second, 8 people put it third and 47 young people putting it bottom of their priority list.

9. Summary, conclusions, and recommendations

The responses to the consultation, survey and youth engagement clearly point to the most important considerations for a cultural investment in Brentwood, to focus on:

- Nurturing our creative sector
- Young people
- Creative placemaking

Across the different approaches, tourism and the distinctiveness of Brentwood was least important to everyone. There are many assumptions that can be made about this factor, from the proximity to London and the love/hate relationship with the capital, to the profile of TOWIE in the past 10 years dominating the perception of Brentwood both locally and nationally.

Across the consultation groups (as previously through the work that BBC led on the high streets conferences), culture has consistently been referred to as a vital part of our borough's offer for everyone. Whilst there are strong views on the types of cultural activities and how they are delivered, the strength of feeling is that cultural investment is important to Brentwood, not least because of the current economic and social environments that affect us all.

In the past five years, the development of visible creative events such as the Brentwood Art Trail, festivals and events in our high streets, performances and music programmes in our venues, the inclusion of community cinema at Brentwood Theatre, the Hermit Music Club and the plethora of voluntary and community arts organisations, performing arts groups, choirs, orchestras, and bands in Brentwood, have created a desire for a more visible, creative offer in the borough.

Brentwood is not a borough that appears on target lists for improvement in socio-economic, health, education, crime, or diversity determinants as in aggregate, it appears healthy, prosperous and unchallenged compared to other parts of Essex and the UK. In averages however, this hides some of the pockets of deprivation and deeper health considerations for Brentwood.

Since 2011, Brentwood's population has risen by around 3,400 which means that the borough now passes 77,000. Although this is slower than other towns and cities in the UK. People in Brentwood describe their health as very good (54.3%) which has increased since the last census. There have been small adjustments in home ownership with just over 3% decrease in homeowners and an increase of 4.7% private renters. Ethnicity is changing in Brentwood since the last census, with a decrease of 5.1% (2011: 93.6% 2021:88.5%) of people who described their ethnicity as White. There has been a small increase in Asian, Asian British, or Asian Welsh communities from 3.2% in 2011 to 5.1% in 2021 and a smaller increase in Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African, Mixed

or Multiple ethnic and other ethnic groups. Although this is not as significant as across East of England or England as a whole, it is something to consider when developing a cultural offer in Brentwood that is equitable, diverse, and inclusive.¹

Brentwood has the opportunity to put culture and creativity at the centre of decision-making and to lead in demonstrating best practice to other, similarly sized and located boroughs across the UK. The new Business Improvement District and the UK Shared Prosperity Fund can drive forward culture and creativity and make visible an investment in Brentwood's cultural people, infrastructure and communities, to have a measurable and positive impact on the Borough over the next 5 years. A strong vision, that has been codesigned by our communities can be the north star to guide future policy, funding decisions and new investment in the Borough.

Conclusions

The approach to consultation and engagement was robust and created opportunities for different voices to take part. With investment from the UK Shared Prosperity fund and partnership with the Business Improvement District, there is a great opportunity now for the Borough Council to put culture at the heart of Brentwood's future and make it happen.

Recommendations for consideration

Over the next five years, Brentwood Borough Council should consider the following recommendations:

- **Write a one statement vision** that embodies the priorities observed through the consultation:
 - Nurturing our Creative sector
 - Giving Young people a voice
 - Creative placemaking
- **Write a simple but ambitious cultural and creative Strategy**, with a vision that sets the north star for the borough and puts culture at the heart of plans, policies and strategies. Create a strategy that can also attract inward investment to Brentwood, connect to Local Plans, Corporate Plans and other policies and strategies.
- **Develop a five year action plan** to demonstrate a commitment to change, with clear, strategic goals and actions. Deliver these actions in partnership with the sector, create an appetite for investment from businesses (through the Business Improvement District and others), join up efforts and increase fundraising skills and knowledge and signify a collective responsibility for culture beyond Brentwood Borough Council.
- **Connect to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund** through the strategy and action plan, making it clear where the priorities are and support local cultural businesses, organisations and individuals to make successful applications which meet the goals and needs of the

¹ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/censusareachanges/E07000068/>

borough.

- **Develop an engagement plan for 2023-2027**, which encompasses the different stakeholders and partners from the creative sector to businesses and audiences. Undertake annual engagement to understand needs through surveys, creative workshops and events, building a knowledge base each year to benchmark against success delivered by the cultural strategy. Consider working in partnership to develop or commission work that will raise awareness of what is already available in the borough, such as a comprehensive events listing, or mapping of creative and cultural spaces.
- **Share the stories of Brentwood's past, present and future** to showcase our heritage, cultural talent, to increase a sense of civic pride, wellbeing and fulfillment in Brentwood. Consider co-creation and co-delivery approaches to cultural participation, engaging and guiding communities in defining their own outcomes and outputs from creative experiences.
- With partners, **support the existing creative sector to thrive** by deepening an understanding of its needs and targeting investment towards those priorities. Invest in the existing creative infrastructure venues, activities, festivals and events over longer periods of time, to raise the profile of Brentwood as a culturally active and ambitious place. This will increase the likelihood of attracting more businesses to the Borough and improve links with higher and further education, creating more sustainable and flexible creative pathways through education and into workplaces.
- **Build a network** of boroughs and towns of similar size and scale to Brentwood across England to share knowledge, peer review and support and exchange best practice in cultural placemaking.