

LOCAL CULTURAL STRATEGIES

The development of Local Cultural Strategies was recommended to all local authorities in England through the publication of a guidance document, 'Creating Opportunities', by the Department of Culture Media and Sport (DCMS, 2000). Although not a statutory duty, by the end of 2002 Local Cultural Strategy development was strongly encouraged by the Government, and the adoption of a strategy became part of performance review for local authorities under Best Value Performance Indicator BVPI 114. This recommendation encouraged local authorities to formalise and publish plans for the strategic development of their cultural and culture-related services. These used a broad definition of culture and recognized the value of partnership working within localities, regions and sub-regions in which local authorities were taking the 'lead'. It also reflected the advocacy of a cultural planning approach by central government for local government.

Cultural planning encourages a culturally sensitive approach to local cultural development, focusing on a diverse range of 'cultural resources', including leisure and sports facilities, qualities of natural and built environment, youth and ethnic communities and communities of interest, as well as the need for different local authority service departments and private, voluntary and other public sector partners to be involved early on in strategic development. According to this approach, culture is broadly defined as a 'way of life', and DCMS's guidance states that Local Cultural Strategies should promote cultural well-being and the quality of life in their designated areas.

As a result, Local Cultural Strategies (LCS) have been developed at all tiers of English local authorities, including district and borough, metropolitan and unitary authority, county and regional levels. Local Cultural Strategies in England have been developed by local authorities with different approaches to the task in the methodologies for consultation employed, the frameworks for monitoring and the evaluation of cultural provision they offer. The strategies do offer an opportunity to examine local approaches to cultural planning. The benefits and problems associated with the production of Local Cultural Strategies as strategic development frameworks for local culture and the future of the process is questioned following their 'subsumption' into Community Strategies as part of a broader package of reforms for local government.

As far back as "Planning for Sport" the SC had emphasised the need for local plans to fill in the National provision recommendations and LCSs did just that. Unfortunately, they also largely coincided with a period of financial cutbacks and capital controls hence the LCSs were in many cases less than ambitious recognising the financial facts of life. They were also often required leisure consultants, who many LAs turned to as producers of strategies in the absence (in many cases) of in-house skills. Every LA produced such documents and many identified areas of facility shortfalls. As an example, this is Worthing and Adur's version -

<https://www.adur-worthing.gov.uk/media/Media,139302,smxx.pdf>

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