



Photo Dacorum Borough Council

Dacorum Arts & Culture Strategy




Dacorum Arts and Culture Team

Diana Houghton – Head of Arts and Culture


Annie Smith – Place Officer for Arts and Culture

Old Town Hall Theatre Team

What we currently do:

- Run the Old Town Hall Theatre, Hemel
 - Facilitate and deliver a range of arts projects and programmes including arts for wellbeing initiatives, public art projects.
 - Manage the relationship with and grant funding of Dacorum Heritage Trust
 - Advise and support artists, creative practitioners and partners
 - Developing the new Arts and Culture Strategy
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Why do we need an Arts and Culture Strategy?

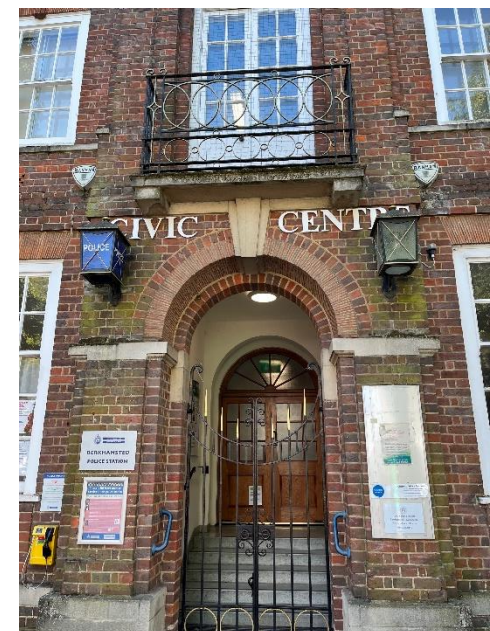
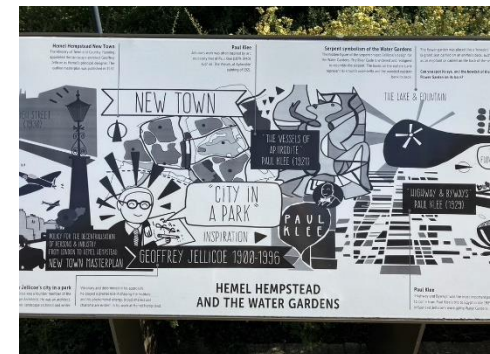
- Identify priorities and clarity of direction for the Council's role in supporting Culture, Creativity and Heritage
 - Support local arts, culture and creative businesses and organisations to thrive
 - Put the Council in a stronger position to seek external investment and grant funding
 - Contribute to wider agendas – Health and Wellbeing, Place Making, Community Cohesion, Economic Development/Visitor Economy, tackling inequalities
 - Support internal and external partnership working
 - Provide context for a Service Review of the Old Town Hall Theatre
 - Maximise the use of cultural assets in the Borough
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Value of Arts & Culture:

The Dacorum Borough Council Arts and Culture Strategy proposes to define **culture** in its widest sense, embracing: our lives, identities and communities; heritage; museums, cinemas, music, theatres, libraries, festivals and events; creative practice and creative industries.

Arts & culture can have many values/impacts, including:

- **Emotional enrichment:** help people understand their inner lives and improve their emotional well-being
- **Social cohesion:** help people feel more connected to each other
- **Physical and mental health:** help improve people's health, happiness and wellbeing
- **Identity:** help people feel a sense of place and belonging
- **Equality:** help people feel equal to each other
- **Societal meaning:** help people understand the values and ideas of society
- **Economic impact:** UK annual benefit is £8 billion annually in terms of ROI and impact on health and wellbeing, in addition to other socio economic benefits.



Arts and Culture Strategy Consultation 2024

BRIDGET SAWYERS

We worked with specialists Bridget Sawyers Ltd to engage with local residents. In autumn 2024 we heard from local artists, arts, cultural, voluntary and community organisations, as well as other Council services and departments.

Directly engaged with 241 people

Engaged with 854 people in total across Dacorum.

- Reviewed key documents & research
- **Mapping** of all venues mentioned by those consulted
- **Connecting with stakeholders:** focused interviews
- Appointed three **Young Creatives**
- Appointed four **artists**
- **A Stall at 50Fest**
- **8 Listening & Sharing Events:** bringing the communities together for artist-led workshops
- 2 Focus groups: a marginalised group and representatives from the arts and cultural sector
- 2 Questionnaires: one for residents, workers and visitors and one for artists and creative practitioners
- Drafted the Consultation Report collating the data – including initial recommendations.

50 Fest

A Penny for Your Thoughts

70 Adults and 24 children engaged

We asked the children to respond with drawings of 'What does the word "culture" mean to you?', and adults six questions and to mark on maps of the Borough the venues that they visit.

The biggest barriers to attending art and cultural activities in Borough were cited as being:

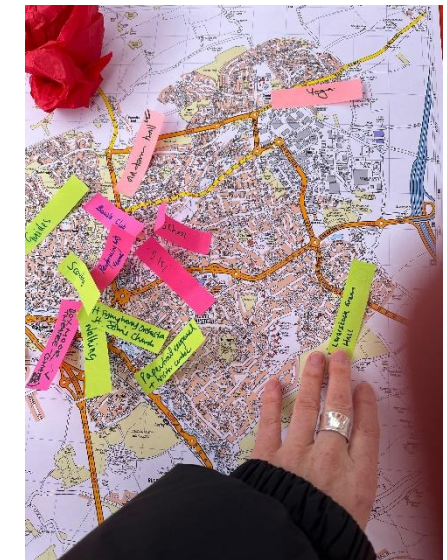
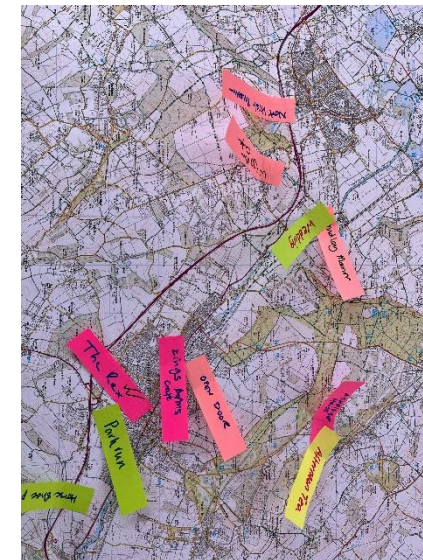
- There is nowhere to go
- There is nothing here, we go to London
- Lack of transport/no public transport.

The arts and cultural activities that people said they would like to see more of were:

- Art galleries and exhibitions
- What we once had
- A bigger venue, like the Pavilion.

The venues and spaces most visited:

- The Old Town Hall Theatre
- Boxmoor Playhouse
- The Natural History Museum, Tring.



Theatre, by Agnes



Music, by Gabriella

Listening & Sharing Event

Baytus Salaam: Women's Group

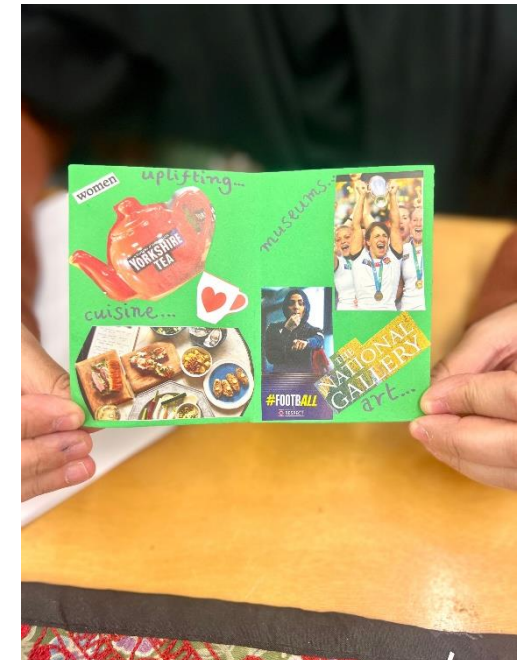
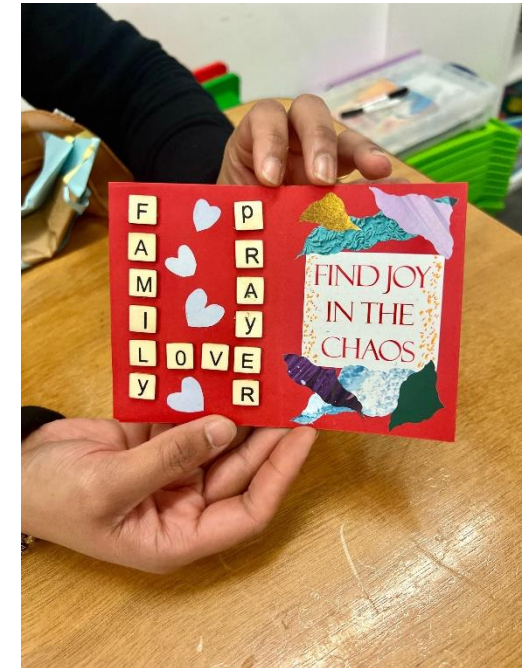
Artist, Khizra Ahmed

11 participants

A session discussing arts and culture in Dacorum whilst making zines.

Key comments from all sessions:

- The collective cultural activities that people enjoy participating in most were understandably related to age, ability and ethnicity but were varied and eclectic; from wrestling and boxing to sewing, tea and chat sessions, music and singing, dancing, going to the theatre and cinema to choirs and craft activities.
- Activities at libraries and theatre was common across all groups.



Poster and photos by
Lily Hart

Listening & Sharing Event

Centre in the Park & Waterside Centre: Older people's groups and people with disabilities

Artist, Lucy Steggals

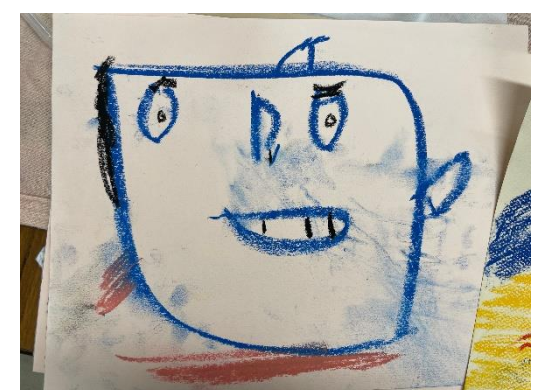
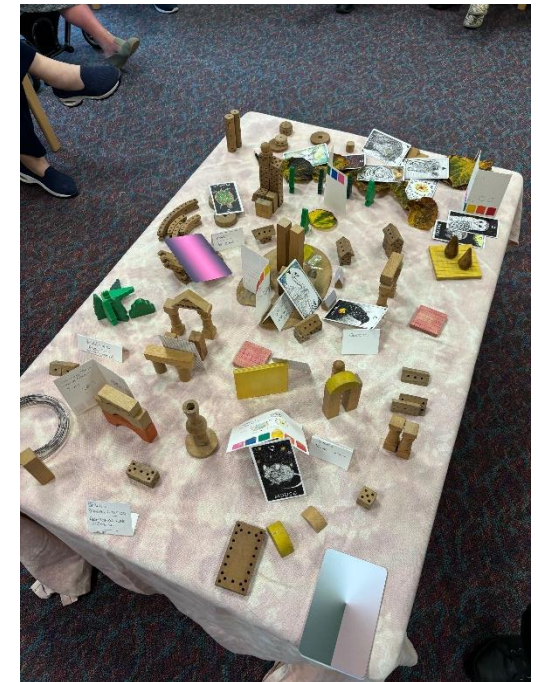
Two events with 16 and 17 participants

Workshops using objects and drawing, model making materials to discuss arts and culture provision in Dacorum.

Key comments from all sessions:

The **biggest barriers** cited to attending arts & cultural activities were:

- Transport
- Disabled access
- The requirement to book everything online or with a smart phone.
- The awareness of what's on was also highlighted by all.



Poster Elizabeth Perry, and photos by Elizabeth Perry & Lucy Bevan

Listening & Sharing Event

Grovehill Community Centre and The Old Town Hall Theatre: Older people's groups

Artist Kerry Lanigan

Two venues, with three events in The Old Town Hall Theatre with 15 and 27 participants

Workshops - the groups collectively built Dreamscapes installations that grew across the events to capture a cultural landscape of ideas, creativity and imagination.

Key comments:

Responses to 'what arts and cultural activities would you like to see more of in Dacorum' were varied, those most mentioned were:

- a local museum, art gallery
- craft fairs
- creative food events
- more activities coming to the groups
- more dancing
- special events on the Marlowes
- more hands-on interactive experiences, and
- more accessible and local classes and workshops.



Photos Lucy Bevan

Listening & Sharing Event

Tring Library: Parents and young children

Artist, Emily Tracy

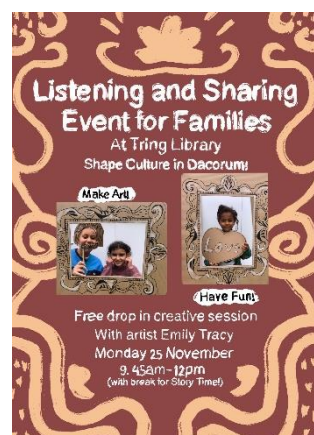
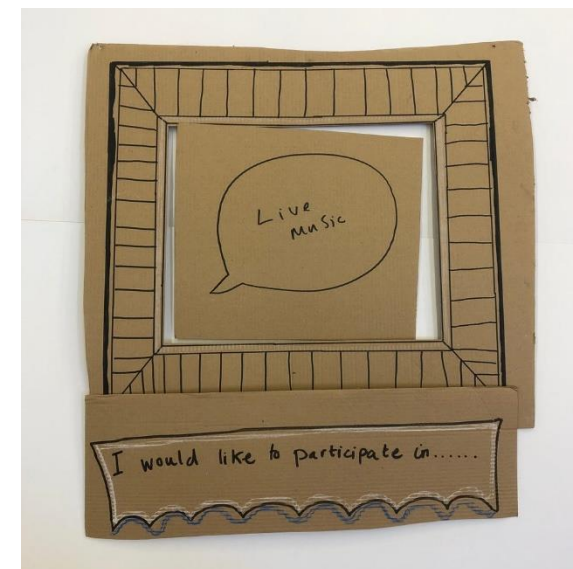
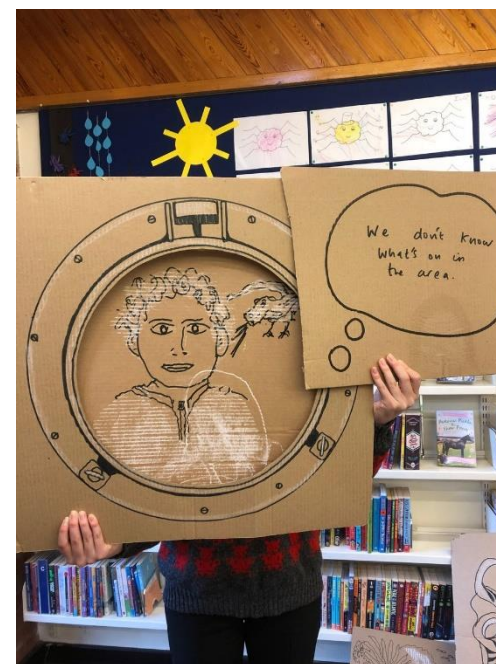
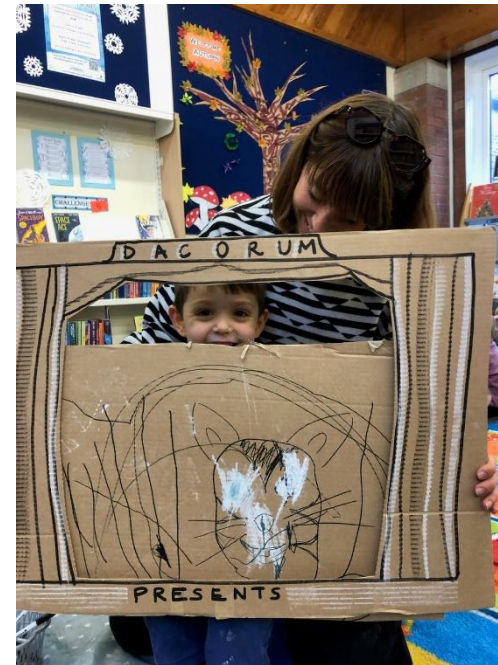
17 adults and 15 children

The artist created cardboard frames that families could use with their cardboard props and placards; exploring their hopes and ambitions for cultural provision in the Borough.

Key comments:

Main words about on '...what people would like for Dacorum culture and heritage to be in 3 years' time':

- Engaging, fun, playful, social
- Choice, warm, safe, interactive, friendly
- More activities, accessible, well promoted, community spirit
- Exploratory, participatory, play, local
- A place to meet
- Inclusive, multicultural, affordable, interesting.



Poster and photos by
Elizabeth Perry

Cultural Workshop

The Civic Centre, Berkhamsted: Artists and creatives

16 participants

The attendees clearly articulated that there needed to be:

Vision:

- Clear heritage strategy and programme from the Council gathering work of the entire sector in the area
- Clear programming vision with long lead in times so people could come on board large events such as 50 Fest
- Clear approach for developing and maintaining the cultural infrastructure for the Borough.

Support:

- Signposting for what funding is available, where to get support, opportunities, for funding applications, hire spaces etc.
- Establish a cultural network with regular meetings to enable information sharing, collaboration, cross-promotion and connect with other sectors of the Council
- Create resource, provide training on access, diversity and inclusion.

Advocacy & promotion:

- By the Council for the sector, to assist with fundraising/funding applications
- Strategic promotion of cultural activity in any comms. strategy so it is clear what activity, when and why should be promoted by the Council. Dacorum events website to be updated, maintained and created as a single source of listing information.



Photos by Elizabeth Perry

Questionnaires

General Public Questionnaire

584 respondents

Digital and hard copies available in libraries with the opportunity to win three £40 vouchers for events at the Old Town Hall.

Based in:

Hemel Hempstead **75%**,
Berkhamsted 8%
Tring 8%.

Lived in the Dacorum but worked elsewhere 55%
Lived and worked in Dacorum 38%
Worked only in Dacorum 2%.

The ethnicity of the respondents was:

English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British **80.34%**
No response 9.50% and Prefer not to say 3.90%

The respondents were from a range of age groups:

24% aged between **55-64 years old**
21.1% were between **65-74 yrs.**
20% were between **45-54 yrs.**
14% were between **35-44 yrs.**
9.2% were 75 or over (
6% were between 25-34
1.4% were between 18-24 yrs.
0.9% were under 18




Consultation Report

The consultation found that people are **very engaged with and passionate about arts and culture** in Dacorum, they value arts and culture and would like to see it supported and the cultural offer expanded.

- **92.6%** of those who responded to the public survey thought culture was **‘important’**, with 62.5% saying it was **‘Extremely Important’**
- **56%** of respondents said they were **regular visitors at cultural events** and heritage attractions and 23.3% said they take part in creative and cultural activities with others (group activities)
- The most popular collective cultural activities were: going to the **theatre 71.7%**, going to the **cinema 49%**, and **outdoor festivals and events 37%**
- Of those who responded to the public survey the most cited **venues and spaces** where people experienced arts and culture were: The Old Town Hall Theatre (253), Home (86), None (61)
- Of those who responded to the question **‘is there something specific you think the arts & culture strategy must do’**:
 - 84 people said a new bigger venue
 - 32 people said be diverse/inclusive
 - 28 people said better publicity, not all online
 - But 131 people stated ‘other’ than the listed responses, including important concerns and issues based on lived experience.


The role of Dacorum Borough Council in supporting arts and culture

The Council's role will focus on:

- Gaps in cultural provision and targeting those who may face barriers to participation
 - Acting as a facilitator and enabler
 - Empowering the cultural sector
 - Setting strategic direction
 - Identifying, leading or supporting opportunities to secure inward investment and grant funding
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Initial Recommendations – what are the priorities?

The initial key recommendations for the Strategy to consider are structured around the following objectives:

- A. Vision for arts and culture in Dacorum and its contribution to the health, wellbeing of residents and economy of the Borough
 - B. Confirm how the Council will support arts, culture and heritage
 - C. Promote Dacorum's Cultural Offer
 - D. Support Artists and Creatives
 - E. Funding Partnerships and Collaboration
 - F. Identify New Opportunities for
 - A. Placemaking
 - B. Community Cohesion
 - C. Wellbeing
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Next steps

Promoting local arts and culture activities

- New webpage on the Council website under development
- Promotional campaign this summer to highlight the current cultural offer and grass roots arts/heritage activity – with Microgrants to support.

Supporting artists and creatives

- Developing more opportunities and networking events for arts organisations and creative practitioners to network, collaborate and come together

Funding partnerships and collaboration

- A programme of training around philanthropy and individual giving for the arts (delivered in partnership with 'Figurative' (New Philanthropy for Arts and Culture)
- Dacorum Borough Council Community Grants programme continues to support eligible arts organisations/ activities
- Dacorum Borough Council Community Grants Training Bursaries

Arts, culture and heritage to support Placemaking, Community Cohesion and Wellbeing

- Art in the Public Realm Policy Framework
- 'Meanwhile Uses' strategy to encourage use of empty shops and other town centre spaces for temporary cultural activities
- A new group facilitated by 'Flourishing Lives' on anti racism in the arts
- Working with Herts University on Heritage trail funding bid

Showcasing creativity in Dacorum – June 2025

One-off micro grants

One-off Arts & Culture Micro Grants of up to £500 to help local organisations and community groups showcase their creativity as part of a month-long cultural celebration in June 2025

Raising awareness of local arts, cultural and heritage providers and activities

These micro grants are available for a limited time only, with a **submission deadline of 9am on Monday 17 March.**

Eligibility

- Open to not-for-profit organisations, including constituted community groups, charities, CICs, and CIOs (see Guidance & Criteria for full details)
- Eligible organisations must be based in the Dacorum Borough Council area or already delivering arts and cultural activities in the borough
- Event/activity must be open to the public (can be drop in or pre booked) and either free of charge or a nominal fee

See the Council website and social media for updates

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