



'Taking Part'

Swale Borough Council Draft Cultural Strategy 2008 - 2011

Foreword

This strategy, '*Taking Part*' represents a new commitment to improving cultural services in Swale and increasing/developing residents' participation.

Cultural in all its forms defines and identifies an area. It is fundamental to health and social inclusion with benefits across our other priorities of regenerating Swale, being a cleaner and greener place, a safer and stronger Community and becoming a high performing organisation.

For example 'Art at the Centre' in Queenborough and Rushenden has played in a key role in shaping the regeneration proposals by:

- encouraging local communities to engage in the development process
- providing them with a means to express themselves and their ideas
- adding innovation and quality to urban and housing design
- recognising and respecting the existing qualities and identity of the regeneration areas.

The Council will play a number of roles in developing and maintaining the cultural infrastructure of Swale, including undertaking research, leading and setting the strategic context, identifying spatial priorities, facilitating partnerships and by delivering some services directly.

Swale is a growing Borough, and as part of the Thames Gateway, employment and housing will grow and shape the character of the Borough for at least the next 10 years. How we plan ahead and provide services that not only meet cultural needs but involve and inspire everyone is a challenge we must address in order to make the Borough an excellent place to live. London 2012 has also added to the significance and impact that culture has and can have on the country. We must use this opportunity to stimulate both a debate about culture and the delivery of real opportunities.

While the Council can and will provide vision and policy for cultural development in the Borough, the vast majority of investment in shaping and providing the cultural offer will be made by the private sector. Developers, landowners and leisure/tourism businesses will continue to be the most influential partners in making this plan a success. The voluntary and community sector remain a strength of the Borough which is very active in the provision of facilities at a grass roots level.

We want everyone to be '*Taking Part*' in revitalising the cultural offer in Swale



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Introduction

What Is Culture?

Culture can be defined in many ways but for this strategy we have used the definition agreed with the Department of Media, Culture and Skills which includes:

- the performing and visual arts, craft and fashion.
- media, film, television, video and language.
- museums, artefacts, archives.
- libraries, literature, writing and publishing.
- the built heritage, architecture, landscape and archaeology.
- sports, events, facilities and development.
- parks, open spaces, wildlife habitats, water environment and countryside recreation.
- children's play, playgrounds and play activities.
- tourism, festivals and attractions.
- informal leisure pursuits
- licensing of alcohol, entertainment and late night refreshment

Culture is more than a list of activities or service areas its about how we think and feel, how we communicate and entertain ourselves and each other. Its about stimulating ideas and about celebrating the past, present and future.

What Is A Cultural Strategy?

A cultural strategy aims to promote the cultural well-being of an area. This strategy '*Taking Part*' is the cultural vision and action plan for the whole of the Borough of Swale and represents a new commitment to recognising and improving the cultural sector and accessibility to it.

The strategy provides an opportunity to define strategic priorities within and between local authority services and our partners. It encourages innovation and partnership solutions to providing cultural services and identifies opportunities designed to meet local needs. Importantly, it also provides links with other plans and strategies of the authority and its partners.

We see cultural development as a catalyst for area renaissance and renewal. The strategy sets an agenda for the future by providing signposts for individuals, groups or agencies that play a part in defining and developing the quality of life and creativity in the district. It defines the local context in which we operate and sets clear policy directions for those that need them.

Through this Cultural Strategy, the Council will work in partnership with key local, regional, and national stakeholders to ensure the value of culture is recognised as both an end in itself and also as a means by which to support achievement of wider social, economic and environmental goals.

Swale Borough Council's Roles in Culture.

The Council will play a number of roles in developing and maintaining the cultural infrastructure of Swale, including undertaking research, leading and setting the strategic context, identifying spatial priorities, facilitating partnerships, and by delivering some services directly.

Strategic	
<i>Research</i>	The Council is the leading local body in consulting local people, researching local needs.
<i>Strategic Leadership</i>	It takes account of local research and consultation, in consultation with partners defines the overall vision and leads the delivery of this strategy.
<i>Spatial Priorities</i>	<p><i>Taking Part</i> is an important consideration in the Council's planning functions, both in the Local Plan and through its development control responsibilities. The Local Plan and the Local Development Framework will take account of the identified cultural needs, which will be allocated as elements in mixed-use schemes or embedded as requirements (e.g., play spaces and community hubs) in policies guiding residential developments.</p> <p>S106/developers' contributions and private sector investment represent a real opportunity for delivering an improved cultural offer. Recent and planned applications have/will be delivering:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A mix of green open space, playgrounds and multi-use games areas to meet community wants and needs in new developments. • A new learning hub and library in Sittingbourne • Arts studio/exhibition space in Queenborough • Public Art in Queenborough • A new Marina in Queenborough • New Community Halls at the Thistle Hill, Meads and East Hall Farm developments • Hotels in Sittingbourne and Sheppey • A new visitor centre to the Marshes on Sheppey • A broad range of improvements to the cultural infrastructure of Sittingbourne Town Centre
<i>Partnerships</i>	<i>Taking Part</i> provides the focus for community and partner involvement and investment from all sectors.
Operational	
<i>Direct Service Delivery</i>	Although culture is a discretionary service, the Council delivers a number of cultural services itself.

The Borough of Swale

Overview

Swale Borough is situated on the North Kent Coast between the Medway Towns and Canterbury. It has a fast growing population of approximately 127,000 people and contains some 57,000 households within an area of 37,387 hectares. Stretching 18 miles (28.8km) east to west and 15 miles (24 km) north to south, it is part of the Thames Gateway. It is also one of a small number of English Authorities that has a populated island within its jurisdiction. Swale's 44-mile (71 kilometres) coastal boundary is longer than any other Kent authority. The Borough comprises four areas, Sittingbourne, the Isle of Sheppey, Faversham and the rural hinterland. Transport links have improved with the opening of the new bridge to Sheppey, but further road linkages are required and some of the rural areas are remote. The chalet and caravan parks situated on the Isle of Sheppey contribute to significant seasonal variations in population.

Swale is a diverse area with urban areas in Sheerness East and West amongst the most deprived in the south east and some of the rural areas being the most isolated in Kent after the Romney Marsh. There are a significant number of conservation areas and approximately one third of the Borough area is within a designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Some 75% of the land area is covered by environmental designations.

In recent times Swale has seen significant improvements, within its economy and its communities. Through major investment, progress against key projects has been accelerated and long-held priorities, in particular the new Sheppey Crossing, have been achieved. This brings in itself new challenges and a need for the Council to refocus. Many long-standing challenges remain. Swale is attracting investment as part of the Thames Gateway regeneration area. New jobs in the knowledge and creative sectors will benefit the Swale economy and provide new opportunities for skilled local people to find rewarding work in the Borough. However, we do not expect the age profile to significantly change. Incoming younger people and families will be offset by a growing percentage of the existing population living longer.

Culture and creative industries in Swale account for almost a quarter of all culture and creative industries across North Kent and are a key growth area for the Swale economy. London 2012 Olympics has also added to the significance and impact that culture has and can have on the country. We can use this opportunity to help revitalise and stimulate what is offered locally and how the community is involved.

Demographics

- Between 2001 and 2011 the population of Swale is predicted to grow by 5,300 persons (4.3%) and by 8000 persons (6.5%) between 2001 and 2016.
- People with diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds rose from 1.9% of the total population in 2001 to an estimated 3.9% in 2005. This is still considerably lower than for the South East (4.9%) and for England as a whole (9.1%) but about the same as the Kent average (3.5%).
- Around 8,200 (0.6%) of the population in Kent is from a Gypsy or Traveller community.
- 18% of people living in Swale area consider themselves to have a long term limiting illness, this compares to 17% for Kent County, 16% for the South East and 18% for England.

- The age distribution for Swale is very similar to that of the County of Kent, the South East region and England as a whole.

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Summary of Research Findings

- Sports/ Leisure Centres and Activities for Young People were the highest priority for local residents followed closely by open spaces, coast and countryside. Community halls were given the lowest priority by local residents.
- Swale performs within the lower quartile for satisfaction with all cultural services, including sports and leisure centres, museums and galleries, theatres and concert halls, arts activities and venues and parks and open spaces. The small variations being that theatres and concert halls are just above the middle of the lower quartile, arts activities and venues are at the top of the lower quartile and parks and open spaces are near the bottom of the lower quartile.
- For sports & leisure facilities and libraries resident satisfaction has increased whilst for museums and galleries satisfaction levels have remained the same. For parks & open spaces and theatres & concert halls have fallen.
- In terms of value for money, open spaces, coast and countryside were ranked top, whilst sport, leisure centres and activities for young people were ranked fifth.
- With the exception of sports and recreation Swale is a comparatively low spending authority on cultural services when compared to its nearest neighbours.
- Cost and cleanliness were clearly identified as a deterrent to participating in activities in all consultations and surveys.
- Improved information about facilities and events was suggested as an area of improvement throughout all themes with traditional postal methods identified as the most popular for receiving information.
- Additional concerns over transportation to events, and safety and accessibility of facilities like parks and open spaces were also identified. Although no major changes were requested with regard to additions or improvements there was a strong desire to *"build on what we do well and get the basics right in terms of issues like safety and cleanliness"*.
- Parish Councils were keen that schools, village halls and churches be principle venues for any cultural activities with theatre and sporting activities their top priorities. They also expressed the view that the Borough Council's role was to provide organisational and financial assistance for cultural activities.
- Locally there is a desire for the London 2012 and the Paralympics to play an important role in culture in the Borough, that partnership working should be an integral part of any cultural strategy and they supported the view that the Council should concentrate on what it does well.

Appendix 2 provides more detail of the research findings.

Swale's Cultural Offer

Culture can help to stimulate ambition, raise standards and increase employability through education, skills development and life-long learning. The cultural and creative industries are also employers and investors in local economies, and therefore have the potential to make direct and indirect contributions to the growth of the district's economy.

Cultural organisations, projects and activities often provide local, accessible, safe and social spaces. This creates a focus for social activity; reduces isolation; offers opportunities to make friends and develop networks; creates a forum of intercultural understanding and friendship; and encourages the development of community organisations.

Cultural services can also play an important part in addressing crime, either directly or in partnership with other agencies, by contributing to programmes that: improve social skills; reduce impulsiveness and risk taking behaviour; raise self-esteem and self confidence; and improve education and employment prospects. Public art and other activities that take place in the public realm can also reduce fear of crime by helping to create safer places.

Swale has a diverse cultural offer from formal recreation through to access to open spaces and wildlife, from arts to sports and from urban to rural locations. However, our residents also choose to visit other towns and centres for shopping, cultural and leisure facilities including Bluewater, Canterbury (world heritage site and theatre), Maidstone (county town, museums and archives) and Medway (Gillingham, Chatham and Rochester – Historic Dockyard, Dickens Centre).

Over the past three years each of the three major towns of Sittingbourne, Sheerness and Faversham have made progress in strengthening their distinctive identities.

- Faversham is recognised as a rural market town and has a wealth of distinctive heritage assets to attract visitors to the town centre and surrounding rural area including the historic brewery, attractive streets, restaurants and churches.
- Sheerness and Sheppey have a maritime and traditional coastal leisure identity with some excellent beaches and coastal marshes of international importance which are significant as a new eco-tourism offer is emerging with a focus on outstanding landscape and diverse habitats. Queenborough has an attractive Harbour managed by the Council and an 'All Tide Landing' for visiting pleasure craft. There is also provision for public launching of boats at the Shingle Bank, Minster, near to two thriving sailing clubs. The 'Sea Sheppey' Festival has further enhanced the maritime heritage of the Isle of Sheppey in recent years.
- Sittingbourne has made less progress in terms of developing a cultural identity but the proposed comprehensive regeneration of the Town Centre offers real opportunities for residents and partner stakeholders to articulate a new vision for the Town's cultural offer. Culture will play a major role in helping to shape a new identity for the town and its adjacent communities.

The cultural strength of the Borough includes its voluntary sector, which is very active in the provision of facilities such as heritage centres, a community cinema, Parish Halls and many clubs and societies offering activities for a wide range of interest groups. The Borough has retained a network of busy public allotment gardens some of which are managed by the Council and some by the voluntary sector.

Tourism is also a great strength. Swale is a top destination for day trips in Kent with almost 4 million day trips annually, a figure only exceeded by neighbouring Canterbury. It generates £188 million of business turnover and supports almost 4000 actual jobs, representing 8% of employment in the Borough. The Tourism Development Strategy¹ sets out a vision which is 'to develop and promote quality environments and amenities that support the needs and enhance the aspirations of local residents', businesses' and visitors'. However, it concludes that whilst tourism is an important aspect of the economic base within Swale it must also respond to the changing character of the environment within both the Thames Gateway region and beyond as well as respond to the ever changing and more exacting demands of our communities.

Some of the Borough's secondary schools also offer well-resourced cultural facilities for the wider community. Sittingbourne Community College has specialist status in the Arts and Borden Grammar School has specialist status in Sport and both have ambitions for further development in these areas. The Borough is also home to high quality, distinct urban and rural landscapes, accessible diverse open spaces and a range of wildlife reserves.²

Appendix 1 provides further detail of our cultural assets.

¹ Tourism Development Strategy 2006-2008, p. 4

² Swale Green Grid, February 2007

Drivers for Change

National Priorities for Culture

- The Department for Culture Media and Sports (DCMS) has set four strategic priorities for the period from 2005 to 2008, these provide a national framework for all cultural related activity.
 - PSA1. To enhance the take-up of sporting opportunities by 5-16 year olds so that the percentage of school children who spend a minimum of two hours each week on high-quality PE and school sport within and beyond the curriculum rises from 25% in 2002 to 75% by 2006 and 85% by 2008 (joint target with the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF))
 - PSA2. To halt the year-on-year increase in obesity among children under 11 years by 2010, as part of the broader strategy to tackle obesity in the population as a whole (joint target with DCSF and the Department of Health)
 - PSA3. To increase the take-up of cultural and sporting opportunities by 16 and above from priority groups by 2008
 - PSA4. To improve the productivity of the tourism, creative and leisure industries

National & Regional Framework

- Arts Council England's publication 'Arts and regeneration: creating vibrant communities' which emphasises the role the arts can play in galvanising community engagement and participation in planning, and in creating a sense of identity and pride.
- Sport England's 'Framework for Sport in England' which aims to inspire the nation to get active.
- South East England Development Agency's 'Culture Counts' and 'A Cultural Toolkit for the Thames Gateway' which emphasise the role of culture in supporting the other key themes of improving health, learning, economy and community safety.
- Thames Gateway Delivery Plan launched in 2007 setting out the Governments overall priorities for the Thames Gateway and detailing funding allocations for the 2008-11 period. In Swale these will focus primarily on Sittingbourne, Queenborough and Rushenden and include commitment to investment in Thames Gateway Parklands, education and skills, and the Gateway as an 'eco region'.
- Kent Partnership's 'Vision for Kent' is the Community Strategy for the County and sets the direction of travel for all key players who are working to improve the quality of life for everybody in Kent. The vision document is divided into 8 themes which includes "Enjoying Life".
- The Kent Agreement 2 will set out the community priorities for the County for 2008 to 2011 based on the County and district level community strategies and local priorities.

Thames Gateway and Parklands

- Thames Gateway is the largest of the national growth areas and includes the Sittingbourne and Sheppey areas. 'Parklands' is an initiative to ensure that environmental quality is embedded within the regeneration process. Parklands will be a model for well managed, high quality landscapes that help to create a strong sense of place. These will include the more formal urban spaces as well as the wider accessible countryside.

Cultural Services Inspection

In 2006 the Audit Commission concluded that Swale's cultural services were 'Fair, with poor prospects for improvement'. Quite simply that is not good enough and we are committed to improving our performance.

Positive Findings	Negative Findings
The service is contributing to improving the quality of life of local people; a range of cultural initiatives and services are impacting on community safety, community sustainability, health and well-being and regeneration.	The service is not systematically tackling barriers to access and participation to encourage take up in some communities; an underdeveloped approach to diversity and equalities.
The service was felt to have a broad understanding of local needs and expectations and has responded to local priorities including expanding the level of cultural provision for young people	The management of cultural services could be improved by having a greater focus on what the purpose of the service is and building on the improvements made in such areas as opportunities for young people and sports development and the range of the cultural offer.
A varied programme of activities and opportunities, physical access is good and access for people in rural areas has been improved.	The Council should be clearer about the purpose of what we do and what it contributes to improving the quality of life for our communities.
Swale Borough Council was considered to work well with partners to maximise its limited resources to achieve more than it could by working alone; and targeted sports and arts projects have broadened the appeal of cultural services, widened access and promoted new audiences.	The Council should making sure it uses the scarce resources to best address our cultural priorities through a clearer corporate planning process which shows our communities what we intend to do and providing a more joined up approach to the way we provide these services
	Performance management is not fully effective, owned or being used to drive improvement.

Public Health

- The 2007 Public Health Profile for Swale estimates that one in four Swale adults are obese and only one in five is eating healthily. Although Swale is not amongst the most unhealthy districts in the UK it is consistently performing just below the UK averages across the range of UK public health indicators. Local priorities are to reduce health inequalities across the local population; to reduce rates of teenage pregnancy; to promote positive mental health; and to reduce levels of obesity in adults and younger people. Cultural activities and an increase in the number of people taking part can be a significant contributor to improving health and well being.

Swale Borough Council's Key Documents

- The Community Plan, "**Priority Swale**" sets out how the Council will work with its key partners to improve the economic, environmental and social well being of the borough.
- The Corporate Plan 2007 – 2011, "**Shaping the Future of Swale**" sets out how the Council will deliver essential services to improve the lives of people that live, work and visit Swale. We have set four interrelated corporate priorities that cover the entire Borough of Swale, which includes the urban areas of Faversham, Sheppey and Sittingbourne and a significant rural area. These priorities will direct what the Council does between now and 2011 and provide a framework for all Council policies.

Swale Borough Council's Corporate Priorities

1. *Regenerating Swale*
2. *Creating A Cleaner and Greener Swale*
3. *Promoting A Safer and Stronger Community*
4. *Becoming A High Performing Organisation*

Culture is a key element of the 'Regenerating Swale' corporate priority, has four specific priorities for action within the corporate plan and supports delivery of a number of others.

Culture Priorities For Action

- RS9. Work with Partners to develop the Borough's cultural offer
- RS10. Increase public participation in cultural activity that builds upon and reinforces local identity
- RS11. Develop a local strategy to optimise the positive impacts of the 2012 Olympics and Paralympics for Swale
- RS12. Develop new partnership arrangements with community based organisations to manage and sustain public facilities and amenities.

- The **Regeneration Framework 2006 – 2016** aims to guide investment in Swale by identifying regeneration priorities and securing public resources to support them. It includes specific objectives for culture and focuses on improvements to the cultural infrastructure.
- The **Swale Borough Local Plan 2000** covers the development and other use of land and sets out the general planning policies that apply Borough-wide, including the control of development and the safeguarding of the areas built and natural environment. This plan will be replaced early in 2008 by the Swale Borough Local Plan Review, following which the Council will prepare its Local Development Framework.
- **Swale's Community Safety Plan 2005 - 2008** which identified the key issues of crime and disorder and sets five priorities for the Community Safety Partnership to tackle between 2005 and 2008. The Plan is soon to be revised and updated for the 2008 - 2011.
- **Swale's Youth Strategy** is the first strategy written by young people for young people it identifies and aims to address the most important issues affecting their lives here.
- **Swale Borough Council's Play Strategy** which sets out how play in Swale will be managed and improved over the next four years.

Our Vision

'Swale is shaped by its cultural vitality that contributes to its distinctive communities and their health and well being.'

In order to achieve this vision, Swale Borough Council will provide a strong lead in using culture as key driver for improving quality of life for all its citizens, workforce and visitors. All cultural objectives must demonstrate a clear benefit to health, lifelong learning and the physical/mental well being of Swale residents and visitors, be inclusive, contribute to the economic sustainability and the conservation of borough.

Cultural Strategy Themes

We have used results from our local research and consultation as well as information on performance to develop 5 overarching themes. These will inform and guide the aims, objectives and action of this local cultural strategy. A detailed action plan showing how we plan to deliver against these themes is provided on pages xxx to xx.

Cultural Strategy Themes

1. Increasing Participation.
2. Planning for Olympics 2012
3. Learning and Innovation
4. Improving health and well being
5. Place Shaping.

Increasing Participation

Participation in cultural activities promotes relationships between groups and individuals bringing together a sense of belonging and of self worth. Shared memories and experiences foster understanding and a sense of identity for groups and communities. Active participation in sport and the arts by young people raises self esteem and is shown to reduce levels of youth offending. Opportunities for actively enjoying cultural activities should be fostered near to where people live and be made accessible to all, especially those in rural and hard to reach communities.

The Council will seek to work with partners and key stakeholders to increase both active and passive participation in cultural activities, promoting social inclusion and encouraging social enterprise. We will engage and empower local communities to define and develop the Borough's cultural identities and diversity and work towards overcoming the physical and social barriers to participation and enjoyment of cultural activity across the Borough. The cultural diversity of the Borough is an asset that should be celebrated and explored through cultural activity and expression. We envisage the long term outcomes to include: increased participation in affordable accessible and relevant cultural activities; empowered and involved local communities and cultural organisations; and raised aspirations and promotion of creativity and experimentation.

Planning for Olympics 2012

London 2012 has added to the significance and impact that culture has and can have on the country. It provides a real opportunity for us to increase participation in cultural activities locally. We must use this opportunity to help revitalise and stimulate a debate about culture, what is offered locally, how the community is involved and the delivery of real opportunities.

Learning and Innovation

Through the strategy, the council key partners and stakeholders will seek to create new opportunities for local people to improve their work and life skills. We will work with partners to maximise the contribution culture can make to reducing skills gaps and raising standards and aspirations. We envisage the long term outcomes to include: a stronger creative industries sector; and improved employment prospects, personal development and ultimately greater prosperity and economic growth.

Improving Health and Wellbeing

We will seek to improve the health and well-being of local people through promoting the benefits of participation in cultural activities and developing innovative programmes. We will also work with key partners on initiatives and projects aimed at increasing community safety through working, in particular, with young people. We envisage a healthier, active and vibrant community participating in cultural activities and safer communities with cultural activities contributing to a reduction in crime

Place Shaping

Decisions about location are often shaped by the cultural offer whether that's as a place to live or to base a business. Swale is made up of four distinct areas based around Sittingbourne, the Isle of Sheppey, Faversham and rural Swale. Each area contributes differently to the cultural offer of the Borough, a diversity that the Council wishes to embrace. The creative sector is of growing importance locally and there is much that can be done to improve the cultural offer as a whole and better meet the needs of these communities and particular groups within them, for example for young people and people with disabilities. Improving the cultural offer will contribute to the economy, quality of life and importantly a sense of place amongst local communities.

It is important to point out what is distinctive about Swale, particularly within the large and very diverse South East Region. It is essential that Swale is represented nationally, regionally and sub regionally when arts and culture are discussed. It should be made clear why Swale is a good place to live and work and to visit. Opportunities for building on and expanding the range and quality of what is on offer should be identified and exploited. Infrastructure includes buildings, facilities and networks. The challenge is to help to meet changing expectations and the need to upgrade facilities to meet rising standards for access.

In delivering the cultural strategy we will adopt the following principles:

- Accessibility for all
- Activities for young people
- Best/multi use of venues
- Promoting cleanliness and safety
- Providing up to date and accurate information
- Effective partnership working

Links to the Corporate Plan

The following table shows how the Cultural Strategy Themes align with the Corporate Plan Priorities for Action.

Corporate Plan Priorities For Action	Cultural Strategy Themes				
	Increasing participation	Planning for Olympics 2012	Learning and innovation	Improving Health and well being	Place Shaping
Work with Partners to develop the Borough's cultural offer (RS9)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Increase public participation in cultural activity that builds upon and reinforces local identity (RS10)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Develop a local strategy to optimise the positive impacts of the 2012 Olympics and Paralympics for Swale (RS11)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Develop new partnership arrangements with community based organisations to manage and sustain public facilities and amenities (RS12)	✓		✓	✓	✓
CG4 Maintain and provide high quality public open space across the Borough and develop a Green Grid charter for Swale (CG4)	✓		✓	✓	✓
Work with partners to reduce crime and fear of crime and to tackle priority crime areas by engaging with local communities on community safety issues (SSC6)	✓		✓	✓	✓

Links to the Swale Sustainable Communities Plan

The following table shows a strong alignment between the sustainable community plan and the cultural strategy themes.

Cultural Strategy Themes	Links To "Priority Swale" Strategic Priorities						
	Learning For The Future	Enterprising	Vibrant & Safe	Green & Clean	Connected	Healthy & Caring	Sustainable Neighbourhoods
Increasing participation	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓
Planning for Olympics 2012	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Learning and innovation	✓	✓				✓	✓
Improving Health and well being	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓
Place Shaping	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

How We Manage and Measure Our Performance

The Council is required to have in place proper arrangements for securing the economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of its resources and is committed to continual improvement in order to deliver improving value for money services to its communities.

Taking Part provides a framework for the Council until 2013 which will enable us to ensure continuity and consistency to Council priorities and provide a sound basis for medium term financial planning linked to the Council's Corporate Plan.

Individual service plans will set out how the Council will deliver its corporate priorities as set out in its Corporate Plan. The service plans in turn will provide a basis for individual appraisals and objective setting.

The Corporate Management Team, the Council's Performance Board, Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Executive will receive quarterly progress updates on the delivery of key performance indicators within the plan. The plan will be subject to an annual review between May and June, providing an opportunity to consider what we are doing and how effectively we are doing it. The Council's Overview and Scrutiny committees will have a key role to play in this review. The review process will, in turn, inform the annual budget setting process each autumn which will then allow adjustments to be made to 'Taking Part's linking strategies and service plans.

In addition the Council will also put in place mechanisms to ensure that our priorities continue to reflect the views of local people, the voluntary sector and business.

Taking Part should also be read in conjunction with the **funding strategy** for cultural facilities and services. The success of the funding strategy will make a significant contribution to the performance of 'Taking Part'.

Action Plans

The following pages give an idea of the indicative template we will be using for the final action plans which are being developed.

INCREASING PARTICIPATION ACTION PLAN						
LINK TO CORPORATE PRIORITY	ACTION	OUTCOME	PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	DEADLINE	LEAD OFFICER	LINK TO OTHER POLICY/STRATEGY/ DUTY

PLANNING FOR THE OLYMPICS 2012 ACTION PLAN						
LINK TO CORPORATE PRIORITY	ACTION	OUTCOME	PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	DEADLINE	LEAD OFFICER	LINK TO OTHER POLICY/STRATEGY/ DUTY

LEARNING AND INNOVATION ACTION PLAN						
LINK TO CORPORATE PRIORITY	ACTION	OUTCOME	PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	DEADLINE	LEAD OFFICER	LINK TO OTHER POLICY/STRATEGY/ DUTY

PLACE SHAPING ACTION PLAN						
LINK TO CORPORATE PRIORITY	ACTION	OUTCOME	PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	DEADLINE	LEAD OFFICER	LINK TO OTHER POLICY/STRATEGY/ DUTY

Appendix 1 – Swale's Cultural Assets

Facilities and Services Offered By Swale Borough Council

Map of location of facilities to be attached

Leisure Centres and Swimming Pools

- The Swallows Leisure Centre is located in the centre of Sittingbourne and offer a leisure pool, dry sports and gym, attracting over 230,000 users/visitors a year. The Sheppey Leisure Complex, located on the seafront in Sheerness, provides badminton courts, squash courts, outdoor floodlit tennis courts, an aerobics studio and main sports hall with over 140,000 users/visitors a year. Sheerness Swimming Pool, next to Sheerness Leisure Complex, provides a 25m pool, a learner pool, a sun deck and an adventure world for younger people. The Jubilee Centre in Faversham (Faversham Gym Club and Activity Centre) offers a gymnastics hall with sprung floor, a weight training room, a large indoor [adventure play](#) area and a small cafe. Faversham Swimming Pools includes, indoors a main pool, teaching pool and bubble pool and outdoors a heated main pool, diving boards, paddling pool, fun pool and a large paved grass area. Between them the two Faversham facilities attract over 160,000 users/visitors a year.

Parks and Open Spaces

- The Council provides and maintains approximately 310 hectares of open space, parks and country parks. Included within this are 63 children's play areas and 21 sports pitches. Some, 9,753,427 visits are made to Swale's sites by residents alone.³ As the number of homes rise in Swale so does the quantity of public open space. Agreements with housing developers has provided new open spaces, play areas and pitches which will become the Council's responsibility to manage.
- There are proposals to develop a Trust that will help manage and bring investment to the Borough's sports pitches and pavilions
- Swale's Green Grid⁴ will have an urban focus, creating a highly attractive, urban environment in which to live and work; increased and enhanced access to open space and areas of natural beauty in the Borough and wider choice for residents. Every household will benefit from the opportunities of the Green Grid through easy access to open spaces and natural areas and new opportunities for healthy exercise, recreation and sport.

Arts and Sports Development

- Support is provided to a number of local arts initiatives and arts groups across the Borough. Arts at the Centre is an arts programme being implemented in Queenborough as part of the area's regeneration.
- Swale is also a member of the North Kent Local Authority Arts Partnership (NKLAAP) and the Swale Arts Forum, both of which are helping to bring a diverse range of arts

³ KMC (Consultants) Analysis of Parks and Open Spaces Usage and Satisfaction 2006

⁴ "Green Grid is an approach to landscape and access management that will provide a modern, functional and cohesive green infrastructure, improving environmental quality and enhancing the quality of life. It is, however, multi faceted and has developed along locally distinct lines reflecting local character as well as community and landscape needs" Councillor Andrew Bowles, Chairman, Swale Forward and Leader and Executive Member for Economic Regeneration, Swale Borough Council (February 2007)

activities and events to the Borough.

- The Council's Sports development team run school holiday and arts schemes, estate sessions in partnership with Charlton Athletic and an Adult Disability Discovery Club. There are numerous sports clubs across the Borough and the Council's sports development team facilitates, co-ordinates and manages a range of club and coach development opportunities. In 2005 there were 144 sports clubs in Swale.

Country Parks

- Country Parks include Leysdown Coastal Park, Barton's Point Coastal Park at Sheerness, Oare Gunpowder Works near Faversham, Perry Wood near Selling and Church Marshes Country Park, Sittingbourne. The Council also own a portion of Blean Wood on the Borough's eastern boundary with Canterbury. Oare Gunpowder Works was awarded a 'Green Flag' in 2007 for the quality of its management, visitor experience and sustainability.

Nature Reserves

- Elmley National Nature Reserve and The Swale National Nature Reserve on Sheppey, are special protection areas and wetland sites of international importance. Other local nature reserves managed by the Kent Trust for Nature in the Borough include Oare Marshes Reserve, Oare Meadow Reserve, South Swale Nature Reserve and Queendown Warren at Hartlip.

Beaches

- Swale is home to the longest section of coastline of any district in Kent. Swale Borough Council is responsible for the following areas of coastline and beaches: Sheerness Beach, Marine Parade, Leysdown Beach, Warden Bay, Minster Leas, Shellness Beach, Rushenden, Beachfield Gardens, sandpit and play area, Beachfield Gardens paddling pool and Beachfield Gardens floral displays. The local beaches are dog free during the holiday season and maintained to Blue Flag status. There are also two private beaches, Loves Beach and Central Beach between Warden Bay and Leysdown.

Museums and Heritage Centres

- The Borough is home to a number of heritage centres operated by voluntary sector organisations and include Rose Street Heritage Centre Sheerness, Minster Abbey Gatehouse, Court Hall Milton Regis, Guildhall Queenborough and Chart Gunpowder Mills.

Libraries

- Kent County Council manage public libraries in Swale and there is one in each of the town centres of Faversham, Sittingbourne, Sheerness and Queenborough, and one in each of the villages of Minster, Teynham and Boughton-under-Blean.

Theatres

- Swale is home to the Avenue Theatre in Sittingbourne, the Arden Theatre in Faversham and Sheppey Little Theatre in Sheerness, all offering a varied programme of productions and events and all run by volunteers. Respectively they have a capacity each of 88 seats, 98 seats and 150 seats.

Festivals and events

- There are a series of events run throughout the summer as part of the Swale Festival and include the three 'showcase' events managed by the Borough Council, including the Sheerness Show, Sittingbourne Spectacular and the Faversham Hop Festival. Other local festivals and events provide a diverse selection of music, arts, drama and exhibitions.

Community Halls, including Village Halls

- The Council owns and operates four community halls as places for the community to hire and they include the Borough Hall at Queenborough, the Kemsley Hall, the King Georges Pavilion in Sittingbourne and the Alexander Centre Halls at Faversham.
- In addition, the town centres and villages are also served by other community halls/rooms either available through Churches, Village Hall Committees or the Leisure centres.
- The Government's *Quirk Report* recommended Councils transfer these type of assets to the Third sector (community organisations) to manage. The Alexander Centre in Faversham and Kemsley Hall are the current subjects of such transfers.

Places of Worship

- Swale has many public places of worship. Most numerous are the Church of England Churches sited throughout the rural parishes and towns. There are also Roman Catholic Churches in Faversham, Sheerness and Sittingbourne and Methodist, Baptist, United Reform Church and Salvation Army Churches in Swale.
- More recently as the diversity of the population has begun to increase public halls are being regularly used as places of worship. The Church of the New Covenant regularly uses Kemsley Hall and the Refiners Church regularly uses the Labour Hall in Sittingbourne. Both of these churches, which mainly attract a congregation from the black community would like more permanent bases.
- Places of worship for non – Christian groups are few in number. The Islamic cultural centre in London Road, Sittingbourne is used as a place of worship, mainly by the Bangladeshi Muslim community, but there is a tendency for other faiths, including people from the Hindu and Seihk religions to leave Swale to worship in temples in neighbouring towns or gather in each others homes for worship. Again they would like more permanent places of worship in Swale as their congregations grow.

Footpaths, Bridlepaths and Cycleways

- The Borough is well served by an historic network of footpaths and bridlepaths. Equestrian pursuits are popular across Swale and there are many small businesses based upon stabling facilities. In terms of regional footpaths the North Downs Way runs through part of Swale and on the coast the Saxon Shore Way follows the whole of the mainland section of Swale's coastline.
- Promoted cycle routes have recently begun to be offered, encouraged by cyclists and the national charity Sustrans. Route one of the National Cycle Network passes through Swale and forms part of the link between Dover and Inverness. Local commuter routes have also been installed in Sittingbourne.

Privately managed facilities and services

There are a wide range of facilities and services offered by the private sector within the sectors of crafts, fashion, tourism, sport and entertainment. They are too numerous to all detail here but most notably Swale has the following:

- A national greyhound racetrack at Central Park Stadium (and event centre) in Sittingbourne.
- Four, 18 hole golf courses; one at Upchurch, one at Wormdale near Sittingbourne, one at Belmont near Faversham and one at Boughton-under-Blean.
- A museum in the Shepherd Neame brewery in Faversham, also offering tours of the brewery.
- Holiday static caravan parks on the Isle of Sheppey whose summer occupation increases the Island population by about 40,000.
- Two cinemas in the Borough, one in Sittingbourne and one in Faversham.
- Boat mooring facilities throughout the Swale and Creeks and a proposal to provide a new Marina as part of the Queenborough and Rushenden Masterplan.

Schools

Local schools are increasingly offering a range of cultural facilities for both pupils' and community use outside school hours:

Facility	Borden Grammar School 2.	Fulston Manor School	Community College 1	Westlands School	Highsted Grammar School	Minster College	Abbey School	QE Grammar School
Gymnasium	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Community Hall	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Tennis Court			•	•		•	•	
Grass pitch	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
All weather pitch	•		•	•		•		
Squash court			•				•	
Theatre/Dance Studio			•			•		
All weather Athletics track								

1. Community College has Arts specialist status
2. Borden Grammar School has Sports specialist status

The Borough is also home to high quality, distinct urban and rural landscapes, accessible

diverse open spaces and a range of wildlife reserves.⁵

draft

⁵ Swale Green Grid, February 2007

Appendix 2 - Survey and Research Findings

Community Views

- Five surveys and a series of targeted focus groups and area fora were undertaken in late 2006 to inform and shape this cultural strategy. The surveys sought to obtain public opinion about the Council's cultural services and their priorities.
- Three postal surveys; Culture, Leisure Centres and Open Spaces, were each distributed to a discreet 10% household sample providing total coverage of 30%. The Cultural Questionnaire resulted in a 12% response rate, Open Spaces a 15% response rate and Leisure Centres an 8.5% response rate.
- The surveys were structured around the Council's existing six themed areas of cultural activity – Arts & Events, Community Halls, Tourism, Open Spaces, Coast & Country, Sport, Leisure Centres & Activities for Young People and Heritage.
- Sports/ Leisure Centres and Activities for Young People were the highest priority for local residents followed closely by open spaces, coast and countryside. Community halls were given the lowest priority by local residents.
- In terms of value for money, open spaces, coast and countryside were ranked top, whilst sport, leisure centres and activities for young people were ranked fifth.
- Cost and cleanliness were clearly identified as a deterrent to participating in activities in all consultations and surveys.
- Improved information about facilities and events was suggested as an area of improvement throughout all themes with traditional postal methods identified as the most popular for receiving information.
- The focus groups identified additional concerns over transportation to events, and safety and accessibility of facilities like parks and open spaces. Although no major changes were requested with regard to additions or improvements there was a strong desire to *"build on what we do well and get the basics right in terms of issues like safety and cleanliness"*.
- Parish Councils were keen that schools, village halls and churches be principle venues for any cultural activities with theatre and sporting activities their top priorities. They also expressed the view that the Borough Council's role was to provide organisational and financial assistance for cultural activities.
- The Council's area fora additionally agreed that London 2012 and the Paralympics should play an important role in culture in the Borough, partnership working should be an integral part of any cultural strategy and they supported the view that the Council should concentrate on what it does well.

Performance.

In terms of resident satisfaction and Council spend, information from the Audit Commission allows Swale to compare itself to other Districts in the UK. A useful indicator of performance is to compare Swale to Districts of similar size and composition (our nearest neighbour group⁶). The information below details how we compare with our nearest neighbours in terms of expenditure levels, improvement and public satisfaction between the years 2003 and 2006.

⁶ Swale's nearest neighbours include Bassetlaw, Braintree, Crewe & Nantwich, Dover, Ellesmere Port & Neston, Erewash, Gravesham, Havant, Kettering, Lancaster, Nuneaton & Bedworth, Rugby, Sedgemoor, South Bedfordshire, and West Lancashire,

Expenditure

With the exception of sports and recreation Swale is a comparatively low spending authority on cultural services when compared to its nearest neighbours.

Cultural Service(s)	Swale Borough Council Spend Per Head of Population (£)	Range Within Authorities (£ per head)	Quartile Position
All cultural services	24.90	11.10 – 61.81	Lower/middle
Culture and heritage	1.18	0.14 – 13.85	Lower
Sports and Recreation	12.50	0.63 – 26.87	Upper/middle
Parks and Open Spaces	9.35	1.37 – 22.49	Lower/middle
Tourism	0.52	0.00 – 4.66	Lower
Other cultural services	1.36	-2.93 – 3.48	Lower/middle

Service Improvement and Resident Satisfaction Rates

Swale performs within the lower quartile for satisfaction with all cultural services, including sports and leisure centres, museums and galleries, theatres and concert halls, arts activities and venues and parks and open spaces. The small variations being that theatres and concert halls are just above the middle of the lower quartile, arts activities and venues are at the top of the lower quartile and parks and open spaces are near the bottom of the lower quartile.

For sports & leisure facilities and libraries resident satisfaction has increased whilst for museums and galleries satisfaction levels have remained the same. For parks & open spaces and theatres & concert halls have fallen. *The challenges are broad in terms of investment in extending the offer, improving standards of existing facilities and increasing the awareness of what is available.*

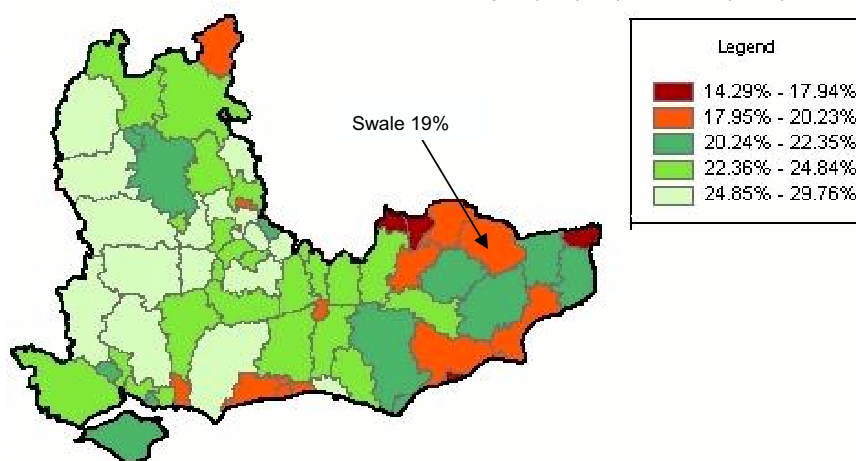
Service Improvement Over The Last 3 Years	2003/ 2004	2006/ 2007	Trend
% of residents who think cultural facilities e.g. museums/galleries have got better or stayed the same.	76.83%	88%	▲
% of residents who think sport and leisure facilities have got better or stayed the same.	83.32%	87%.	▲
% of residents who think parks and open spaces have got better or stayed the same.	82.79%	86.9%	▲
% of residents who think Libraries (owned and managed by KCC) have got better or stayed the same	Not available	95.7%	
Source: Swale General Household Survey 2006-07			

Public Satisfaction	2003/ 2004	2006/ 2007	Trend	Quartile Position
% of residents very or fairly satisfied with <i>museums/galleries</i> .	24%	24%	▶◀	Bottom
% of residents very or fairly satisfied with <i>sports & leisure facilities</i> .	49%	53%	▲	Bottom
% of residents very or fairly satisfied with <i>parks and open spaces</i> .	66%	62%	▼	Bottom
% of residents very or fairly satisfied with <i>theatres/concert halls</i> .	27%	26%	▼	Bottom
% of residents very or fairly satisfied with <i>libraries</i> .	70%	76%	▲	Not Available
Source: Swale General Household Survey 2006-07				

Active People

The Sport England national 'Active People' Survey collects information on a number of indicators to enable us to understand levels of physically activities. This work relates to the National Framework for Sport target to increase participation in sport by 1% per year.

Participation in Sport.

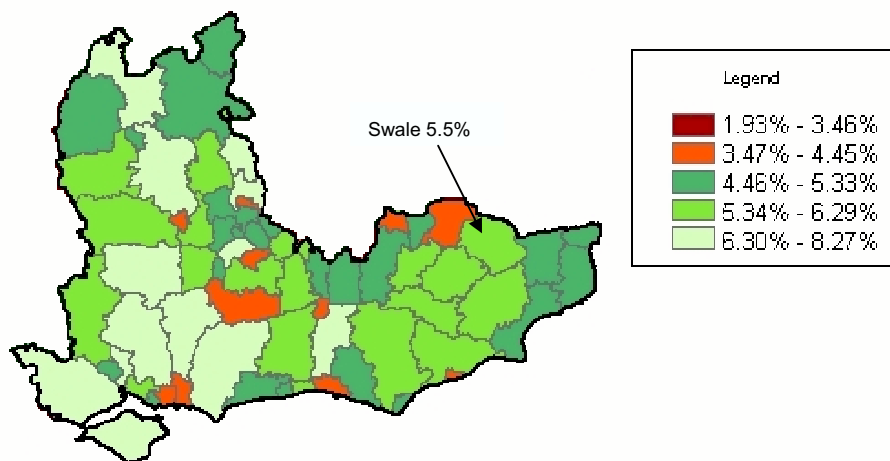


Active People Challenge

To reach its target of a 1% increase in participation year on year to 2013, the South East must increase participation on three days a week of 30 minutes moderate intensity exercise amongst priority groups⁷ by 300,000 people. For Kent this equates to 59,000 people.

⁷ Priority groups include women, ethnic minorities, people with disabilities and people from lower socio economic groups.

Volunteering



Active People Survey Swale Compared To the Region

- Volunteering is higher for females but club membership, participation in competitive sport and recreational walking is lower.
- Volunteering by the over 55's is lower as is club membership. Tuition received is lower for the 16-34 age group but participation in competitive sport is higher. Recreational walking is lower for the 35-54 age group.
- Participation is lower amongst people from black and minority ethnic communities as is volunteering and recreational cycling but club membership, received tuition, participation in competitive sport, satisfaction and recreational walking are all higher.
- Volunteering is lower for people with a disability but satisfaction and recreational cycling is higher.
- Volunteering is higher for managerial/professional groups but recreational walking is lower. Participation, satisfaction and recreational cycling are lower for intermediate groups but volunteering, club membership and receiving tuition are all higher.
- Participation and club membership are lower for self employed/small employer groups but receiving tuition is higher. Participation in competitive sport is higher for the lower supervisory and unemployed groups.

Headline Participation Measures	Swale	Quartile Position	Kent	South East	National
Participation in Sport	19%	Bottom	19.9%	22.6%	21%
Volunteering	5.5%	Middle	5.1%	5.4%	4.7%
Club Membership	23%	Middle	24.9%	27.6%	25.1%
Satisfaction	61.1%	Bottom	66.8%	71.8%	69.5%
Tuition	14.6%	Bottom	18.2%	20.7%	18%
Recreational Walking	19.4%	Middle	19.2%	21.9%	20%
Organised Competitive Sport	15.8%	Middle	15.9%	17.1%	15%
Recreational Cycling	8.4%	Middle	7.8%	9.4%	7.8%

Note: a more detailed analysis of the survey is available at www.sportengland.org/southeast_index/southeast_get_resources/kent_active_people.htm

Draft

Appendix 3 – Cultural Achievements

The former Cultural Strategy set out specific objectives and actions that we agreed to deliver. Below we have summarised our achievements against what we said we would do:

Young People

- We have strengthened the Borough Youth Forum and produced a Youth Strategy for the Borough largely written by young people.
- We facilitated the installation of new ball parks and multi use games areas at Rushenden, Murston and Bysing Wood, Faversham.
- We installed new skateboard parks at Sheerness Seafront and Faversham Recreation Ground and we contributed towards the opening of a new indoor Skateboard and BMX park in Sittingbourne.
- A network of statutory, voluntary and community sector providers of children's and young people's holiday activities was formed in 2004.
- A combined Swale Summer Programme leaflet and a fully functioning website 'Bored In Swale' has been set up.
- Our Sports Development team increased their published number of regular activity programmes and with the Community Safety Partnership contracted Charlton Athletic to deliver more football and other sports coaching sessions in the Borough.

Key User Data

In 2006, 5054 young people took part in holiday activity schemes provided by the Council and its partners compared to 4701 in 2005 when the activities were first coordinated Borough wide.

Sports and Arts

- We funded and project managed the construction of the new dry sports centre (The Jubilee Centre) run by Faversham Gym Club in Faversham
- We extended the Sheppey Leisure Complex with the addition of the Healthy Living Centre
- We carried out a major refurbishment of Sheerness Swimming Pool and secured funding for a regional Arts programme in Queenborough and Rushenden
- We helped to fund the opening of a new floodlit outdoor sports arena at Minster College
- We produced regular programmes of holiday activities for young people.
- A community cinema (Screen on Sheppey) was opened at Sheppey Healthy Living Centre.
- A full range of sports development activities are in place from club and coach development activities, through multi session school holiday activities down to small group work with young people with behavioural problems.

Key User Data

The Council's Bus club scheme to encourage young people in rural areas to use leisure centres helped 420 children to access leisure facilities in 2006/2007 and a total of 38 schools have participated in the scheme. 36 of them are repeat users of the scheme.

68% of the children involved had never visited a sports or leisure centre before

Events and Festivals

- We supported the establishment of the Sea Sheppey Festival in 2005 as part of the national Sea Britain (Trafalgar bicentennial) celebrations
- We organised and managed the Faversham Hop Festival, Sheerness Show and Sittingbourne Spectacular
- In 2005, as part of a Best Value Review of Council services Events and Festivals were judged by Swale residents to be the most improved Council service.
- In 2006 we agreed to transfer the organisation of the Mt Ephraim classic 'pops' concert at Boughton-under-Blean to a community organisation.
- In 2006 we organised more events during the Christmas festivities including a Cameo Opera in Teynham and Brass Band Concert in the Sittingbourne Community College.

Key User Data

80% of shops in Faversham have a hop display theme in their windows during the hop festival. In 2006, 51% of the resident population of Swale are estimated to have attended either the Faversham Hop Festival, Sheerness Show or Sittingbourne Spectacular.

Source; 2006 Local Cultural Survey

Tourism and Commercial Leisure

- Along with key stakeholders, we supported Sheppey Heritage Trust in developing the 'Flying Start' project.
- We have secured Blue Flags for Sheerness beach.
- We became members of Tourism South-East and Kent Tourism Alliance and helped establish a tourism destination management system and an economic impact assessment tool to assess the impact of attractions.
-

Key User Data

In 2005/2006, 1,289 serviced bed spaces were available, 224 self catering bed spaces and 5301 camping, caravan and chalet bed spaces. This represents a small increase over the 1,277 serviced bed spaces, 206 self-catering spaces and 5031 camping, caravanning and chalet spaces available in 2003/2004.

In bed and breakfast accommodation the average length of stay was 4.27 nights, a figure just below the top quartile of our nearest neighbour group.

Swale is a top destination for day trips in Kent with almost 4 million day trips annually.

People With Disabilities

- A Junior Disability Discovery Club has been formed at the Faversham Jubilee Centre and Adult Disability Discovery Clubs at The Swallows and Sheppey Healthy Living Centre have been formed.
- Facilities have been improved through, for example, upgrading toilet provision in the Borough Hall at Queenborough and the installation of new and better pathways through Country Parks at Church Marshes and Oare Gunpowder Works

Improved Health.

- We have promoted many facilities by improving their accessibility and attractiveness. The information and interpretation at Country Parks has been improved.
- At Church Marshes in Sittingbourne there has been extensive investment in ground restoration, enhanced wildlife management, improved provision for fishing, upgraded pathways and cycle routes have been designed to attract the widest range of users. The same philosophy has been followed at Oare Gunpowder Works where Heritage Lottery funding has helped provide a new Interpretation Centre and other physical features to improve accessibility into the surrounding woodland.
- We continued to offer an exercise referral scheme through the Healthy Living Centres and managed a sports development project which was successfully associated with reducing teenage pregnancy levels on the Isle of Sheppey.
- We reduced the price of admissions for people aged 50 plus one morning/week to a broad range of leisure centre activities, helped set up a 'new age curling club' with Sittingbourne Active Retirement Association and promoted local footpath and cycle routes near to town centres.
- Through Sheppey Matters in 2006 we helped set up the Sheppey Wheels project which helps cover gaps in the public transport system and provides a new means for residents in the more isolated communities to access leisure opportunities that are mainly provided in Sheerness.
- As the lead local body for the national Sure Start programme we built and opened one of the largest Children and Families Centre in the country in Sheerness in 2005. Known as Seashells the facility is meeting the needs of 2190 Parents and Children in the area.
- We also launched our own bus club project to increase access to leisure facilities for primary age children in rural areas. 65% of the first users of the project had never visited a leisure centre before and 75% of those first users continue to use them regularly.

Key User Data

One in four adults are estimated to be obese in Swale, (slightly above the national average) and the rate of early death from heart disease is similar to the rate for England.

Partnership Working

- The Leisure and Cultural Group was formed to help achieve closer working and coordination with our partners.
- New dry sport facilities were provided in Faversham through the opening of a new Sports Hall at the Abbey School and at Minster a new all weather Sports Arena was opened at Minster College with the help of a grant from Swale Borough Council.
- The Swale Arts Forum was established with significant support from Sittingbourne Community College and it will provide a springboard from which to promote the performing Arts in particular and improve venues.
- North Kent Local Authority Arts Partnership was formed and this has improved the Boroughs links with the Arts Council encouraging investment in projects like community film making and our events programme.
- Through the investment referred to under Sport and Art the Leisure Centre contract managers for the Swallows and Sheppey Leisure Complex; Serco, have improved the quality of the venues, all of which have been awarded QUEST quality accreditation to a standard within the top 10% nationally.

- In March 2004, The Kent Architecture Centre prepared *The Swale Green Grid*, a Green Grid strategy, which sets out a clear vision for Swale's Green Grid along with recommendations for taking it forward.
- *The Swale Green Grid* describes a suite of five pilot projects, which have received funding. *St Michael's Churchyard Pocket Park*, *St Michael's Road environmental improvements*, *Central Plaza*, *Sittingbourne*, *Sheerness Triangle* and *Fulston Manor Green Link*.
- Two of these pilot projects, *St Michael's Churchyard Pocket Park* and *Central Plaza*, *Sittingbourne* are already complete and the *Sheerness Triangle* has also progressed with significant investment.

School Sports Partnerships

- The Youth Diversion Network was established in 2004 as a response from providers and funders to know what activities were being provided by who, to enable a more joined up and effective use of funding and to highlight gaps in current provision.
- Partners all contribute information to the Bored in Swale website and the newly established text messaging service.
- The Network meets every quarter and is currently focusing on a joint programme of sports activities for the 14 years plus age group this summer.

Key User Data

www.boredinswale.org.uk attracted an average of over 2000 'hits' per month in 2007

Contacting Swale Borough Council

The **Customer Service Centre** deals with all enquiries across the Council; it should be your first stop when contacting us.

Copies of this Swale Borough Council plan are available on the Council website www.swale.gov.uk If you would like further hard copies or alternative versions (i.e. large print, audio, different language) we will do our best to accommodate your request please contact the Council at:

Swale Borough Council
Swale House, East Street
Sittingbourne
Kent, ME10 3HT

Customer Service Centre ☎ 01795-417850

Contact Details

For any further information on these proposals or the work of the Council please contact:

- The Leader of the Council, via email councilleader@swale.gov.uk
- The Director of Regeneration, via email barbarathompson@swale.gov.uk
- Regeneration Manager (Culture/Liveability), via email lynnewton@swale.gov.uk

How to Get Involved

The Council encourages and welcomes community and partner organisation involvement in all its work and there are various ways you can participate:

- Working with Ward Members
- Involvement in the Overview and Scrutiny process
- Attendance at Committees and Executive meetings
- Taking part in consultation activities
- Implementing joint projects

For further details of how to get involved please contact the Head of Policy, by telephone on ☎ 01795-417533 or by email ✉ policy@swale.gov.uk