

LBH EVENTS STRATEGIC PLAN 2019 - 2023

Introduction:

The London Borough of Hounslow (LBH) recognises that there are many benefits to residents and communities through hosting a vibrant and diverse cultural events programme within the borough. Amongst other things, these benefits can include an improved awareness of council owned and managed land; a cultural boost; opportunities for young people through performance and employment; improved health and wellbeing; development of a stronger community and improved cohesion; a boost to the local economy and an enhanced image of the borough.

For the reasons outlined above, the council facilitates the hire of its parks, open spaces and other land it owns or manages to be used as venues by external event organisers. In addition to this, the council also supports the use of its green spaces, for sports, fitness, dog walking and other organised group activities such as historical walks or community improvement activities. The council has a duty-of-care to ensure these events are managed correctly, safely and are of a high standard and as such, all activities that go above the regular uses for a park must seek permission through an application and approval process.

Over the past ten years, the existing programme of activity in Hounslow's parks and open spaces has remained largely the same. The basic programme has not responded to the changing interests and desires of our residents and the way they wish to enjoy our parks and open spaces. Opportunities to benefit from an enhanced offer of activities within our parks have been missed by not moving quickly to secure partnership opportunities and approve applications for high profile cultural events. This led to those applicants seeking alternative venues in London. Cultural benefit aside, there is also the financial benefit to hosting these events and at a time when Conservative austerity measures are being imposed by central government, the Council is required to seek new revenue through commercial opportunities.

The council has an opportunity to sensitively develop a relevant programme of activity across the borough, that appeals to the local community, regular park users and visitors, while being respectful of the valuable role parks and open spaces play within the community as a place for relaxation.

As such, the development of a strategic plan was necessary. The Events Strategic Plan is the council's commitment to developing events and other activities in the public spaces it owns or manages. It sets out our vision for the next five years and is a roadmap to achieving our goals. It will inform key decision makers and provide an improved framework to guide our frontline officers in their day-to-day delivery of the service.

This plan includes the development of the Council's Festivals and Events service, fitness training and other small group activities in parks with an emphasis on income generation. It is necessary in order to stimulate an offer that has become stagnant and to capitalise on opportunities that are present.

Looking beyond the development of a leading Events programme, the council will be able to create a new sense of community for the borough through an enhanced and varied offer. Local residents will be encouraged to experience a wider range of cultural events and to participate in more activities to improve health and wellbeing such as fitness sessions and other small activities.

Through the implementation of this Events Strategy, and a new policy to govern the decision-making process for event and activity approvals, the council can reposition Hounslow as a centre for events and leisure activities. The objectives outlined within the strategic plan will permeate throughout the council and inform decisions that are made, not only about events, but anything that is aligned with the larger objective of improving Hounslow for those that visit, work, study and live in the borough and that will contribute to enhancing the image of Hounslow as a destination.

“WE WILL SENSITIVELY TRANSFORM HOUNSLOW INTO A DESTINATION BOROUGH. DELIVERING A DIVERSE AND SUSTAINABLE PROGRAMME OF EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES THAT ENHANCES THE VISITOR EXPERIENCE AND IMPROVES THE LIVES OF THOSE THAT VISIT, WORK, STUDY AND LIVE IN THE BOROUGH.”

- Vision Statement

Where Are We Now?

Summary:

Each year, the council receives more than 50 applications for events to take place on council owned/managed land and 84 per cent of them gain approval. These events have an estimated attendance of 67,500.

At present, the LBH Events Team administrates the application process for external event organisers seeking to use council owned and/or managed land for their event. Through this process, Hounslow plays host to a wealth of exciting and culturally beneficial outdoor events, which range from large-scale music festivals to small charitable fund-raising events. Alongside processing these applications, they also coordinate small activities for fitness and leisure.

Hounslow has demonstrated its capability to produce its own events to meet a variety of needs, e.g. through its civic events programme which includes Holocaust Memorial Day, Armed Forces Day, The Mayor's Inaugural Ball, and the Remembrance Day service. The council's Events team also delivers two large annual events for the public, in collaboration with partners; the fantastic Night of Festivals on Hounslow High Street and the Joint Services Open Day.

The council is now intending to develop the programme of council-run events further by increasing the variety of new events throughout the year and across the borough for the community to enjoy. This commenced with the successful introduction of a Fun Park to enable residents and visitors to experience The Boat Race at Duke's Meadows in April 2019.

The council has reason to celebrate its achievements over the past four years:

- We have hosted four successful Junction 2 festivals in Boston Manor Park, demonstrating the borough can attract high profile events which host international performing artists.

- In partnership with London Borough of Ealing, we have transformed Gunnersbury Park into a viable outdoor events venue with a sustainable source of income in preparation for the management of the park to be handed to the recently formed Gunnersbury Estate (2026) CIC.
- Developed and implemented a progressive Leisure and Culture Strategy that champions the benefits of cultural events within the Borough.

Although these achievements are reason to celebrate, we recognise we still have a long way to go. Our neighbour, the London Borough of Ealing, receives double the income we do through administering park hires. On our border to the South, the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames processes and approves more than double the number of applications to hold events in their parks and open spaces. Lambeth Borough Council, widely regarded as leaders in local authority events management, have an income target which is 1500% greater than LBH's current income levels and has more than three times the number of events and activities taking place within its parks and open spaces each year.

In recent years, there has been an upturn in the number of commercial and group activities in our parks. These must be regulated to avoid saturation and overuse. These organisations are businesses and should pay a fee for operating within the Borough's parks and open spaces.*

Core Themes:

In developing this strategy, we have been guided by the LBH Corporate Plan, Leisure and Culture Strategy 2016 to 2020 and West of the Borough and Great West Corridor Local Plans.

There are common themes found within these planning documents that we will carry into our own strategic plan. We will do so by summarising them within three core themes, these are: Community, Sustainability and Destination. Additional behaviours we would like to encourage are Health and Wellbeing, and Inclusion.

Community is about accessibility, cohesion, consultation, empowerment, enabling, engagement, equality, health and wellbeing, venues, volunteering and young people.

Sustainability is about ensuring best value for money, business continuity, economic regeneration, efficiency, longevity, reduced environmental impact, safety and quality assurance.

Destination is about arts and culture, branding, business, celebrating Hounslow, identity, leisure, placemaking and tourism.

***We will be developing proposals around the introduction of paid for permits for small commercial activities in parks. This will be consulted on in due course.**

Encouraged Behaviours:

Health and wellbeing is about encouraging active lifestyles, participation in sports and fitness, and promoting a well-balanced lifestyle for physical and emotional wellbeing. LBH and its partners have undertaken many projects in recent years, in outdoor spaces to encourage residents to take part in physical activity. We want outdoor spaces to reflect the needs, wishes and desires of residents to make areas that children, young people and adults can enjoy, whatever their background or capability for physical fitness and exercise.

LBH recognises that health and wellbeing not only relates to physical health but also mental health. Quite often, those with mental health difficulties will have an inequality of physical wellbeing – our aim is to reduce this inequality and ensure there are activities all over the borough that are accessible for everyone to take part in and encourage healthy and natural improvement in reducing the number of people in the borough suffering mental health difficulties, through physical activity.

Inclusion of borough residents of all ages and abilities, supporting those who are susceptible to social isolation in order to reduce loneliness. LBH understands that activities will target specific audiences, however, all public activities must give equal opportunity to anyone wishing to attend and organisers must strive to make the activity accessible so far as is reasonably practicable. In considering equality, LBH looks particularly at race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, disability, religion, faith, socio-economic background and age, aiming to ensure that no person is discriminated against or disadvantaged for their circumstances, identity and beliefs.

In order to promote equality throughout the borough's fitness and small activities, all organisers seeking to hire council venues will be required to develop an Equality and Diversity policy. Whilst the council will monitor the successful implementation of an activity's equality and diversity policy, it is the duty of the organiser at each activity and every member of staff to ensure that the terms of the policy are observed.

Community:

The council will improve access to arts, music, comedy, literature, film, sports, food and drink by sensitively introducing new cultural events to areas of the borough which are currently underserved. This will include the council's own events programme – 'Destination Hounslow' (working title).

The council events team will share their knowledge and skills with the community in order to provide enhanced guidance and support to event organisers.

LBH officers will create templates and guides for community groups to use in their planning process and signpost applicants to where further information can be found, equipping them with the resources they need to deliver safe and successful events.

The income generated through commercial event hires will be used to subsidise the hire fees for community event organisers and pay for community-focussed events that the council delivers.

Improve health and wellbeing through successful management of fitness and training activities in parks and open spaces.

The council will develop a robust consultation policy that includes relevant stakeholders throughout the planning process thus improving communication, building trust and making it easier than ever for residents to engage with events taking place in the borough.

What will success look like?

More community-led and community-focussed events taking place in council managed venues.

Improved accessibility to cultural events.

Increased attendance at events taking place in the borough.

Sustainability:

The council will nurture a programme of events and activities that support Hounslow's economic regeneration.

Through an enhanced events offer the council will support young people and local artists through experience and performance opportunities.

We will curate a calendar of events that encourages residents to seek out cultural experiences and spend money within the borough as well as attracting new audiences to the borough who will also spend money, thus providing a boost to the local economy.

The council will work with event organisers to ensure their events are delivered responsibly. This means that they are safe, their impact on the environment is minimal and they support local businesses and residents through their procurement processes and community-focussed initiatives.

The council will be proactive, monitor trends and attract suitable events to the borough that can provide an uplift to the local economy by supporting local businesses, through increased footfall or by procuring their services.

The events team will be empowered to negotiate with event organisers to achieve the best possible rates for the borough and to support new event organisers while they establish themselves.

The council will provide additional support to community groups that might be struggling to deliver their own events programme, in order to maintain the existing offer.

What will success look like?

More events repeating annually.

Improved positive economic impact from events.

Reduced environmental impact of the events programme within Hounslow.

Destination:

The council will develop a comprehensive programme of events that are relevant to those that visit, work, study and live in the borough. Through this improved offer, we will transform Hounslow into a destination borough.

We will cultivate a receptive environment for event organisers by thoroughly reviewing all applications and proposals with open minds. We will take a positive approach to this work and make resources available so that event organisers can benefit from the council's collective knowledge and experience, ensuring events that take place are safe and appropriate.

The council will implement a progressive policy, that promotes our three core themes and defines Hounslow and its events programme.

There's no place like Hounslow. Through an enhanced events offer we will develop the Hounslow brand and promote the borough as a visitor destination; instil a sense of pride amongst those that live in the borough; attract new business; stimulate inward investment; and attract new people to move into Hounslow.

By working with external partners, community groups, projects and initiatives, members of Hounslow's arts community, and commercial operators, we will enable our events programme to flourish. Through maximising the positive impact of this enhanced programme, we will develop a consistent brand message - that Hounslow is a vibrant and exciting borough to visit, work, study and live in.

Events will be used as a platform to promote the various services provided by the council and other organisations in the borough.

What will success look like?

A diversified programme that appeals to wider audiences.

A higher percentage of event attendees travelling from outside of the borough.

Raised awareness of the council, its services and an improved image of the borough.

Measurement, Monitoring and Consultation:

To assist with monitoring, we will survey three key groups:

1. Attendees at 'Destination Hounslow' events: This survey will provide functional data that will help improve the events programme in the future. The surveys will include questions like:

- How did you travel to the event?
- How much money did you spend today?
- Will you come again?
- How satisfied are you with the event?

2. External event organisers that operate within the borough:

Third party event organisers hiring council venues are service users. Understanding their priorities is important to improving the service for them and others. The survey will include questions like:

- How satisfied are you with the service you received?
- Do you plan to host the same event/activity in the borough again?
- What do you like about hosting your event/activity in Hounslow?
- What do you dislike about hosting your event/activity in Hounslow?

3. Friends Groups, Residents Associations and Neighbours:

The council will advertise that a survey is available to complete through their website and social media during the autumn months, after the busy summer season. Events and other activities impact on these groups and asking for their opinion will help identify areas for improvement and build trust. The survey will include questions like:

- Did you attend any events taking place in a council-managed venue?
- Which event(s) did you attend?
- How much did you enjoy the event(s)?
- What did you like most about the event(s)?
- Would you like to attend the event again?
- How can the council help to improve this event?

Where possible, surveys will be multiple choice questions and quantifiable in order to ensure the responses are easily measurable. The results of these surveys will enable us to monitor the success of our strategic aims.

In addition to the surveys listed above, the council will adopt a policy that requires key events to carry out their own surveys and feedback data to the council. For example, this could include economic impact reports. This information will help the council determine the positive effects the events programme has had on the borough.

Furthermore, the council is committed to developing and implementing a robust and continuous consultation process. There will be dialogue with relevant stakeholders ensuring that comments and concerns of those effected by the council's work relating to events can be heard and thoroughly considered during decision making processes.

The feedback from the surveys and consultation will be a key-contributing factor in how the council is able to recognise potential for improvements throughout the lifetime of this strategic plan. During operational review meetings, we will be able to cross check reports for the core components of the plan and identify areas of success and where we can improve, allowing us to implement an annual cycle of continuous improvement, throughout the five-year plan.