

# WE ARE CULTURAL.

# WE ARE NEWHAM.



## BUILDING NEWHAM'S CREATIVE FUTURE

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

People at the Heart  
of Everything We Do



## MAYOR'S FOREWORD



I am thrilled to unveil Building Newham's Creative Future, our creative and cultural strategy that will act as the foundation for driving participation and be a key part of inclusive growth in Newham.

This strategy is the first of its kind in Newham, framing the creative and cultural industries within an ambitious 15 year plan that demonstrates how they can contribute to our community wealth building agenda. By 2037 we want to be at the forefront of culture across London and beyond, ensuring our residents feel its many benefits.

Reflecting on creativity and culture in the borough, Newham has a rich history and our diverse communities are at the heart of everything we do. Through Building Newham's Creative Future we will drive inclusivity and we hope this will translate to greater engagement and participation in culture.

Engaging in creativity and culture can be wholly enriching and it is important that everyone feels the health and wellbeing benefits of this. Having the Newham Unlocked Festival has been an excellent

recent initiative, showcasing the diversity of Newham's artistic talent, and we are keen to build on this.

The strategy brings together all that is going on in Newham now and recognises that we are at a critical point in our creative and cultural landscape. The future is bright with so much planned, including the cultural hub of Stratford's East Bank, creative programmes at the Royal Docks and now the delivery of Levelling Up, following the Council's successful bid for £40m to central government, much of which will focus on the re-use of character buildings for cultural and creative activity.

Working on this in the future with residents, cultural and creative organisations, businesses and partners, we look forward to accelerating our businesses' creative and cultural agenda for Newham. We have so much to offer and I can't wait to show the rest of London.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rokhsana Fiaz OBE'.

**ROKHSANA FIAZ OBE**  
Mayor of Newham

March 2022



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### WHERE WE ARE NOW

Over the past fifteen years Newham has been at the centre of some of London and the UK's largest and most ambitious cultural regeneration projects, with key developments at East Bank and the Royal Docks. These are helping to secure Newham's place at the heart of London's cultural and creative future.

But we know it's the people of Newham who are by far our greatest strength. Newham is home to a thriving and talented community of artists, dance groups, production agencies, musicians, community choirs, theatre companies, fashion designers and many more cultural producers who make Newham what it is today. This community is essential in showcasing and nurturing Newham's cultural diversity and heritage, and in fuelling the creative economy.

More than ever, we are prioritising inclusive growth as a guiding principle across the borough. Our Towards a Better Newham Covid-19 Recovery Strategy makes us the first borough in London to use livelihood, wellbeing and happiness as its prime measure of economic success, and our Community Wealth Building Strategy builds on the principles of economic, social and environmental justice so that long-term prosperity, fairness and wellbeing can be embedded for all residents.

And yet, we know there are some key challenges:

- Uneven spatial distribution of investment in culture borough-wide is perpetuating existing inequalities
- Lack of capacity and resource across the local authority, sectors and other players, particularly when it comes to accessing funding and delivery
- Loss of cultural spaces and the financial viability of keeping spaces open and/or refurbishing vacant or underused spaces that could host community services, particularly in a difficult economic climate
- Funding models, rather than community needs, are driving development
- Culture is not considered a viable career by all Newham communities
- There is a risk that culture is viewed as tied to regeneration, rather than something intrinsically valuable and with wider economic, social and environmental benefits

Moreover, Arts Council England's (ACE) statistics indicate that Newham has both low annual investment per capita and low engagement in the arts sectors. Newham ranks in the bottom ten English local authorities in terms of resident attendance to an arts event, museum, gallery or residents spending time doing an arts activity. ACE's 2017 Active Lives survey found that 44% of Newham adults have not attended an arts event, museum or art gallery nor participated in an arts activity over a year, compared with neighbouring Hackney (27%).



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### VISION FOR THIS STRATEGY – NURTURING TALENT IN NEWHAM

Newham's priority is to put people at the heart of creativity and culture. This ambition requires long-term and consistent commitment and as such this strategy lays out the framework for cultural investment in Newham over the next 15 years. Our ambitions for culture and creativity in Newham also require strong leadership and action now, therefore the strategy also lays out the big steps we will take in the first four years.

It is our firm belief that this approach will unlock opportunities borough-wide by providing equitable access to creative and cultural expression and by nurturing a creative economy where Newham residents can find fulfilling work, as well as supporting Towards a Better Newham's ambitions for greater health, happiness and wellbeing.

Achieving this means investing in creative education early and maintaining these opportunities throughout people's lives, facilitating collaborations that can unlock potential, celebrating and showcasing our cultural programmes with pride, and providing a diversity of spaces that enable people and businesses to thrive.

Our vision is for Newham to be a place where culture, creativity and heritage drive investment, inclusive participation and wellbeing. In light of this vision, this strategy sets out five focus areas:

### CULTURE FOR LIFE

By 2037: lifelong learning and inclusive engagement with creative and cultural activities is the norm for all residents to support fair employment opportunities, wellbeing and happiness.

### POWERFUL PARTNERSHIPS

By 2037: Newham communities, cultural and creative organisations and the borough work together to exchange ideas, experiment, and act to increase inward investment, productivity, and community impact.

### LOUD AND PROUD

By 2037: Newham values, celebrates and communicates its creativity, culture and heritage to increase access and engagement, develop a sense of belonging, support local enterprise and encourage a thriving and resilient local economy.

### CULTURE-FIRST SPACES

By 2037: Newham has high quality, diverse and inclusive spaces for a range of creative and cultural activities borough-wide to support local enterprise and inclusive access.

### PROACTIVE MINDSET

By 2037: Newham's governance structure, management systems and resources effectively support the needs of Newham's thriving cultural sector and communities and lead with optimism.

