

Cheltenham Borough Council
Overview and Scrutiny – 29 March 2004
Arts Development Strategy
Report of the Arts Development Officer

1. Summary and recommendations

- 1.1 Following the re-organisation of the officer structure in September 2003, the council committed itself fully to building upon Cheltenham's reputation for quality and excellence within the arts, through the appointment of an arts development officer, within the Health & Wellbeing Division.
- 1.2 A key element of the appointment has been the production of Cheltenham's arts development strategy, which sets out the vision, priorities and work plan for arts development over the next three years, within the context of the community plan and council's business plan.
- 1.2 I therefore recommend that:**
- 1.2.1 The arts development strategy and action plan as presented in Appendix A are agreed.**
- 1.2.2 The arts development strategy and action plan are reviewed and updated on an annual basis.**

2. Introduction

- 2.1 Cheltenham has a well deserved reputation as a cultural centre. The town is home to Gloucestershire's only fully professional theatre, has a programme of internationally recognised arts festivals, and a designated art gallery & museum containing a collection recognised as being of national significance. The town also boasts a thriving community of independent artists, clubs and societies and committed amateurs.
- 2.2 The arts development strategy and action plan represent Cheltenham Borough Council's commitment to arts development and follows on from the appointment of an Arts Development Officer in November 2002 whose the initial brief of conducting research leading to the formulation of an arts development strategy for Cheltenham.
- 2.3 In addition, the year 2003/4 saw further research and discussion of the future of the arts in Cheltenham, as follows:
- In November 2003, the Arts Centre Working Group made recommendations to cabinet to invest the capital receipt from the sale of the Axiom Arts Centre building into schemes to enhance the Art Gallery & Museum; the Playhouse; and to fund a 'virtual arts centre'. The recommendations were agreed by Council in December 2003.
 - The Art Gallery & Museum, through a working group, considered its future options and reported back to cabinet in November 2003.

- Towards the end of the financial year 2003/4, research began into the formulation of a public art strategy.

3. Background

- 3.1 Research to inform the arts development strategy has been primarily through one-on-one interviews with individuals and organisations, supplemented with telephone interviews where a meeting has not been possible. Desk research has been extensive.
- 3.2 In addition to the research undertaken by the Arts Development Officer, consultants were commissioned in June 2003 to investigate and report on options for the allocation of the capital receipt to be received from the sale of the building and site of the Axiom Arts Centre. The Arts Development Officer worked closely with the consultants on further consultation exercises.
- 3.3 The views of the residents of Cheltenham were gathered through the inclusion of questions relating to the arts (and in particular an arts centre for Cheltenham) in the Viewpoint questionnaire sent out over the summer of 2003. The views of young people were gathered via two questionnaires through MAD Young People's Council and MASSIVE. A full list of people and organisations consulted are contained in Appendix B1 and B2 of the arts development strategy.
- 3.4 Pilot projects in the form of five arts workshops for children and family groups took place in partnership with the Whaddon Lynworth & Priors Neighbourhood Project during August 2003. A further three workshops took place at the Whaddon Project Centre over the October half-term.
- 3.5 An overview and scrutiny working party was set up in February 2004 and has twice met to look at the Arts Development Strategy.

4. Impact on corporate priorities

- 4.1 The arts have the power to contribute positively to a wide range of social agendas: education, economic regeneration, health education and promotion, crime reduction and community development.
- 4.2 Section 6 of the arts development strategy addresses in detail how the arts impact upon corporate priorities as well as wider social agendas.

5. Implications

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| 5.1 Financial | None as a direct consequence of this report |
| 5.2 Legal | None as a direct consequence of this report |
| 5.3 Personnel | None as a direct consequence of this report |
| 5.4 Equal opportunities, social justice and anti-poverty | This strategy promotes social inclusion and equal opportunities |
| 5.5 Environmental | This strategy promotes environmental improvement through public art |

Background Papers

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Accountability

Cllr Rowena Hay

Scrutiny Function

[Click here](#) and type the relevant overview and scrutiny committee