

Cheltenham Borough Council

Social & Community Overview & Scrutiny Committee

11 April 2005

**From Access to Excellence - Arts Development Strategy
Monitoring Report**

Report of the Arts Development Officer

1. Executive Summary and recommendation

1.1 The issue

1.1.1 Members may recall approval of the council's three year Arts Development Strategy – *From Access to Excellence* – by this Committee and the Cabinet in March 2004

1.1.2 As part of the approval it was agreed that a monitoring report would be presented to this Committee annually, in order to provide members with an update on the progress, which has been made against the action plan contained within the strategy. An update of the progress made within the first year of the strategy is appended to this report.

1.2 I therefore recommend that:

1.2.1 **Members note the progress made within the first year of the Arts Development Strategy Action Plan.**

1.3 Summary of implications

1.3.1 Financial None as a result of this report

1.3.2 Legal None as a result of this report

1.3.3 Human Resources None as a result of this report

1.3.4 Equal opportunities, social justice and anti-poverty The strategy promotes social inclusion and equal opportunities

1.3.5 Environmental The strategy promotes environmental awareness and improvement

1.4 Links to Business Plan and Corporate Objectives

1.4.1 The implementation of the arts development strategy directly supports the council's

priority to deliver a wide range of objectives within areas of social, educational, cultural environmental and economic policy.

1.5 Statement on Risk

1.5.1 This service area is not contained within the corporate or service risk register.

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 represents Cheltenham Borough Council's commitment to arts development. Its production followed on from the appointment of an Arts Development Officer in November 2002 whose initial brief was of conducting research leading to the formulation of the arts development strategy for Cheltenham, which was approved by the cabinet and this Committee in March 2004.

3.0 Progress to date

3.1 Since that time the Arts Development Officer has been responsible for the delivery of the set of actions contained within the attached action plan, through facilitation, co-ordination and partnership working. The progress against each task to date is detailed within the final column of the document, however the headline tasks and achieved to date are as follows:

- to address issues surrounding the borough's arts infrastructure
The Arts Development strategy was published in Spring 2004 and is the basis for the work of the ADO. The ADO promotes the arts in Cheltenham through this publication and attendance at meetings and boards at local and regional level.
- to lead on the 'virtual arts centre' initiative, a project aimed at addressing key gaps in arts provision, facilities and programming
The virtual art centre initiative remains dependant upon revenue from the sale of the Axiom building.
- to promote access to, and use of, the arts in tackling social exclusion, health issues and crime & disorder
The ADO has created a number of initiatives and projects which engage young people and there families specifically in regeneration areas.
- to target arts projects at young people, including the promotion of arts in education
Education underpins all the work of the ADO. The ADO has worked closely with the Life Long Learning Officer and those responsible for young people in both formal and informal education.
- to promote the use and role of the arts in developing the borough's economy and in contributing to economic and social regeneration

The ADO, as part of Gloucestershire Arts Advisory Group (GAAG) has contracted research into Creative Industries in the county. The ADO is an active member of a number of partnerships and acts as the primary contact for public art.

- to employ the arts in raising awareness of environmental issues, in enhancing our environment and in promoting sustainability
The ADO is working closely with Green Environment team on a number of projects. The Public Art Strategy was approved by cabinet in December 2004.
- to develop and support partnerships, which promote creative practice, attract investment to the arts, support joint working and which make the most effective use of resources for the arts

The ADO represents CBC at GAAG which negotiates spending of partnership funding with Arts Council South West. Funding for the arts has increased due to the support of various agencies and commitments to public art.

- to advocate for the positioning of the arts at the strategic centre of the council, particularly in light of there being a separation between the arts providers within the council at directorate level (i.e. Arts Development and the Art Gallery and Museum in the Social and Community Group; Festivals and Entertainments and associated arts venues in the Economy and Business Improvement Group; Public Art and Planning in the Environment Group).

The ADO supports the portfolio holder for Social and Community on all arts related matters and works across departments and disciplines to promote the arts throughout Cheltenham Borough.

4. Consultation

- 4.1 Extensive consultation was undertaken as part of the production of the Arts Development Strategy. Since that time ongoing consultation has been undertaken on a project by project basis in order to ensure that direct and partnership work is delivered both effectively and appropriately and which address accessibility and inclusion.

5. Conclusion

- 5.1. Encouraging progress has been made within the first twelve months of the implementation of the arts development strategy. It is recognised that some of the tasks identified have yet to commence as a result of the delay in the sale of the Axiom Centre and the implications of this. However, officers are optimistic that the sale is now progressing, and subsequently the work identified within the plan relating to the sale will be targeted as a priority action once the sale is completed.

Background Papers

Overview & Scrutiny Report March/April 2004

Arts Development Strategy – From Access to Excellence

Contact Officer

Paul McKee Arts Development Officer : Tel 01242
Paul.McKee@cheltenham.gov.uk

Accountability

Deputy Health Wellbeing & Economy

Scrutiny Function

Social and Community Overview & Scrutiny