

Cheltenham Borough Council
Social & Community Overview & Scrutiny Committee
10 July 2006
From Access to Excellence - Arts Development Strategy
Monitoring Report
Report of the Museum & Arts Manager

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 second year of the strategy is appended to this report.

1.2 I therefore recommend that Members note the progress made within the second 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 to conduct 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 plan, however, the headline tasks 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 networking, partnership working and co-operation with cultural institutions, at both local and regional levels.*
- To lead on the 'virtual arts centre' initiative, a project aimed at addressing key gaps in arts provision, facilities and programming. *Since the sale of the Axiom building, a recruitment process for the Virtual Art Centre Officer has been successful, and the chosen candidate will be in post by the end of July 2006. This appointment is crucial in supporting the work of the ADO – and enabling even wider participation within the arts.*
- To promote access to, and use of, the arts in tackling social exclusion, health issues and crime and disorder. *The ADO has created a number of initiatives and projects which engage young people and their families specifically in regeneration areas. Key projects include: the Hester's Way and Priors Neighbourhood projects, working with Arts in Trust to provide performances with Cheltenham General Hospital and a proposed project within Lower High Street Regeneration Area with CCP and local police.*
- To target arts projects at young people, including the promotion of arts in education. *Education underpins all the work of the ADO. The ADO continues to work closely with the Lifelong Learning Officer and those responsible for young people in both formal and informal education. This valuable partnership working has resulted in improved projects, offered and planned by all providers.*
- 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 commissioned research into the Creative Industries in*

the county. The ADO is currently investigating the development of artists studios at a town centre location – and continues to be an active member of a number of partnerships concerned with regeneration.

- To employ the arts in raising awareness of environmental issues, in enhancing our environment and in promoting sustainability. *The ADO continues to work closely with the Green Environment team on a number of projects. These include: offering advice and support to a consortium of artists, planning to create an art gallery in the proscenium building in Montpellier Gardens, and providing artistic input to the National Play Day events in Pittville Park. The Virtual Arts Officer will also in the future, devise and promote the arts in parks, gardens and public spaces.*
- 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. Through successful partnership working with ACE SW and GAAG, the ADO has devised and implemented a countywide visual artists festival, called Encantas, which culminated in a high profile symposium at the University of Gloucester in June 2006. Funding for the arts continues at the same level for the period 2006-2008, 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 continues to support 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 Council.*

4. Consultation

- 4.1 Extensive consultation was undertaken as part of the production of the Arts Development Strategy. Since that time ongoing consultation continues to be undertaken on a project by project basis in order to ensure that direct and partnership working is delivered both effectively and appropriately, and addresses accessibility and inclusion.

5. Conclusion

- 5.1. Encouraging progress has once again been made over the past twelve months in order to implement the actions set out within the arts development strategy. It is recognised that the appointment of the Virtual Arts Officer was inhibited due to the delay in the sale of the Axiom Centre, and now with that position going live – an exciting opportunity exists in further bringing the town's cultural facilities together, and enabling even wider participation within the arts.
- 5.2 This second progress report and the implementation of the tasks identified have been delayed by the absence of the ADO during a four month period, October – February. However, officers are optimistic that with the addition of the Virtual Arts Officer, and the appointment of the Museum & Arts Manager, that the ADO will be supported and encouraged to continue with the outstanding work that has resulted from the implementation of the Arts Development Strategy, and which will continue into year 3.

Background Papers	Review of Arts Development Strategy April 2005/06 Arts Development Strategy – From Access to Excellence
Contact Officer	Jane Lillystone Museum & Arts Manager : Tel 01242 237431 Jane.lillystone@cheltenham.gov.uk
Accountability	Deputy Finance and Economic Development
Scrutiny Function	Social and Community Overview & Scrutiny Committee