

# ***Information/Discussion Paper***

## **Social and Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 15<sup>th</sup> October 2007**

### **Future Development of Cheltenham Town Hall**

This note contains the information to keep Members informed of matters relating to the work of the Committee, but where no decisions from Members are needed

#### **1. Why has this come to scrutiny?**

- 1.1 The Committee has requested a briefing on progress made since the Cultural review with plans to develop the Town Hall.

#### **2. Summary of the Issue**

- 2.1 Arising from the recommendations contained in the final report of the Cultural review, architects were appointed to prepare a scoping report outlining a potential development plan for the Town Hall.
- 2.2 The architects were instructed to prepare a phased development programme, to be implemented as funds became available. They were charged with addressing the immediate operational requirements of the Town Hall in phase one, to alleviate the most pressing needs and deliver immediate improvements. Phase One would also have an eye to the long term and the ultimate achievement of the full potential of the Town Hall and its development into a cultural centre of which the town could be proud. The finished product would meet the town's cultural needs for the foreseeable future.
- 2.3 The architects have produced plans and a model to show how the phased development might be achieved. These will be on display at your meeting and available for inspection.

#### **3 Phase One**

- 3.1 Addresses capacity constraints at the Town Hall, improving emergency exits and toilet facilities needed to increase the operational capacity and improve event profitability. This would also provide new artists changing rooms, improved staff accommodation, and catering facilities.
- 3.2 The Town Hall would be 'turned around' to present a new face to the world, with the main entrance being through Imperial gardens. The extension proposed would introduce a 'cultural hub' containing new reception and circulation area, box office facilities, and a bar / café area that would be open to the public and provide all-day

catering to casual customers. The proposed bar / cafe would replace the current Garden Bar.

- 3.3** Currently, it is not possible to offer all-day catering in the Town Hall as the existing buffet is located beyond the 'ticket barrier'. Catering is therefore available only to patrons attending events. This simple change would provide an additional income stream for the Town Hall.

#### **4 Phase Two**

- 4.1** This envisages the provision of an adjoining building at the rear of the Quadrangle, linking the Town Hall with the Promenade. This would provide indoor exhibition space, plus a purpose-built new home for the Town's Tourist Information Centre. This phase would also include new permanent offices for the staff of Cheltenham Festivals.

#### **5 Phase Three**

- 5.1** This completes the development project with the construction of a new 500 seat auditorium to extend the capacity of the Town Hall and provide further flexibility in the types of business that can be handled. In addition to avoiding the need to erect marquees to stage the town's major festival programme, it will provide a modern raked-seat event and conference facility in the Town Centre.

#### **6 Finance**

- 6.1** This first phase has been estimated to cost approx. £4 million at current prices.
- 6.2** It must be recognised that the Council does not have the resources to fund this development in its entirety and must seek funding partners and business partners to achieve its ambitions.
- 6.3** The Cultural Review had envisaged a situation whereby the sale or lease of the Pump Room would provide resources to invest in the development of the Town Hall. With the decision now taken to retain the Pump Room under direct Council control for the foreseeable future, this possible source of funding is not now open.

#### **7 English Heritage**

- 7.1** With the Town Hall being a listed building set within a conservation area, it has been necessary to consult English Heritage on the development proposals. At their request, a Heritage Impact assessment has been commissioned. Once this has been submitted they will be able to give a view on the project.
- 7.2** We will need to secure that active support of English Heritage for the development proposals to proceed.

#### **8 Future Management**

- 8.1** The Council will also need to consider which future management structure would best deliver the development proposals and provide ongoing management of the extended facilities. An alternative to outright Council management might provide

better and easier access to external funding streams to help to finance development. Structures that might be considered include Trust status, or one of the new Community Interest Companies. Such a move would also support the Council's stated intention of moving from the role of a direct provider of arts and cultural activities, to that of enabler. It is our intention to evaluate these alternatives and report to Cabinet accordingly in due course.

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## **Background Papers**

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