

Cheltenham Borough Council

Social and Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 15th October 2007

Cultural Review : implementation update

Report of the Cabinet Member Arts and Culture

1. Executive Summary and recommendation

- 1.1** In March 2006, the Cabinet received a report highlighting the principal recommendations of a strategic review on culture in Cheltenham.
- 1.2** The Cabinet accepted most of the review's recommendations, and many of them have either been implemented or are in the process of implementation
- 1.3** **I therefore recommend that the members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee note this update and raise any specific queries with the officers presenting the individual reports.**

1.4 Summary of implications

- 1.4.1** Financial All of the initiatives are dependent upon the availability of adequate funding and this challenge is addressed in each of the reports which follow on this agenda.
- 1.4.2** Legal None arising from this report.
- 1.4.3** HR None arising from this report.

1.5 Implications on corporate and community plan priorities

- 1.5.1** Action 2c of 'Our Plans for 2007/08' states that:
"In 2007/08 we will start to deliver an investment programme which will deliver our ambition to create a sustainable future for our cultural activities and venues through implementing development proposals for the Art Gallery and Museum, and completing the separation of Cheltenham Festivals from the Council, and agreeing future plans for the Town Hall and Pittville Pump Room".

1.6 Statement on Risk

- 1.6.1** See attached appendix.

2. Background

- 2.1** David Pratley Associates were commissioned in 2005 to produce a review document : "Culture in Cheltenham : Planning for a Sustainable Future". The report was jointly commissioned by the Council and Cheltenham Festivals, with the majority of funding coming from Arts Council (South West).

- 2.2** The scope of the report was to cover:

- Identifying any gaps in cultural provision
- maximising the collective impact of arts providers
- ensuring a stable future for Cheltenham Festivals (CF)
- clarifying the role of the Council and other stakeholders in the cultural scene
- providing business plans for both CF and Council-owned venues
- realistic investment plans for the Council-owned venues.

2.3 A steering group of officers, members and other stakeholders guided the work of the consultants to arrive at a final report in February 2006, with findings in three main areas:

- Proposals for an optimal platform and framework for developing cultural services
- The future direction, governance and business plan for CF
- Options for the future of council-owned venues, including both the programming policy and any required capital investment.

2.4 Some of the report's more radical initial options such as the creation of a 'Cultural Foundation' or Trust, and the sale or long lease of some of the venues were rejected in favour of what were judged to be financially sustainable alternatives which were supportive of the then current programme.

The report made it very clear that status quo was not a sustainable option.

2.5 The specific resolutions of the Cabinet in March 2006 were:

2.5.1 To endorse an outline £4m. scheme to develop the Art Gallery and Museum, using £500,000 of the receipt from the sale of the Axiom to support the scheme.

2.5.2 To provide £200K from the sale of the Axiom to the Playhouse theatre.

2.5.3 To move CF to full independence as quickly as possible.

2.5.4 To undertake a scoping study for £4m. scheme of improvements to the Town Hall.

2.5.5 To endorse the principle of the Council as an enabler rather than direct provider of arts.

2.5.6 To seek partnership opportunities for the operation of both the Town Hall and the Pittville Pump Room.

2.5.7 To strengthen the strategic role of the Cultural Partnership.

2.5.8 To reconsider senior management arrangements and their impact of future management of cultural services.

3. Implementation of the Cabinet's decisions

3.1 Officers and members have been working to implement these decisions over the past eighteen months. Interestingly, neither the officers nor the members leading this implementation phase were involved in the initial cultural review.

3.2 Inevitably, some of the decisions will involve long term implementation and progress has been predictably slow; others have already been completed or rejected in the light of subsequent information.

3.3 The papers which follow this brief history of the cultural review look in greater detail at:-

- progress on the independence of CF
- the Town Hall scoping study
- the future of the Pittville Pump Room

The Museum and Arts Manager will also present an oral update on the proposed development of the Art Gallery and Museum.

3.4 Of the other main items progress is as follows:

3.4.1 Following receipt of a satisfactory business plan, the Council has agreed to release £200,000 to the Playhouse Theatre.

3.4.2 The senior management structure of the Council remains under general review but no firm decisions have yet been made.

4. Consultation

4.1 The original cultural review was widely consulted amongst staff, partners and other stakeholders.

Subsequent reports to Cabinet or to Overview and Scrutiny committees have been subject to public consultation.

Background Papers	Culture in Cheltenham : Planning for a sustainable future (David Pratley Assocs) February 2006. Cabinet report : Cultural review : implementing changes 29 th March, 2006.
Report Author	Chris Huckle, Deputy Chief Executive, 01242 264201, Chris.Huckle@cheltenham.gov.uk
Accountability	Councillor Diggory Seacome, Cabinet Member for Arts and Culture
Scrutiny Function	Social and Community