

Cheltenham Borough Council**Social & Community Overview & Scrutiny Committee****23rd July 2008****Revised Exhibitions Policy for the Art Gallery & Museum****Report of the Museum & Arts Manager****1. Executive Summary and recommendation****1.1 The issue**

1.1.1 This revised policy replaces the previous Exhibitions Policy for the Art Gallery & Museum, approved by Cheltenham Borough Council's Leisure Committee in 2003. It reflects the mission statement of Cheltenham Art Gallery & Museum (CAG&M); and takes into account the findings from a visitor, non-visitor and stakeholder survey on preferences for the type and style of temporary exhibitions within the galleries. This survey was part the Art Gallery & Museum's 2007 consultation campaign (funded by the Museum, Archives & Libraries (MLA) Data Collection Project), which also included surveys on: A Review of Opening Hours, and Proposals for the Future Development / Expansion.

1.1.2 The revised Exhibitions Policy will deal with temporary exhibitions within / part of the Art Gallery & Museum only; and the temporary exhibitions programme links into the (annual) Art Gallery & Museum Service Action Plan. The revised Exhibition Policy also includes references to the Council's Business Plan – from 2008/09 onwards – and takes into account the *Building for a New Future* Development Scheme.

1.1.3 This revised policy will be updated again in 2010.

1.2 I therefore recommend that this report be noted.

1.3 Summary of implications

1.3.1 Financial As outlined in 4.3 of the report.

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1.3.2 Legal There are no legal implications arising from this report.

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1.3.3 Other

1.4 Implications on corporate and community plan priorities

1.4.1 The revised Exhibitions Policy includes references to the Council's 2008/09 Business Plan – in which the delivery of an investment development programme for the Art Gallery & Museum is a key ambition (9A).

1.5 Statement on Risk

1.5.1 The revised Exhibitions Policy takes into account the redevelopment plans for the Art Gallery & Museum – and these will be identified within the 2008/09 Wellbeing & Culture Divisional risk register. A detailed risk register assessment will form part of the project planning for the Development Scheme.

2. Introduction

2.1 Cheltenham Art Gallery & Museum is committed to offering a varied programme of temporary exhibitions, which will contribute to the town as a popular cultural centre in both local and regional terms; and in line with the Council's Cultural Review Strategic Framework.

2.2 Through organising a lively, informative, balanced and challenging exhibitions programme, the Art Gallery & Museum is able to attract new and repeat audiences on a continuing basis.

2.3 Temporary exhibitions are also an essential part of our audience development work as they provide a means for engaging with a broad visitor spectrum – whether this is local, regional or national.

3. Background

3.1 Cheltenham Art Gallery & Museum has a long and successful history of showing a diverse temporary exhibitions programme. Exhibitions are programmed throughout the year – currently in two galleries: the de Ferrieres Gallery and Gallery 13 – with an average showing of 10 to 12 exhibitions per year; with a minimum duration of four weeks. The selection, number and range of exhibitions are presently determined by the Exhibitions & Education Manager – in consultation with the rest of the Art Gallery & Museum staff – and agreed at the Exhibitions & Education Team meetings.

3.2 Our aim is to continue building on this success during the next 2 to 3 years, with a programme that will provide a series of 'taster exhibitions' of the calibre we plan to show in the new galleries (a key part of the Development Scheme), starting with *Surrealism Returns*. This in-house exhibition will include loans from national, regional and private lenders, and will be a significant marker for CAG&M in terms of partnership working and fundraising.

3.3 One of the key features of Building for a New Future will be a temporary exhibitions gallery of the size and standard to take national touring shows. This will enable the Art Gallery & Museum to collaborate with regional and national galleries in organising specific exhibitions for Cheltenham; and will provide the town with a

cultural centre of excellence for the visual arts.

4. Summary of the Exhibitions Policy

4.1 Within the policy– and as part of the exhibition programming - the Art Gallery & Museum aims to:

- Provide a broad balanced programme of stimulating exhibitions – encompassing art, craft, design, history and issue-based material.
- Encourage and promote equal opportunities by creating exhibitions which allow physical and intellectual access – via clear and understandable content labelling and educational opportunities; promoting the educational potential of all exhibitions and provision of activities where appropriate.
- Create a welcoming and stimulating environment for all visitors – regardless of race, class, gender or sexual orientation; challenging pre-conceptions and prejudice, and encouraging engagement and involvement.
- Promote an awareness of other cultures and celebrate cultural diversity – supporting cultural cohesion.
- Develop new audiences locally and involve targeted communities – which encourage lifelong learning, and give local people the opportunity to experience temporary exhibitions of national and international importance.
- Complement the Art Gallery & Museum’s permanent collections by enlarging on aspects already covered (i.e. on display), or by focusing on themes and objects omitted (i.e. not within our collections) – including displaying recently acquired items and material from the reserve collections.
- Generate or commission exhibitions that include local artists / makers – as a way of supporting their development and Gloucestershire Creative Industries.
- Continually improve the service by a process of monitoring and evaluation – including using statistics, public feedback and reviews.
- Work in partnership with individuals and organisations at local, regional and national levels - to provide specific shows for Cheltenham and / or for touring.

4.2 To achieve these aims, a strategy has been proposed, which includes:

- Revise the current selection process for the temporary exhibitions programme, including the revision of prescribed guidelines and exhibition criteria – based on the aims within this revised policy, and with links to the Audience Development Plan.
- Ensure that temporary exhibitions come from a variety of different sources, which may include: exhibitions created in-house, exhibitions created in partnership with CAG&M and other organisations, touring exhibitions, exhibitions from groups / single artist and / or makers, and community exhibitions (which include local people in a participatory manner).
- Produce a new agreement to outline the responsibilities of the exhibitors and CAG&M staff – based on the revised prescribed guidelines and exhibitions criteria.

- Investigate the feasibility of providing a biennale open exhibition to showcase the work of local artists working in Gloucestershire. Because of the great demands on the current gallery space, there are proposals to organise a Cheltenham Open Show – which will provide CAG&M with a fair and democratic way to exhibit local artists' work. There will be a selection process, including an independent judging panel.

4.3 The following considerations have also been taken into account, these include:

- **Funding:** The current programme operates on a limited budget, often requiring an imaginative and flexible approach; and a small amount of additional fundraising. However, the temporary exhibitions programme for the new galleries (for example larger in-house shows and national touring exhibitions) will require substantial levels of funding. Therefore, we will need to consider seeking grants and sponsorship from external sources and partnership working through fundraising as a core activity for the exhibitions programme.
- **Partnerships:** We aim to maintain and develop further links with various agencies:
 - Providers of exhibitions: other galleries and organisations at local, regional, national and international levels, Touring Exhibitions Group (TEG), artists, makers and their representatives or groups, local clubs and societies.
 - Education: Maintain and develop further links with both the formal and informal education sector – as users of the temporary exhibitions programme and as exhibition providers and partners, i.e. University of Gloucestershire.
 - Maintain active involvement in local groups and consortia, including artist and maker groups (CGA, GGC) and Gloucestershire Arts Framework (GAF).
 - Develop partnerships with tourism organisations and the local business community – with a specific remit for Gloucestershire Creative Industries and links into the Cultural Entrepreneurs (a new network for creative industry workers).
 - Work with the Arts Development Team, colleagues in Cheltenham Borough Council and other organisations / individuals to tackle issues relevant to the wellbeing and cultural agenda
 - Festivals and events: Cheltenham's renowned festivals offer opportunities for high profile cultural projects across the arts.
 - Work with other venues / organisations – including the Pittville Studios and the Gardens Gallery.

5. Key Milestones

5.1 Within the Exhibitions Policy, key milestones for the period 2008 to 2010 will be included within an action plan (please refer to Background Papers), with reference to the following:

- Provide a series of 'taster exhibitions' – during the next 2 years – of the calibre to be shown in the Exhibitions Off-Site programme and new temporary galleries (as part of the Development Scheme).

- Develop an Audience Development plan – in conjunction with project planning for the building of the new Development Scheme.
- Develop new temporary exhibition galleries as one of the key features within the Development Scheme, *Building for a New Future* - of the size and standard to take regional / national touring shows.

Background Papers	Exhibitions Policy & Action Plan – April 2008 to December 2010 Exhibitions Programme – April 2008 to December 2009
Contact Officer	Jane Lillystone, Museum & Arts Manager, 01242 775706, jane.lillystone@cheltenham.gov.uk
Accountability	Councillor John Rawson Cabinet Member, Finance & Culture
Scrutiny Function	Overview & Scrutiny Social & Community Committee