

**Cheltenham Borough Council
Social and Overview & Scrutiny Committee –
23 July 2008**

Report from Chair of Cultural Partnership

1. Following the reorganisation of the Cheltenham Strategic Partnership, Culture is no longer represented on the main body of the partnership and there is no administrative support for the partnership in CBC.
2. However, given the importance socially and economically of culture to Cheltenham and the investment made in it by the Council, I invited those running cultural organisations and CBC representatives to meet in April to decide how best to take matters forward. Those attending the meeting were Geoffrey Rowe from the Everyman, Derek Aldridge from the Town Hall, Donna Renney from Cheltenham Festivals, Chris Lammiman representing the Voluntary Sector, Chris Huckle, CBC Deputy Chief Executive and Diggory Seacome, Cabinet Deputy with responsibility for culture. Apologies were received from Jane Lilleystone and Sonia Phillips.
3. There was complete agreement over the fact that Cheltenham needed a stronger overarching Cultural Strategy and that the main bodies should find a way to report their achievements jointly to CBC under a united cultural voice. Potential collaborative working on education projects was also suggested. To this end, the partners are currently compiling data to form the basis of a cultural report. This was to have been completed at the beginning of July but has been delayed by Festivals.
4. There was agreement that it was beneficial for culture in the town if the key organisations were to meet and have a voice. It was also felt that there should be a forum at which cultural developments in the Town are discussed and cultural players could be informed of relevant developments and inform each other. A need was identified for the cultural organisations to have a joint mechanism through which to influence CBC policy and strategic developments. However, the organisations also recognised that there is a degree of competition between them for audiences and for funding and that the main players are a “mixed economy” in that some are run by CBC whilst others are run by independent boards.
5. There was no overall agreement on whether a request should be made for the Cultural Partnership to be reinstated on the main body of the Strategic Partnership although several people thought it should be. Having sat on the Strategic Partnership myself, I am unsure as to whether this is the best route for a Cultural Partnership as I felt there was an imbalance of power between statutory bodies and non-statutory and culture is a non-statutory activity.

6. There was agreement between the cultural providers present that the Cultural Partnership should be restricted to arts and entertainments and not include sport. This was not shared by Chris Huckle.
7. A follow-up meeting is now planned for August after which a report will be submitted to the Cabinet Deputy for consideration. The report will contain the data gathered, summarise the diversity of opinions and provide options for further consideration on the future structure of the partnership. This will allow time for me to consult Sonia Phillips, Assistant Director Wellbeing and Culture on her thoughts and what assistance she might be able to bring to the group.

**Donna Renney,
Chair Cultural Partnership
7 July 2008**