

SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
23 JULY 2008

MINUTES
(18.00 – 20.20)

PRESENT Councillor Martin Dunne (in the Chair), Councillors Lydia Bishop, Tina Franklin
Les Godwin, Sandra Holliday and David Hall.
Hazel Kitchin and Jackie Sallis

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE Cabinet Member Finance and Culture

1. APOLOGIES Councillors Wendy Flynn, Duncan Smith, Chris Ryder and Paul McLain
Cabinet Member Community Development and Housing
Cabinet Member Sport and Safety

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Hazel Kitchin declared an interest in agenda item 11 Revised exhibitions policy for the art gallery and museum as an Executive on the Arts Council, Chairman of the Board of Directors on the Gardens Gallery and Chairman of Cheltenham Arts Society Ltd.

3. MINUTES (Agenda item 3)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 5th June be approved by the Committee and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

Councillor Holliday asked whose decision it had been to change the date of this meeting from 7th July to 23rd July 2008. In response the Deputy Chief Executive explained that the revised date had been agreed by the Chair and Vice Chair to accommodate a themed meeting around culture following the close of the Music Festivals and had been announced at the last meeting.

4. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

None

5. MATTERS REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE

(a) By Council – None

(b) By Cabinet - None

(c) By Other Committee – None

6. CO-OPTION OF HOUSING TENANT REPRESENTATIVE TO THE SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (Agenda item 6)

The Deputy Chief Executive introduced this item which had been circulated with the agenda. He reminded the Committee that at the previous meeting the appointment of a housing tenant representative had been deferred pending future developments for tenant participation in Cheltenham. He explained that the tenant and leaseholder representatives had now elected an interim sub-committee to act on their behalf and at an initial meeting a new housing tenant representative, Karl Hemming was nominated.

RESOLVED that the Committee appoints Karl Hemming as non-voting housing tenant representative on the Committee.

7. BRIEFING FROM CABINET MEMBERS

The Cabinet Member Finance and Culture provided the following update:-

- He would be presenting a report to Council on 28th July which recommended allocation of funding of £2 million from the sale of land (the Midwinter Scheme) to the Art Gallery and Museum Development Scheme to supplement the £500k already committed from the sale proceeds of the Axiom. He referred to the question raised by Councillor Ryder at the last meeting regarding future commitment to invest part of the capital receipt back into allotments and indicated that he would be emailing her with a response following the meeting.
- The Playhouse Theatre (Cheltenham) had re-opened last week following refurbishment including a new auditorium
- Cheltenham Music Festival running from 4 - 19 July 2008 had been very successful, increasing ticket sales by over 800 on last year's figures.

In response to a question from Councillor Godwin, the Cabinet Member Finance and Culture indicated that £200k of the proceeds from the sale of the Axiom had been committed to the Playhouse and had contributed to the recent refurbishment. The £500k committed to the AG&M was earning interest until such time as the funding was required to take the project forward. The financial deficit would need to be met through further fundraising. The Head of Financial Services clarified that payment to the Playhouse Theatre had been made in tranches of £50k and by the end of the next week £150k will have been received.

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member Finance and Culture for his briefing.

8. CHELTENHAM FESTIVALS (agenda item 8)

The Deputy Chief Executive introduced his covering report explaining that Cheltenham Festivals (CF) is an important strategic partner for the Council and as such benefited from long term support including an annual revenue grant as well as other subsidies in the form of services provided by the Council. It had also been awarded £500,000 over a three year period from April 2007 to March 2010 to assist CF in becoming independent and for other reasons outlined in 1.1 of the report. He advised that following the presentation by Donna Renney, Chief Executive of CF, members will need to satisfy themselves that the original aims of the funding are being adequately addressed and raise probing questions if deemed necessary.

Donna Renney, Chief Executive of CF presented her report which had been

circulated with the agenda. She provided the following responses to Members' questions:-

- One of the major risks to the success of the Festival organisation in the future is the facilities and capacity of the Town Hall and gardens. The Festivals currently spend over £90,000 per annum on marquees. Plans to develop the Town Hall are vital to the long term success of the Festivals and Cheltenham's reputation as a centre of cultural excellence, however the development scheme was not supported by English Heritage or local residents and wider public consultation had not yet been undertaken so any improvements were in the long term. In the meantime, the Festivals were currently working with the Manager of the Town Hall and other partners to look at different management options.
- The five-year sponsorship deal with HSBC allowing rent free accommodation for that period was a risk that had to be taken in order for the business to grow. No discussions had taken place regarding the future following the end of the current sponsorship but the Festival is building up reserves where possible to meet future costs in the event of the worst case scenario.
- Whilst the aim was to reduce reliance on CBC revenue support (grant and in kind) it was hoped that the council would continue to support the work of the Festivals in as many ways as possible.
- The Science Festival had attracted significant sponsorship compared to the other festivals because of its uniqueness. The event was being exported to St Louis, USA in October 2008.
- Discussions and consultation were taking place with friends groups such as the Festival Society and Friends of the Literature Festival regarding 'the Festivals Club' Membership Scheme to be launched in 2009. CF valued the enormous support given by such organisations.
- The percentage of festival goers from Cheltenham varied depending on the type of festival but was approximately Music 50%, Science 50%, Literature 40% and Jazz 40%.
- The year on year growth that CF will be required to achieve to secure a financially sustainable future will be challenging and not to be underestimated particularly given the economic downturn, however the Chief Executive of CF was satisfied that at the end of years one and two the company was on track to meet the five year target.

The Chairman thanked the Chief Executive of CF for her presentation.

RESOVED that the Committee notes the report.

9. CULTURAL PARTNERSHIP (Agenda item 10)

Donna Renney, Chief Executive of CF presented her report which had been circulated with the agenda.

Councillor Godwin felt that sport should be included in the Cultural Partnership as it was important for promoting healthy lifestyles and popular with young people. As indicated in the report, the Deputy Chief Executive shared this view and commented that the current Cultural Strategy was far wider than arts and entertainments and included leisure so there was a legitimate argument to broaden the partnership. With funding available in the lead up to the London Olympics 2012, it was a good opportunity to link the Cultural Partnership into the sporting agenda. However, it was up to the organisations involved to

determine what they wanted to get out of the partnership. In response to a question from Councillor Godwin, the Deputy Chief Executive indicated that once the report of the Cultural Partnership is received by the Cabinet Member, the council will be able to pick up the sports issue and deal with it if necessary.

The Chairman commented that as there is a degree of competition between the cultural organisations for audiences and for funding, managing the group must be difficult particularly encouraging a willingness to share information. In response the Chief Executive CF explained that most data was already in the public domain so this was not a problem and the group were able to reach consensus in most cases because they had a common aim to promote Cheltenham as a cultural centre and encourage education.

The Chairman thanked the Chief Executive of CF for her presentation.

RESOLVED that the Committee notes the report

10. PROGRESS REPORT ON THE ARTS DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY – ACCESS AND EXCELLENCE (agenda item 10)

In introducing this report which had been circulated with the agenda, the Museum and Arts Manager explained that in March 2004, a three year Arts Development Strategy had been approved by Cabinet and it had been agreed that a monitoring report would be presented to this Committee annually. The Museum and Arts Manager explained that funding for the creation of a 'virtual arts centre' following the decision to sell the Axiom Centre building in December 2002 had been secured through the interest earned on the capital receipt from the sale of the building. The Virtual Arts Officer had been appointed in August 2006 on a two year contract. This report provided an update to Members of the progress made within the third year of the strategy.

The Arts Development Officer and Virtual Arts Officer gave a presentation on the wide range of projects that have resulted from the implementation of this strategy and which have increased access to and participation in a wide range of cultural activities through out Cheltenham. Priorities delivered through the strategy include promoting access to (and use of) the arts in tackling social exclusion, health issues and crime and disorder, targeting arts projects at young people, promoting the use and role of the arts in developing the Borough's economy and to employ the arts in raising awareness of environmental issues. Project work included:-

- Encantas visual arts festival and symposium
- Meantime - artist-run project space
- Advent Art website
- Alternative Galleries
- Arts in Health
- Urban Art
- Community Art
- Zeitgeist online oral history archive
- Whychwood Music Festival
- Cheltenham Rock School
- Surrealist exhibition
- Public Art

Further information is available on the website www.cheltenham.gov.uk/arts

Jackie Sallis asked what provision had been made for the needs of disabled people and suggested that the Disability Forum be used as consultative body. In response, the Arts Development Officer indicated that as far as was possible projects were made accessible to everyone. This had included liaison between Gifford Circus and young people with disabilities and Milsom Street Day Centre for those people recovering from mental health problems. However, he welcomed the opportunity to work further with the Disability Forum in the future.

Hazel Kitchin commented that the presentation had been very stimulating and she was pleased that the outreach work had attracted new audiences. She praised the work of the Virtual Arts Officer which had been innovative and extremely effective and asked whether this work would continue in view of the short term contract. In response, the Museum and Arts Manager hoped that funding would be available to extend the contract.

In response to a question from Councillor Hall, the Arts Development Officer explained that the Artlift project provided 15 sites across Gloucestershire offering 30 arts sessions to patients referred by their GP or other practitioners. He indicated that all GPs in the Gloucestershire area had been approached and given the opportunity to participate.

In response to a question from the Chairman, the Arts Development Officer commented that research undertaken by the University of Central England had shown that following the arts sessions people had expressed a view that they were feeling better and were therefore less likely to go back to the GP for further treatment. The Cheltenham Safety Partnership had also reported that crime against property and crime against person had significantly reduced during the time spent on community based arts projects.

The Chairman thanked the Arts team for their presentation.

RESOLVED that Committee

- i) Notes the progress made within the third year of the Arts Development Strategy
- ii) Notes the progress made on the establishment of the virtual arts centre.

11. REVISED EXHIBITIONS POLICY FOR THE ART GALLERY AND MUSEUM
(Agenda item 11)

The Museum and Arts Manager introduced this report which had been circulated with the agenda. She explained that the revised policy replaces the previous policy which had been approved by Leisure Committee in 2003. It reflects the mission statement of Cheltenham Art Gallery and Museum and takes into account findings from a visitor, non visitor and stakeholder survey on preference for the type and style of temporary exhibitions within the galleries. The policy also takes into account the Building for a New Future AG &M Development scheme. The Exhibition and Education Manager was also in attendance to answer any technical questions.

In response to a question from Councillor Hall, the Exhibition and Education Manager confirmed that Gallery 13 was not accessible to wheelchair users if they were unaccompanied, however the new development scheme will be accessible to all. She indicated that she would be happy to consult with the Disability Forum with regard to the design of new temporary exhibition galleries.

Hazel Kitchin welcomed the aspirational plans for temporary exhibitions which were long overdue. In response to her comments and questions, the Exhibition and Education Manager indicated that the exhibitions programme including community exhibitions and the proposed Cheltenham Open Show sought to dovetail and not compete with the work of the Gardens Gallery. She confirmed that further consultation with regard to the Audience Development Plan will take place with the local art fraternity amongst other stakeholders. Hazel Kitchin also commented that as part of education, it would be useful if the council could apply some joined up thinking with the arts clubs who were currently running workshops.

In response to a question from the Chairman, the Exhibition and Education Manager explained that whilst the current programme operated on a limited budget and within limited space it offered a diverse range of exhibitions following a fair and democratic selection process.

RESOLVED that the Committee notes the report

12. POSSIBLE FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS (Agenda item 12)

Councillor Hall suggested two topics and agreed to complete scrutiny topic registration forms regarding the provision of a gym in the town centre and a piece of work on Care Villages.

13. COMMITTEE FEEDBACK SESSION (Agenda item 13)

The Chairman commented that he was disappointed that there had been a lack of cross-party participation in the meeting that evening.

The Deputy Chief Executive informed the Committee that the Lead Officer support for Scrutiny Committees will be changing from September 2008 and Grahame Lewis will be supporting Social and Community O & S Committee.

The Committee wished to put on record its thanks to the Deputy Chief Executive for his support over the past number of years.

14. DATE OF NEXT MEETING – Monday 8th September 2008.

Councillor D Smith
Chair