

# ***Information/Discussion Paper***

## **Cheltenham Borough Council**

**Council – 27 June 2011**

### **Imperial Gardens Outline Design and Consultation**

This note contains information to keep Members informed of progress on the garden redesign and consultation process and the Cheltenham Festival proposals for Imperial and Montpellier Gardens.

#### **1. Background**

- 1.1 On the 15<sup>th</sup> March 2011, the Council's Cabinet resolved that an outline design be drawn up for Imperial Gardens to accommodate the increase in size and popularity of the Cheltenham Festivals. The marquee footprint (excluding gazebos and covered walkways) is to be kept to a maximum area of 2750m<sup>2</sup> (currently approx. 1950m<sup>2</sup>). Furthermore, both Imperial and Montpellier Gardens will not be subject to more than 75 days each of special event usage, including setting up and taking down (currently 107 days in Imperial Gardens).
- 1.2 Previously, Imperial Gardens has been the main public park used by the Cheltenham Festivals. Starting from 2012, it is proposed that the Jazz Festival will take place in Montpellier Gardens in May and the Science Festival in Imperial Gardens in June. Starting in October year, the Literature Festival will take place in both Gardens.
- 1.3 The Council's Cabinet has allocated £140,000 to undertake landscape improvements to Imperial Gardens and to upgrade it's infrastructure in order to accommodate the increased marquee footprint. This sum also includes modifications to the electricity, water and sewer supplies which will be needed in Montpellier Gardens in order to accommodate this, and existing special event usage

#### **2. Imperial Gardens Design and Consultation**

- 2.1 Taking on boards the comments of stakeholders and the needs of the Cheltenham Festivals the outline design is focused on the following outcomes:
  - Retaining colourful floral bedding.
  - Improving Skillicorne Gardens
  - Improving the garden bar area.
  - Accommodating sustainable forms of planting.
  - New water, electricity, and drainage supplies to Montpellier Gardens
  - Access improvement to Imperial Gardens
- 2.2 Proposals for the redesign were put out for consultation on week commencing 16<sup>th</sup> May 2011 and extensively publicised through the local newspaper and radio. It will remain open until the 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2011. Venues for the display have included the

Regent Arcade, Beechwood Arcade, libraries, neighbourhood resource centres, the Imperial Gardens Garden Bar, and Municipal Offices. Separate meetings have taken place with the Cheltenham Civic Society, Cheltenham in Bloom, the Friends of Imperial Square and Gardens and the Friends of Montpellier Bandstand and Gardens.

**2.3** At the time of writing this report 176 comments cards have been received the results of which are summarised in Appendix 1, and general comments listed in Appendix 2. Collective responses from The Cheltenham in Bloom Committee are contained in Appendix 3. Members will be updated on any further responses received.

**2.4** In summary, the feedback received to date indicates strong support for the scheme, but with some reservations about the positioning of marquees over flower beds for the duration of the festivals. This may reflect concerns that the subsequent re-instatement will not be adequate or effective enough. There are also concerns about achieving and delivering the scheme within a reasonable timeframe and with the funds available. Further comments raise concerns about providing adequate resources with which to maintain the gardens upon completion of any improvement works.

### **3. Montpellier Gardens**

**3.1** Discussions on the proposed use of Montpellier Gardens for the Jazz and Literature Festival are ongoing, but a maximum area of approximately 4700m<sup>2</sup> is currently being considered for all structures except temporary gazebos.

### **4. Next Steps**

**4.1** The designs, together with feedback from the consultation, and Council Debate will be reported back to Cabinet for a decision at the end of July. If approved by Cabinet, phase 1 of the works will be worked up in more detail and more accurate costings obtained. Planning and listed building consent will be applied for where required with a view to works being undertaken during this coming Autumn and Winter.

<b>Report author</b>	<b>Contact officer:</b> Adam Reynolds – Green Space Development Manager adam.reynolds@cheltenham.gov.uk, 01242 774669
<b>Appendices</b>	Appendix 1 – Summary of comment card returns Appendix 2 – General Comments Appendix 3 – Written response from Cheltenham in Bloom
<b>Background information</b>	Cabinet Report and Minutes, 15 <sup>th</sup> March 2011 – Imperial and Montpellier Gardens Strategy