Cheltenham Borough Council
Social and Community Overview and Scrutiny – 11 July 2011
Cabinet – 26 July 2011


Accountable member: Cabinet Member for Sport and Culture, Andrew McKinlay
Accountable officer: Executive Director – Pat Pratley
Accountable scrutiny committee: Social and Community
Ward(s) affected: All

Key Decision: No

Executive summary

This report provides a summary of the content and approach set out in the attached report (Appendix A) - “Towards a Commissioning Strategy for Leisure and Culture Outcomes – Preliminary Analysis – July 2011”, hereafter referred to as the “preliminary analysis report”.

The primary objective of the preliminary analysis has been to;

“Assess the ability of the current delivery arrangements to deliver an agreed set of outcomes within a challenging financial framework.”

The preliminary analysis report sets out the context for the review and contains research and background information which is then drawn upon in arriving at the review conclusions.

The preliminary analysis report concludes by describing an assessment process called the “Current Model Exercise”. The purpose of the assessment was to evidence the current delivery arrangements ability to meet the primary objective from 2 aspects; (a) deliverability of new proposals and (b) positive direction of travel for the service across a number of key areas. The assessment was based on submissions completed by the current service providers.

The report makes a number of service specific recommendations arising directly from the Current Model Exercise and also some more general recommendations arising from the context and background research.

Recommendations

Cabinet is requested to:

1. Support the proposal that the review team engages with local partners and stakeholders, including the voluntary and community sector, Local Strategic Partnership and Health and Well-Being Partnership to; (a) bring them up to date with the review, (b) outline the priorities for further work and (c) consult on the currently proposed outcomes for leisure and culture reporting back to Cabinet on the above by October 2011.

2. Acknowledge that in the development of a joint strategic cultural
plan for Cheltenham there should be alignment between the outcomes commissioned through this review and the conclusions of the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Festivals Working Group.

3. Approve the commencement of an option appraisal of the alternative delivery arrangements for the Art Gallery and Museum (AG&M), as compared to the status quo, and by April 2012, a business case be presented recommending the most appropriate option that:
   • Delivers the outcomes and measures of success required by the Heritage Lottery Fund;
   • Meets the requirements of the HLF special conditions;
   • Creates an opportunity to secure wider economic and creative growth as well as the regeneration potential that a cultural quarter presents for the town; and
   • Reduces the ongoing AG&M operational subsidy (based on an appropriate business case).

4. Endorse the approach that as part of the above AG&M appraisal process the review team engages with all relevant partners and stakeholders to ensure that options and outcomes are fully identified, assessed and consulted upon.

5. Approve, subject to agreement through the budget and Bridging the Gap processes, proposals to generate additional Town Hall revenue of £10K (2012-13).

6. Approve proposals for the review team to commence testing the outcomes for the Town Hall and Pittville Pump Room with other commercially operated public facilities, recognising the need to balance commercial aspects with its community role and report back to Cabinet by April 2012.

7. Depending on the outcome of (6) above, investigate the potential to develop a strategy for capital investment in the venues and in particular the commercial feasibility of improving conference facilities at the Town Hall.

8. Approve, subject to agreement through the budget and Bridging the Gap processes, savings arising from Leisure@ of £140K (2012-13) and a further £64K (2013-14).

9. Endorse the approach that by December 2011, service providers will have explored how, within a difficult financial framework, Leisure@ and Sport, Play and Healthy Lifestyles can deliver outcomes and provide more mutual support for each other.

10. Endorse the approach that the review team commences discussions with the Local Strategic Partnership and the NHS with a view to being best placed to act as a provider of choice for health commissioners locally for physiotherapy and activity based patient treatment pathways.

11. Endorse the proposal that an assessment of other alternative
delivery arrangements for Leisure@ and Sport, Play and Healthy Lifestyles is an ambition for the future with the AG&M work taking a priority.

12. Endorse the proposal that Leisure@ service providers continue to pursue additional savings/income opportunities so that operational subsidy will be reduced to a minimum over the medium term.

13. Endorse the proposal that the review team, together with the Cabinet Member Working Group, starts the process of building knowledge and understanding of alternative delivery arrangements for leisure outcomes through visits and discussions with other providers and commissioners, with the objective to defining next steps by May 2012.

### Financial implications

The assessment of the current delivery arrangements for leisure and culture has identified savings of £150k which can be delivered in 2012/13 with a further £64k savings being delivered in 2013/14. It is proposed that these savings will be agreed through the budget and bridging the gap processes.

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### Legal implications

None directly arising from this report.

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### HR implications (including learning and organisational development)

There are no immediate HR implications arising from this phase of the L&C Commissioning review. However, ongoing informal consultation with the recognised trade unions and employees working within the leisure and culture service area is recommended to ensure employee engagement is maintained and that any proposed changes that are needed in the future are properly understood.

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### Key risks

The main risks to the recommendations are:
- Incomplete or unsuccessful engagement with the local partners and stakeholders
- Inadequate appraisal of options
- Lack of internal capacity

The approach to managing these and other risks may be found in the Risk Assessment (Appendix B)

### Corporate and community plan Implications

The services within scope of this review and the outcomes described support a number of the Council’s corporate outcomes, in particular:
- Arts and culture are used as a means to strengthen communities, strengthen the economy and enhance and protect our environment
- Cheltenham is able to recovery quickly and strongly from the recession
- We attract more visitors and investors to Cheltenham
| Environmental and climate change implications | As part of the review process, service providers have completed an environmental impact assessment. This has been assessed as part of the direction of travel assessments. |
1 Background

1.1 The Leisure and Culture Commissioning Review is one of 3 strategic projects using commissioning principles. The review encompasses Leisure@ (including Prince of Wales Stadium), Town Hall, Pittville Pump Room, Art Gallery and Museum (including Tourism and TIC), Sport Play and Healthy Lifestyles. Grants for the Playhouse Theatre, Everyman Theatre and Gardens Gallery do not fall within the scope of this review.

1.2 Like many authorities, Cheltenham Borough Council, faces significant financial constraints and has been required to adopt a rigorous approach to finding year on year financial savings. The outcome of the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) resulted in a cash reduction in government support of £1,090M, a cut of 15.16% in 2011-12 to be followed by a further provisional cut of £579K (9.57%) in 2012-13. Cumulatively, this equates to a 23.86% cut over 2 years.

1.3 Members have been clear in their priority to maintain the level and quality of front-line services. The financial backdrop is, however, like never before, forcing the Council to fundamentally review and assess priorities. Commissioning provides the Council with a way of re-thinking and re-shaping how “outcomes” vital to the social and economic well-being of the community might best be provided for across the wider public and voluntary sector community.

1.4 The challenge for the Council is, therefore, in a period of significant financial restraint, how best to commission the outcomes for leisure and culture, which secure that viable and sustainable future, but from a standpoint of a significantly reduced level of direct public investment.

2 Towards a Commissioning Strategy for Leisure and Culture Outcomes – Preliminary Analysis

2.1 The preliminary analysis report is attached at Appendix A. The primary objective of the preliminary analysis has been to:

“Assess the ability of the current delivery arrangements to deliver an agreed set of outcomes within a challenging financial framework.”

2.2 The “challenging financial framework” set for the preliminary analysis review was a target of finding savings/increased revenue of £690Kpa by 2013-14. This represents 30% of the net cost of expenditure for the services within scope.

2.3 The preliminary analysis report contains research and background important in setting the context for the review. The report concludes by describing a process called the “Current Model Exercise”. The report draws on the conclusions of the Current Model Exercise and the background research to arrive at recommendations for next steps.

2.4 It should be pointed out at this point, however, that the Art Gallery and Museum (AG&M) did not complete the Current Model Exercise owing to the timing of the Heritage Lottery Funding (HLF) application and the outcomes and conditions attached to the bid. However, the AG&M has been considered in terms of recommendations for next steps and these are outlined later in this report.

3 Background to Leisure and Culture Services

3.1 Section 2 of the preliminary analysis report considers the background to current day provision of leisure and culture services.

3.2 The DPA report (2006) provided a 5 year framework for cultural services. The Council has driven forward this longer-term approach and continues to support investment into its cultural provision, taking opportunities where possible to explore alternative delivery arrangements, eg, Cheltenham Festivals.

3.3 More recently, the Council has remained committed to its leisure provision, making the decision to reinstate Leisure@ following the 2007 floods and also the commitment to the re-development of the Art Gallery and Museum (AG&M).
3.4 The framework has worked well in achieving one of the DPA report aims “to reduce the net cost of cultural activities, in line with other economies across the Council”. This reduction in cost strategy has been extended to leisure as well as cultural services.

3.5 Reflecting back again to the DPA report, the challenge then was recognised as the ability of the Council to maintain “the Borough’s cultural heritage … in light of financial pressures”. This challenge is as real today, perhaps even more so, than it was in 2006.

4 Current Service Performance and Public Perception

4.1 Section 3 of the preliminary analysis report reviews the current service performance.

4.2 Headline performance data and user/customer information has given a flavour of the activity being undertaken. The services provided by Leisure and Culture are well-performing and, particularly from the culture perspective, make Cheltenham “what it is”.

4.3 Ongoing reduction in net operational expenditure, and hence public subsidy, for leisure and culture services has been an ongoing theme. Over the financial years 2007-08 to 2011-12 the strategy to reduce the net cost of the services has achieved savings amounting to £573,200.

4.4 Public perception of the services gained through the 2010-11 budget consultation process has shown the public regard Leisure@ and Cheltenham Festivals very highly. The value of the Town Hall and Pittville Pump Room (PPR) as venues was also recognised as important. Whilst it is probably dangerous to draw significant conclusions without further research, the “mid-range” ranking of the AG&M may be reflective of the very fact that it needs that capital investment to re-develop its offer and so raise its standing in the public perception.

5 Cheltenham’s Leisure and Culture Offer

5.1 Section 4 of the preliminary analysis report considers Cheltenham’s leisure and culture offer. The conclusion drawn is that the offer is rich and diverse. Strategically, leisure and culture are key priorities for the Council and are seen as not having an end in themselves, rather a catalyst for social, economic and environmental development and improvement within the town.

5.2 The Council’s offer does not sit in isolation from the Cheltenham offer, and this will be an important consideration moving forward. The report identifies a number of other similar providers in the market place, particularly locally and, therefore, understanding the “fit/relationship” between the offers will be important. The joint strategic cultural plan for the town, referred to later in this report, will be important in this respect.

6 Alternative Delivery Arrangements

6.1 Section 5 of the preliminary analysis report summaries, at a very high level, alternative delivery arrangements particularly within Gloucestershire. Not unexpectedly, a mixture of delivery arrangements exists locally. Research shows that nationally, the arts, sport and leisure sectors have become increasingly engaged with, and reliant on the voluntary, private and partnership sectors to deliver and sustain the level of provision previously enjoyed.

6.2 Of the case studies analysed there is evidence of improvement in service standards and user/footfall numbers. There are also examples where new ventures have been less successful.

6.3 However, at this stage any direct comparisons with the Council’s services must be treated with caution. Facilities may not be exactly the same and the baseline position needs to be understood in order to be able to make a direct comparison.

6.4 The Council itself does of course have a track record of creating or supporting the creation of other operating models. Commissioning leisure and culture outcomes through alternative delivery arrangements may be an option for the Council to consider moving forward, and there is
local knowledge and expertise to draw upon should that direction of travel be chosen.

6.5 Section 5 of the report concludes the research part of the review.

7 Needs Analysis to Defining Outcomes

7.1 Section 6 of the preliminary analysis report moves on to describe the process of identifying the needs of the community and translating these into meaningful outcomes. This is not an easy process.

7.2 One of the lessons learned from the preliminary analysis phase was that outcomes for Leisure@ and Sport, Play and Healthy Lifestyles (SP&HL) should be the same, reflecting the close relationship and connection between the services. Therefore, in outlining conclusions and recommendations from the Current Model Exercise Leisure@ and SP&HL will be considered together.

7.3 The currently defined outcomes for Leisure@, SP&HL and Town Hall and PPR are outlined in Tables M and N of the preliminary analysis report.

7.4 As explained earlier the AG&M did not complete the Current Model Exercise. The HLF grant uses an outcomes based approach and also includes special conditions attached to the HLF application itself. To create yet another set of outcomes at this time would overcomplicate an already understood and well-researched project. At this point, therefore, the outcomes for the AG&M are those required by the HLF and which must be delivered as a requirement of the re-development scheme.

8 General Observations and Recommendations

8.1 The Financial Challenge

8.1.1 In the short term, perhaps not surprisingly, it was not possible, without seriously impacting upon the outcomes sought, for the services within the scope of this review to identify new short-term proposals to deliver savings to the value of the financial challenge set, ie, £690K by the end of the financial year 2013-14. However, savings totalling £214K have been identified, the significant proportion of which relate to Leisure@. (Recommendations 5 and 8).

8.2 Engagement and Consultation

8.2.1 The preliminary analysis review, having concentrated on looking at the current delivery arrangements, has not engaged more widely with local partners and key stakeholders. There is now, following Cabinet’s approval of the recommendations, a real necessity to bring stakeholders up to date with the review work so far, the direction of travel and proposed priorities for further work and also to consult on the currently proposed outcomes for leisure and culture. (Recommendation 1)

8.3 Joint Strategic Cultural Plan

8.3.1 The preliminary analysis report makes reference to the recent review of the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Festivals Working Group (December 2010) and the proposal put forward for a Joint Strategic Cultural Plan for the town. The analysis of the Cheltenham “offer” has highlighted the importance of understanding the “fit/relationship” between the Council’s offer and the wider provision. Therefore, an opportunity to contribute to, and be engaged in, the development of a Joint Strategy Cultural plan is welcomed. (Recommendation 2)

9 Art Gallery and Museum – Conclusions and Recommendations

9.1 Whilst, as outlined, the AG&M did not complete the Current Model Exercise the review has concluded that an opportunity exists, during the period of re-development period, to conduct an options appraisal of the alternative delivery arrangements for the AG&M. The objective would be
to report on the outcomes of this appraisal to Cabinet by no later than April 2012. The reasons for drawing this conclusion may be summarised as follows.

9.2 The current trend, post CSR, appears to be for decreasing public sector funding for museums and galleries. This is not the case for Cheltenham. The support and commitment to the re-development of the AG&M, which houses one of the nation’s national collections, is clear and unequivocal.

9.3 The AG&M has successfully reduced its net operational expenditure by £156K (2007-08 to 2011-12) and plans to reduce this by a further £50K upon re-opening in 2013-14. However, it will still have the largest public subsidy of the services within the scope of this review and there is a need to ensure its continued sustainability and viability post re-development.

9.4 The review has confirmed, what is probably well known and understood, that the AG&M is much more than the sum of its parts. The AG&M has the potential to contribute so much more to the community of Cheltenham; a potential catalyst for bringing in those people who do not currently see the arts and culture scene as something for them. Furthermore, there is the vision for the AG&M as part of a cultural quarter and the regeneration potential that brings to the town.

9.5 One of the trends now being seen nationally is a move towards alternative delivery arrangements for the provision of museum and gallery outcomes. This drive is supported by one of the sector’s most respected organisations, the Museums and Libraries Archives (MLA).

9.6 The AG&M team have already acknowledged the need to look at its management arrangements during the closure period and also post the AG&M re-opening in April 2013. As with anything timing is crucial and the programme of commissioning activity can be driven by a number of factors. But the opportunity now exists, during the re-development period, to look more widely than the current delivery arrangements for the AG&M.

9.7 It is recognised that the HLF has placed strict conditions/outcomes on which the Council must deliver. The HLF measures of success relate not just to increasing direct participation in the arts and culture but wider economic and social “big society” outcomes through volunteering opportunities, engagement in training, etc. There is an absolute recognition that these obligations must be honoured in any consideration of alternative delivery arrangements.

9.8 It is also recognised that the milestones referred to later in this report may not be achievable due to the demands of this review set alongside other corporate change projects. It will, most likely, be necessary to bring in specialist external support to assist with the options appraisal work and it is the intention to seek funding for this from existing resources, eg, Business Change Capacity Funding. It will also be necessary to assess the internal support needed from finance, HR, procurement etc and to review how these can be delivered as part of the Council’s resource planning process.

9.9 In conclusion, therefore, the re-development scheme is not only about creating a modern and accessible museum space, it creates an opportunity to secure wider economic and creative growth as well as the regeneration potential that a cultural quarter presents for the town. This broader focus requires exploration to determine whether there are alternative delivery arrangements that can deliver not only a state of the art museum and gallery but also the wider social, economic and community benefits that are at the heart of the re-development proposals. (Recommendations 3 and 4)

10 Current Model Exercise – Conclusions and Recommendations

10.1 Section 7 of the preliminary analysis report draws conclusions and recommendations from the Current Model Exercise. This exercise was designed to assess the current delivery arrangements in their ability to deliver an agreed set of outcomes within a challenging financial framework. The assessment seeks to confirm:

(1) Whether the current delivery arrangements can deliver new proposals put forward, which reduce cost, but which do not undermine the outcomes being sought; and

(2) Whether the service provision direction of travel is satisfactory from a number of standpoints,
ie, service outputs (eg footfall, attendances), direct outcomes for people (eg improved health), service delivery principles (eg, quality of venues, outreach work), sustainability impact and finally equality impacts being sought.

10.2 Town Hall and Pittville Pump Room – Conclusions and Recommendations

10.2.1 The Town Hall and Pittville Pump Room new proposals’ risk assessment and service direction of travel assessments are satisfactory. The detailed assessments are appended to the full report. The new proposals do not require capital investment and deliver modest income growth from corporate business. Therefore proposals to deliver £10K (2012-13) are assessed as not undermining the delivery of the outcomes and are also assessed as deliverable. (Recommendation 5)

10.2.2 In terms of strategy for the Town Hall and PPR moving forward the following observations are made. The focus for business growth is the civil ceremonies, weddings, and conference market. The Cheltenham “offer” indicates an already healthy market with ready competition for this business. If the venues are to pursue this strategy then it will be necessary for the unique selling point of the venues to be clear to differentiate them from competitors in the eyes of the customer.

10.2.3 The Council’s Tourism and Marketing Strategy set expectations for business growth at the Town Hall requesting that this review “develop a strategy for capital investment and development plan for the Town Hall” and also “consider the commercial feasibility of improving conference facilities”. The proposals presented did not indicate this request might be fulfilled. However, some outline suggestions for further investigation were identified and it would be useful to explore these in more detail.

10.2.4 Finally, what is less clear from the review and the proposals presented for the Town Hall and PPR is how the venues see themselves as fitting in and contributing to the wider cultural offer now and in the future, and also how the proposed outcomes and direction of travel compares with other commercially operated public facilities across the country. (Recommendations 6 and 7).

10.3 Leisure@ and Sport, Play and Healthy Lifestyles – Conclusions and Recommendations

10.3.1 The Leisure@ new proposals’ risk assessment and service direction of travel assessments are satisfactory. The detailed assessments are appended to the full report. The new proposals do not require capital investment, are not factored into the MTFS, and do not incur de-commissioning costs. Therefore new proposals to deliver £140Kpa (2012-13) and £64Kpa (2013-14) are assessed as not undermining the delivery of the outcomes and are also assessed as deliverable. (Recommendation 8)

10.3.2 The SP&HL new proposals risk assessment and service direction of travel assessments has identified that the new proposals would have a detrimental impact on the delivery of positive outcomes. Therefore, modest new proposals for savings are not assessed as deliverable and are not being accepted at this time.

10.3.3 The assessment, in particular, revealed the vulnerability of the SP&HL service but has also, revealed the synergy that exists between the activities of SP&HL and Leisure@ which has created the opportunity to develop a set of shared outcomes. Rather than taking short-term savings now, the review team felt it would be beneficial to see how Leisure@ and Sport, Play and Healthy Lifestyles can deliver these outcomes and provide more mutual support for each other. (Recommendation 9)

10.3.4 Turning to general conclusions from the assessment. Leisure@ membership continues to grow and the service is building on its traditional role of leisure centre to a “health” hub. The growth in GP referrals is particularly impressive and plans to increase preventative health care into the facility are welcomed. This latter activity is an area that should be pursued in the immediate future with a view to supporting the primary outcome and to put Leisure@ in a good place to be a provider of choice and to be commissioned by health. (Recommendation 10)
10.3.5 Leisure@ has a good track record in delivering savings/increased revenue and this track record suggests that leisure outcomes may be secured at a further reduced net operational expenditure in the medium term using the current delivery arrangements. In prioritising next steps, therefore, it is proposed that any review of alternative delivery arrangements for Leisure@, including SP&HL, be a later activity. (Recommendation 11) However, current service providers are expected to continue to pursue additional savings/income opportunities in line with the overall expectation that net operational expenditure will be reduced to a minimum over the medium term, say 3 years. (Recommendation 12)

10.3.6 In the meantime, however, a short term goal should be to begin, together with the Cabinet Member Working Group, building knowledge and understanding of alternative delivery arrangements for leisure outcomes, using visits and discussions with other providers and commissioners in preparation for a future commissioning opportunity. (Recommendation 13)

11 Plan for Next Stage and Capacity Management

11.1 The anticipated milestones for the next stage of the project are:

- Complete consultation on the commissioning outcomes by October and ask Cabinet to agree any changes at their meeting on 8th October 2011;
- Complete the options appraisal of alternative delivery arrangements for the AG&M by April 2012 and ask Cabinet to agree recommendations at their meeting on 17th April 2012;
- Complete the investigation of commercially run public facilities similar to the Town Hall and Pittville Pump Rooms by April 2012;
- Complete the exploration of mutual support options for Leisure@ and Sport, Play and Healthy Lifestyles by December 2011; and
- Build knowledge and understanding of other delivery arrangements for Leisure@ and Sport, Play and Healthy Lifestyles and decide next steps by May 2012.

11.2 There is a risk that these milestones may not be achievable due to the demands of this review set alongside other corporate change projects. There are known capacity issues in Finance, HR, Procurement and in the Leisure and Culture teams themselves which may impact this review and which are being addressed through the council’s corporate resource management process.

12 Reasons for recommendations

12.1 The recommendations contained within this report deliver medium term financial savings additional to those included within the MTFS. The new proposals from which the savings arise have been risk assessed to ensure proposals do not have a detrimental impact upon the delivery of identified outcomes.

12.2 The recommendations provide a prioritised approach. In particular the timing of the AG&M re-development scheme is important creating an opportunity to look more widely at the best way of operating the AG&M to deliver its stated purpose, post re-opening, even if that operation is found to be through current delivery arrangements.

13 Alternative options considered

13.1 At this time the recommendations set out relate to prioritising next steps of the commissioning project. However, the recommendation in relation to the AG&M refers to an option appraisal and business case to support any change in delivery arrangement post re-opening.

13.2 Alternative options will be considered as and when more detailed work progresses, eg, with the AG&M option appraisal work.

14 Consultation and feedback

14.1 Recommendation (1) explicitly acknowledges that following Cabinet’s approval of the recommendations in this report, there is a necessity to: (a) bring stakeholders up to date with the
review work so far, (b) outline the proposed direction of travel and priorities for further work and (c) consult more widely on the currently proposed outcomes for leisure and culture. Stakeholder analysis work is currently underway.

14.2 When considering in particular recommendation (3) for the AG&M, a specific obligation is placed upon the review team to engage with all relevant partners and stakeholders to ensure that options and outcomes are fully identified, assessed and consulted upon.

14.3 Turning to the review consultation which has taken place up to this point in the review:
- An information / discussion paper was presented to the Social and Community Overview and Scrutiny committee on 9th May 2011 and the Cabinet Member has regularly briefed the committee on the review.
- A Cabinet Member Working Group has been formed and met for the first time on 18th May 2011.
- There has been extensive involvement from the council’s Leisure and Culture teams in the review so far including; identifying needs and outcomes, testing needs and outcomes against anticipated societal changes, responding to the Current Model Exercise
- The Cabinet Member for Sport and Culture and the Director of Wellbeing and Culture are members of the Leisure and Culture Programme Board
- Employees in the Leisure and Culture teams are briefed regularly on the progress of the review and, also in the early stages of the review, took part in a future-proofing exercise
- Employee representatives are updated a monthly meetings on this and other commissioning projects

15 Performance management – monitoring and review

15.1 The Leisure and Culture Commissioning Review is one of the Council’s strategic commissioning projects. It reports to the monthly Strategic Commissioning Programme Board (SCPB) chaired by the Chief Executive. Key risks and issues and progress to date are reported to the SCPB.

15.2 The commissioning programme of activity is monitored through Economy and Business Improvement Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

15.3 The project operates using Prince 2 project management methodology and the review team meets on a monthly basis to set work priorities, review and monitor progress.

15.4 As individual projects move forward they also will use Prince 2 project management principles and will report in their own right to the council’s Operational Programmes Board as appropriate.

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