

Cheltenham Borough Council
Cabinet – 5 April 2022
A Cultural Strategy for Cheltenham

Accountable member	Cllr. Victoria Atherstone – Cabinet Member Culture, Wellbeing & Business
Accountable officer	Richard Gibson, Strategy and Engagement Manager
Ward(s) affected	All
Key/Significant Decision	No
Executive summary	<p>In May 2019, Cabinet gave its approval for the council to work with the Cheltenham Culture Board to develop a cultural strategy and to procure external support for the development of the cultural strategy. Cabinet agreed that a strategy be developed to explore four areas for how the town can benefit from culture and creativity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To increase the visitor economy; • To attract and retain young people; • To secure inward investment and growth opportunities; and • To promote social inclusion and tackling inequalities. <p>Following the procurement exercise, consultants Creative Tourist were appointed and began work in January 2020.</p> <p>A series of workshops and meetings were held from Jan 2020 up to March 2020. But due to the pandemic, the work was put on hold and was picked up again in September 2020.</p> <p>A number of workshops were held throughout the Autumn and Winter to engage grass-roots organisations in the process.</p> <p>A new-look culture board had its first meeting in July 2021 and took on the responsibility of shaping the strategy through its representative structures.</p> <p>The board are now happy with the draft strategy and are keen to have the strategy endorsed by Cheltenham Borough Council before going undertaking a process of more formal consultation on the strategy.</p>
Recommendations	<p>Cabinet agrees:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To endorse the draft strategy; 2. To support the Cheltenham Culture Board to carry out a programme of consultation on the strategy in order that it be signed off by July 2022.

Financial implications	<p>There are no financial implications from the recommendations.</p> <p>Cheltenham Borough Council continues to provide direct financial support to a wide-range of cultural organisations and once the strategy is agreed, the council will review how this funding is allocated to ensure that it is aligned as much as possible with the aims of the strategy.</p> <p>Contact officer: Gemma Bell Head of Property, Finance and Assets (Deputy Section 151 e-mail: gemma.bell@cheltenham.gov.uk tel: 07341780601</p>
Legal implications	<p>There are no legal implications arising directly from the recommendations.</p> <p>It should be noted that the board is not an entity in itself and therefore will not be able to enter into contracts or apply for funding. This will need to be undertaken by CBC or Gloucestershire County Council (who are also on the board) and the relevant decision-making rules of the authority will need to be followed.</p> <p>Contact officer: Ian Goldsmith Interim Head of Law (Commercial & Property) Tel. 01684 272186</p>
HR implications (including learning and organisational development)	<p>There are no HR implications identified as a result of this report.</p>
Property/Asset Implications	<p>There are no property implications identified as a result of this report</p>
Key risks	<p>There are no risks currently identified with this initiative. The need for the strategy is supported by the partners of the culture board.</p>
Corporate and community plan Implications	<p>The strategy will help the council deliver its corporate plan key priority:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuing the revitalisation and improvement of our vibrant town centre and its public spaces <p>The commitment to develop a cultural strategy for Cheltenham is outlined in the Council's 2019/2023 Corporate Plan</p>
Environmental and climate change implications	<p>The strategy identifies meeting the climate change challenge as one of the six key themes of the strategy and sets out possible actions for the board to explore including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unlocking the potential of arts, culture, and heritage to achieve the ambitions of Cheltenham Zero; • Lead transformation within their own organisations, embracing sustainable practices wherever possible; • Make culture and heritage available in inclusive ways, including through traditional and innovative artistic forms as well as new technologies.

1. Background

1.1 The commitment to work with partners to develop a single cultural strategy for Cheltenham was

part of the Council's 2019/2023 Corporate Plan under the aim of 'Continuing the Revitalisation and Improvement of our vibrant Town Centre and Public Spaces'.

- 1.2 In May 2019, Cabinet gave its approval for the council to work with the shadow Cheltenham Culture Board to develop a cultural strategy and to procure external support for the development of the cultural strategy. Cabinet agreed that a strategy be developed to explore four areas for how the town can benefit from culture and creativity :
 - to increase the visitor economy
 - to attract and retain young people
 - to secure inward investment and growth opportunities
 - to promote social inclusion and tackling inequalities
- 1.3 Following the procurement exercise, consultants Creative Tourist were appointed and began work in January 2020.
- 1.4 A series of workshops and meetings were held from January 2020 up to March 2020. But due to the pandemic, the work was put on hold and was picked up again in September 2020.
- 1.5 A number of workshops were held throughout the Autumn and Winter to engage grass-roots organisations in the process.
- 1.6 A new-look culture board had its first meeting in July 2021 and took on the responsibility of shaping the strategy through its representative structures.
- 1.7 The board are now happy with the draft strategy and are keen to have the strategy endorsed by Cheltenham Borough Council before undertaking a process of more formal consultation on the strategy.

2. The Cheltenham Culture Board

- 2.1 Cheltenham Culture Board was set up to connect the cultural sectors together and to take on the role of producing the cultural strategy for Cheltenham and continue the work of the original shadow board.
- 2.2 Although its first meeting was only in July 2021, the new board has made significant headway in building a strong alliance across Cheltenham's cultural and creative communities and there is excitement about its role to advocate that culture and creativity should be central to the economic and social recovery of Cheltenham.
- 2.3 The board has a representative structure to ensure that the broadest span of cultural organisations is represented. The sectors that are represented include:
 - Festivals
 - Visual arts
 - Heritage
 - Theatres
 - Music and performance
 - The voluntary and community sector
 - Young people
 - Diversity groups
 - Creative / cyber industries
 - Further education / higher education

- Secondary Schools

- 2.4 The board also has individual membership from the Cheltenham Trust, Cheltenham Borough Council and the libraries team at Gloucestershire County Council.
- 2.5 The board has played an instrumental role in developing the cultural strategy – working hard to ensure that as many grass-roots organisations have had the chance to input into it whilst also remaining clear about the over-arching need for the strategy as set out in para 1.2.
- 2.6 The Cheltenham Culture Board are now asking Cabinet to endorse the draft strategy and then undertake a period of more formal consultation on the strategy.

3. **About the draft culture strategy**

- 3.1 In producing the draft strategy, the board has consulted widely with cultural partners and key stakeholders across the town all of which endorsed this assessment of Cheltenham as a place with powerful cultural and heritage assets that need to be celebrated and nurtured.
- 3.2 But what also emerged from the consultations was the need for a cultural vision that requires Cheltenham to really shift gear in our approach to developing and deepening our cultural offer; establishing our town as a truly innovative creative place and destination; fostering creative expression across our town; alongside much greater community engagement.
- 3.3 The board spent time to develop a vision that is sufficiently ambitious yet reflects the very special character of Cheltenham being a place with a proud heritage background but one that is now embracing cyber as its future and where arts and culture can play a critical role linking both agendas to create exciting possibilities.
- 3.4 The board also noted that the town's motto "Salubritas et Eruditio" recognises that the town's historic success was built on the fusion of wellbeing and learning. The board are excited by its vision which entwines our heritage assets and organisations with our digital ambitions and be a place where arts, digital and heritage meet, and creative innovation happens.
- 3.5 The board's vision is
- 3.6 **Cheltenham is a vibrant place and cultural destination where the fusion of arts, digital and heritage innovation fosters creative and inclusive communities where everyone has the chance to thrive**
- 3.7 To meet this cultural vision the board has agreed six themes that provide the focus for this strategy.
- Opportunities to fuse heritage, cultural, and digital assets
 - Improving the life chances of our young people
 - Building inclusive and creative communities
 - Nurturing grass-roots creative talents and ambitions
 - Supporting visitor economy and our wider place brand
 - Meeting the climate change challenge
- 3.8 The strategy includes an assessment of current challenges and opportunities under each of the key themes and arrives at a set of potential options to explore.

4. Engagement and consultation

- 4.1 As set out above, the board has undertaken a programme of engagement with cultural organisations including six workshops from late 2020 through to Spring 2021. The board has also met four times to review and progress the strategy. The board is confident that its engagement processes have led to a draft strategy that its members and the sectors that they represent are happy with.
- 4.2 But the board wishes to do more – and to carry out more formal consultation on the strategy, in particular on the following areas:
- The vision and the big ideas;
 - The board’s assessment of the challenges and opportunities;
 - The board’s suggested responses and the measures of success; and
 - Plus allowing opportunity to capture other ideas and suggestions.
- 4.3 It is intended that the draft strategy and the consultation questions will be made available on the council’s engagement platform for an 8 week period, with board members also making themselves available to attend meetings if required.
- 4.4 It is hoped that the final strategy will be ready for sign off by July 2022.

5. Performance management – monitoring and review

- 5.1 The draft cultural strategy sets out some possible key performance indicators that will enable the delivery of the cultural strategy to be managed and monitored by the board. Once agreed, it is suggested that board members be available for scrutiny via Overview and Scrutiny Committee and will also present updates to all elected members via briefing and/or member seminars.

6. The council’s support for culture

- 6.1 Once the strategy is agreed, it is suggested that the council carries out a review of how its funding for cultural organisations and activities is allocated to ensure that it is aligned to the new strategy wherever possible.
- 6.2 In addition, the council will work with the board to identify external funding opportunities that could support the delivery of the strategy.

Report author	Richard Gibson, Strategy and Engagement Manager Richard.gibson@cheltenham.gov.uk , 01242 235 354
Appendices	1. Risk Assessment 2. Copy of working draft culture strategy for Cheltenham
Background information	Corporate Plan 2019/2023 https://www.cheltenham.gov.uk/info/19/corporate_priorities_and_performance/790/our_corporate_strategy

The risk			Original risk score (impact x likelihood)			Managing risk				
Risk description	Risk Owner	Date raised	Impact 1-5	Likelihood 1-6	Score	Control	Action	Deadline	Responsible officer	Transferred to risk register
If the council does not support the development of a cultural strategy, there is a risk that as a town we do not build on what is best about our cultural offer or make the most of national and international opportunities.	Darren Knight	28.4.19	3	3	9	Reduce	Work with the culture board and cabinet member to bring a draft strategy to cabinet for endorsement.	Apr 2022	Richard Gibson	
If the council does not support the implementation of the agreed cultural strategy, including considering how its own resources can support the strategy, there is a risk that we do not maximise the benefit from the strategy	Darren Knight	28.4.19	3	3	9	Reduce	Undertake a review of CBC resources for culture and ensure they are aligned to the new strategy	July 2022	Richard Gibson	
<p>Explanatory notes Impact – an assessment of the impact if the risk occurs on a scale of 1-5 (1 being least impact and 5 being major or critical) Likelihood – how likely is it that the risk will occur on a scale of 1-6 (1 being almost impossible, 2 is very low, 3 is low, 4 significant, 5 high and 6 a very high probability) Control - Either: Reduce / Accept / Transfer to 3rd party / Close</p>										