

Cheltenham Borough Council

Cabinet 4 April 2023

Cheltenham Culture Strategy

Accountable member:

Cllr Max Wilkinson, Cabinet Member Economic Development, Culture, Tourism and Wellbeing

Accountable officer:

Richard Gibson, Head of communities, wellbeing and partnerships

Ward(s) affected:

All

Key Decision: No

Executive summary

Following Cabinet approval for the council to work with the cultural partners to develop a Culture Strategy and the establishment of the Cheltenham Culture Board in July 2021, a first draft of the culture strategy was endorsed by Cabinet in April 2022.

This draft strategy was then used as the basis for further consultation and engagement over the summer.

The Culture Board then carried out further refinement of the strategy over the Autumn, and has recently signed off a final draft at its meeting on 9 February 2023.

Recognising that the strategy belongs to Cheltenham Culture Board, and not the Borough Council, the final strategy is brought to Cabinet for endorsement.

Recommendations:

- 1. To endorse the final culture strategy attached as appendix 2;**
 - 2. To work alongside partners on the Cheltenham Culture Board to develop a robust 12-month action plan;**
 - 3. To note that the Borough Council will be involved in working with partners to deliver the outcomes in the action plan and is providing support in the form of one-off funding for a co-ordinator, but that the Cheltenham Culture Board is a distinct entity in itself.**
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1. Implications

1.1 Financial, Property and Asset implications

The Culture Board is not a forum directly funded by the Council however we have agreed the use of funding received from Gloucestershire County Council with their grant lead officer to fund a fixed term resource to coordinate the Culture Board and deliver the action plan as outlined in the recommendations.

There are no property or asset implications of the recommendations in the report.

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1.2 Legal implications

The commitment to work with partners to deliver 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’. Any collaboration or delivery model to achieve these objectives with outside bodies (including with funding bodies) will need to comply with relevant legislative requirements and the Council’s Contract Rules.

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1.3 Environmental and climate change implications

The completed dashboard and summary report are attached as **appendix 3**. The strategy is generally positive in its contribution to environmental and social outcomes



1.4 Corporate Plan Priorities

This culture strategy contributes to the following Corporate Plan Priorities:

- Making Cheltenham the Cyber Capital of the UK
- Working with residents, communities and businesses to help make Cheltenham #netzero by 2030
- Ensuring residents, communities and businesses benefit from Cheltenham's future growth and prosperity

1.5 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Implications

The completed community impact assessment is attached as **appendix 4**. There are two key actions for the board; ensuring the effectiveness of the Equitable Futures group and moving forward to recruit a young person's representative.

1.6 Performance management – monitoring and review

The Board will develop an action plan that will set out how the Board will deliver against its agreed Culture strategy in order that the Board can demonstrate that it is making progress towards the Board's longer-term vision for the town.

The action plan, which will be refreshed on an annual basis, will set out what actions will be taken under each of the objectives and shared commitments. The actions will be identified for those to be taken in the next year, in the medium-term and in the longer-term.

The plan will also identify which person / organisation is responsible for the action and a timescale.

Progress against the action plan will be monitored via Board meetings at which those that are accountable for actions will be asked to supply updates.

The strategy is also on the forward plan for the council's overview and scrutiny committee.

2. Background

2.1 The commitment to work with partners to develop a single Culture 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'.

2.2 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.

- 2.3 Following the procurement exercise, consultants CTConsults were appointed and began work in January 2020. 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 later that year. Throughout 2021, a number of workshops were held to engage a wide cross-section of cultural organisations in the process.
- 2.4 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.
- 2.5 The first draft of the culture strategy was endorsed by Cabinet in April 2022. This was then used as the basis for further consultation and engagement over the summer utilising the Citizen Space platform.
- 2.6 The Culture Board then carried out further refinement of the strategy over the Autumn, and has recently signed off a final draft at its meeting on 9 February 2023.
- 2.7 Recognising that the strategy belongs to Cheltenham Culture Board, and not the Council, the final strategy is brought to Cabinet for endorsement.

3. The Cheltenham Culture Board

- 3.1 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.
- 3.2 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 life of Cheltenham.
- 3.3 The aim of the Culture Board is to set and deliver a cultural strategy for Cheltenham which makes demonstrable progress towards the Board's longer-term vision for the town:
- 3.4 The board will achieve this aim through:
 - Creating a truly representative membership structure ensuring that a diverse range of cultural and community voices are heard.
 - Building a strong and supportive alliance across Cheltenham's cultural and creative communities to aid communication, collaboration and capacity-building.
 - Advocating for the central role of the creative and cultural sector in the town's economic and social future.
 - Developing a shared leadership model to increase cultural capacity and ambition, and support Cheltenham's cultural ecology.
 - Leveraging funding to deliver the agreed strategy.
 - Commissioning, and analysing relevant data to inform its approach including audience data; community feedback and impact studies.
 - Building a cooperative relationship with Cheltenham Economic Advisory Board to support the link between culture, economy and inward investment.

- 3.5** The board has created a representative membership structure to ensure that a diverse range of cultural and community voices are heard.
- 3.6** In building this representative structure, it has drawn representatives together with a diverse range of skills, knowledge and expertise to give their perspective in areas of culture, business, community and academia. The sectors that are represented include:
- Festivals
 - Visual arts
 - Heritage
 - Theatres
 - Music and performance
 - The voluntary and community sector
 - Diversity groups
 - Creative / cyber industries
 - Further education / higher education
 - Secondary Schools
- 3.7** The board also has individual membership from the Cheltenham Trust, Cheltenham Borough Council and the libraries team at Gloucestershire County Council.
- 3.8** The board has played an instrumental role in developing the Culture 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 2.2.
- 3.9** The Cheltenham Culture Board are now asking Cabinet to endorse the strategy.

4. About the culture strategy

- 4.1** In producing the strategy, the board has consulted widely with cultural partners and key stakeholders across the town all of which endorsed an assessment of Cheltenham as a place with powerful cultural and heritage assets that need to be celebrated and nurtured. Section 5 of this report details the consultation that helped shaped the detail of the strategy.
- 4.2** What also emerged from the consultations was the need for a cultural vision that would really shift a 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.
- 4.3** Alongside the evident cultural ambition, consistent themes emerged from across the community.
- The need to maintain and grow the town’s national and international links, ensuring that Cheltenham remains open to new thinking and ideas that can fuel creative innovation and our collective recovery from the pandemic.
 - The opportunity for Cheltenham to capitalise on the next wave of digital innovation.
 - A common belief in the powerful role Cheltenham’s cultural offer can play in

positively impacting upon health and wellbeing; on community pride and cohesion; and on individual aspiration and attainment.

4.4 The community also stated strongly that there needs to be:

- More diverse expressions of culture and greater support for diverse communities;
- Greater accessibility to venues and events, both financial and practical;
- Better and more comprehensive marketing of cultural opportunities;
- More space for cultural activity;
- Greater involvement of young people in designing the cultural offer; and
- More live music.

4.5 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.

4.6 The board's vision is:

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

4.7 To meet this cultural vision the board has agreed six objectives that provide the focus for this strategy.

- Forge partnerships and collaboration across the heritage, cultural and digital sectors.
- Use culture and creativity to improve the life chances of our young people.
- Promote equity of opportunity to help build inclusive and creative communities.
- Celebrate and nurture our community, grass-roots creative talents and ambitions.
- Drive our visitor economy and wider place brand.
- Use culture, creativity and innovation to contribute to the Cheltenham Zero and work collectively to address the climate emergency.

4.8 These objectives form the basis of the Board's action plan that is under development.

5. Engagement and consultation

5.1 As set out above, the board has undertaken a comprehensive programme of engagement with cultural organisations, other stakeholders and local residents.

5.2 Over the summer, the board undertook a digital engagement on the draft strategy (agreed by Cabinet in April 2022) using the council's engagement platform, Citizen Space, for an eight-week period. More than 950 responses were received.

5.3 The results were overwhelmingly positive about the direction that was being set in the draft strategy. 65% of respondents agreed with our draft vision and 73% agreed with our big ideas.

5.4 The summary of the results of the engagement are attached as **appendix 5**.

6. Performance management – monitoring and review

6.1 The Board are now working to agree an action plan that will set out its commitments over the short, medium, and longer term. This will also set a baseline so that the Board can measure its performance.

6.2 Once the action plan is agreed, it is suggested that board members are available for scrutiny via Overview and Scrutiny Committee and will also present updates to all elected members via briefing and/or member seminars.

7. The council's support for culture

7.1 Once the action plan is agreed, it is suggested that the council establishes a baseline of its existing support for cultural organisations and activities.

7.2 The council will also work with the board to identify external funding opportunities that could support the delivery of the strategy.

7.3 In addition, in recognition that sport is part of Cheltenham's wider cultural offer, the council will shortly be coming forward with the first phase of a sport and physical activity strategy which will set out a collective vision for sports and physical activity and high-level shared outcomes.

Report author:

Richard Gibson, Head of communities, wellbeing & partnerships

Appendices:

1. Risk Assessment
2. Final Culture Strategy 2023-2027
3. Climate Change Impact Assessment
4. Equality Impact Assessment
5. Results of the engagement process

Appendix 1: Risk Assessment

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 final strategy to cabinet for endorsement.	April 2023	Richard Gibson	Closed if this report supported by Cabinet.
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	March 2024	Richard Gibson	
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										