

Cheltenham Borough Council

Cabinet – 14 July 2026

Cultural Grant Awards for 2026-27

Accountable member:

Cllr Izaac Tailford, Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Wellbeing, Culture and Public Realm

Accountable officers:

Helen Mole, Head of economic development, comms & marketing

Richard Gibson, Head of communities, wellbeing & partnerships

Ward(s) affected: n/a

Key Decision: No

Executive summary:

This report asks Cabinet to agree a set of recommendations for the allocation of the council's cultural grants for the financial year 2026-27.

The cultural grants are a series of annual grants that are made to several cultural organisations in the town.

The recommendations set out in the report respond directly to the financial challenges currently faced by the council but also take into account the nature and contribution of the individual organisations.

Recommendations: That Cabinet:

- **approves the following cultural grant allocations for the financial year 2026-27:**

Holst Birthplace Trust (HBT)	Maintain grant amount of £7.5k for
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	2026-27 and investigate options for entering into a contract for these services in the future.
Cheltenham Festival of Performing Arts (CFPA)	Maintain grant amount of £20k for 2026-27 but review for future years.
Cheltenham Arts Council (CAC)	Maintain grant amount of £5k for 2026-27 and continue to work with CAC to ensure that the allocation of their grants reflects the over-arching direction of the council
Gloucestershire Everyman Theatre	To reduce the amount of cultural grant awarded to the Everyman Theatre to £90k for 2026-27 and to £60k for 2027-28
Cheltenham Civic Society	Maintain grant amount of £2k for 2026-27

Implications

1.1 Financial, Property and Asset implications

The recommendations, if approved, will generate a new saving of £32.3k in 2026-27 and a further saving of £30k in 2027-28, giving an overall saving to the general funds of £62.3k in two years.

Signed off by: Ela Jankowska – Finance Business Partner

Date: 26.06.2026

1.2 Legal implications

- 1.2.1 The Council should enter into grant agreements with the providers which are based on the approved Small Grant Agreement for grants below £10,000 and the approved Standard Grant Agreement for grants of £10,000 and above.
- 1.2.2 Under the Subsidy Control Act 2022 (“the Act”) public authorities are allowed to award low-value subsidies (Minimal Financial Assistance “MFA”) to organisations without needing to comply with the majority of the subsidy control requirements under the Act. MFA has a financial threshold so no recipient can receive more than £315,000 over the applicable period. The applicable period is the elapsed part of the current financial year (that is, from 1 April), and the two financial years immediately preceding the current financial year.

Signed off by: Alison McKane Interim Deputy Monitoring Officer,
alison.mckane@cheltenham.gov.uk

1.3 Environmental and climate change implications

There are no environmental or climate change implications envisaged as a result of the recommendations set out in this report.

1.4 Corporate Plan priorities

This report contributes to the following Corporate Plan Priorities:

- Key priority 4: Reducing inequalities, supporting better outcomes
- Key priority 5: Taking care of your money

1.5 Equality, diversity and inclusion implications

The equality quality impact assessment screening is attached as Appendix 2.

1.6 Performance management – monitoring and review

Each organisation will be expected to track its performance against a set of key performance indicators and present these in an annual report to the cabinet member.

2. Background

- 2.1** The council makes a significant financial contribution to the cultural and creative life of Cheltenham in the form of direct grants, rent support grants, contracted spend and in-kind benefits.
- 2.2** A total of £156,800 of discretionary cultural grants are provided by the council to cultural organisations in the town each year. As part of the discretionary service review and in line with the focus on cost savings for the council, an assessment of the grants has been undertaken. This report summarises key information for each cultural grant recipient, and highlights decisions taken and actions needed to support the wider savings programme.
- 2.3** This report covers discretionary cultural grants paid to the following organisations:

Recipient	Grant paid in 2025-26
Holst Birthplace Trust (HBT)	£7,500
Cheltenham Festival of Performing Arts (CFPA)	£20,000
Cheltenham Arts Council (CAC)	£5,000
Gloucestershire Everyman Theatre	£122,300
Cheltenham Civic Society	£2,000
Total of discretionary cultural grant	£156,800.00

3. Savings requirement for 2026/27

3.1 To ensure the achievement of the required £1.054m of savings during 2026/27, an approach consisting of four pillars has been adopted by the council:

- **Staffing establishment review** - reconciling the staffing budgets the council has set aside with the current workforce.
- **Base budget review** - consider information on spend trends over the last few years to identify potential savings across all budget lines.
- **Capital project and funding review** - consider how the council is funding projects and consider the profile of capital spending.
- **Discretionary service review** - consider how discretionary services meet corporate priorities. This is where the review of cultural grants sits.

It is vital that the council sets out a viable plan for delivering this budget reduction and work is underway across the council to put this in place.

4. Overview of recommendations:

Recipient	Summary	Grant paid in 2025-26	Recommendation	Grant to be paid in 2026-27	2027-28
Holst Birthplace Trust (HBT)	Annual grant paid in recognition that HBT took over the running of the museum from Cheltenham Borough Council in 2000 after the museum was closed due to budget cuts.	£7,500	Maintain amount for 2026-27	£7,500	To be agreed

Recipient	Summary	Grant paid in 2025-26	Recommendation	Grant to be paid in 2026-27	2027-28
	Although delivered as a grant, HBT provides a collections management service for CBC as well as managing their own collection.				
Cheltenham Festival of Performing Arts (CFPA)	The annual festival provides a platform to showcase the performing talents of local children and young people in music, dance and drama. Annual grant paid to offset hire charges for the Town Hall, the venue for the festival.	£20,000	Maintain for 2026-27. Expectation that the grant will reduce in 2027-28	£20,000	To be agreed
Cheltenham Arts Council (CAC)	Cheltenham Arts Council (CAC) is a membership-based organisation with members representing all branches of the arts: music, drama, visual arts, history, languages and literature. CAC use the funding from the council to distribute grants to smaller cultural organisations within Cheltenham.	£5,000	Maintain for 2026-27, but continue to work with CAC to ensure that the allocation of their grants reflects the over-arching direction of the council	£5,000	To be agreed
Gloucestershire Everyman Theatre	The Everyman lease the theatre from the council on a full repairing lease until 2061. The make-up of the grant to the Everyman is complex and reflects several historic decisions taken to support the Theatre.	£122,300	To reduce the amount of grant awarded to the Everyman Theatre over the next two years. The recommendation is made in recognition that the grant is the single largest grant that the council allocates, and that the Everyman has	£90,000	60,000

Recipient	Summary	Grant paid in 2025-26	Recommendation	Grant to be paid in 2026-27	2027-28
	The grant is used to primarily support the Theatre's education outreach work		access to a broad funding portfolio.		
Cheltenham Civic Society	To cover the printing costs of the Heritage Open Days brochure. Organised by Cheltenham Civic Society, Heritage Open Days celebrates local history, culture, and architecture by providing free access to places and experiences that are usually closed or charge admission.	£2,000	Maintain the grant	£2,000	To be agreed
Total		£156,800		£124,500.00	

5. Next Steps

- 5.1** Following agreement by Cabinet to the recommendations, new grant agreements will be entered into to cover the financial year 2026-27. The agreements will set out the outcome measures and key performance indicators.
- 5.2** The measures and KPIs will then be used as the basis of monitoring the performance of the grant recipients.

Report author:

Helen Mole, Head of economic development, comms and marketing

Richard Gibson, Head of communities, wellbeing and partnerships

Appendices:

Appendix 1 - Risk Assessment

Appendix 2 - Equality Impact Assessment – Screening

Appendix 3 – Details of individual organisations

Appendix 1: Risk Assessment

Risk ref	Risk description	Risk owner	Impact score (1-5)	Likelihood score (1-5)	Initial raw risk score (1 - 25)	Risk response	Controls / Mitigating actions	Control / Action owner	Deadline for controls/ actions
	If the Council reduces grants paid to cultural organisations, then there is a risk that the Council may receive negative feedback from the press, the public and the organisations themselves.	Helen Mole	3	3	9	Reduce	Sustain effective working relationships with cultural organisations to explain the council's position.	Richard Gibson	
	If the council does not reduce its discretionary outgoings then there is a risk that essential services may not be delivered	Adele Taylor s151 officer					Review all discretionary spend and put in place measures to manage this.	Adele Taylor	

Appendix 2: Equality Impact Assessment (Screening)

STAGE 1 – Equality Screening

1. Identify the policy, project, function or service change

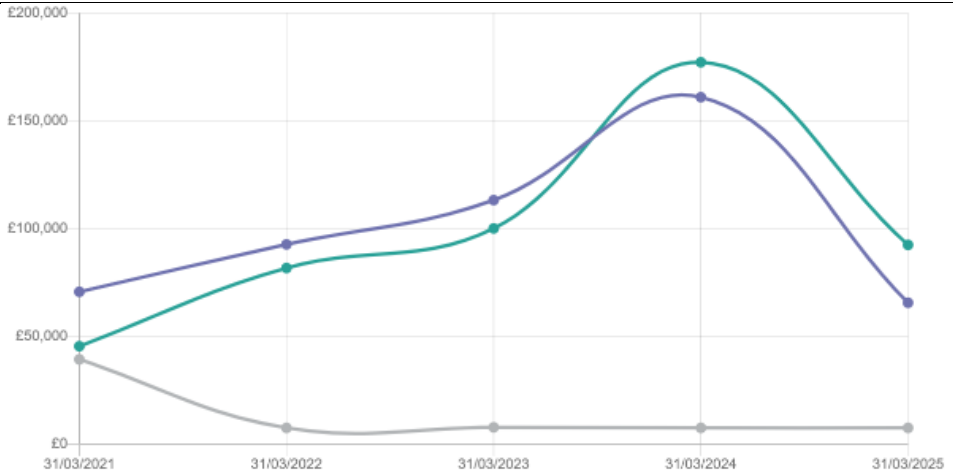
a. Person responsible for this EqIA	
Officer responsible: Richard Gibson	Service Area: Community, Wellbeing and Partnerships
Title: Head of communities, wellbeing and partnerships	Date of assessment: 23 June 2026
Signature:	
b. Is this a policy, function, strategy, service change or project?	Other
If other, please specify: Reduction in discretionary grant	
c. Name of the policy, function, strategy, service change or project	
Reduction in discretionary grant	
Is this new or existing?	New
Please specify reason for change or development of policy, function, strategy, service change or project	
Reduction in discretionary grant	
d. What are the aims, objectives and intended outcomes and who is likely to benefit from it?	
Aims:	Reduce discretionary spend as part of wider corporate savings
Objectives:	Reduce discretionary spend
Outcomes:	Reduction in discretionary spend
Benefits:	Meeting corporate objectives
e. What are the expected impacts?	

Are there any aspects, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could have an impact on the lives of people, including employees and customers.	No
Do you expect the impacts to be positive or negative?	No impact expected
Please provide an explanation for your answer:	
Promoting equality and tackling discrimination will remain the responsibility of the grant recipient, not the council.	

If your answer to question e identified potential positive or negative impacts, or you are unsure about the impact, then you should carry out a Stage Two Equality Impact Assessment.

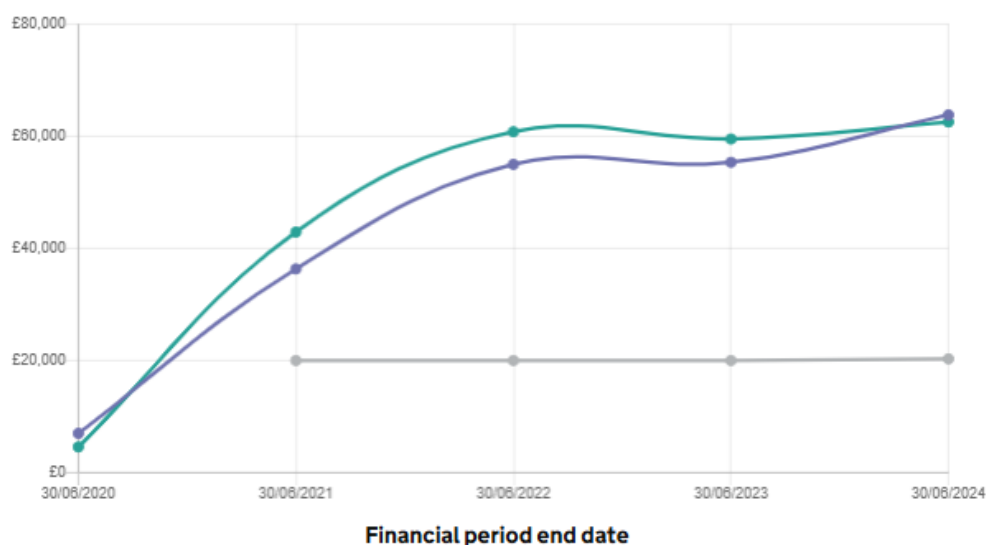
f. Identify next steps as appropriate	
Stage Two required	No
Owner of Stage Two assessment	N/A
Completion date for Stage Two assessment	N/A

APPENDIX 3 – DETAILS OF THE INDIVIDUAL ORGANISATIONS

Holst Birthplace Trust (Holst Victorian House)						
Charity number	1078599					
Grant amount 2025-26	£7,500					
Funding requirements	To manage and develop the Holst Victorian House Museum as an attractive, viable, and sustainable cultural destination. This includes enhancing the museum’s programme, building partnerships with schools and local community groups, and diversifying sources of support and income to strengthen long-term financial sustainability. To manage and conserve the council’s Holst Collection, currently on long-term loan to the Holst Birthplace Trust, ensuring its long-term preservation and continued relevance. This will be achieved through professional conservation, environmental improvements, and interpretive enhancements that support public engagement and educational outreach.					
Performance Measures	Protect, conserve and improve the Holst Collection. Attract visitors and improve the economic vitality of the town. Enhance the quality of life and wellbeing of Cheltenham residents through inclusive access to creative and cultural opportunities. Engage Cheltenham children and young people in positive activities that enrich their social and emotional development.					
Financial history from Charity Commission						
						
	Income / Expenditure	31/03/2021	31/03/2022	31/03/2023	31/03/2024	31/03/2025
☒	Total gross income	£70.66k	£92.66k	£113.20k	£160.98k	£65.58k
☒	Total expenditure	£45.40k	£81.70k	£100.06k	£177.20k	£92.43k
☒	Income from government contracts	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
☒	Income from government grants	£39.30k	£7.50k	£7.75k	£7.50k	£7.50k

Cheltenham Festival of Performing Arts	
Charity number	1157550
Grant amount 2025-26	£20,000
Funding requirements	Deliver the annual Cheltenham Festival of Performing Arts event which has the following aims: <i>To provide a platform to showcase the performing talents of local children and young people in music, dance and drama via an annual performing arts festival.</i>
Performance Measures	Engage Cheltenham children and young people in positive activities that enrich their social and emotional development. Enhance the quality of life and wellbeing of Cheltenham residents through inclusive access to creative and cultural opportunities.

Financial history from Charity Commission (NB: 2020 festival cancelled so grant not paid over)



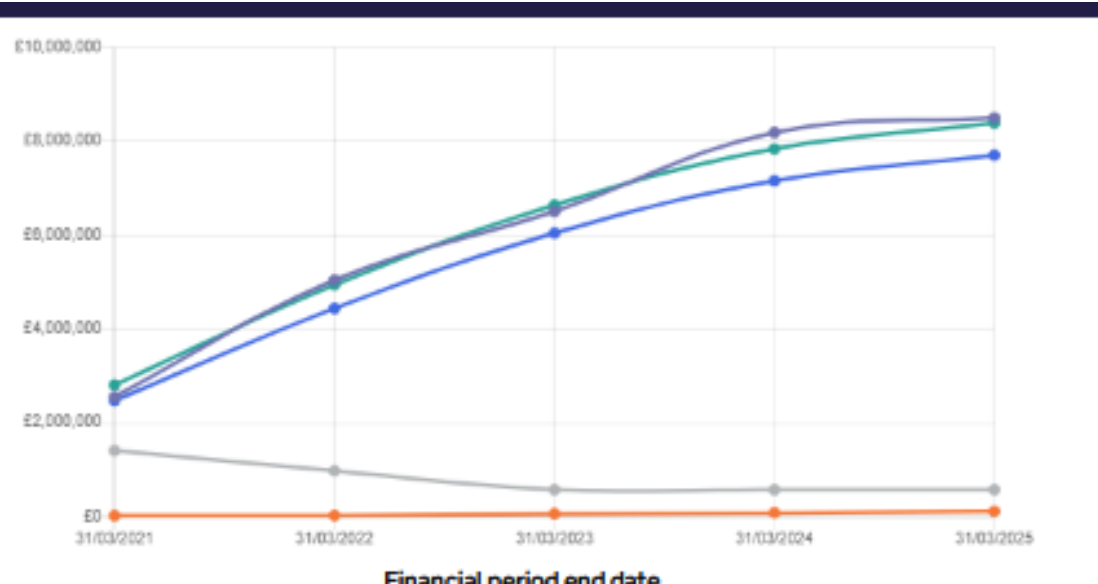
	Income / Expenditure	30/06/2020	30/06/2021	30/06/2022	30/06/2023	30/06/2024
☒	Total gross income	£7.01k	£36.34k	£54.99k	£55.36k	£63.80k
☒	Total expenditure	£4.59k	£42.91k	£60.80k	£59.51k	£62.54k
☒	Income from government contracts	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
☒	Income from government grants	N/A	£20.00k	£20.00k	£20.00k	£20.30k

Cheltenham Arts Council	
Charity number	273501
Grant amount 2025-26	£5,000
Funding requirements	The Organisation has been awarded a grant so that it can deliver the following aims: To foster and promote the arts within the Borough of Cheltenham. This is achieved by supporting voluntary arts societies, offering grants, and acting as a representative body for arts interests in the town.
Performance Measures	Ensure local cultural organisations are more financially resilient and are able to deliver cultural projects. Ensure local cultural organisations are able to put on cultural events and programmes that promote inclusive access to creative and cultural opportunities. enhance the quality of life and wellbeing of Cheltenham residents. Ensure Cheltenham children and young people are able to engage in creative and cultural opportunities that enrich their social and emotional development.

Financial history from Charity Commission



	Income / Expenditure	31/03/2021	31/03/2022	31/03/2023	31/03/2024	31/03/2025
☒	Total gross income	£9.28k	£9.64k	£9.63k	£10.84k	£10.23k
☒	Total expenditure	£6.78k	£12.72k	£11.24k	£11.18k	£12.05k
☒	Income from government contracts	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
☒	Income from government grants	N/A	N/A	N/A	£5.00k	£5.00k

Gloucestershire Everyman Theatre																																					
Charity number	234229																																				
Grant amount 2025-26	£122,300																																				
Funding requirements	The grant is awarded to the Everyman so that it can: • Protect, conserve and improve the fabric of the Everyman Theatre building. • Attract visitors and improve the economic vitality of the town. • Enhance the quality of life and wellbeing of Cheltenham residents through inclusive access to creative and cultural opportunities. • Engage Cheltenham children and young people in positive activities that enrich their social and emotional development. • Deliver community-based performing arts productions for the benefit of Cheltenham residents. • Improve the accessibility of the venue.																																				
Performance measures	Protect, conserve and improve the fabric of the Everyman Theatre building. Attract visitors and improve the economic vitality of the town. Enhance the quality of life and wellbeing of Cheltenham residents through inclusive access to creative and cultural opportunities. Engage Cheltenham children and young people in positive activities that enrich their social and emotional development. Deliver community-based performing arts productions, for the benefit of Cheltenham residents. Improve the accessibility of the venue.																																				
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<table><caption>Estimated Financial Data (in £)</caption><thead><tr><th>Financial period end date</th><th>Purple Line</th><th>Green Line</th><th>Blue Line</th><th>Grey Line</th><th>Orange Line</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>31/03/2021</td><td>2,500,000</td><td>2,500,000</td><td>2,500,000</td><td>1,500,000</td><td>0</td></tr><tr><td>31/03/2022</td><td>5,000,000</td><td>5,000,000</td><td>4,500,000</td><td>1,000,000</td><td>0</td></tr><tr><td>31/03/2023</td><td>6,500,000</td><td>6,500,000</td><td>6,000,000</td><td>500,000</td><td>0</td></tr><tr><td>31/03/2024</td><td>8,500,000</td><td>8,000,000</td><td>7,000,000</td><td>500,000</td><td>0</td></tr><tr><td>31/03/2025</td><td>8,800,000</td><td>8,500,000</td><td>7,500,000</td><td>500,000</td><td>0</td></tr></tbody></table>		Financial period end date	Purple Line	Green Line	Blue Line	Grey Line	Orange Line	31/03/2021	2,500,000	2,500,000	2,500,000	1,500,000	0	31/03/2022	5,000,000	5,000,000	4,500,000	1,000,000	0	31/03/2023	6,500,000	6,500,000	6,000,000	500,000	0	31/03/2024	8,500,000	8,000,000	7,000,000	500,000	0	31/03/2025	8,800,000	8,500,000	7,500,000	500,000	0
Financial period end date	Purple Line	Green Line	Blue Line	Grey Line	Orange Line																																
31/03/2021	2,500,000	2,500,000	2,500,000	1,500,000	0																																
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Financial period end date						
	Income / Expenditure	31/03/2021	31/03/2022	31/03/2023	31/03/2024	31/03/2025
☒	 Total gross income	£2.56m	£5.05m	£6.51m	£8.19m	£8.50m
☒	 Total expenditure	£2.81m	£4.94m	£6.64m	£7.84m	£8.39m
☒	 Income from government contracts	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
☒	 Income from government grants	£1.41m	£981.42k	£579.54k	£579.54k	£579.54k
☐	 Income - Donations and legacies	£1.48m	£1.08m	£649.17k	£673.87k	£635.44k
☐	 Income - Other trading activities	£81.73k	£546.67k	£643.54k	£789.85k	£823.61k
☐	 Income - Charitable activities	£382.77k	£3.33m	£5.03m	£6.33m	£6.58m
☐	 Income - Endowments	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
☐	 Income - Investment	£13.97k	£16.51k	£37.81k	£143.42k	£172.11k
☐	 Income - Other	£595.75k	£69.72k	£147.12k	£255.45k	£295.25k
☐	 Income - Legacies	£40.00k	£15.00k	£11.00k	£45.65k	£957