

EXETER CITY COUNCIL

**SCRUTINY ECONOMY COMMITTEE
12 MARCH 2009**

ARTS & MEDIA STRATEGY UPDATE

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To update Members on the progress of the Arts and Media Strategy.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 At the meeting of the Scrutiny Committee – Economy held on 22 January, Members requested that the Arts and Media Working Group be reconvened to look at the festivals budget, to explore other options to avoid a proposal for the alternation of the Summer Festival and Animated Exeter. This report is based on the minutes from a meeting of the Working Group held on 6 February.
- 2.2 A paper was circulated outlining the predicted expenditure for the festivals portfolio for 2009/10, which gave the background and offered a suggested approach for each festival. Comments made at Scrutiny Committee were noted including the need to maintain a year round portfolio of festivals, but the funding constraints of the next financial year had to be acknowledged.
- 2.3 The festival team was currently working towards a budget of £151,000, and the proposal set out the recommended revenue budget of each festival for 2009/10 –

Summer Festival	£100,000
Exeter Autumn Festival	£15,000
Respect	£2,000
Animated Exeter	£20,000
Vibraphonic	£14,000

- 2.4 It was also noted that it was still not clear what additional pressures there may be on the budget in the coming financial year, not least because of the outcome of the future of the City Council from the current Local Government Review. However it was important to make some strategic changes as to how the festival portfolio will run for the short term future.
- 2.5 The proposals sought to suggest a solution to keep the current level of festivals where possible.
- 2.6 One such solution would be to consider the future funding arrangement for Animated Exeter. Following a recent meeting of other regional funders such as the Arts Council, Screen South West and Exeter partners such as Spacex Gallery and Exeter Phoenix consideration was given to the possibility of managing the festival externally through a not for profit company. There were a number of advantages including greater opportunities to develop and apply for additional funding that may not be available to a local authority; regional funders had indicated that they would be prepared to consider match funding any funds provided by Exeter City Council should the festival become an independently run event. It was noted that Animated Exeter had reached its 10th anniversary and this might be a good stage to make some changes, but it would still be identified and associated with the City Council.

- 2.7 Members expressed that perhaps there was a need to change the image of the Summer Festival . The Summer Festival did start as a community event 30 years ago but has developed as ticket sales and sponsorship improved into a more significant event. There was now the opportunity backed up by the Draft Arts and Media Strategy to develop new ways to deliver a high quality and innovative programme. It was suggested the timing of the event could be changed, particularly as the current dates precluded the student population. Such a change might mean less competition with other festivals and perhaps early September might be a possibility for the future. The Summer Festival had already made some changes to delivery in 2009 with the festival team coordinating the classical and outdoor events but events in the core programme being subsidised and programmed directly by the city's key venues with the box sales for the event going to the venue.
- 2.8 There would be more involvement in 2009 by Exeter City Council with the Respect Festival with the development of a partnership between Exeter Respect Committee and the City Council's Festival and Events and Play development teams to produce the Exeter Respect in the Park event on 11 July in Belmont Park. This partnership and new way of working is also supported by DREC.
- 2.9 It was proposed that there be a reduction in the grant programmes and marketing budgets for the Autumn Festival . It is proposed that the Autumn Festival will stay as a separate festival in 2009, but there could be the potential for a further change from 2010 to merge with and extend the period of the Summer Festival in an attempt to make the best use of resources. It was suggested that this might take on the character of the Edinburgh Festival with the Fringe element. Reference was made to the example of the North Devon Festival which also had a month long mix of community based and core events.
- 2.10 In 2009 Vibraphonic funding would be reduced by £2000 but it was recommended that Vibraphonic should try to ensure match funding from commercial or other funding sources as a condition of future service agreements. Also if the Exeter Phoenix are to become more involved in the production of Animated Exeter they may wish to consider the timings of both events.
- 2.11 It was agreed that if the proposals were pursued both the Festival Advisory Group and the Friends of the Festival would be consulted over the Summer and Autumn Festivals. Equally the Animated Exeter working group would be involved. Although any changes in the festivals have been driven by financial constraints, this has provided an opportunity to revisit the way in which they are organised and develop the expertise of those partners with a particular artistic slant and expertise.

3.0 RECOMMENDATION

That Members note the report.

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