

EXETER CITY COUNCIL

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - COMMUNITY

5 JUNE 2007

REVIEW OF CULTURAL STRATEGY

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To review the progress of the Council in implementing its Cultural Strategy during 2006/7.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Council adopted its first Cultural Strategy in 2003 and it has been reviewed in June each year since then. The possession of a cultural strategy is not a legal requirement, but is often seen as a helpful extension of the community strategy. In the case of Exeter's the strategy itself is couched in such a form as to show how the City Council's cultural services contribute to the aims of the Vision Strategy.
- 2.2 The Strategy covers those matters which the Government's Department of Culture Media and Sport define as culture, including the visual and performing arts, built and natural heritage, sport, parks and open spaces, tourism, and the cultural industries (architecture, media, publishing etc).

3. REVIEW OF 2006/7

- 3.1 This was a successful year for the City Council's cultural enterprises. The RAMM project progressed, passing the key milestone of a Stage II grant award from the Heritage Lottery Fund, while a second major bid was submitted for the two historic parks in the city centre. The festivals continued to grow, particularly Exeter Festival of South West Food and Drink, Animated Exeter and Vibraphonic with its radio station. Support has been given for refurbishment and improvements to the Exeter Northcott Theatre and facilities improved at The Corn Exchange (St George's Hall). New strategies for tourism, play and leisure & museums were all written. Appendix I goes into more detail about what has been accomplished during the year, and what is currently under way. The report follows the structure of the Vision, listing each objective (except the Housing one), then the relevant objective from the Cultural Strategy, followed by the commentary.

4. THE FUTURE OF THE CULTURAL STRATEGY

- 4.1 Next year the strategy will be five years old, and it would be reasonable to consider replacing it, or at least updating it considerably. The Vision Strategy itself is being renewed, and keeping the link to its objectives would be helpful. The national and regional cultural climate has changed, with *People Places and Spaces*, a regional strategy for the cultural infrastructure of the South West having been issued for consultation in April. This deals with the facilities side, and one of its key proposals is that local authorities and the regional agencies begin co-operating at the sub-

regional (ie Exeter and the Heart of Devon) level to achieve things which single councils cannot. At the same time Culture South West is working on a new strategy for activities, to complement *People Places and Spaces*, which is also due to be issued during the year.

- 4.2 The main potential change however is that to unitary status, and the new Council will certainly want to look anew at its cultural services and how they are delivered in that new context.

5. CONCLUSION

- 5.1 The City Council devotes a large proportion of its resources to cultural services of one sort or another. Through the Cultural Strategy however this enables the Council to achieve a wide range of desired outcomes under nearly all its corporate objectives, notably under the headings of Prosperity, Learning, Health, and Community, as well as the intrinsic one of A Cultural and Fun Place to Be. With the advent of a new look Community Strategy, the issue of regional strategies and the possible change to unitary status, the Council should consider replacing the present Cultural Strategy with a new one, perhaps to start in April 2009.

6. RECOMMENDED

- 1) That the report be noted.

HEAD OF LEISURE AND MUSEUMS

HEAD OF ECONOMY & TOURISM

S:LP/Committee/607SCC10
15.5.07

COMMUNITY & ENVIRONMENT DIRECTORATE

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended)

Background papers used in compiling this report:

None