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Local Gov.

(Final Report)

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL

CABINET

Thursday 3 February 2005

Report by Director of Community & Leisure

CULTURAL COMMISSION: STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION

REASON FOR REPORT

1. To seek members' approval for a response to the second phase of consultation from the Cultural Commission.

BACKGROUND

2. The Cultural Commission was established by the Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport in April 2004 to undertake a review of cultural provision in Scotland. The review was seen as presenting a *"generational opportunity – to look seriously and maturely at our culture and decide the framework for its support in the future"*.
3. The background to the review was the speech by the First Minister on St Andrew's day 2003

"Our devolved government should have the courage and the faith to back human imagination, our innate creativity, as the most potent force for individual change and social vision"

"I believe we should make the development of our creative drive the next major enterprise for our society. Arts for all can be a reality, a democratic right and an achievement of the 21st century"

"I believe this has the potential to be a new civic exercise on a par with health, housing and education – the commitment to providing and valuing creative expression for all"

4. The Commission's remit is wide-ranging and includes: the consideration of cultural rights and entitlements; the responsibilities of public sector agencies and local authorities; guidance for the private and voluntary sectors; and an assessment of the current institutional infrastructure. The Commission was asked to comment and advise on the wider cultural sector including: *"the arts (including drama, dance, literature, music, the visual arts, crafts, film and all branches of these); the creative industries; museums and heritage; libraries; archives; architecture and relationships with events, festivals and sport."*
5. The Cultural Commission will report to the Minister in June of this year. It is understood that interim reports will be prepared on particular issues, to allow discussion and consultation before the final report is published.

ISSUES

6. The attached paper was drawn up as a result of discussion with a group of officers from Community & Leisure, Chief Executive's and Education. Consultation also took place with the Director of Finance, and with the Convener and Vice-Convener for Community Services.

7. The main focus of the consultation exercise is on the issue of cultural rights and entitlements, on governance of the cultural sector, and on links to wider public policy issues. The consultation document contains sixty-two questions: it is not expected that consultees will respond to each of these: they are asked to comment on issues raised.

8. Key points made in the paper include:

- An agreement with the importance of culture to contemporary life in Scotland
- A stress on the importance of local authorities in cultural provision, and in shaping cultural policy
- A belief that the Scottish Executive needs to take a stronger and more direct role in driving cultural policy in Scotland, and in linking it to other key agendas
- Linked to this, a view that there is scope for rationalising the various cultural sector bodies within Scotland: and that their role should shift to advice and sharing best practice, without a direct funding element
- An agreement that there is benefit in using the idea of cultural rights and entitlements to drive policy – given that the funding mechanisms are in place to support this

9. It is suggested that, in considering these issues, it is important to keep in mind that what is under consideration here is a "*generational change*". There is no suggestion that these aims can be realised overnight. What is being sought through the Cultural Commission is an agreement on the long-term aim, and a roadmap for moving towards it.

IMPLICATIONS

10. There are no direct resource implications for the Council arising out of this consultation. However, a recurring theme in discussion has been how the proposed cultural rights and entitlements will relate to funding. Concern has been expressed that cultural providers, and particularly local authorities, may be given an impossible task, if funding does not match aspiration.

11. Since its initial briefing meetings in June 2004, the Commission has been at pains to stress that it does not see the answers to its remit only in funding increases. It has said that it wishes to encourage lateral thinking, and to examine options such as economies of scale, partnerships, joint use of facilities etc.

12. There may well be merit in that approach, but it is suggested that there needs to be an awareness by the Commission of the pressures upon local government finance, and of the reduction in funding of cultural provision since local government re-organisation in 1996. The attached response

emphasises that it is not reasonable or realistic to require authorities to enable cultural rights, without the requisite resources being available.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

13. Members are asked to consider the contents of the attached response, and agree that it should be sent to the Cultural Commission as the response from East Renfrewshire Council to this phase of its stakeholder consultation.

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EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL

Cultural Commission: Stakeholder Consultation Phase 2

Introduction

1. This paper is East Renfrewshire Council's response to the "Pan-sectoral questions" which comprise the second phase of the Cultural Commission's consultation with stakeholders. It does not attempt to respond in detail to each of the sixty-two individual questions: it seeks to deal with those issues which are of most significance for a local authority's cultural policy, provision and partnerships.
2. In making this response, East Renfrewshire Council wholly supports and endorses the recognition of the importance of culture which underpins the establishing of the Commission. It is noted that the United Nations has published a resolution on cultural rights (2002), which *"re-affirms that cultural rights are an integral part of human rights, which are universal, indivisible, and interdependent"* and *"re-iterates that everyone has the right to freely participate in the cultural life of the community"*.
3. It notes also the conclusions of Agenda 21 for Culture agreed in 2004 in Barcelona by the Forum of Local Authorities for Social Inclusion. This represents a commitment to human rights, cultural diversity and cultural development. It sees culture as a central element in supporting democracy, and in the development of public policies.
4. A recurring theme throughout this paper will be the centrality of local authorities to cultural policy and provision. It is not only that local authorities are the major cultural providers within Scotland: it is also that they are democratic bodies, accountable to an electorate, with the legitimacy in policy making which flows from that. Local authorities have a role in community governance, and possess the power to promote well-being. Taken together with their key role in community planning, all of this ideally equips local authorities to marry cultural policy with other major areas of social policy.
5. The Cultural Commission does not devote a lot of time to a detailed definition of "culture". Its terms of reference covered what may be viewed as the conventional areas of cultural activity. East Renfrewshire Council supports the broad view of "culture" as set out in the National Cultural Strategy. This explicitly saw "culture" as a wide and inclusive set of activities, which had nothing to do with any elitist stereotype. Nor was it confined to a narrow range of artforms.

"This strategy therefore takes a broad view of Scotland's culture. It includes ideas, customs and traditions, beliefs, habits of thinking, religions, languages, identities, mythologies and histories, and the expression of these in myriad forms such as poetry and prose, visual arts, music, song, theatre, comedy, dance, architecture, design, costume, film, photography and a range of crafts. It is represented in the natural and historical landscape; archaeology;

buildings; museum, gallery and library collections; archives and records; and shared memories and experiences. It includes aspects of lifestyle, such as sport and leisure. We can participate in Scotland's culture almost anywhere: in museums, theatres, schools, colleges, streets, galleries, libraries, churches, cinemas, sports grounds, workplaces, local halls, pubs, and in our homes. Not only have new technologies dramatically widened global access to Scotland's culture, but they have also widened our understanding of what that culture is. "

6. The Council notes also the definition proposed by one English authority, which simply said that culture is "the way we live".

Rights, entitlements and responsibilities

7. One of the main elements of the Commission's remit is the question of cultural rights and entitlements. Is it possible to identify a set of rights which everyone possess simply because they live in twenty-first century Scotland? Perhaps more importantly, is it feasible for these rights to have a meaningful and powerful impact on public policy?
8. We believe that it is possible, and we believe that it is important to do so. A clear statement of cultural rights would provide a solid foundation for cultural policy-making, and provide a yardstick against which to measure attainment. It would enable a clear statement of direction, without being overly prescriptive.
9. We support the work being done by the working group established by COSLA and VOCAL¹. That group has produced an interim paper, and what follows draws extensively upon that paper. It recognises that cultural rights are important for personal development, and for community and national identity. The provision that would be made to enable people to exercise these cultural rights would make a significant contribution to regeneration and community development
10. Cultural rights would form the basis of partnerships and agreements between all those involved in cultural provision in Scotland, at both national and local level.
11. We believe that the establishment of basic cultural rights supported by a set of entitlements would be an important step towards achieving the Scottish Executive's objectives of widening access to cultural opportunities and enabling people to develop their talents.
12. We believe that cultural rights should be based on the principles of every citizen in Scotland having the right to access an extensive range of local cultural provision and everyone having the means of understanding and accessing a wide range of cultural experiences.

¹ The member organisation for culture and leisure chief officers.

13. In proposing what these rights should be, we draw on work done by the officers' group established by VOCAL and COSLA. What follows is a slightly-modified version of the list contained within their interim paper.

The right to health and well-being

- Every citizen in Scotland should be entitled to have access to community facilities such as public/village halls, community centres and community use of schools which can provide opportunities to take part in cultural, sporting, recreational and social activities.
- Every citizen in Scotland should be entitled to have access to public parks and quality open spaces and public realm.
- Every citizen in Scotland should be entitled to participate in sport and physical activity through the local provision of indoor and outdoor sports facilities (including sport and leisure centres, swimming pools, playing fields and other outdoor sports facilities).
- Every citizen in Scotland should be entitled to participate in activities which contribute to self-confidence and self-belief, and which enable them to develop skills which will assist in tackling issues within their own lives

The right to explore, express and extend their cultural identity

- Every citizen in Scotland should be entitled to experience their local and national heritage including museums, heritage sites and attractions, natural heritage, townscape and built heritage, literary heritage, local history and archaeology.
- Every citizen in Scotland should be entitled to experience events that reflect their own cultural heritage and cultures of the world.
- Every citizen in Scotland should have the opportunity to experience the diversity of Scotland's cultures, traditions and languages.

The right to develop cultural talents

- Every citizen in Scotland should be entitled to experience the arts in Scotland including: performing arts, visual arts and crafts, literature, community arts, cultural traditions and the moving image. These should be provided through local provision of arts venues (e.g. theatres, galleries, art centres); the inclusion of arts activities in multi-purpose facilities, including schools; through access to projects, performance, workshops, festivals and information; and through outreach activity which addresses barriers to that experience
- Every citizen should have the opportunity develop their skills and talent, in whatever area, to a level which fits their needs and aspirations.

The right to literacy, knowledge and information

- Every citizen in Scotland should be entitled to have access to libraries and to information resources including manuscript, printed, electronic and multi-media material and community information and a right to literacy support and learning opportunities.
- Every citizen in Scotland should have the opportunity to develop skills which will assist in achieving that access.

The right to help shape and design cultural policy and provisions

- Every citizen in Scotland should have the opportunity to be involved in helping shape local cultural policies and provisions through democratic processes, the development of Local Cultural Strategies and ongoing dialogue.
14. It is important to recognise that working towards the achievement of these rights is a long-term goal, which will require careful planning and sustained activity. To state the obvious, generational change does not happen overnight. We would suggest that the approach needs to be one of continuous improvement, and within a supportive environment. This is not a matter of instant success or failure
15. Achievement of rights will entail provision of the necessary resources. These resources will include partnerships and joint working arrangements, as well as people and the "softer" resources of creativity, imagination and drive. But, fundamentally, if funding is not available, rights and entitlements will not happen. It is reasonable to expect cultural providers to be open and creative in their thinking and planning of services, and to expect them to look for new partnerships and ways of working: it is not reasonable to blame them for non-achievement if the core funding simply is not there.

Leadership

16. To achieve the "generational change" sought, we consider that there does require to be a change in leadership for cultural activity in Scotland, at national level. At that level, we believe that the focus of leadership should move from the lobbying role of the cultural agencies to the public policy role of the Scottish Executive. If cultural activity is to become a key area for public policy in Scotland, then the Executive must take on that leadership role.
17. By leadership is meant – setting out the long-term vision for cultural activity in Scotland; setting out the links between cultural policy and other policy priorities, encouraging the integration of these priorities; setting out priorities for cultural activity, and articulating the expectations placed upon cultural providers, including local authorities, to achieve these priorities; putting in place funding mechanisms which will support these priorities; monitoring progress and rewarding achievement.
18. We believe that this shift in focus would better integrate the various component parts of the cultural sector: with each other, thus recognising that cultural activity is not neatly divisible; and with other priority areas in the public sector, thus recognising the potential for synergy and for best value. It would also enhance the democratic accountability of the governance of the cultural sector.
19. Developing this model would entail clarifying and enhancing the responsibility of the Minister and their Scottish Executive department for strategic policy and funding decisions at this level. It would in turn mean the transfer of policy making and funding responsibilities from the agencies currently responsible

for culture and sport, to a separate department for Tourism, Culture and Sport within the Scottish Executive. This department would be responsible for the full development, monitoring and sustainability of Scotland's National Cultural Strategy and Sports Strategy with appropriate levels of policy, technical and research support. The policy unit could also be responsible for funding the national companies and national programmes such as the Cultural Coordinator and Active School Coordinator programmes directly, as opposed to indirectly via arms-length bodies.

19. Equally, for public sector spending programmes, a more direct link between the Executive and local authorities and their community planning structures should again ensure greater democratic accountability, and a more flexible and targeted approach towards meeting community needs.
20. This model clearly would have radical implications for the existing cultural agencies covering arts, museums and heritage, libraries and information services, and, potentially, sports. It raises two issues: the function of these agencies and, second, whether there should be one agency rather than many.
21. The function suggested is that these bodies do become more arms length from the Executive. Their role would become primarily advice and advocacy, supporting the work of the Executive and its partners through specialist knowledge and expertise. They would have a key role to disseminate good practice among providers and potential providers. They would subscribe to the priorities established by the Executive, in consultation with its partners: a key part of their role would be to provide expert guidance on how these priorities could be translated into action.
22. There are separate areas of activity, museums have specialisms which are different from arts, or from archives. However, if there is a need to adopt a more "joined-up" approach to culture, to look more at Scotland's citizens and less at professional disciplines, then arguably there is a requirement to reflect that in organisational structures. If culture is defined as the way we live, then its structures should reflect this more open approach.
23. This clearly needs a more detailed level of exploration and discussion, but what might be looked at is an over-arching body for culture within Scotland, mirroring the remit of the Minister. Within that might be contained sub-committees or panels for the specialist areas of activity. That would assist in achieving a more cross-cutting approach to cultural planning, and to ensuring that culture contributes fully to wider agendas. Potentially, it would also represent better value, through the sharing of resources, and achieving economies of scale.

Local authorities

24. Local authorities have a major, pivotal role in cultural policy making and provision. There are many reasons for this, not least the scale of cultural provision currently made:
 - They are democratically elected and accountable
 - They have a role for community governance

- They are at the heart of the community planning process
 - They have strong links with local communities, both through their structures, and through service delivery within those communities
 - They have links with other providers, including the voluntary sector
25. The role of the local authority in cultural provision is comparable to its role in community learning and development. It is about taking nationally-determined priorities, and translating them into plans and actions which reflect local needs, context and aspirations. It is about having a key role within a wider partnership, engaging with those partners to achieve maximum impact and best value.
26. If a major part of the agenda here is to link cultural provision more closely to other areas of public policy, then the community planning process is central. It provides an existing framework for cross-sectoral working, drawing together the main providers within an area to work to a shared agenda. It provides mechanisms for involving and engaging the community in setting that agenda and establishing local priorities. We believe strongly that this existing, and still developing, structure should be fully used in planning local cultural provision.
27. Community planning also gives potential models for working and thinking between authorities.
28. This leads to consideration of the need for each authority to produce a local cultural strategy. It is already recommended that they should do so, in the joint Executive/COSLA document *Implementation of the National Cultural Strategy: guidance for Scottish local authorities*. This states that
- "It is for each local authority to consider how best to meet the needs of its area. To do so it should:*
- *prepare a single authority-wide cultural strategy and consider service-specific plans relating to key areas of provision"*
29. We believe that there is a benefit in each local authority stating clearly its cultural policies and plans. If the proposal to adopt a set of cultural rights is adopted, this statement would articulate the long-term planning on how these rights will be realised in each area: what are the priorities, what are the milestones on the way. It would also articulate the links between cultural policy and the other key agendas of the authority.
30. In preparing this type of statement, there is a need to ensure that an authority does not become pre-occupied with the preparation of an increasing range of plans and strategies, at the expense of service delivery. It is suggested therefore that while the need to set out a statement of cultural priorities and actions should be retained, further consideration should be given as to how this might be done by local Community Planning Partnerships, and not necessarily as a separate document. This would involve the Community Planning Partnership, not just the local authority, in consideration of how to achieve its citizens' cultural rights. It would further assist in raising the priority of cultural provision, and in achieving joint working with other sectors.

31. It is asked whether there are any benefits in regional structures for cultural agencies. There is a basic presumption against introducing additional layers into the structure unless there are clear and unequivocal gains to be achieved. It is not clear what these gains would be. The issues facing cultural provision in East Renfrewshire obviously differ from those in Highland, or in Edinburgh, but local authorities are already positioned to respond to these variations. Increasingly, local authorities are exploring joint working in cultural provision, as in other areas. The recent moves in the setting of efficiency targets will provide further incentive for this, and it is not apparent how any regional structure for cultural bodies would add to efficiency.
32. There are in any event developing models for joint planning across local authority boundaries, using community planning frameworks. The Clyde Valley grouping being one such example. These models should be used and developed for large-scale cultural planning, rather than inserting intermediate tiers.
33. Overall, there may seem to be some risk of increased "bureaucratisation" and loss of experiment or innovation through what is proposed here. We do not believe that risk is critical. There are already exist bureaucratic structures within the cultural sector: arguably, these are unclear, fragmented, and do not provide clear leadership at present. We believe that these proposals, when coupled with a more long-term funding regime (considered below) would provide greater clarity and consistency, and would create an environment where innovation could flourish.

Funding

34. A generational change in cultural provision, and in attitudes to culture, requires a commensurate change in funding arrangements. It is wholly accepted that this is not about a simple increase in funding. Still, the pressures upon local authority finances overall, and the reductions in cultural spend since re-organisation must be noted here.
35. In our view the key funding issue is about long-term, sustainable, predictable funding. That is the essential element in achieving the step-change that is sought. The cultural sector is bedevilled by a dependence on short-term project funding: much effort is put in sourcing funding and compiling bids; much effort is put into exit strategies, securing continuation funding, seeking alternative options. Too often, this effort is at the expense of service provision. It makes it very difficult to undertake long-term, sound strategic planning. Activity can be directed towards available funding, rather than towards priorities.
36. This is not to argue for funding being disbursed, regardless. It is to argue for a move to a long-term funding regime, based upon outcomes, which are themselves linked to cultural rights. This links strongly to issues of evaluation, considered below. An evaluation and assessment regime, in the absence of a suitable funding structure, is unreasonable.
37. On the model outlined above, the Executive is the main funding source, distributing directly to cultural providers, in order that they can undertake

activities which lead to the attainment of cultural rights. This would be in line with a wider movement towards an outcome-based funding approach.

38. If the cultural agencies are no longer to have a funding role, then a delivery mechanism is needed to ensure funding of local cultural activity. It is suggested that this role is taken on by the local authority. It would allow the distribution of funding in line with a broadly-based set of priorities for cultural activity.
39. The focus in the consultation is on revenue funding. It is also necessary to consider capital. The change envisaged will affect buildings through modifications to existing, changing purpose of existing buildings, extensions and sharing, as well as new build. It has also implications for transport, for equipment, and for infrastructure, including ICT. There may be economies to be achieved through sharing of resources, but the underlying funding provision does need to be there in the first place. It is essential that developing the cultural infrastructure is not achieved through removing funding from cultural activity.

Evaluation

40. If the landscape of cultural provision is to be changed, then we need to be able to assess progress on the journey. If that provision is to be underpinned by a set of rights and entitlements, then we need to be able to determine how far, and how well, these are being realised.
41. We do not believe that an inspection or evaluation regime is incompatible with innovation, challenge or quality. We believe that a properly-structured and sympathetic evaluation methodology would support good practice, recognise and reward innovation and contribute to a raising of awareness of the quality of work being done. It is entirely reasonable to seek to ensure value from public funding, and a proper evaluation approach would provide a level of reassurance that priorities were being addressed. As is said above, an evaluation regime presupposes a level of funding which makes good practice attainable.
42. There are existing models of evaluation, which could be readily modified to support cultural provision: "How good is your community learning and development" and the Best Value audit being the prime examples. This type of approach would look at elements such as leadership, partnership, community involvement, access and inclusion, as well as the overall standard of work being achieved across the range of provision. The underlying thrust of the evaluation would be to assess the provider's achievement in realising cultural rights.

Summary

43. In our view, this response deals with the main issues for local authorities in this phase of the consultation. We would repeat our support for the work of the Commission, and the recognition it implies for the role of culture in our communities and society.

44. We do not believe that the intrinsic and instrumental roles of cultural activity are in competition. We believe that they are complementary and intertwined, and taken together, they demonstrate the value of cultural activity to our quality of life.
45. We would also re-iterate the view that local authorities are central and critical to the provision of culture in Scotland, today and in the future. Not least because of the scale of the resources they deploy, but also because of their place at the heart of communities, and their governance.

Ack by email
8/2/05.

visitor

From: Karen
Sent: 07 February 2005 13:44
To: info
Subject: FW: stakeholder consultation - east renfrewshire council[Scanned]



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-----Original Message-----
From: McKinlay, Ken [mailto:ken.mckinlay@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk]
Sent: 04 February 2005 13:57
To: Karen
Subject: stakeholder consultation - east renfrewshire council[Scanned]

Karen

Further to my e-mail of 14 January, I can confirm that the Council cabinet yesterday proved the consultation response attached in that e-mail. I attach a further copy of that response, together with the accompanying report, for reference.

Please contact me if you need any further information at this time. The consultation has been an interesting, thought-provoking and valuable exercise, and I am grateful to the Commission for the opportunity.

<<cabinetculturecommissionconsultation.doc>> <<Cultural commission phase
2 - final draft.doc>>

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