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**PERTH &
KINROSS
COUNCIL**

Education &
Children's Services

19 JAN 2005

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Our ref MW/AG

Date 14 January 2005

Dear Mr Boyle

Thank you for your letter of November 2004 when you asked for comments on the second phase of the Cultural Commission Consultation. Please accept the following as the response from Perth and Kinross.

Yours sincerely

MARIA WALKER
Lead Officer, Cultural and Community Services

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This document links to Education & Children's Services Vision Values & Aims

If you would like more information about Vision Values & Aims, or would like to receive a copy, please contact Alison Thomson on 01738 476728 or e-mail: aathomson@pkc.gov.uk

PERTH AND KINROSS RESPONSE

General Comments

While it was understood that the sixty two questions were there to stimulate thought and discussion the number did seem daunting to some of our respondents. Our response is therefore completed on the basis of the sections, rather than individual questions.

Within Perth and Kinross, we have just completed the setting up of a new Cultural and Community Services within the larger department of Education and Children's Services and pan sectoral developments are a very real challenge for members and officers of the Council. We are pleased that the Commission has given an emphasis to this and would encourage this thinking at all levels of cultural developments across Scotland.

Cultural development is a key priority in the Corporate and Community Plan for Perth and Kinross as it is seen as a major way in which we can re-vitalise and re-define Perth and Kinross. With the opening of the new Concert Hall and better working relationships between the Council and its partners, there is a real desire to see the Cultural Commission recommending to the Scottish Executive the developments of national priorities and actions in the field of Cultural Development. We are therefore keen to support the work of the Commission. One major omission, however, is the area of sports and active leisure which we believe are also included in cultural development. In looking at pan sectoral issues, we would wish to make a plea that sports and active leisure are once again considered by the Commission. When we talk of "culture/cultural" in this submission, therefore, we are including sports and active leisure.

Rights, Entitlements and Responsibilities (1 – 5)

The question of rights is a complex one. We like the idea of cultural rights as a means of securing better opportunities for the citizens of Scotland. We would point to the way "rights" are presently being developed within the context of the Integrated Children's Services Planning e.g. "The Right to be Safe". We believe similar concepts could be developed for cultural rights.

These rights should then be used as a catalyst to give arts/culture/sport the same status within local authority provision as other statutory duties to enable a parity of provision and support. This status should reflect the significance of arts/culture/sport and their contribution to the physical and mental wellbeing of the community. It would include fostering support for the practitioners, developing local economies and business opportunities, creating diverse career paths that can be sustained and significantly contributing to the local community.

Cultural rights which acknowledge the human need to be creative and be nourished by cultural activity should inform cultural policy and would spearhead new ways of breaking down barriers to cultural participation, ensuring the whole populace is valuing a larger and more diverse range of creativity than the archetypal art forms that currently make up a popular definition of culture. This would also place cultural activity within the context of the lifelong learning ethos, with expansion and growth being identified. Standards of provision to support these rights need to be high and pertain to the process by which people engage with an activity as well as the standard of the cultural activity itself. (i.e. an artist's use to a community would be judged on their communication skills and ability to engage as well as their artistic ability).

We agree that this is preferable to vague statements about 'adequate'. However, this should not then mean the provision of such opportunities is the sole function or responsibility of local authorities, nor that provision could be encompassed within current levels of resourcing.

Following the Agenda 21 lead of Barcelona, cultural rights could be given legal status. The surrounding responsibility would not fall only to local authorities and other public bodies but remain with the individual too. Enshrining cultural rights in law would change the emphasis of cultural participation within the 'diet' of the nation and move it from sweetie status to a staple food with which we are nourished.

We agree that rights and entitlements should link to other areas of social policy. If it is acknowledged that people have expectations/rights that should be met then inclusion and social justice agendas must be part of cultural strategies and strategic developments for cultural provision. For example, we should look to a 'per cent for art spaces' initiative in all new builds with a community focus therefore creating the spaces for people to create in. We should look to develop infrastructures that enable cultural/sports practitioners to generate their own work as well as contribute to the community /local economy wherever possible – people have the right to create and generate new work as much as to participate in activities / opportunities for self expression.

There will be an implication for formal education and the curriculum if rights are enshrined in policy. Not a significant enough proportion of the timetable is given to the expressive arts. Teachers are not given enough training in making the arts/culture a significant part of life. The received wisdom the average pupil gets from the education system about the significance of arts/culture is extremely limited, and this continues beyond school, unless a major revelation to an individual occurs or they have the courage to investigate things further for themselves.

The media should be encouraged to generate greater interest in the arts – if comparable time was devoted to the arts/culture as is given to sport in BBC Radio Scotland (news/sports round ups/magazine shows/chat shows other than at Edinburgh Festival time) there may be a greater acceptance of the significance and contribution of the arts to society. All local papers should have an arts/culture regular feature.

Cultural rights, entitlements and responsibilities should link to other areas of social policy, particularly inclusion, promoting positive mental wellbeing and social justice. More data is required to support the improvement in the wellbeing of individuals and communities as a result of active participation in cultural activity.

When the delivery of a social policy is being evaluated there should be information and criteria available for cultural creative activity. For example HMI reports should include a section requiring a level of cultural activity which would indicate a rounded and full approach to the experience of pupils in schools. This would require more personnel available with the necessary skills to provide appropriate training / access / awareness in each field. As has happened with Creative Links, Active Schools and Cultural Co-ordinator projects, so professionals would work within healthcare, social work and lifelong learning settings developing the capacity of these sections to deliver cultural activities and opportunities. The recent creation of a Scottish Arts Council Officer with remit for mental health could be a model. Workers with the tools to provide an impact in both spheres are required to educate and expand the current links and awareness.

As far as guardianship and review is concerned, we would recommend the recent development of Community Learning & Development Strategies as a possible model of developing local guardianship of cultural rights. This would bring cultural provision into line with other major areas of local authority provision where partnership working is important to local services and there is an acknowledgement that partnership delivery is both necessary and desirable.

A cultural remit could be added to the HMIE Inspections, bringing in expertise from the field to support the process and integrate culture into a broader lifelong learning arena.

At a national level guardianship for cultural rights, entitlements and responsibilities should lie with a council of experts from related fields. A framework should be developed outlining how the cultural sector should engage the population. This framework would define values attached to expansive cultural activity and education.

This drive should be essentially through the Scottish Executive. There is a real need to be creative and ambitious and aspirational, and back up such a vision with resources. The responsibility for the review and potential amendment of cultural rights, entitlements and responsibilities should involve awareness and involvement of individuals and communities who would have access to information and tools (this could be supplied by the guardian body) in order to make those decisions. A process like that of the cultural commission with consultation being undertaken with every sector of the cultural community is a good model.

Cultural Leadership (6 – 15)

We view cultural leadership at all levels to be an imperative for a re-vitalisation of cultural developments in Scotland.

Cultural Leadership should be the same as any other leadership in relation to the Executive. The Minister for Culture now has Cabinet rank. This is to be welcomed and maintained. He / she should develop cultural policies and priorities – in consultation with lead bodies as appropriate.

The Scottish Executive should have a say in the appointment to bodies where it supports but partnership with local authorities, the private and voluntary sector must be continually supported.

Local Government will influence local cultural strategies. Community Planning led by local authorities, could provide a process which should involve citizens at local level.

Universities and others should have representation on National Bodies.

However, in this question, we were concerned about the emphasis on artists rather than all people involved in cultural developments.

We also believe that the private sector is very important but believe that grassroots organisations would be better represented at local level.

Strategic and operational alignment is not solely an issue for the cultural sector and we feel that the existing structures being developed for Community Planning should be utilised as far as possible. In particular, grassroots developments can be nurtured in this way.

Pan-Sectoral Planning (16-21)

We would repeat that it is important to look at existing models of planning and development and the cultural imperative in these structures. The Scottish Executive should set out its priorities and funding will follow these priorities, hopefully.

National influences should come through the setting of standards, networking and support. Again, we see the developments taking place to ensure Integrated Children's Services as a model which is worthy of the note. However, this pan sectoral work takes time to develop and can only truly flourish if it is well supported and funded.

We believe too that proper standards of provision can be achieved without compromising local needs – again, the role of the HMIE in all aspects of education could be used as a model. Part of the issue here is that the cultural sector has not been developed nationally nor funded appropriately over many years so there are little benchmarks available.

There is a parallel here in the development of the childcare sector in Scotland. Ten years ago this was a little known, non regulated and mainly private/voluntary funded.

Through the setting up of Childcare Partnerships across all local Authority areas, substantial funding for training and infrastructure development and the setting of standards for both the workforce and the actual provision, the whole sector has improved allowing thousands of parents to be supported and be confident of the care their children receive in our schools, nurseries and childcare provision.

Funding Arrangements (22 – 33)

The Scottish Executive will have the final decision on how public money is allocated although even if other ways of calculating the final amount are considered. Once again, there needs to be a partnership between national targets and local strategies. Some local authority areas will be well developed in one sector while others will not. If there are minimum standards developed, particularly if these are in the area of participation in cultural activities, then this would help differentiate between levels of funding.

Much of the funding at the moment is simply going on expenses to maintain current facilities and provision – museums and libraries in older buildings which need refurbishment, for example. There is still too much emphasis on short term funding and particularly in local authorities where “cultural” activities have to fight for resources against such emotive and vital services such as social work, there is simply no competition. Financial support must counteract these historical, systemic injustices.

Standards and Evaluation (34 – 38)

We would refer you to earlier comments about examples of Her Majesty Inspectors of Education in Community Learning and Development and the development of Childcare and Integrated Services.

The development of Quality Indicators is essential but this has to be backed up by support to the workforce and an increase in spending to develop provision.

Consistency, however, is very difficult to action in this area of work. Unlike school education there are no benchmarks, no standards of provision and areas of huge underdevelopment. We need best practice rolled out and we need to ensure that local strategies are effective.

Operations and Administration (39 – 43)

We would welcome any initiatives which would raise Scotland’s national cultural profile.

The priority of the Scottish Executive might be supported by pan sectoral bodies development.

The Scottish Executive should explore benefits of back-office mergers, particularly at national level.

Local Authorities (44 – 51)

We need to be clear that the responsibility is not all for Local Authorities but they do need to be supported in the greater responsibility envisaged. This includes the encouragement to widen provision and have the arts / culture integrated into more areas of provision of services; to be more creative in partnership working with internal / external providers and to promote greater access through education / outreach / community involvement as an integral part of that provision. A framework for provision needs to be developed so that legislative requirements instituted would have a context in which to function. Local authorities' responsibilities should be enshrined in law so that cultural provision cannot be eroded.

It is recognised that "adequate provision" does need to be defined. The guardian body may take this responsibility, defining a minimum percentage of population engaged in cultural activity and inspecting each local authority's ability to meet this. Socio economic factors would be taken into account with an expectation that work is done in each local authority to support those less likely and less able to be involved. The issue here is one of ownership and the Community Planning process, led by Local Authorities, is the ideal forum for working out the issues around cultural responsibilities.

The merits and practicalities of adopting national standards for the provision of culture are that there is then a legal requirement to make them happen. Hence cultural activities would be raised in status and the local authority obliged to ensure to ensure that standards were met. The practical issues to be tackled include how this would be audited, organised and funded and how diverse cultural aspects of the nation could be addressed generically. The guardian body setting a national standard would have to be truly representative of the whole country. This would need to include knowledge of such issues as the rural isolation of the islands to the very different cultural setting of the central belt. The diversity and difference of culture would have to be constantly celebrated whilst also being challenged to ensure that it is not exclusive.

The justification for supporting local authorities to develop and champion better resources for cultural provision is that it will develop audiences, engage more people, and ensure continuity from the school experience. This links with the development of individuals and citizenship issues within a lifelong learning context and in short, ensure that an agreed and equal amount of money will actually be used for cultural provision, rather than local authorities being forced to make difficult financial decisions comparing culture with other areas of need. The cake would have to be bigger – it cannot be the same size of cake re-cut!

Conclusion

We hope the above comments are seen as useful and look forward to hearing the outcome of this phase of consultation.