

Your Ref:

Education and Community Services

Our Ref: ARJ/AF

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17 May 2005

20 MAY 2005

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Dear James

CULTURAL COMMISSION : ENDORSEMENT OF COSLA SUBMISSION

I am pleased to inform you that the Education and Community Services Committee of Dumfries and Galloway Council, at its meeting of 26 April 2005, agreed to endorse the COSLA Submission to the Cultural Commission.

For your further information I have enclosed a copy of the report considered by the Committee.

Yours sincerely



Alastair Johnston
Operations Manager, Cultural Services

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CULTURAL COMMISSION: ENDORSEMENT OF COSLA SUBMISSION

1. Reason for Report

To seek formal endorsement of COSLA's submission to the Cultural Commission.

2. Background

2.1 Members are aware of the working of the Cultural Commission from previous reports considered by this Committee at its December 2004 and January 2005 meetings.

2.2 COSLA Leaders at their meeting held on 25 February 2005 approved the COSLA submission to the Cultural Commission and expressed an interest in formally endorsing the submission through their individual authorities. The full text of the COSLA submission is available in the Members' Lounge.

3. COSLA Submission

3.1 The COSLA submission contains recommendations in three key areas of cultural policy:

- governance arrangements;
- cultural rights and entitlements; and,
- education.

The over-riding aims of COSLA's proposals are to enhance democratic accountability for cultural provision and to widen access to, and interest in, cultural experiences and activities.

3.2 COSLA's key proposals are:

- A National Culture Bill, which amongst other things, would enshrine cultural rights in legislation. It should be noted that COSLA's proposals do not support a prescriptive approach, but rather would support a flexible local approach for councils and their partners. The rights proposed in the submission are suitably broadly defined.
 - The Bill would place a new duty on councils to produce Local Cultural Strategies, which would nest within the community planning framework. Councils and their planning partners would use the strategies to set out how they would deliver cultural rights, tailored to their local circumstances.
 - The establishment of a dedicated Ministry of Culture within the Scottish Executive.
 - The Ministry of Culture would assume responsibility for a number of key areas of cultural provision, including funding the national arts companies directly, as is currently done with National Museums, Galleries and Library.
 - The Ministry should also fund and administer national cultural programmes and new spending programmes such as the proposed Significance Scheme for Collections of National and International Importance.
 - The Ministry would have a dedicated department with appropriate levels of policy, technical and research support containing a high level of expertise
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across the sectors.

- A range of service delivery and resource allocation functions currently exercised by what are considered to be minimally accountable quangos would transfer to central and local government, according to whether a national or local focus is required.
- A revised role for the quango sector, with the establishment of a new publicly funded body, wholly independent of government, to advocate, advise, lobby, and, where appropriate, monitor the delivery of cultural policy.
- A range of proposals aimed at using the education system to promote young people's access to cultural opportunity.

3.3 There would be resource implications for local government were these proposals ultimately to be adopted by Ministers. The COSLA submission sets out how this resource challenge might be met and includes such as: the development of local cultural strategies which will assist to identify gaps in provision; incentives to encourage local authorities to reflect national priorities; a long term national investment strategy; using spare capacity in school buildings for community use; and adopting a community planning approach to service provision for the convenience of customers as well as economies of scale.

3.4 The intention is to further enhance local government's cultural role and strengthen its ability to act as a force for progress across local communities. Councils would enjoy greater freedom to develop cultural services and facilities relevant to the communities they serve. Nationally, the currently complex, often duplicating bureaucracy that characterises the cultural sector would be replaced with streamlined, coherent structural arrangements clarifying exactly where accountability for decision-making lay.

4. Dumfries and Galloway Reaction

4.1 The following issues are thought to be of particular relevance from the Dumfries and Galloway perspective:

- The Group Manager Community Services, Stewart Atkinson was a member of the COSLA/VOCAL [Voice of Chief Officers of Cultural, Community and Leisure Services in Scotland] Working Group which drafted the COSLA submission, and it has therefore already benefited directly from DGC officer input.
- The term 'culture' covers a broad spectrum of activity, including sport, parks and open spaces alongside arts and museums (see section 3 of the COSLA submission).
- DGC has made its own response to the Cultural Commission which is broadly in line with the COSLA submission and emphasises the key role of local authorities in relation to cultural provision.
- DGC officers will shortly be preparing a further committee report following the third phase of the Cultural Commission's work. Officers will continue to take cognisance of COSLA's views.
- From the COSLA perspective the submission was made in order to strengthen democratic accountability and achieve integrated cross-sectoral cultural provision. It was also felt that the new ministry would raise the profile of culture within the Scottish Executive, making it 'core business'. In terms of

an independent 'voice' for the sector COSLA envisages a new body (the DGC response referred to this same idea as a 'Forum') to undertake an advocacy role.

- The COSLA submission recommends that cultural rights and entitlements should link to human rights and that cultural provision should become a mandatory service within local authorities. It emphasises that educational and community rights are integral to cultural rights.
- It also recommends that a Cultural Strategy should be mandatory for all local authorities, to be developed in accordance with community planning principles, and to be closely linked to national standards monitored through inspection – the latter much in the same way as Education and Community Learning Strategies are monitored by HMIE.
- The COSLA submission emphasises that if local authorities are to deliver on cultural rights and mandatory provision then additional resources are required to enable them so to do.

5. Policy Implications

5.1 The Cultural Commission's findings and recommendations, if adopted and implemented by the Scottish Executive, could have implications for the Council's policy framework, depending on whether, and to what extent '*cultural rights and entitlements*' will have implications for local government provision.

5.2 In overall terms, however, provision of meaningful, quality cultural services can contribute significantly to the key Corporate Plan themes of Enterprising and Learning, Inclusive and Safe and Healthy Communities.

6. Staffing Implications

There are no staffing implications arising directly from this report. Staffing implications might arise as a result of the Cultural Commission's final recommendations being accepted and implemented by the Scottish Executive.

7. Consultation

The Corporate Directors of Corporate Services and Planning and Environment Services have been consulted in the preparation of this report and any comments included.

8. Recommendation

Members are requested to endorse the COSLA submission to the Cultural Commission.

Report prepared by Alastair Johnston, Operations Manager, Cultural Services [01387 260292].

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Background Papers:

1. Cultural Commission Interim Report October 2004
2. Cultural Policy Statement Delivered to Parliament on April 22 2004 by the Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport
3. First Minister Jack McConnell's St Andrew's Day Speech - 30 November 2003
4. Report dated 13 December 2004 on "Cultural Commission - Review of Cultural Provision in Scotland" considered at Education and Community Services Committee on 21 December 2004
5. Report dated 17 January 2005 "Cultural Commission – Phase Two Stakeholder Consultation" considered at Education and Community Services Committee on 25 January 2005.