

Report considered by Cabinet – 7 November 2006

CULTURAL STRATEGY REVIEW GROUP REPORT

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1. Purpose

- 1.1 To refer to Cabinet the recommendations from the Cultural Strategy Review Group.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That Cabinet be recommend to direct officers to review the Cultural Strategy as follows;

- (a) that the vision for Milton Keynes be amended to read, “by 2012 Milton Keynes will be recognized as a leading European city for creativity, excellence and participation in cultural activities.”
- (b) that a further statement be added to the definition of culture to state, “the distinctive nature of culture in Milton Keynes is expanded within this document.” Those areas, which define culture in the local setting, should also highlight multi-culturalism throughout the city.
- (c) to ensure that there is greater reference made to and promotion of cultural activities for people with disabilities, the youth services and tourism.
- (d) the action plan be revised to ensure that actions specify identifiable and measurable targets.
- (e) further investigation be undertaken to ensure that all of the centres of excellence within Milton Keynes are referenced within the report and that they adequately reflect the wide range of cultural activities across the city. An equal description should be provided against each of the centres of excellence so as to highlight their role in the provision of services.
- (f) to include those facilities, which the Council aspires to develop, so that it can enable these facilities to be developed in the future.

- 2.2 That Cabinet be recommended to develop a user-friendly version of the cultural strategy as a top priority so that when the strategy is formally

adopted it can be distributed in a means that is understandable to a larger number of people. Members should be involved in the process for designing the user-friendly version as soon as officers begin to develop it.

3. Issues and Choices

3.1 At its meetings on 15 June 2006 and 19 September 2006 the Learning and Development Policy Development Committee considered the Cultural Strategy for Milton Keynes (2006). Arising from comments made at these meetings the Committee resolved (**Minute LD17 refers**) “that a review group...be established to review the Cultural Strategy and make recommendations direct to the Cabinet.”

3.2 A Panel constituting Councillors Dransfield (Chair), Lloyd and Seymour was appointed and met on 4 October and 11 October 2006. Councillor Lloyd submitted apologies but provided representations in writing. Evidence was provided in person by the following persons;

Marie Collins	Chair – Sport MK
Deborah Cooper	Learning and Skills Manager – MKC 4 October meeting only
Roger Cooper	Sport MK 4 October meeting only
Richard Davis	Sports Development Co-ordinator - MKC
David Hall	Chief Executive – Shenley Leisure Centre Trust
Paquita Lamacraft	Cultural Strategy Manager - MKC
David Parry	Chief Executive – Woughton Leisure Centre Trust
Paul Sanders	Assistant Director: Leisure, Learning and Culture - MKC 4 October meeting only
Rick Townsend	Sport Alliance 11 October meeting only
Jackie Tracey	Commercial and Events Manager, The Centre:MK

- 3.3 The Review Group considered the latest iteration of the strategy at its meeting on 4 October and in light of the previous recommendations considered an updated version of the strategy at their meeting on 11 October.
- 3.4 The Review Group focused on the following themes;
- (a) The vision
 - (b) The definition of culture
 - (c) The balance in focus
 - (d) Language
 - (e) Centres of Excellence
 - (f) Extreme Sports
 - (g) Facilities
- 3.5 The Group appreciated that some recommendations made at their meeting on 4 October had been acted upon by Officers prior to the meeting on 11 October. Those recommendations, which the Group feel still need to be addressed are detailed throughout the report and contained highlighted in Section 2 of the report.
- 3.6 The Group considered that the document was much improved on the earlier versions and was far more balanced than it had previously been in the detail provided on both the arts and sports. Due to the papers not being provided in advance of the meetings the Group still felt that there may be issues in the detail contained within the report which might require reviewing but as a strategic document the Group were, on the whole, satisfied with the document.

The Vision

- 3.7 The Group considered it was essential that the 'vision for Milton Keynes' takes account of all elements of culture throughout the city and that these elements were equally balanced. It was stated that the current vision should not refer to "...participation in sport, leisure and other cultural activities" but should simply refer to cultural activities.

Recommendation 2 (a)

That the vision for Milton Keynes should read, "by 2012 Milton Keynes will be recognized as a leading European city for creativity, excellence and participation in cultural activities."

Definition of culture

- 3.8 The Group considered that there was an imbalance in the definition of culture provided in first iteration of the strategy and that there was too much weight given to the Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) definition. Although it was accepted that the DCMS definition should be

referenced in order to encourage external funding it was recommended that it should be contained within a separate annex and not detailed within the main body of the strategy.

- 3.9 It was also considered the definition should be specific to Milton Keynes and should define what culture was in the local context as well as the national whilst also reflecting the changing nature of local culture over time. The definition should take account of the ethnic communities, which are a part of the culture in Milton Keynes and should provide a greater element of multi-culturalism and celebration of other cultures. The definition also needed to be adequately balanced to address both sports and arts.
- 3.10 The Group recommended that the definition be placed at the front of the document so people were immediately able to ascertain what the definition of culture was in Milton Keynes.
- 3.11 The Group recommended that research be undertaken into the definitions that other local authorities have used in their cultural strategies so as to provide an overarching definition that would be suitable for Milton Keynes. Manchester City Council was regarded as an example of best practice and the Group stated that it should be made explicit within the opening statement that the definition of culture was further developed throughout the course of the strategy document.

Recommendation 2 (b)

That a further statement be added to the definition of culture to state, “the distinctive nature of culture in Milton Keynes is expanded within this document.” Those areas, which define culture in the local setting, should also highlight multi-culturalism throughout the city.

- 3.12 At the meeting on 11 October the Group considered that in the latest iteration of the strategy there had been duplication of paragraphs 4.1.1 and 4.1.2 referring to “what is culture” and the purposes of the cultural strategy. It was stated that removing paragraphs 4.1.1 and 4.1.2 should resolve this duplication.

The balance in focus

- 3.13 The Group discussed the balance within the strategy between arts and sports and leisure activities and considered that in earlier iterations there had been too much emphasis placed on the arts side of the strategy and not enough on sports. It was also commented that whilst the arts side had been written by someone with specialised knowledge of the arts, the sports sections had not been written by someone with a specialist knowledge of sports. In developing the strategy it was considered that an officer from the sports side should be involved in re-drafting elements of the strategy, which would provide a more knowledgeable opinion on those elements of the strategy.

- 3.14 The Group appreciated that the arts and heritage items had been moved out into separate annexes and considered that they would be removed altogether when their own strategic documents were developed. Their inclusion at the present time permitted the release of capital funds, which was considered to be an important element of the strategy.
- 3.15 In respect of sports provision it was considered that there needed to be more reference made to other current documents, which referred to sporting activities and sports facilities in the future, which the Council aspired to provide.
- 3.16 The Group considered that the balance between sports and arts had been addressed in later versions although it was considered that there might be a shortfall in the level of detail afforded to youth services and tourism. It was considered there was also insufficient balance within the strategy paid to people with disabilities, which should be addressed. There also needed to be increased emphasis on cultural activities for people with disabilities.

Recommendation 2 (c)

Officers review the strategy to ensure that there is greater reference made to and promotion of cultural activities for people with disabilities, the youth services and tourism.

Language

- 3.17 The Group considered that the strategy needed to be re-written so as to use less academic language and make it easier to read. It was considered that whilst the academic language within the strategy was enabling for some services to apply for external funding that did not make it easy for everybody to understand. There needed to be an adequate balance in terms of language, which was both enabling for external funding and simplified for ease of use.
- 3.18 The Group heard that a user-friendly version of the cultural strategy would be developed as a priority after it had been formally adopted. The Group however considered that it should be developed at the same time and that Members should have the opportunity to input into the development process as soon as the documents were drafted.

Recommendation 2.2

That a user-friendly version of the strategy be developed as a top priority so that when the strategy was formally adopted it could be distributed in a means that is understandable to a larger number of people. Members should be involved in the process for designing the user-friendly version as soon as officers begin to develop it.

- 3.19 At the meeting on 4 October the Group recommended that the action plan and the executive summary be re-written to make them easier to read and to provide more identifiable and measurable targets.
- 3.20 At the meeting on 11 October the Group considered that lead partners against each of the action points should be identified so as to provide clear lines of accountability. Although it was considered that the document would change over time, as this was a long term strategic document, to reflect changing partners the Group felt that accountability against the action plan should be considered as an important factor.

Recommendation 2 (d)

Officers revise the action plan to ensure that actions specify identifiable and measurable targets.

Centres of Excellence

- 3.21 At their meeting on 4 October 2006 the Group discussed the centres of excellence referenced within the strategy and considered that there needed to be more centres of excellence included for sport. The Group resolved that witnesses should inform the cultural team of additional centres of excellence for Milton Keynes, which could be included within the strategy.
- 3.22 At the meeting on 11 October the Group reviewed the centres of excellence, which were included in the strategy and considered that there were still centres of excellence missing from the list and elements of culture, which were under-represented. The Group resolved that further investigation should be undertaken into the centres of excellence referenced within the report to ensure that adequate reference was made to those centres, which should be contained within it. The Group also considered that the list of centres of excellence should contain a description of the centre and what was provided. One example was the new football stadium where it was suggested Pete Winkelman be approached to provide a brief description.

Recommendation 2 (e)

That further investigation be undertaken with relevant officers to ensure that all of the centres of excellence within Milton Keynes are referenced within the report and that they adequately reflect the wide range of cultural activities across the city. An equal description should be provided against each of the centres of excellence so as to highlight their role in the provision of services.

Extreme sports

- 3.23 The Group considered that there was an external perception of Milton Keynes as a city for extreme sports resulting from the uniquely built environment. It was considered that officers might want to consider providing

further emphasis to extreme sports within the strategy so as to promote the provision of facilities for extreme sports in the future. It was accepted that if extreme sports were to be specifically referenced within the strategy the same detail would have to be provided in other areas.

Facilities

- 3.24 The Group discussed facilities, which the Council aspired to develop in the future throughout Milton Keynes. It was remarked that these could be contained within a separate annex so as to provide a future vision for those facilities, which the Council aspired to develop in the future. Those facilities that might permit Milton Keynes to engage with the Olympics were considered to be a particular priority.

Recommendation 2 (f)

That the Strategy includes those facilities, which the Council aspires to develop, so that it can enable these facilities to be developed in the future.