

Workshop Sessions

Entitlements (facilitated by Dougal Nicholls, PMP)

Issues raised included:

- Just arts (or is sport/leisure to be included)?
- Should it be classified as entitlements or opportunities?
- What are the skills requirements of those asked to deliver?
- Culture for culture's sake – or more robust evidence based argument?
- Right to choose...
- Imposition or entitlement?
- There must be a progression moving through ages, not repetition of old formats/styles of delivery?
- How do we measure, or even acknowledge, if a cultural entitlement (such as attending a library) has any tangible effect?

Culture should not just be classified as a single provision for it is depending on a wide support network to ensure its delivery. There is much cross-cutting, cross management and communication between departments needed.

A starting point for local authorities would be an audit, of sorts, that could identify what current capacity exists:

- access to buildings
- staff to deliver
- resources
- facility strategy for respective local authority.

Currently it is useless stating that local authorities have a museum component of cultural policy to deliver – what of authorities who have no museums or of communities that have no museums nearby?

Reinventing the Wheel: look for examples of good practice that we could learn from and that could inform Executive policy. For instance Canada, Scandinavia and England.

Maybe one should consider that now is the time to stop attempting to formulate new conceptions of culture or cultural policy and take some action:

- stop debating – do something
- identify the necessary process to build something meaningful
- total commitment from council members needed and must be sustained
- cultural rights are relative and should be locally determined.

Cultural delivery ought to be based on local decisions and there ought to be a move to validate what the local authority is doing and provide support and resources (not necessarily financial) to push through initiatives. There needs to be internal consistency in local plans and strategies.

Finally, a 'bottom up' approach is favoured with local communities and individuals' views informing National policy.

Cultural Planning (facilitated by Bryan Beattie, Creative Solutions)

The following points were raised for consideration:

- What is cultural planning?
- Who could be said to be doing it/carrying it out?
- What are the implications for service delivery?

The overall consensus of the group was that definitions of culture are not important, a waste of time and relatively useless. How the notion of culture fits into cultural planning was deemed to be of far greater significance. The example of Edinburgh's science and art partnership designed to deliver culture – this is derived from cultural policy stated in the Cultural Strategy for Edinburgh.

It was pointed out that there is a strong requirement for leadership in cultural planning. What is more, the success of this leadership will stand or fall depending on the levels of creativity and innovation that inform how cultural planning is modelled and, ultimately, delivered. The fostering of links with community planning departments in local authorities were cited as being of paramount importance.

BB pointed out that there is a very real tension between whether local authorities and council officers ought to be regarded as enablers or deliverers.

The group felt that it was undoubtedly a positive move on the Government's part to acknowledge that culture deserves up the political ladder though they now need to act on this pledge.

It is crucial that some form of monitoring or checking is implemented for the cultural sector and those that are now charged with delivering it as an entitlement. Standards for delivery will derive from this and good practice will be rewarded. It was thought that the CPA system adopted in England could potentially work in Scotland though the idea of 'naming and shaming' local authorities that aren't fulfilling their cultural 'duty' may not be the most constructive means of ensuring that levels are raised. Rather, the use of frameworks as a continuous tool for improvement could actually help the delivery of culture to communities.

Working practices and the attitudes of staff and of council members were cited as being of paramount importance. The main problem was thought to lie in the disparate nature of culture in that many different activities and artistic products come together and sit under the heading of culture. Crucially, in attempting to make culture a requirement one must consider all these elements in conjunction (as constituting the cultural product). This makes the task of 'selling' culture and its benefits to members rather difficult.

A useful analogy is that of sport/leisure – the argument for the benefits of sport/leisure/promotion of healthy lifestyles is quite straightforward in that the benefits of these are tangible (savings on healthcare, for instance) and can be witnessed regularly in communities and throughout society. The argument for the benefits conferred by cultural activity are less robust and more difficult to grasp; the many disparate elements

that make up 'culture' do not appear to confer direct benefits and similarly cannot be argued (successfully) to be good as an end in itself. Council members must be convinced by those whose task it is to provide culture that there is some benefit to be found in culture and taking part in it.

What is more, framing culture as an entitlement does not secure the status enjoyed by council duties such as emptying bins, cleaning streets and ensuring the neighbourhoods are safe. The relationship between culture and well-being is an indirect one and the only way it can be ameliorated into Executive or local Government policy as a right is either through some creative thinking on the part of individuals whose role it is to formulate initiatives or from some robust, evidence based debate that can begin to articulate the wider benefits of culture on a local and National level.