



Interim Events Strategy

# VISIT CHELTENHAM THE FESTIVAL TOWN



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## Section 1

### Introduction

True to its heritage, Cheltenham continues to enjoy a vibrant visitor economy. In recent years, this has seen encouraging, albeit modest growth contributing £162 million to the town's economy in 2018. Cheltenham's ambition is to accelerate this growth over the coming years, helping to drive increased visitors and spending within the town, whilst at the same time strengthening its place identity and its ability to attract investment and retain talent.

With a limited number of major visitor attractions in the town however, it is Cheltenham's cultural offer – and its extensive festivals and events programme - that must underpin this growth. The creation of a new Culture Strategy for Cheltenham – and alongside this, a supporting Events Strategy – will therefore play a vital role in helping to shape the town's collective approach to its cultural offer and events programme and ultimately in realising the wider ambitions set out in the Cheltenham Place Vision.

With the Culture Strategy in development during 2020, this document will be an Interim Events Strategy primarily focussed around some of the council's priorities and shorter terms objectives to improve event delivery and management. This strategy will then be re-visited and aligned with the Culture Strategy and its recommendations, becoming a longer term, Cheltenham-wide Events Strategy.

Cheltenham already has a strong tradition of hosting successful, prestigious, large scale cultural events which have been shown to materially boost the local economy. However, the town is also home to active grassroots events delivered by individuals and community groups. They attract visitors to the region and positively influence perception of place through the level of quality in the experiences they deliver. Cheltenham needs to position itself strategically in recognition of the increasingly competitive marketplace regionally, nationally and internationally. Whilst Cheltenham is well placed with a strong events calendar, it is important that we refresh our approach to remain a destination of choice in the future. Events are ever more frequently competing for position in the same reduced funding pool, therefore the Borough Council together with its stakeholders needs to think carefully about identifying and prioritising events that can best be aligned to Cheltenham's wider economic, social, sporting and cultural outcomes. This events strategy is just one tool that will help to inform and provide strategic direction to this.

In 2017, Cheltenham Borough Council invested in the creation of Marketing Cheltenham, with the intention of driving forward the visitor economy, destination marketing and inward investment for Cheltenham. With a new team in place from 2019, one of Marketing Cheltenham's first actions in response to this was to rebrand Cheltenham as The Festival Town. Cheltenham may only have a population of 117,000 but it stages around 25 significant festivals every

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year, several of which are world leading. The festivals bring thousands of visitors and millions of pounds into Cheltenham's economy each year. Festivals are part of the town's heritage, and are an integral part of Cheltenham's unique offer as a cultural destination.

Now branded The Festival Town, events in Cheltenham are integral to delivery of the Place vision<sup>i</sup> as well as responding to the agenda of commercialisation of Cheltenham Borough Council providing added value to Tourism, generating income but also contributing to the economic and cultural vitality of the town. The Festival Town has been widely supported from town-wide stakeholders and see the benefit this new identity can bring to Cheltenham and its economy. With the Council's current investment in Cyber Central and the Golden Valley UK projects, there will be a greater spotlight on Cheltenham from potential investors. Events can build confidence, income, brand and loyalty amongst regions. The cultural and events offering that the town currently boasts will only strengthen the towns image and prospects.

This event strategy is being prepared to directly respond to the objectives of Marketing Cheltenham, providing direction across Cheltenham's visitor economy within a commercially focussed approach. This interim strategy is designed to create a clear vision for Cheltenham Borough Council to identify the mechanisms for successful event delivery, improve the infrastructure available to events, and provide some direction to the town's programme of events to maximise on their impact in preparation for the Culture Strategy.

### Our vision

Cheltenham is at a pivotal point, with over 35 established festivals amongst many other events, the town proves to be a popular destination. The town needs to embrace this to continue to attract high calibre events to the area. For this to occur Cheltenham as a town needs to:

- review its current position on how it supports current and future events,
- Consider the demographics of residents and visitors and the type of events that will attract our target audiences<sup>1</sup>
- Consider how Cheltenham Borough Council and other key stakeholders can act as enablers to add value to the cultural offer of Cheltenham and the wider region;
- Consider the impact of events to ensure activities have a positive benefit on the wider local economy
- Consider the impact of events to ensure activities have a positive benefit to the wider community of Cheltenham.

Our vision is:

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*Our vision is to enable the delivery of high quality events that create positive and memorable experiences for residents and visitors alike – and that support Cheltenham’s Place Vision as a vibrant town to visit, work, live and invest and contribute positively to the local economy.*

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- <sup>1</sup> In response to the Cheltenham Place Vision The Wilson Art Collective, was asked to create its own vision for where they live <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Vif5MYc6IQ>

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This strategy will support a transparent approach which will help Cheltenham deliver change to:

- Ensure the events delivered are right for the brand of Cheltenham with an appropriate geographical spread across the town.
- Further improve our national and international reputation for attracting and hosting major events.
- Develop a framework to ensure Cheltenham Borough Council assets create a return on investment – being able to clearly demonstrate the value through effective research and ensure fairness when charging for the use of spaces.
- Attract events which bring added value to the town - Establish a stronger emphasis on how partners optimise and leverage the benefits from events and ensure that all events, including one off events, generate an ongoing event legacy whether this be through adding value to the local economy, community engagement or outreach outcomes.
- Provide clear leadership and collaboration – encouraging services and organisations to work better together. This includes strengthening the culture of collaboration at both an organisational and locality level across all sectors (public, private and voluntary) in order to create an enhanced events programme.
- Use Cheltenham's events to reinforce 'The Festival Town' brand, creating year-round activity to strengthen our identity across many events so the critical mass of activity is of greater value than the individual parts.

## Section 2

### Setting the scene

The Events Strategy supports and aligns with town-level strategies as well as Cheltenham Borough Council strategy and priorities:



Figure 1: Alignment of events strategy to supporting strategies on a council, town, county and national level.

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The Culture Strategy will complement the Cheltenham's Place Vision and work alongside other key strategic intentions such as the emerging growth strategy and Cyber Central plans, our approach to working with communities, and GFirst LEP's Local Industrial Strategy for Gloucestershire. The Culture Board has been created to support this work and along with its stakeholders are ambitious to attract and retain creative talent, leading to a rich and growing creative ecosystem that embeds arts and culture in all aspects of life and is resolutely international and diverse in outlook. It is keen to attract enough funding to be able to make the necessary investment so that culture and the arts are available to everyone, irrespective of background, age or ability. As a result the Board have highlighted four priority areas:

1. Attraction and retention of young people
2. Investment. Specifically the Board are keen on opportunities for the growth of creative businesses/start-ups
3. To promote social inclusion
4. To increase the visitor economy

It is widely recognised that events play a significant part in evolving and promoting a place's image. Events and culture can act as drivers for investment and economic growth. By bringing the two closer together, it creates an opportunity to showcase Cheltenham as an investment opportunity. To achieve this and maximise the results there needs to be clear synergy between Cheltenham Borough Council's Place Vision, Corporate Plan and Strategies. The events strategy plays a key role in supporting the aims of all of these.

Increasing business tourism was identified as an outcome of the Visitor Economy Strategy. This is an area that Marketing Cheltenham will be pursuing through the creation of 'Meet in Cheltenham' and 'Meet in Gloucestershire'. This strategy focuses on events that support the consumer visitor rather than the corporate one.

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### *Event Scrutiny Task Group*

In view of the strategy to increase commercialisation of the parks and gardens an Events Scrutiny Task Group was formed to look at the approval process for events in the town and how those events are managed once approval is given. Over a series of 5 meetings the task group focussed on the strategies informing the decision for commercialisation, the processes involved with booking and managing events, enforcement as well as gaining feedback from event organisers and resident groups on their experiences.

The report presented to cabinet identified the following recommendations:

*Table 1: Event Scrutiny Task Group recommendations*

No.	Recommendation	Supporting recommendation within Events Strategy (referenced table 4)
<b>Engagement</b>		
1	An agreed standard of public engagement be established as part of the event consultative process, which all event organisers will be expected to achieve. Officers to be tasked with engaging on developing the agreed standard with Gardens Forum and Friends of Groups.	Objective 1: Mechanisms Recommendation 9 & 13
2	Engagement protocol between the Events Consultative Group (ECG) and Members be reviewed, to ensure that Members are as engaged as possible about events in their ward.	Objective 1: Mechanisms Recommendation 11
3	Investment be made in an event website (portal) to create a forum that connects event organisers be developed with a clear point of email contact. Key outcome to provide clear information regarding events for communities in their ward, providing live updates on events and stages within the events sign off process.	Objective 1: Mechanisms Recommendation 13
4	The remit of the Gardens Forum be re-evaluated to include a review of site/geography covered.	Objective 1: Mechanisms Recommendation 12
<b>Process</b>		
5	The objectives of the events process align not only with the goals of the commercial strategy, but also those of the Culture Strategy and the social value policy.	Objective 1: Mechanisms Recommendation 4 & 6 Objective 3: Programming Recommendation 28
6	The event process: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Be digital wherever possible to aid event organisers and enable back office systems between parks, licensing, planning and event management to be joined up</li> </ul>	Objective 1: Mechanisms Recommendation 1, 2 & 15 Objective 4: Impact

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be clearly set out on the Council website</li> <li>• Clearly provide a single point of contact</li> <li>• Demonstrate the benefits to the wider community as part of the events process</li> </ul>	Recommendation 39
7	A 'how to' pack be compiled and published on the events website in order to help event organisers understand the licensing, enforcement and environmental health requirements of the events process and enforcement.	Objective 1: Mechanisms Recommendation 9
8	Member training be put in place to support Members in their roles and responsibilities within the events process.	Objective 1: Mechanisms Recommendation 1
<b>Events Strategy</b>		
9	The event strategy be interim, to ensure it can be reviewing to be fully reflective of the Culture Strategy once it is approved.	See introduction
10	<p>The events strategy incorporate a tier system, classifying events as follows:</p> <p>Headline Events: a small number of big impact annual cultural and sporting highlights which showcase the town.</p> <p>Feature Events: Established, growing or one-off events that contribute to the vibrancy, profile and tourism appeal of the town.</p> <p>Town Events: events delivered at a town level that although of a recognised quality are predominantly aimed at residents.</p> <p>Community Events: small scale community or community of interest organised festivals and events taking place across the town. They have a capacity of 499 or less.</p>	Objective 3: Programming Recommendation 31
11	The events strategy to consider options of spreading the impact of events across wider venues, to recognise the opportunity for commercial opportunities together with reducing the impact on current honeypot sites such as Montpellier and Imperial Gardens.	Objective 2: Infrastructure Recommendation 21, 22 & 23
12	The events strategy to consider the infrastructure required to support recommendation 12 and present a business case to Cabinet as appropriate outlining capital investment required. In addition, the strategy should ensure that any new event sites consider infrastructure in the context of the climate emergency.	Objective 2: Infrastructure Recommendation 18, 24 & 26
<b>Commercial</b>		
13	The rates charged by CBC on the assets of parks and gardens are reviewed in the context of the councils commercialisation strategy.	Objective 4: Impact Recommendation 34
14	The events strategy look at opportunities of improving troughs in the events calendar, to further develop commercial opportunities, whilst recognising the impact of stretching the peak season on heavily used parks and gardens.	Awaiting strategic direction from Culture Strategy regarding programming.
15	Officers investigate the commercial opportunities of providing hands-on guidance for event providers.	Objective 4: Impact Recommendation 34

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Enforcement		
16	All non-community events are required to attain their own licence to aid any enforcement measures undertaken by the council.	This work is already in progress within the licensing team. To be formalised.
17	The Land Use Agreement template be reviewed to ensure conditions are sufficiently robust to support enforcement actions where required.	Objective 1: Mechanisms Recommendation 1
18	A review of noise levels be applied to events once national guidance has been published (anticipated 2020) and review of enforcement to follow to ensure robustness of procedures.	Awaiting national guidance
19	An enforcement guidance paper is prepared and published online, clearly articulating the actions the Council may take with non-compliance with Land Use Agreements.	Objective 1: Mechanisms Recommendation 9

### Cheltenham Borough Council greenspaces

Cheltenham has been described as “a town within a park”. It is home to 21 green spaces with 4 parks currently identified as being able to accommodate events: Imperial Gardens, Montpellier Gardens, Pittville Park and Sandford Park. These parks all host events with the majority of event activity taking place within Montpellier and Imperial Gardens due to their location, footfall and infrastructure – in 2019 89% of event days hosted in council greenspaces took place in these 2 parks with the majority of these days occupied by Cheltenham Festivals and commercial events. The majority of community events take place in Pittville Park. Sandford Park is the least used for events with just 6 days of use in 2019. In 2019 Cheltenham’s green spaces hosted 43 events over 145 days bringing in an income of £35,705.

Over the past 3 years there has been an increasing demand on event spaces in Cheltenham; however there is currently a shortage of space available for such activities.

Through the Corporate Plan there is an ambition to attract more commercial events and increase the revenue currently generated from the use of greenspaces. For this to be achieved research needs to be conducted to identify new event sites, review rate cards and review the current use of event spaces.

### Income from hire of greenspaces by year

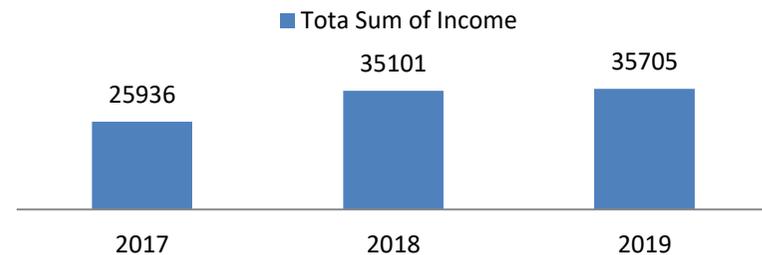


Figure 2: Income from hire of greenspaces by year

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### Events venues

Beyond the town's parks and gardens, Cheltenham is home to a number of indoor and outdoor venues. Using Visit Cheltenham's 'What's on' listing the majority of the events take place within indoor or private venues.

Cheltenham Trust manage a number of the cultural venues including The Wilson, Pittville Pump Rooms and Cheltenham Town Hall. These venues hosted 169 events during 2019 including theatre shows, exhibitions and festivals.

In addition to being home to 'The Festival' Cheltenham Racecourse hosts a number of indoor and outdoor events during the year and is the town's largest conference facility.

N.B. The Culture Board are currently conducting a survey with all of the cultural venues in Cheltenham to gain insight on events that take place.

### Visit Cheltenham's What's on listing venues for 2019

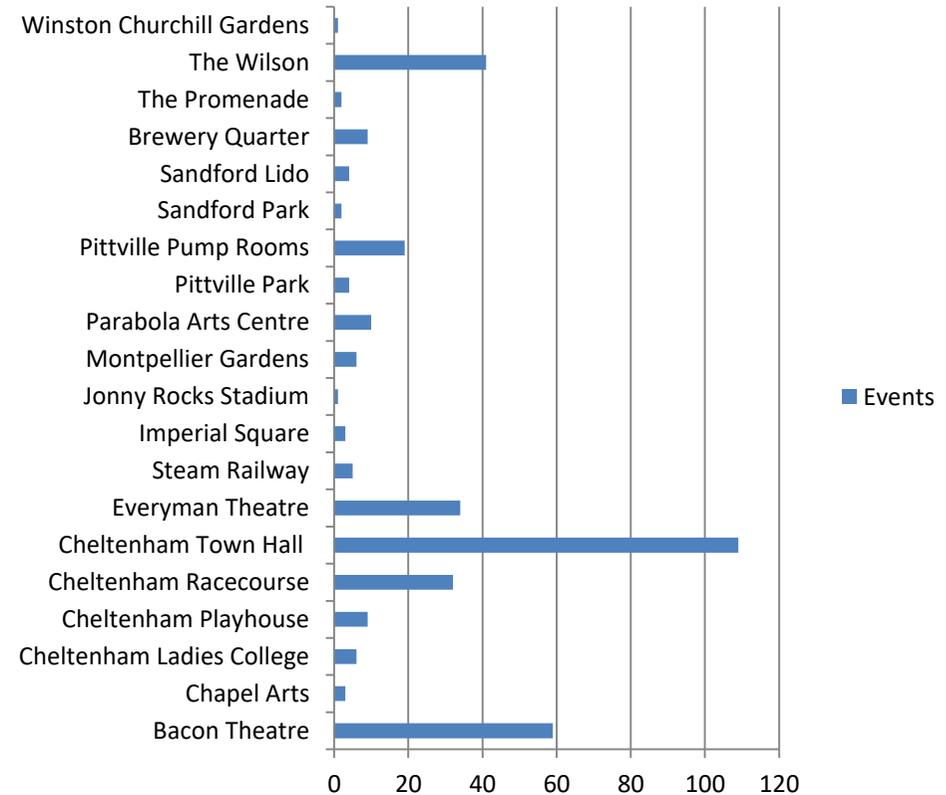


Figure 3: Visit Cheltenham's What's on listing venues for 2019

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### Events calendar

Cheltenham is home to over 35 festivals and hundreds of events throughout the year. There is a concentration of Festivals during May to July which follows the typical event season with another peak in September. January and December are currently the quietest months of the year. The events calendar is driven by Event Organisers selecting the months to ensure the viability of their events when there is the expectation of better weather conditions and a seasonal rise in visitors to draw upon as audiences and participants proving it difficult to make significant changes in the events held within the winter months.

During The Festival Town rebrand the below festivals were identified as those that supported Cheltenham’s new identity (although this is not intended to be an exhaustive or exclusive list). These have been colour coded in relation to the new tier system proposed in objective 3.

Tier
Headline Events
Feature Events
Town Events
Community Events

Table 2: Events calendar for Cheltenham based on annual events and dates 2018-2020

January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December
New Year’s Day meet – Races	Light Up Cheltenham	The Festival ft. The Gold Cup	Cheltenham Wine Festival – Pittville Pump rooms	Cheltenham International Film Festival	Cheltenham Science Festival – Imperial Gardens	Cheltenham Music Festival – Imperial Gardens	Suffolks Market	Cheltenham Paint Festival	Cheltenham Literature Festival – Montpellier Gardens	Cheltenham Real Ale Festival – Ladies College	The International – Races
		Craft Festival Cheltenham – Town Hall	Poetry Festival	Cheltenham Children’s Festival – Town Hall	Christian Arts Festival	Midsummer Fiesta – Montpellier Gardens	Prescott Vintage Sports Car weekend	Cheltenham Wellbeing Festival	The Showcase – Races	The Gin to My Tonic Festival – Town Hall	

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			Cheltenham Jazz Festival – Montpellier Gardens	Wychwood Music Festival	Cheltenham Food & Drink Festival – Montpellier Gardens	Bugatti Festival		Cheltenham Festival of Cycling – Montpellier Gardens	Autumn Festival of Speed – Prescott	Christmas Light Switch On	
			Prescott Bike Festival	Cotswolds Festival of Steam – GWR Railway	Cheltenham Balloon Fiesta	2000 Trees – Upcote Farm		Cheltenham Half Marathon		Christmas Markets	
				Cheltenham Festival of Performing Arts	Prescott Speed Fest	Cheltenham Cricket Festival – Cheltenham College		Cheltenham Triathlon – Sandford Lido			
				Suffolk Markets	Cheltenham Beer & Cider Festival – Old Patesians Rugby Club	Open-Air Theatre Festival - Tuckwell Amphitheatre		Prescott Speed Championships			
						Cotswold Beer Festival – Postlip Hall					
						Suffolk Markets					

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						Staverton Airport Open Day – Gloucs Airport					
						Prescott Bike Fest					

### Industry insight

Events are essential to any region's cultural and economic life and their importance is only set to rise in the future. In just 9 years the music festivals market has grown more than fourfold and will continue to do so with an estimated 4,500 music festivals in the UK by 2030. It is predicted by 2030 events will become more central to the British economy and to British society than ever before, with the value of consumer events estimated at £5.7bn<sup>ii</sup>. As well as attracting more tourists and diversifying the cultural offer, events can serve as a catalyst for urban renewal and increase the infrastructure and tourism capacity of the destination of Cheltenham.

In 2017/18, 68.6% of Adults in England said they'd attended an arts event in the previous 12 months, with this figure increasing to 86.2% when focusing on the South West region<sup>iii</sup>. This adds economic value to the events themselves, the wider local economies in which they are located, but also in direct employment. The arts and culture industry pays nearly 5% more than UK median salary, thereby making a positive contribution to average household earnings<sup>ii</sup>. For every £1 of salary paid by the arts and culture industry, an additional £2.01 is generated in the wider economy through indirect and induced multiplier impacts.

Towns and cities benefit from events more easily than counties or regions. 'Over any year and in any one area, rural events will tend to bring revenues in just once, while urban ones, and certainly urban clubs, will bring them in more continuously. That is a tangible support to local authorities<sup>ii</sup>. UK festival companies on average pay local authorities around £50,000 per event<sup>ii</sup>. If you were to assume 2,000 of Britain's 2019 festivals were held on local authority's land this would generate an annual income of £100m, not including the other indirect revenues such as parking charges and licensing.

Despite their benefits, events, for some can be seen as disruptive not only due to occupying public spaces but also due to large sums of money being spent on planting, maintenance and supervision of green spaces once events have concluded. However The White Paper predicts that by 2030 the income received from events could help keep green spaces in good shape, streets swept and local rate rises suppressed. With this change on the horizon, Local Authorities need to engage with residents to rally their support and communicate the benefits events can have on the local communities.

As well as within green spaces, events can help to revive the high street. There are number of outside factors such as online shopping and increased business rates that are having a detrimental affect however the one thing that will offset this is stronger footfall. Having a strategic approach and strategy for events

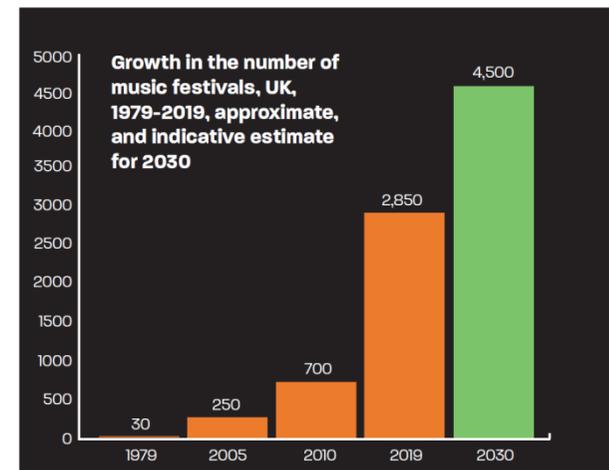


Figure 4: Growth in the number of music festivals, UK, 1979-2019, approximate, and indicative estimate for 2030

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that considers benefits to the high street can have a positive impact on high street revitalisation, either by attracting new visitors to Cheltenham or by providing additional experiences to the existing visitors and residents.

Translating this evidence more locally, arts and culture forms an important sector within the Cheltenham economy and that of wider Gloucestershire. A Cheltenham Culture Board has recently been established to provide leadership within this sector. This Board represents the leading cultural organisations across Cheltenham<sup>2</sup>. Output from this Board clearly evidences the value and impact that the cultural and creative industry has on stimulating innovation, growing the local economy, contributing to a sense of place and attracting and retaining a breadth of demographic groups to choose Cheltenham as a destination of choice. Whilst events are just one part of the wider cultural and creative sector, it plays an important role by providing a physical outlet to market Cheltenham as a destination and create opportunities for experiencing arts and culture through a range and variety of events and locations.

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<sup>2</sup> Culture Board membership includes Cheltenham Borough Council, Marketing Cheltenham, Cheltenham Festivals, Cheltenham Trust, Everyman Theatre, Edge Design Workshop, Gloucestershire Libraries

*Cheltenham Borough Council event booking process*

As part of the modernisation work currently being undertaken by the council the current end to end event process has been documented and analysed. Alongside this consultation has taken place with third party event organisers through the work of the overview and scrutiny events task group to gain their insight on the usability of the current system, where the following challenges and opportunities have been identified.

*Table 3: Challenges and opportunities of the current council event booking process*

Challenges	Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- High level of officer processing time</li> <li>- High number of wait times within the process</li> <li>- High number of internal and external roles involved</li> <li>- High number of interactions</li> <li>- High level of cost</li> <li>- The current event form doesn't encompass all the relevant information required for the relevant departments.</li> <li>- Half of the process is managed using the council's task management system, where the other half is still paper-based.</li> <li>- Event Organisers unclear of who to talk to about specific issues, or contacted by various departments following application who are asking similar requests.</li> <li>- The green spaces events calendar and its availability is currently only managed by two people.</li> <li>- Ineffective consultation between local residents and major event organisers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To review the current event booking process, identifying an electronic system that is fit for purpose.</li> <li>- Evaluate the function and benefit of Event Consultative Group (ECG) and Garden's Forum.</li> <li>- Create a single point of contact for third party event organisers to co-ordinate internal department's responses to event applications.</li> <li>- Create a guide to support Event Organisers on the information and contact details they need to know when working in Cheltenham.</li> <li>- Review how residents local to events are informed and consulted with.</li> </ul>

### **Section 3**

Within this section the implementation of the events strategy will be broken down into 4 objectives:

- Objective 1: Mechanisms for managing events
- Objective 2: Events infrastructure
- Objective 3: Programming of events
- Objective 4: Maximising impact of events

Using the insight from section 2 the objectives have formed a clear framework for Cheltenham Borough Council through a series of recommendations. Though the council is directly responsible for the delivery of some of recommendations, as this strategy is labelled interim of number of them will await for the implementation of the Culture Strategy before being actioned.

#### **OBJECTIVE 1: Mechanisms for managing events**

Cheltenham Borough Council's aim is to become more commercial in its approach and its investment needs to be strategically targeted against key outcomes to ensure resources are used efficiently and effectively. However funding is only one part of the equation and Cheltenham must be 'event friendly' and easy to do business with in order to attract the calibre of events which will enhance and develop our reputation. Additionally we need to ensure that we have the knowledge and capacity to provide an 'event friendly' approach.

This strategy advocates a complete review of the event booking process to streamline the process which in turn will improve the customer experience for Event Organisers in Cheltenham. It is proposed to implement an electronic/digital system will meet the needs of event organisers as well as reduce the time needed to manage event bookings and consult with partners. The council currently support around 40 events each year so with a new simplified process will help support an increasing workload as event bookings increase in the future.

As part of this process there isn't a formal enquiry process, with very limited information available to event organisers prior to application to assist in their research for event sites, facilities and costs. It is proposed a formal enquiry process is implemented along with the creation of supporting material that is freely available to all event organisers both prior to and during planning.

Currently the approval process for events is only linked to site availability. With an increasing demand on the use of the council's assets an approval process needs to be adopted. Implementing events criteria to all applications would support this process as currently the council can't decline an event without

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precedent and clear reason to do so. To strengthen this process, event organisers may be asked to provide some weighting to the criteria to evidence how strongly they fulfil this area.

The Council will select events to be part of this portfolio if they meet criteria 1 to 6:

1. Fit this Strategy's definition of a Level 1, 2, 3 or 4 event;
2. Complement the existing calendar of events
3. Position Cheltenham as a vibrant and attractive town;
4. Direct and immediate benefit to the local economy in the context of Cheltenham Borough Council's Social Value Policy and for major events to have a mechanism in place to measure this
5. Make Cheltenham a more attractive place to live in and visit with a year-round offer; encouraging people to live or invest in the city or to visit Cheltenham.
6. Demonstrate a sustainable approach during planning and delivery, supporting Cheltenham's Climate Emergency.

In addition, events must meet at least one of these criteria:

7. Help to build a strong profile for Cheltenham as an active town;
8. Make effective use of Cheltenham's built facilities, cultural infrastructure or natural environment;
9. Strengthen the town's reputation for successful quality event delivery;
10. Strengthen, or have the potential to strength, the town's national relations and national development work.
11. Generate money for regional, national or international charities;
12. Offer a free element to the event allowing the event to be accessible to all.
13. Include the town's communities
14. Engage with local businesses and maximise opportunities for local suppliers.
15. Include young people or offer opportunities for volunteering;
16. To accelerate longer-term development benefits for the city; and
17. Help to regenerate parts of the town.

Throughout consultation on this interim events strategy a key recommendation has been to create a single point of contact at the council for event organisers. This role wouldn't relieve internal departments of their function, but facilitate the sharing and request of information between council and organiser creating an improved customer experience. It is currently planned that this function will be managed by Marketing Cheltenham's Event Manager.

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To deliver and manage an increased number of events, including large scale events, there needs to be investment committed to supporting events and the resources that support them. Increased dedicated officer support for events would support the growth of events that will be required to support new and upcoming events and ensure Cheltenham maintains its level of customer services and reaches its aspiration of improving this.

### *Key recommendations*

- Review the events enquiry and booking process, aiming to digitalise the process and provide a better customer experience for the Event Organiser.
- Adopt events criteria to assist in the approval of events and ensure the offer meets the town's strategic aims and the events strategy.
- Create a single point of contact at the council for event organisers.
- Review dedicated officer support for events

### **OBJECTIVE 2: Events infrastructure**

Cheltenham benefits from beautiful parks and gardens however lacks viable event spaces to accommodate the number of events that wish to come to Cheltenham. Both Montpellier Gardens and Imperial Gardens have existing planning permissions permitting 'temporary structures in connections with festivals and special events' for 70 days each calendar year. Being extremely central the enquiries for these parks exceed the number of days able to be offered. Though Pittville Park and Sandford Park provide alternative space neither are as popular to third party organisations. Pittville Park in particular can provide the most space of all parks, however currently doesn't provide the main requirements for an event site. This strategy proposes that a fit for purpose event site is created in Pittville Park.

In addition to green spaces there is an increasing need to identify areas within the public realm that have the ability to host events and markets. Currently the pedestrianised section of the Promenade is the largest space on offer within the town centre, with utilities available. Recent work around John Lewis created another suitable event space, however there is currently no provision of utilities so relies on additional infrastructure to make events viable. Cheltenham Borough Council has committed to improving public realm and regenerating the high street, this creates a key opportunity to build event spaces into the plans and proposals increasing our venue offering.

The main requirements that future development should consider would include:

- Provision of flat, open space
- No street furniture or public art that cannot be easily moved
- Provision of electricity power supply, data, water and drainage at appropriate underground points
- Vehicle access for unloading
- Performer parking
- Security and site safety designed in

The establishment of event ready infrastructure will also critically assist reducing environmental impacts managing energy and water more efficiently, reducing waste and carbon emissions. With Cheltenham committing to be carbon neutral by 2030 the council need to be able to provide event organisers with the tools and infrastructure to achieve this.

#### *Key recommendations*

- To increase the availability of events sites in Cheltenham to include the creation of a fit for purpose event site in Pittville Park.

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- Identify event spaces within public realm during the regeneration of the high street.
- To invest in existing event sites to increase the provision of facilities and utilities available for event organisers.

### **OBJECTIVE 3: Programming of events**

Events make towns a more vibrant and interesting place to both live and work, bringing people together and sharing a sense of identity. Whilst, as expected Cheltenham's events follow the typical calendar, making good use of the spring through to autumn seasons, Cheltenham also has a range of events taking place over winter months. This contributes to Cheltenham having a year round offer. With careful consideration of how the event will affect the normal operation of the town and a focus on having a longer spread of activities throughout the year. Events make towns more vibrant and interesting to both live and work in with the potential to bring people together, sharing sense of identity.

Working in line with the Culture Strategy this strategy will encourage and develop events that fit the brand of Cheltenham, offering a range of arts and cultural experiences across the calendar, not just in the peak months. The events that the town want to host need to respond to the current audiences identified within the Cheltenham Profile as well as the ones we wish to engage with as already identified within the Place Vision and the priorities of the Culture Board, these include:

- Responding to the ageing population
- Attract a younger population
- Promote social inclusion

To drive increased day visitors this strategy would encourage event organisers to invest in 'free' events that provide a festival experience 'around the town' rather than in just one area as well as support the need for cultural experiences to be accessible to all social backgrounds. An example of this is already taking place in the Jazz, Science, Music and Literature festivals with the expansion of the Around Town programme.

Increasing the profile of Cheltenham has the potential to accelerate economic and infrastructure developments which provide a significant catalyst for change. Cheltenham would have the potential to use major events to give focus to their priorities and use the opportunity to develop longer-term business and trade connections. Marketing Cheltenham are currently progressing with the launch of Meet in Cheltenham that will promote the town as a destination for corporate events and conferences attracting delegate visitors and inward investment.

Our events programme will be a mixture of established successful events, new events which can be developed and national/international events which we will be trying to attract to Cheltenham. In most instances the council will work in partnership with one or more organisations to deliver the event but the approach needs to be considered and relevant.

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It should however be acknowledged that occasionally an event opportunity will arise which will be exceptional and which should be grasped even if it does not fully meet core benefits. In such an instance flexibility and capacity to respond quickly will often be essential whilst not compromising the local authorities processes.

Cheltenham will seek to build a new event portfolio, by developing and attracting the following four categories of event: Headline Events, Feature Events, Town Events and Community Events.

### *1. Headline events*

These are a small number of big impact annual cultural and sporting highlights which showcase the town. The aspiration should be for events that can be classified as ‘distinctively Cheltenham’ that: display excellence in quality and high levels of ambition; deliver high economic impact; attract large audiences; achieve significant media coverage; and generate more overnight stays in the Cheltenham.

Examples: The Festival and Cheltenham Festivals

### *2. Feature events*

Established, growing or one-off events that contribute to the vibrancy, profile and tourism appeal of the town. They will be able to demonstrate how they can deliver quality and high levels of ambition, achieve greater public profile, deliver economic impact and attract visitors to the town from beyond Gloucestershire.

Examples: The Paint Festival, Christmas Markets, Tour of Britain

### *3. Town events*

These are events delivered at town level that although of a recognised quality are predominantly aimed at residents. They will have limited impact or attraction to visiting audiences beyond Cheltenham and Gloucestershire but contribute to the year-round ambience of the town as a happening place.

Examples: Children’s Festival, Midsummer Fiesta.

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### *4. Community events*

These are small scale community or community of interest organised festivals and events taking place across the town. They have a capacity of 499 or less. While these events have real value to local communities and should be welcomed, the limited resources of the borough council should be targeted at events which deliver a wider set of impacts. Nonetheless the borough council should support the permissions required and offer guidance and advice on best practice delivery.

### *Key recommendations*

- Alongside the Culture Strategy identify events that Cheltenham wish to host in the town.
- Create a culture where free elements to events are encouraged to ensure experiences promote social inclusion and embody the principles of the Council's Social Value Policy
- To adopt a tier system to categorising events in Cheltenham

### **OBJECTIVE 4: Maximising impact of events**

The Cultural Strategy has significant impact within this objective. For Cheltenham to maximise the impact of all of its events there needs to be a collaborative approach between the council, cultural partners and event organisers. The Culture Strategy once complete will identify specific outcomes that will assist meeting this objective.

Cheltenham's new brand as 'The Festival Town' already lends itself to create a collaborative approach between all the key stakeholders. By creating 'The Festival Town' into a form of networking group it will create a forum where information and resources can be shared, promoting professional skills development to support and nurture event organisers, showcasing Cheltenham as a town where events are welcome and encourage new and high calibre events in the future.

An initial approach to collaborative working would be creating a central volunteer bank. Cheltenham is home to a number of volunteers that support events throughout the year. This central database would be able support existing events as well as enable new events reliant on volunteers in Cheltenham that don't have a robust following themselves. The volunteer bank could offer individuals opportunities within the planning stages of events as well as delivery, providing them with professional skills development.

Beyond volunteering a central box office is another area of proposed collaborative working. Currently festivals and events use a variety of platforms from locally based box offices to national providers. A central box office for festivals and events in Cheltenham would make booking tickets and experiences easy for the consumer.

Cheltenham is home to a number of public and private venues suitable for events. Currently event organisers need to navigate the town's venue options themselves. Marketing Cheltenham is in a position to promote the town as a whole and become a central point for any event organiser identifying Cheltenham as a location for their event. This approach is already proving successful with corporate events, so a similar approach could easily be replicated for festivals and events. As part of this a venue directory would be created to support the marketing of the town as a destination for event organisers.

It is clear that events provide wealth, jobs and social vitality but it can be hard to get clear data on how events have economic benefit they have as spend linked to the event can be spread far and wide, and into the smallest corners of the region. There are a number of factors to consider when assessing the economic impact of an event in Cheltenham including the duration of event, the nature of the event and the audience profile. Any major event will spend some of its budget outside the region but it will also spend it in the region to deliver the event, as well as its visitors spending money within the local economy through accommodation, travel, restaurants and shopping. This strategy advocates that a consistent and systematic approach to evaluating economic impact

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be developed and encourage all event organisers to share this analysis as part of the event process. These statistics should be available to the public in some form to help illustrate the benefits of festivals and events to Cheltenham's economy and communities.

### *Key recommendations*

- For The Festival Town to be taken beyond a brand and into a peer group and collaborative forum under the umbrella of Marketing Cheltenham membership and network organisation.
- For Cheltenham to continue to invest in a collaborative, town-wide approach to marketing Cheltenham as a cultural destination and as The Festival Town in order to attract new and more diverse audiences, maximising benefits to the town.
- Develop a Cheltenham Venue Portfolio to package the town's assets.
- Develop a consistent and systematic approach to event measurement and evaluation including economic impact methodology.

## Strategy recommendations

Table 4: Events strategy recommendations

No.	Recommendation	Partner responsible for delivering	Wider benefit realisation
<b>Objective 1: Mechanisms for managing events</b>			
1	Review the events enquiry and booking process for CBC assets to ensure it is efficient for both officers and event organisers.	Cheltenham Borough Council	
2	Research and identify event booking software to be used for CBC assets.	Cheltenham Borough Council	
3	Create a working group of existing council officers and event organisers to support the design and implementation of a new event booking process.	Cheltenham Borough Council	
4	Review the approval process for events to ensure they meet the town's strategic aims and the events strategy.	Cheltenham Borough Council	
5	CBC to adopt event criteria for approving events for the use of their land assets.	Cheltenham Borough Council	
6	Identify the events approval process for council assets	Cheltenham Borough Council	
7	Encourage event partners to refer to/adopt event criteria during programming	Cheltenham Borough Council/Culture Board	
8	Develop a Festival Town Charter	Holding recommendation awaiting Culture Strategy for guiding principles	
9	Design a guide for event organisers on how to produce events in Cheltenham to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cheltenham Event Criteria</li> <li>- Application process guidance</li> </ul>	Marketing Cheltenham/Cheltenham Borough Council	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Consultation advice</li> <li>- Legal requirements and permissions</li> <li>- Health and Safety</li> <li>- Cheltenham Borough Council Contacts</li> <li>- External Stakeholder Contacts</li> </ul>		
10	Attract events with sustainable model/same environmental values as the Council.	Cheltenham Borough Council	
11	Reinforce the use of Event Consultative Group to members, assess the way meetings are organised to ensure their effectiveness.	Cheltenham Borough Council	
12	Evaluate the effectiveness of the Garden's Forum and whether its function can be expanded beyond the consultation of Cheltenham Festivals. To consider an alternative method of consultation and extending beyond resident groups.	Cheltenham Borough Council	
13	Identify an effective way of communicating events with residents, businesses and other stakeholders no matter their proximity to the proposed event site(s). Explore the benefits of an online portal.	Cheltenham Borough Council	
14	Explore the benefit of creating a Council's Events Management Group to ensure the council takes a co-ordinated approach to the delivery of events in the town. To be composed of officers from a number of Council services and has representation from Marketing Cheltenham. The group is not intended to act as a steering group for the strategic development of events. Instead, this Group focuses on operational issues and ensures events are delivered through internal partnership working. A key role of the group would be to alert stakeholders to any significant impact an event may have on either the town or the Council's services.	Cheltenham Borough Council	
15	Create a single point of contact for all Event Organisers	Cheltenham Borough Council/Marketing Cheltenham	

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16	Increase dedicated officer support towards events in the form of an Events Coordinator to support on the growth of events in the town and the administration that will be required to ensure their success and Cheltenham's reputation as town that supports new and upcoming events.	Marketing Cheltenham/Cheltenham Borough Council	
17	To gain a clear understanding of the council's liabilities for third party events.	Cheltenham Borough Council	
<b>Objective 2: Events infrastructure</b>			
18	Look to work with Gloucestershire County Council to identify sustainable transport provisions including park & ride.	Gloucestershire County Council/Cheltenham Borough Council	
19	Identify potential event spaces within public realm areas during the high street redevelopment plans.	Cheltenham Borough Council	
20	Work with Gloucestershire County Council on the procedure for holding public events within public realm areas.	Gloucestershire County Council/Cheltenham Borough Council	
21	Explore options for a capital investment programme for a new bespoke event site within Pittville Park	Cheltenham Borough Council	
22	To apply for planning permission to increase the number of days available for events for Pittville Park.	Cheltenham Borough Council	
23	To apply for planning permission to increase the number of days available for events for Sandford Park	Cheltenham Borough Council	
24	Explore options for a capital investment programme to improve facilities and utilities at existing event sites	Cheltenham Borough Council	
25	To review the current planning permissions for Montpellier and Imperial Gardens allowing more flexibility in the usage and types of events able to use the gardens.	Cheltenham Borough Council	
26	To create a green policy for events to provide guidance and information to event organisers supporting the Carbon Neutral 2030 pledge.	Cheltenham Borough Council	
<b>Objective 3: Programming of events</b>			

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27	Identify Event Organisers that Cheltenham wish to invite, pitch to and attract to the town.	Holding recommendation awaiting Culture Strategy for guiding principles	
28	To encourage event organisers to include free elements to festivals and events.	Holding recommendation awaiting Culture Strategy for guiding principles	
29	To encourage innovation through events.	Holding recommendation awaiting Culture Strategy for guiding principles	
30	To explore potential benefits to event organisers who provide free elements to festivals and events.	Holding recommendation awaiting Culture Strategy for guiding principles	
31	CBC to adopt event tier system for categorising events for the use of their land assets.	Cheltenham Borough Council	
32	Encourage event partners to refer to/adopt event tier system during programming	Holding recommendation awaiting Culture Strategy for guiding principles	
<b>Objective 4: Maximising impact of events</b>			
33	For Cheltenham to continue to invest in a collaborative, town-wide approach to marketing Cheltenham as a cultural destination and as The Festival Town in order to attract new and more diverse audiences, maximising benefits to the town.	Marketing Cheltenham	

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34	Work with event organisers and cultural partners across the town to scope the potential of creating a single, shared online box office for Cheltenham.	Marketing Cheltenham	
35	For The Festival Town to be taken beyond a brand and into a peer group and collaborative forum under the umbrella of Marketing Cheltenham membership and network organisation, to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Information and resources for event organisers</li> <li>- Support and advice on marketing and communications.</li> <li>- Professional skills development to support new and upcoming events to nurture and develop organisers of the town's festivals and events</li> <li>- Networking opportunities for professionals within the sector to share knowledge and skills.</li> <li>- Volunteer bank, a central volunteer database than can support all events within the town</li> <li>- Access to a centralised online ticket booking system</li> <li>- Member benefits similar to those of Marketing Cheltenham.</li> </ul>	Marketing Cheltenham	
36	To support and recommend Event Organisers on marketing events and festivals in order to attract a broader audience to Cheltenham and to maximise the economic impact of events.	Marketing Cheltenham	
37	Develop a Cheltenham Venue Portfolio to package the town's assets (include CBC, partner and private venues), strengths and potential capabilities to capture the attention of national and international organisations and event organisers.	Marketing Cheltenham	
38	Attend specific trade fairs to market Cheltenham as an attractive, events friendly town in conjunction with Meet In Cheltenham..	Marketing Cheltenham	
39	Develop a consistent and systematic approach to event measurement and evaluation including economic impact methodology. Explore the use of <a href="http://www.eventimpacts.com">www.eventimpacts.com</a>	Holding recommendation awaiting Culture Strategy for guiding principles	

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40	Articulate the benefits of major events to Cheltenham residents and businesses	Holding recommendation awaiting Cultural Strategy for guiding principles	
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<sup>i</sup> [https://www.cheltenham.gov.uk/info/19/corporate\\_priorities\\_and\\_performance/1392/place\\_strategy](https://www.cheltenham.gov.uk/info/19/corporate_priorities_and_performance/1392/place_strategy)

<sup>ii</sup> White Paper – The political economy of informal events, 2030

<sup>iii</sup> Taking Part 2017/18 adult annual report