

## Statement by Nicole O'Flaherty to Cabinet 3-Feb-10

### Grant to Fringe

I am speaking to you as the Chair Elect of Bath Fringe

Main points:

1. Apologise for not having brought that issue up before. Was away..., particular apologies to Cllr Gazzard.
2. I have read all the latest studies, letters and emails between the Council and the Fringe.
3. Break of communication between Council and Fringe, not because of lack of information from the Council but because the people who run the Fringe do not really understand 'Council speech'.
4. At a meeting with Council's Arts officer on 23<sup>rd</sup> November, the minutes states that £15,000 was allocated in the budget for 2010/11. This, they took as an assurance that the Festival would receive that amount for one more year.
5. It is true that it is difficult to get relevant business plans, budgets, etc in time from Fringe. The people involved are not malicious in any way, or ill intentioned, they just are not familiar with what they should be providing to the Council and in what format.
6. On 25<sup>th</sup> January, two months after meeting I just referred to they received a letter from the Divisional Director stating that they would cease to provide financial support to the Fringe from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2010.
7. I was made aware of this development on my return on Sunday.
8. They are a number of inaccuracies in that letter; the Fringe does involve people from a wider B&NES community. The Boom Stage last year was started as a result of fulfilling a need for the young people of Radstock who wanted to perform at the Fringe. I do not wish to go into too many details in this Forum but I'd like to point out that in 2009, over 27,000 people attended events at the Fringe, out of which nearly 9,000 were free events.
9. To finish, I would like to ask you to reconsider your decision to cut the budget to the Fringe. I am asking for one year grant until April 2011. This will enable me to put their affairs in good order and to respond to the Council's priorities. Let us remember that they provide cultural events to many residents of B&NES who cannot afford the more expensive festivals in the City and that is very commendable. They are inclusive, innovative, allow new performers to have a stage and for these and many more reasons I genuinely believe that their case has not been understood – or well explained by them- and I hope that you will seriously consider giving them a one year grant until April 2011.

Many thanks