

**Leisure and Culture Policy Development Advisory Group**  
**18 JULY 2018**

Present: Councillors: Jonathan Chowen (Chairman), Matthew French, Nigel Jupp and Kate Rowbottom

Apologies: Councillors: Christine Costin, Tony Hogben, Adrian Lee and Mike Morgan

Absent: Councillors: Billy Greening and Michael Willett

Also Present: Councillor Claire Vickers

1 **NOTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The notes of the meeting of the PDAG held on 16 May were received.

2 **THE CAPITOL**

The Cabinet Member welcomed Chris Moore from ACL Consultancy Solutions, which had been commissioned to produce a future options appraisal to help secure a sustainable future for The Capitol. The commission had been prompted by the proposed new Everyman Cinema in the town centre.

The consultants had already had a constructive meeting with the Leader of the Council and Chief Executive. A provisional report followed by a final report, with a preferred option, costings and budget projections, would be prepared later in the year.

Chris gave a presentation to the group to update them on progress. Areas that were being analysed included: programming; potential for adapting parts of the space with a view to increasing flexibility; condition of the building; catering; parking; staffing structure; audience development; and marketing. A survey of current users of The Capitol would be run later in the summer and autumn to help inform the appraisal. He considered that the particular business model of the Everyman Cinema would not pose a threat to the viability of The Capitol.

In response to questions from the group, Chris outlined ways in which the current offer could be expanded and adapted to encourage attendance from a wider demographic. He stressed the need for a long term plan that could adapt with changing times.

The group were encouraged by the progress report and the Cabinet Member thanked Chris for the positive work so far and looked forward to the final report.

### **3 YEAR OF CULTURE**

The Head of Community & Culture reported on a number of developments in the preparation for The Year of Culture since the last update on 14 March.

He outlined the current budget projections, including current investment from HDC budgets, and highlighted four significant projects from those that HDC will deliver alongside 38 community led projects which are benefitting from Year of Culture funding. The group noted confirmed sponsorship, projected ticket sales and touring revenue. The figures showed a modest contingency budget but the Director of Community Services reinforced that there would be a level of financial exposure if ticket sales fell short of expectations. There was also an expectation of income from legacy projects.

The Head of Community & Culture gave details of the significant projects that had been confirmed. Two would be ticketed events (at Leonardslee Gardens and Knepp Castle Estate) and two would involve a number of towns and villages across the district and be free of charge.

The Cabinet Member thanked officers for their hard work in developing the project and engaging with so many communities across the district. The project would be a celebration of the district's rich cultural heritage and help drive the visitor economy.

### **4 ECOLOGY UPDATE**

The Cabinet Member welcomed the Cabinet Member for Planning & Development to the meeting, and introduced the Principal Planning Officer who gave a presentation on how the Council's Planning Department was looking at ways to improve biodiversity across the district.

The group were advised of research from the University of Sheffield into different land uses in Horsham District and nationally. It was noted that Horsham has a very high percentage of farmland (83%) and low percentage of natural habitat (7%) compared to the national average and many of the districts and boroughs in West Sussex.

The Principle Planning Officer gave examples of planning applications (East of Billingshurst development and Nowhurst Business Park) where wildlife enhancement areas and other mitigation and enhancement had improved schemes and made them acceptable in planning terms. It was noted that developers already recognised that protecting or encouraging wildlife helped to create desirable developments. The Berkeley Group was given as an example of a developer that had introduced initiatives to ensure a net gain for the natural environment.

Members noted proposed changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which was currently being consulted on. These proposed changes, if retained, would include policies to help ensure that biodiversity enhancement becomes a requirement rather than an option.

The Council's Horsham District Planning Framework was being reviewed and this would need to reflect any changes in the updated NPPF. Work was also in the process of being programmed with the Sussex Biodiversity Record Centre to help understand how the natural environment functions across the district. This work will provide a greater understanding of the natural environment and the biodiversity potential of the district.

The group commented on the pressure that the council was under to build new homes in order to achieve the projected housing needs of the district. In response to concerns, the Head of Strategic Planning confirmed that introducing buffer zones and wildlife initiatives should not have a significant impact on the viability of schemes, their overall density or the amount of land used for development.

The Cabinet Member considered that the district's small proportion of natural habitat needed defending. He was also concerned at the large amount of farmland which was often less beneficial to biodiversity than other land uses. He welcomed the work that the Planning Department was undertaking.

The Cabinet Member of Planning & Development suggested that once the evidence base work undertaken by the Sussex Biodiversity Record Centre was completed and analysed, a joint PDAG for both portfolios should be held. The group were supportive of this approach.

## 5 **THE BRIDGE UPDATE**

The Director of Community Services advised Members that the construction of the new leisure centre was approaching completion and was expected to be finished in approximately two months. There would be an update from the building contractors next week, after which all Members would be updated.

Members were assured that existing customers were being encouraged to transfer to the new leisure centre. It was anticipated that there would be an official high profile opening shortly after the opening of the leisure centre.

The Head of Community & Culture also gave a brief update on the Football Club, where construction of the new pavilion was going well. The lack of rain was causing challenges for growing the new pitch. Members were advised that the site would be handed over to the club once it was considered to be in good condition.

6 **FORWARD PLAN EXTRACT FOR THE LEISURE AND CULTURE  
PORTFOLIO**

There were no relevant items on the current Forward Plan.

*The meeting closed at 7.40 pm having commenced at 5.30 pm*

CHAIRMAN