

Leisure and Culture Policy Development Advisory Group
13 MAY 2020

Present: Councillors: Jonathan Chowen (Chairman), Chris Brown, Ruth Fletcher, Tony Hogben, Lynn Lambert, John Milne, Roger Noel, Bob Platt and Josh Potts

Apologies: Councillors: Christine Costin and Billy Greening

38 **NOTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING FROM 15TH JANUARY 2020**

The notes of the meeting held on 15th January 2020 were received by the group. It was noted that this meeting was a joint meeting with the Horsham Town PDAG but several councillors had not been able to be present at the meeting. The Highwood Community Centre Development Proposal and Denne Ward Asset Consultation with key stakeholder groups is underway.

39 **GENERAL SERVICE UPDATE AND EFFECTS OF COVID 19**

It was thought that COVID 19 would have an impact on the arts and leisure sectors for the next couple of years.

40 **PARKS AND COUNTRYSIDE - SERVICE UPDATE**

There was a question regarding the proposed development at Rockwood as part of the Local Plan process, it was confirmed that the Friends of Warnham Nature Reserve were part of the consultation process along with other stakeholders. An independent ecological report had been commissioned to look at the potential impact and mitigation opportunities for the adjacent Warnham Nature Reserve. The Group was keen to see it when available.

It was noted that with the COVID 19 situation, people were exercising on Rockwood Golf Course. Members of the Group wished to know whether they could still be accommodated when the golf course re-opened that week. The Director of Community Services stated that the Council could have discussions with them but that they were a commercial organisation. The Head of Property and Facilities was going to contact Rockwood Golf Course to discuss the issue.

There was a discussion around the reopening of the bird hides at Warnham Nature Reserve. There was a suggestion of allowing one family group in at a time but there were concerns about social distancing and disinfecting the door handles. It was agreed that the bird hides would remain closed. The nature reserve was unable to open at present due to the construction work on site but the team were looking into practical solutions to enable it to be opened as soon as possible.

It was noted that during the COVID 19 situation the mowing of grass on Council-owned parks and green spaces had depended on the ability of the contractors to be able to get into the sites.

Where there had been confrontation because of concerns about social distancing and people exercising in certain areas, the staff had tried to respond with more specific wording of notices and contact numbers which people could phone if they had concerns. There was concern regarding the resources it would take to keep people abiding by the social distancing instructions, especially now there had been some relaxation of the rules.

41 **THE CAPITOL - SERVICE UPDATE**

The Capitol was currently closed. Performances were being rescheduled where possible and refunds were being offered in line with other venues. Maintenance was being carried out behind the scenes and it was hoped that The Capitol could reopen in July for cinema. It was acknowledged that it would be longer for live theatre. Social distancing measures would need to be introduced throughout the building. There was a discussion around why there was a difference between opening simply for screening films instead of live theatre. It was explained that the issue was partly the safety of the actors on the stage but also the theatre ran with smaller margins and performances might not be viable if capacity was limited. With cinema, a film could be shown on numerous occasions on multiple screens whereas theatre was live and more restricted. Also an interval was not needed with a film whereas it was usual with theatre. An interval would provide problems with social distancing for audiences wanting to access shared facilities like toilets.

42 **HORSHAM MUSEUM - SERVICE UPDATE**

Horsham Museum was closed and the staff were working from home on the website and online presence. Contractors were working in the building on the heating and lighting. Work was underway looking at options for reopening the museum.

43 **LEISURE AND SPORTS - SERVICE UPDATE**

Payment from Places Leisure had been deferred due to the current COVID 19 situation but they had requested further assistance. The Council were waiting for them to provide more detail of what assistance they required. Most staff working for Places for Leisure had been furloughed. The Sports Development service is closed at the moment and work is underway looking at options for restarting.

44 **INTRODUCTION OF PETE CRAWFORD, NEW PARKS AND COUNTRYSIDE MANAGER**

The new Parks and Countryside Manager, Pete Crawford, introduced himself and said that he had started work on March 9th. He had had one and a half weeks in the office before having to start working at home due to the COVID 19 situation. He outlined his previous experience. He stated that he reported to the Head of Leisure and Culture. He managed the Countryside Team including the rangers, the Parks Team and Cemeteries.

45 **GROUND'S MAINTENANCE CONTRACT**

The Council's 7 year grounds maintenance contract with Ideverde ends on 31 December this year. There are two options to consider regarding renewal – either renewing again for the full 7 years or extending the contract for 15 months which would then tie in with when the Arboriculture Contract which ends on 31 March 2022. If the contract were renewed it would be increased by approximately £10,000 to reflect the national living wage obligations for the contractor as well as some smaller costs for replacement tools and machinery that have come to the end of life. The proposed extension of the contract was on the agenda for Cabinet for June.

46 **YEAR OF CULTURE OVERVIEW**

The Head of Leisure & Culture provided an overview of the 2019 year of culture.

- The aim of the Year of Culture was a year long heritage celebration. It had been a success.
- There had been over 700 events listed on the Year of Culture website. The website reached 700,000 people and there were 50,000 clicks and 11,000 shares or comments.
- There were several events each month including 52 free or low cost events which the Council initiated or put on.
- The Council funded 38 local community groups and arts organisations.
- All parishes were reached.
- 395 volunteers gave 7000 hours of voluntary work
- 120,000 people attended new HDC funded events plus thousands attended advertised events
- It cost £631,000. £260,000 came from sponsorship, ticket sales and the existing arts and community budget. £300,000 came from specific funding. The funding shortfall was £71,000. It had originally been highlighted as potentially reaching £165,000.
- Events included a travelling play about football performed across the district – The Red Lion, light up projections, the commissioning of local landscape painting and a History of the District in 100 objects at the museum. There was also a children's' parade which had £3,000 HDC funding and £17,000 match funding. 17 schools and 700 children were involved. This was the most talked about Year of Culture event on social media
- High quality and National Portfolio organisations (who are funded by the Arts Council) who came to Horsham District during the Year of Culture

included Motion House, Stop Gap, Applause rural touring, Chicken Shed, Tony Easterby

The Art of Culture significantly raised Horsham District's profile with the Arts Council. Despite not being on the Art's Council's target list for investment, Horsham was able to secure Arts Council funding towards the creation of an arts and culture strategy as part of the legacy from the Year of Culture.

HDC had planned to employ a Cultural Outreach Officer and Strategic Cultural Officer. Due to the COVID 19 situation, it would now probably be 2021 when they were taken on.

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FORWARD PLAN EXTRACT FOR THE LEISURE AND CULTURE PORTFOLIO

There were two items on the Forward Plan for this portfolio. The Grounds Maintenance contract had been discussed above. The other item was the review of Southwater Country Park car parking. It was felt that there could not be too many people using the car park during the COVID 19 situation and pricing could act as a deterrent.

The meeting closed at 7.11 pm having commenced at 5.30 pm

CHAIRMAN