

Leisure and Culture Policy Development Advisory Group
11 NOVEMBER 2020

Present: Councillors: Jonathan Chowen (Chairman), Christine Costin, Ruth Fletcher, Billy Greening, Lynn Lambert, John Milne, Roger Noel, Bob Platt, Josh Potts and Kate Rowbottom

Absent: Councillors: Chris Brown

7 **NOTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The notes of the meeting held on 23 September were received.

8 **WILDER HORSHAM DISTRICT**

The Cabinet Member welcomed Sussex Wildlife Trust's Director of Conservation and also the Landowner Adviser and Community Support Officer, who had recently been recruited to work on the Wilder Horsham District project.

The SWT Director of Conservation gave an update on the project. There were three main strands to the work that sought to build: a resilient organisation (HDC); resilient landscapes; and resilient communities.

Much of the work would focus on creating key Nature Recovery Networks across the district. This would involve landowners, including farmers, and the HDC Parks & Countryside team with regards to Council owned land. The Landowner Adviser summarised what had been achieved so far and how liaison with landowners, local communities and parish councils from across the district would continue during the 5-year project.

The Environmental Coordination Manager advised that the first round of applications for the HDC Community Climate Fund had just closed and a Nature Recovery Award would be launched later in November. The latter focuses on supporting the creation of the Nature Recovery Networks. There would be talks and seminars for staff and Members, with the talks for staff beginning in the New Year.

The Cabinet Member stated that the ambition was for the aims of this project to be embedded into the Council's policy-making process. It was noted that the Government had committed to the creation and enhancement of Nature Recovery Networks in their Environmental Bill, which was currently going through Parliament.

9 **LEISURE CENTRES**

The Head of Leisure & Culture gave a presentation to update the Group on the leisure centres in the light of their closure on 5 November because of the national Lockdown. After reopening in July, they had been operating at a

similar level to other districts and boroughs, with customers returning to activities with some restrictions in place.

The second Lockdown would have a less severe impact in terms of reopening costs now that all sites were Covid-secure. However, there would be a financial impact and a new Deed of Variation to be agreed with Places Leisure to reflect the estimated relief required for the second Lockdown.

The Cabinet Member said that it was hard to predict outcomes when the situation was uncertain. The Group were advised that a number of scenarios for the rest of the financial year, and into 2021/22, were being worked up with a view to balancing cost savings with community needs and expectations.

10 **THE CAPITOL - RECOVERY PLAN**

The Cabinet Member congratulated staff on the refurbishment of The Capitol and on the interesting programme that had been put together. The Operations Manager was promoting events successfully and attendance had been good after the first Lockdown.

The Head of Leisure & Culture advised that prior to the Lockdown on 5 November the anticipated subsidy level remained stable and the intention was to reopen as soon as possible. The Capitol had also been awarded £182,000 from the Arts Council's Cultural Recovery Fund.

Live performances were back before the second Lockdown and many had sold out. Tickets were now selling well for the Christmas performances in December with a programme designed to appeal to a wide audience. Learning from trials of performances that have appealed to younger audiences and customers from outside of the district will feed into longer-term development plans for the venue.

With the current uncertainty caused by the pandemic a number of scenarios were being explored. The Cabinet Member advised that the report to Cabinet on 26 November would seek to delegate authority to the Head of Service to enable a fast and flexible response if required.

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

The Forward Plan extract was noted.

The meeting closed at 7.40 pm having commenced at 5.30 pm

CHAIRMAN