

Leisure and Culture Policy Development Advisory Group
20 JANUARY 2021

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

Apologies: Councillors: Christine Costin

12 **NOTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The notes from the previous meeting on the 11th November were received.

13 **HORSHAM MUSEUM**

The Curator and the Assistant Curator briefed the Group on the planned Museum refurbishment. In the downstairs galleries, visitors would be taken on a journey of the whole Horsham district, following a chronological approach, including the exhibitions:

- Discover Horsham District
- Geology, Palaeontology and Archaeology
- Crime and Punishment
- Medieval Horsham
- Horsham district in 18th to 20th century
- Town changes in 20th & 21st century.

In the upstairs galleries, each room would cover an aspect of Horsham life. The Museum has been working with a number of community groups to co-curate some features of the refurbishment. There would be an increased use of digital technology throughout, including touchscreen videos, QR codes and film.

The Museum's barn and outbuilding would introduce some new large objects, digital projections, a pop up café and a refreshed workshop for volunteers.

The Museum & Heritage Officer also gave an overview of other projects, such as the completion of the district's Heritage Trails.

14 **COVID 19 - UPDATE ON LEISURE AND CULTURE SERVICES**

The Head of Leisure and Culture gave an update on the directorate's services and the impact of Covid-19.

Leisure Centres

The Council had worked closely with Places Leisure (PL) throughout the pandemic. PL & Council Officers had estimated customer appetite and the level

of support needed. The Head of Leisure & Culture noted October was the peak in customer confidence, as customers were visiting consistently with all sites open.

The group noted the financial forecast for the Leisure Centres. The predicted loss for the Leisure Centres had been reduced through Central Government support schemes and recovery funding. However financial support would still be needed going forward. The Head of Leisure & Culture had a goal of returning to earning an income from PL as soon as possible.

There was still uncertainty around the impact of Covid-19, specifically in relation to any potential increase in restrictions throughout the year. Other future challenges were the possible renegotiation of contracts and the need for investment in the medium term for key sites like the Pavilions.

Parks and countryside

The service had seen increased pressure related to the pandemic, as more people has been accessing green spaces across the district. This contributed to an increase in repairs, refurbishments and increasing access to all the sites. In the long term, the Head of Leisure & Culture noted the positive opportunities which had arisen due to the pandemic, as it highlighted the importance of the spaces within the district.

The Head of Leisure & Culture briefed the group on developments to the Warnham Discovery Hub, and presented changes to the inside and outside of the building. There were plans for the Hub to be open by autumn.

The Capitol

The Capitol Operations Manager presented an update on The Capitol. The overwhelmingly positive customer feedback was highlighted and the importance of the theatre in the community reinforced. The Capitol had seen an increase in followers across their social media channels.

It was noted that due to significant changes to the Film Industry, live theatre was now the offer which attracted the largest audiences. This new focus on live theatre had seen new Comedians and West End stars come to The Capitol, and they had been received positively. The Capitols Christmas Offer included two very popular live shows: Santa's new sleigh and A Christmas Carol. The majority of shows were sold out. There had been challenges for the Capitol, like the social distancing measures that meant 25% of seats were available. The nature of recent uncertainty meant the team had been reactive and taken a creative flexible approach.

Moving forward, the venue would likely remain closed in the short term. Future challenges around capital investment needed in the medium term and uncertainty in the film industry and cinema were also noted.

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

There were no items on the current Forward Plan for the Leisure & Culture portfolio.

The meeting closed at 7.00 pm having commenced at 5.30 pm

CHAIRMAN