

Leisure & Culture Policy Development Advisory Group
14 JULY 2021

Present: Councillors: Roger Noel (Chairman), Tony Bevis, Martin Boffey, Ruth Fletcher, Bob Platt, Josh Potts, Kate Rowbottom, Jack Saheid and Ian Stannard

Apologies: Councillors: Billy Greening and Liz Kitchen

1 **NOTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The notes from the previous meeting on 3 March were received.

2 **GROUNDS MAINTENANCE AND ARBORICULTURE CONTRACTS**

The Head of Leisure and Culture gave a presentation on these tenders by way of a refresher and to get the new Members up to speed.

The start dates for the new contracts were 1 February 2022 for grounds maintenance; 1 April 2022 for the Arboriculture, with an opportunity to align the contracts at break points in future.

3 **LEISURE SERVICES UPDATE**

The Head of Leisure and Culture gave an update on the contract with Places Leisure (PL), and the impact that the Covid-19 pandemic was having since the leisure centres reopened. It was noted that PL was performing better than projected with swimming attendance at 90%.

4 **THE CAPITOL UPDATE**

The Head of Leisure and Culture reported the Capitol reopened on 28 May, with social distancing in place until 19 July. The first month's performance had shown takings doubled from the same time last year when the initial lockdown was lifted.

The team were back from furlough and doing well booking acts and trialling events with a focus on quality. Educating Rita starring Steven Tomlinson had sold well, Jo Brand had sold out and booking the musical Little Voice had been secured too. The Wimbledon final had received positive feedback, despite a clash with the Euro finals.

Plans to trial a jazz offering were underway, and an increase in people staying at the bar, both before and after shows had been noted.

The pantomime this year, Aladdin, would use a local lead actor that had performed in the West End shows Mama Mia and Les Misérables. Should Covid restrictions be reintroduced during winter months the pantomime would have to be delayed into 2022.

5 **MUSEUM REOPENING PLANS**

The Museum Curator and the Head of Leisure and Culture provided an update regarding Horsham Museum's opening plans.

The museum was due to reopen in the Autumn following refurbishment and reorganisation of the two floors.

The Visitors Centre had moved online via the museum blog and social media, freeing up space in the Museum foyer. Volunteers were back working in the Museum, assisting with redecoration works. The Museum Curator had offered Councillors the opportunity of a guided tour of the building and exhibits ahead of the reopening.

A new associate curator had been employed, with previous experience including the National Trust and V&A Museum. A new Volunteer and Business Coordinator role would also be recruited to manage and recruit new volunteers to develop the sales, outreach activities, and front of house offerings.

Opportunities for modernisation include further digitisations, with plans to put QR codes next to exhibits to improve the customer experience.

6 **MUSEUM OPENING HOURS**

Visitor patterns were being studied to find the best opening times. Trials of opening on Sundays and Bank Holidays would take place next summer.

A discussion took place about changing the Museum's opening hours, which saw most Members supportive of the motion to delegate that authority to the Director of Community Services, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Leisure and Culture.

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

The forward plan extract was noted.

The meeting closed at 7.15 pm having commenced at 5.30 pm

CHAIRMAN