

Leisure & Culture Policy Development Advisory Group
9 AUGUST 2022

Present: Councillors: Roger Noel (Chairman), Alan Britten, Ruth Fletcher, Billy Greening, Richard Landeryou, Gordon Lindsay, Bob Platt, Louise Potter, Josh Potts and Kate Rowbottom

Apologies: Councillors: Peter Burgess
Absent: Councillors:

Also Present:

1 **NOTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The notes of the meeting held on 11 May 2022 were received and agreed, with one small amendment.

2 **SOUTHWATER COUNTRY PARK CONSULTATION**

The Head of Leisure and Culture delivered a presentation updating Members on the ongoing Southwater Country Park consultation, which is due to complete at the end of September. This incorporates an on-line questionnaire (link sent to all Members), face-to-face engagement in the Country Park, child-focussed activities, and focus group conversations with key stakeholders. The aim is to assess the reasons why people visit, aspects of the Country Park that are valued, areas that visitors would ideally like to improve and what should be prioritised for future possible development.

To date 749 responses have been received, of which 73% were from local people, within a 15 minute drive of the Country Park. Tourism South East will deliver 17 on site sessions and children's engagement activities throughout August and September. Stakeholders consulted include on-site businesses, clubs and wildlife groups, Parish and HDC Council representatives, and key community users.

Key themes emerging from the consultation will be assessed by the consultants and shared with SLT and Members later in the year.

Further updates regarding the Country Park included:

- Anti-social behaviour concerns.
- Confirmation that the beach booking system is still being trialled throughout the school summer holidays.
- Lower oxygen levels in the fishing lake are due to the current hot weather, staff are working closely with the Environment Agency to best manage and support the wildlife.

Questions and discussion clarified a number of points, including

- The Head of Leisure and Culture confirmed that officers will await the consultants' final report to then assess key themes that could potentially feed into a masterplanning exercise.
- A concern was raised about the effective use of pumps in the fishing lake. The Head of Leisure and Culture confirmed that the pumps are not left out throughout the night because of the risk of theft and vandalism.
- A concern was also raised about the loss of cygnets from the park. Natural predation is to be expected but the cause of other cygnet losses is being investigated.
- Consider the potential to make the beach available in the summer beyond the current 4.45pm beach booking closing time, to enable families to access and enjoy the site in the evening.

3 **GROUNDS MAINTENANCE AND ARBORICULTURE CONTRACTS UPDATE**

The Parks Operations Manager provided a brief update. Both contracts are bedding in well.

The Head of Leisure and Culture gave a financial update regarding the contracts.

4 **EVENTS UPDATE**

The Head of Leisure and Culture provided an update to Members on the Jubilee and other events.

The public response to the Jubilee events was very positive. Key events for the Council to support in the remainder of the year include the Remembrance Parade in November and a Christmas community event.

HDC is supporting the Horsham Business Initiative to develop its independent vision for the role of events within the town, as part of the Business Information District (BID) proposal. Updates on the BID will be through the Horsham Town PDAG.

The Head of Leisure and Culture confirmed that an Events Officer post will be recruited in the autumn. HDC's priority for commissioning and delivering events was to prioritise community benefit and ensure the legacy of the Year of Culture continues.

5 **LEISURE CENTRES UPDATE**

The Head of Leisure and Culture gave a financial update on the leisure contract and current usage rates. Confirmation that work is ongoing to look at how to improve green energy use at the leisure centres.

6 **MUSEUM UPDATE**

The Head of Leisure and Culture updated Members on the staffing for the Museum as well as current exhibitions and successful children's activities. The Curator is starting work on a Five Year Plan, ensuring that the Museum continues to be accredited and has a clear vision for the short- to medium-term.

The meeting closed at 6.45 pm having commenced at 5.30 pm

CHAIRMAN