

# ***Report to the Council***

**Subject: Leisure and Wellbeing Portfolio      Date: 5 November 2013**

**Portfolio Holder: Councillor E Webster**

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## **Recommending:**

**That the report of the Leisure and Wellbeing Portfolio Holder be noted.**

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## **Leisure Strategy**

The process of developing the new Leisure Strategy, which will also incorporate consideration of the next Leisure Centres Contract is now well underway. At the present time this is essentially an information gathering exercise, ensuring that all available data around Leisure Centre usage is collated such that a clear view of what might be required in a future contract can be determined. Despite the current testing economic circumstances, the Centres are continuing to perform well with gym and fitness class activity higher than the same period last year. Swimming classes remain in demand but there has been a slight drop in public swimming activity.

## **Community Services**

Following a very successful launch of 'Prison Me No Way' at Roding Valley High School earlier in the year, two further events were staged in October at St Johns School, Epping and King Harold School, Waltham Abbey. The 'Prison Me No Way' scheme is a high impact, interactive day for Year 10 pupils which focuses on the consequences of committing crime and gives pupils a true insight into what prison life is really like. The scheme is delivered by Prison Wardens and current and ex-prisoners and includes the opportunity for young people to be locked in a cell and treated as they would be in prison.

## **Limes Centre, Chigwell**

The Limes Centre continues to be a thriving Community Hub and with the introduction of a new, volunteer run community café local residents are being encouraged to increase their skills and think about Social Enterprise. It is also planned for a Youth Café to be launched before Christmas.

Other new initiatives which are being provided for young people at the Limes Centre and on Limes Farm estate include:

- A graffiti arts project, which is being funded by the Royal Opera House Bridge organisation and supported by Essex County Council. The project which is aimed at 13 – 19 year olds, aims to get more young people participating in the regular youth club and is teaching them and the youth workers based at the centre, the various skills to create a 'stencil wall', which will personalise the activity hall where they meet in the centre

- A new football coaching programme and junior club has just been launched in partnership with Colebrook Royals Football Club, which is for young people aged between 10 and 16 years age. Around 20 youngsters attend the sessions which include football coaching, skills and game play. Colebrook Royals are also using the session to identify talented youngsters to recruit to their teams.

### **Epping Forest Youth Council**

Our young councillors introduced a new initiative to promote and support local youth groups and clubs this year, by holding a 'Celebration of Youth Groups Event', which was staged in the Council Chamber last week and was really well received by everyone who attended. The evening provided the opportunity for staff and young people from local groups to network and receive advice about training opportunities for staff and various funding information that is available to local groups. There was also entertainment from a range of local young people and the Youth Council launched their Youth Volunteer Information Guide on the night, to encourage more local teenagers to volunteer in their spare time.

### **Change to the Arts Award programme**

Following a complete review of the old Arts Award system, it has been re-launched and replaced with the 'Creativity Awards'. The scheme now includes groups involved in art activity and is aimed at giving even more young people in the district the opportunity to develop their creative talent. The new application forms will soon be available online.

### **Supporting our local arts facilities**

An exciting promotional initiative entitled 'Our Lopping Festival' is currently taking place at Lopping Hall in Loughton and runs through to 9 November. The Festival, which is being staged at the Lopping Hall venue, is being delivered with a range of partners is aiming to raise the profile and history of this excellent local facility and includes tours, drama showcases, a market, and exhibitions containing photographs and press cuttings from the period when Queen Victoria established the venue as 'hub' for the local community.

### **Mountain Biking is a hit with local young people and families**

The new Epping Forest Mountain Biking Club which was introduced in the summer has around 20 regular participants who from being beginners have now progressed on to competing in 'Mud, Sweat and Gears' events across the county and East Region. Several parents have also been trained as mountain bike leaders to volunteer and help sustain the club.

### **Disability Inclusion Project**

The district-wide inclusion project which provides opportunities for children and young people with disabilities continues to expand to meet demand, with new swimming sessions called 'Every Body Swims' starting on Saturday 9 November at Waltham Abbey Swimming Pool. The Council is working in partnership with SLM to provide the sessions which are for children and young people and their carers or parents. Over 120 disabled children and young people have accessed the Inclusion Project over the last few months by taking part in activities including horse riding, boccia, dodgeball, trampolining, forest activities, camping, football and yoga.