

## ***Report to the Council***

**Committee:** Cabinet

**Date:** 28 July 2015

**Subject:** Leisure & Community Services

**Portfolio Holder:** Councillor H Kane

---

### **Recommending:**

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

---

### **Community Services**

My report for July Council, reflects back over the two previous months since our last Full Council meeting.

**Museum Redevelopment:** I am pleased to advise Council, that our main building contractors, Coniston Ltd, began work on site at the Museum at the end of April and have progressed well over the last 11 x weeks. The contract is scheduled to take place over 28 weeks, which includes an additional week for a delay due to the discovery of archaeological remains during the groundworks that were taking place in the Edwardian part of the building.

As Members are aware, the programme of works for the Museum redevelopment includes the expansion of the facility across the 1<sup>st</sup> floor of 37 Sun Street and installation of a central lift, which will make the new facility fully accessible. A range of new facilities and opportunities will be available for the local community, including spaces for people to meet and take part in activities. The public will also be able to access significantly more of the Museum Collection and be involved with the care of the collections in open storage. The new facilities will additionally include the offices of the new Museum, Heritage and Culture team (MHC), which is an amalgamation of the Museum and Arts Development teams. It is planned to run an extensive public engagement programme from the building and on an outreach basis

**External Funding:** In March this year, Museum Heritage and Culture was awarded £55,000 from Arts Council England's (ACE) Resilience Fund, to investigate opportunities to develop new external funding streams to support the core budgets of the service through the potential establishment of a fundraising arm. The study will also include a review of the commercial opportunities available through the range of services and facilities that will be provided from the new facility. Following a tender process over the last few weeks, we have appointed two separate consultancies to work on this dual study, which is due to completed by mid -September in order to enable the Council to submit a further two- year funding bid to ACE in November.

The service was one of only 108 Museums awarded funding nationally, and one of only two in Essex to receive support.

**Motiv8:** I was delighted to attend the annual youth dance platform 'Motiv8', which took place at Epping Forest College, in the Spring. Over the two evenings an audience of some 528 adults, children and young people were superbly entertained by some 190 performers. The show brings together a large number of young people from primary schools, secondary schools, colleges and stage schools across the district to perform and share their work. This year we were entertained by several new groups from the district which included The Funky Nazeing Street Dancers, Hip Hop Pop Primary Schools Club, Stadium Theatre School-Street Dance, Epping St. Johns and Coopersale and Theydon Garnon Primary School who teamed up with Motiv8 veterans Flashdancers, from Ivy Chimneys Primary School. The following are some comments from the audiences;

*"I thought the show was fantastic and I was so impressed by all the talent in Epping Forest!!"*

*"You must be very proud. I know I was - and I only had half a dozen children there"*

*"Thank you so much for allowing my children to be involved. They loved it"*

The Motiv8 partnership between the council and Epping Forest College continues to grow and evolve, with more and more students becoming a huge part in helping out backstage and in the documentation of the show. For the first time since Motiv8 has been based at the college, students from the new fashion course designed and made accessories for the college to wear during their performance.

**Mythical Beasts Exhibition:** As part of the Museum's two year touring exhibitions programme (which has received £150,000 from Arts Council England and the Royal Opera House Bridges programme), MHC staff have been working with students from Epping Forest College over the last year, to support them in curating and creating the exhibition 'Mythical Beasts'. This opened in April in a new 'pop up' gallery specially created at the college. The exhibition featuring the students work will soon be touring, first to Harlow Museum and then Loughton Library, before touring further afield over the next two years.

**Education and Outreach:** The previous financial year proved to be one of the busiest years for the Museum's formal schools engagement programme, with some 7000 pupils benefiting from the museum's learning programmes led by the Education Engagement Officer and through a range of resources that we loan. A new subject area covering Pre-history to meet the recent changes to the National Curriculum has proved to be particularly popular with schools and includes a training session on working with timelines for teachers. This has also led to a partnership with the Museum of London and The Corporation of London, to develop an Iron Age Day event at Ambresbury Banks in Epping Forest.

**Lowewood Museum:** Staff at our Lowewood site have developed a number of new initiatives, including a 'museums memory box' project, providing reminiscence based resources for local care homes and health groups across Epping Forest and Broxbourne. This work has been developed in partnership with Lea Valley U3A, Vision4Growth, B3Living, Cheshunt Aphasia Group and Belmont View Care Home and will be rolled out across both districts. New engagement work has also been piloted with young people, including working with pupils from King Harold School in Waltham Abbey, involving them in cleaning up the Lowewood Museum garden.

A further initiative has been the formation of a Museum Youth Panel for young people aged 14-24 years. The panel has been undertaking monthly meetings and will be curating their own exhibition at the end of the year. MHC will also be submitting an application to the Heritage Lottery Fund's Young Roots programme to support the work of this group and we plan to establish a group at our museum in Waltham Abbey as part of the Museum re-launch programme.

**Social Media and digital engagement:** Museum, Heritage and Culture operate a number of digital engagement platforms, including the EFDM website, twitter, Facebook, Blog pages and an education resource website. The audience of these engagement tools is growing rapidly, with April recording over 13000 users of our digital resources. Two images on Facebook of a historic view of Sun street Waltham abbey and a VE party attracted over 10,000 views alone and generated a wealth of positive comments, including the following;

*"My godmother and her family owned the dairy shop. I've heard so many stories about it growing up, so thank you for posting the picture and bringing back memories"*

**Assistant Museum, Heritage and Culture Manager:** Jo Cowan the Assistant Museum, Heritage and Culture Manager has now started her maternity leave and the post is being covered by Alex Hugo, who had previously been the Arts Development Manager for Vivacity a Culture and Leisure Trust based in Peterborough.

**Community Clean-up:** Residents, Members and Council staff participated in a community 'clean-up day' around Oakwood Hill Estate in Loughton. Equipped with hi-visibility jackets, gloves, litter pickers and refuse sacks, an extremely productive morning was spent carrying out a communal clean-up of the area. Community spirit was high as the group collected over twenty sacks of rubbish, an old car battery, a fire extinguisher, a rusty strimmer, a table frame and countless plastic bottles! Well-deserved refreshments were served afterwards by Oakwood Hill Senior Citizens Club. The event proved a great success and is now planned to be held annually on the estate and the initiative will be rolled out across other areas of the district.

**Get Active:** The Community, Health & Wellbeing Team has recently launched the 'Get Active Epping Forest' initiative, to provide residents with the opportunity to improve their general health and wellbeing, self-image and confidence. A full programme of activity sessions is currently underway on and around Limes Farm in Chigwell and on the Ninefields estate in Waltham Abbey. The range of activities available include; buggy Walks, body conditioning, Aerobics, Zumba, Boot Camps and cycling. To date over 100 people have taken part in sessions.

**Leisure Management:** The Portfolio Holder Advisory Group on the procurement of the new Leisure Management Contract has met and agreed its terms of reference. The Group received a presentation from the Council's Consultants who have been appointed to assist with the process, covering the key issues that would need to be considered to achieve the best value for any new contract. To this end, a business case is being developed which will outline a number of options around contract length and packaging. Once this business case has been considered, I will keep Council advised of next steps.