

Report to the Council

Subject: Leisure & Community Services

Date: 18 February 2016

Portfolio Holder: Councillor H Kane

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

Community Services

Youth Council: I would like to update Council, on the recommendations from the Youth Engagement Task and Finish Review Panel that was undertaken between April and September 2015, and were agreed Cabinet Committee in December 2015.

The Cabinet supported the Panel's recommendation to continue to support and develop the Youth Council at the current level, in light of the excellent role that the Youth Council plays in engagement with their peer group, which extends across their respective school community and the local area where they live. They also agreed that representatives from the Youth Council should present reports on their work to all Members of Council twice per year and be afforded the opportunity to act as a consultee at meetings of Overview and Scrutiny Committee, when guest speakers are present.

Indeed, within the Budget detail this evening, members may have noted that a further recommendation was agreed, for a District Development Fund growth bid of £8,000 to provide an 'enabling fund' that the Youth Council can access for projects, subject to acquiring formal approval from the Cabinet.

I would finally ask Members to note, that, due to the uncertain future of the Youth Council prior to completion of the Task and Finish Review and subsequent presentation to Cabinet & Council, it has not been possible to carry out Elections for the new cohort of Youth Councillors in the first part of this year as would be normal practice. Therefore, Youth Council Elections will be held in local secondary schools during the Autumn 2016 and the current members of the Youth Council will have the opportunity to extend their participation in Youth Council activities during this time.

Museum, Heritage and Culture: We were recently delighted to take Practical Completion of the Museum redevelopment, following a main building period of around 10 months. Snagging was however, still taking place at the time of writing this report, but the Council now has an excellent flagship community facility to be very proud of.

Apart from providing a much greater visitor experience due to the expansion into new premises, the museum has some very exciting features that are unique in Essex and one of few in the East of England. The main one of these being the 'Core Gallery', where visitors will be able to see displays of clothing, artwork and hundreds of other historical artefacts that are displayed in 'storage' through large floor to ceiling windows. Items are displayed on a range of movable racking and other interchangeable storage features, which allow displays to be changed regularly, allowing access to much more of the museum reserve collection,

which was previously held in permanent storage at Langston Road Depot. This means that regular visitors will be able to see new items each time that they visit the museum and they will also be able to see into a work and research room, where staff and volunteers tend to items of the collection and undertake data base work.

Previously, the average visitor time to the Museum would have been up to about 1.5 hours, but with the new displays and features, it is anticipated that visitors would be able to spend up to 3 hours on the site and therefore, be able to split their visit by having lunch in Sun Street and returning in the afternoon to complete their tour of the other galleries. A new buggy storage area, coat racks and lockers are also available and it is hoped that this will encourage shoppers to access the building without needing to worry about carrying items with them.

The installation of a lift to all floors of the museum and full disabled access toilets, means that people of all physical abilities will be able to take advantage of what is on offer, and the complete re- design of the new and old areas of the buildings provides a fresh, but also familiar facility for previous users.

I am delighted to announce, that as planned, the Museum will be re-opened in mid-March and a series of launch events are being held, including a private view for Members of Council. All Members should have received a 'save the date' for 17th March.

Ongoing Fundraising: Although a significant amount of officer time has been ploughed into the redevelopment of the Council's Museum in Waltham Abbey over the last year, our MHC team has continued to pursue new funding streams throughout this period and has been successful in obtaining funding for the district museum and Lowewood. One of the latest successes has been in securing a grant of £86,900 to undertake works in partnership with Broxbourne Borough Council and B3Living, to develop our work programme at Lowewood Museum. The funding will allow for the appointment of a temporary Exhibitions Officer and the creation of a Touring Exhibition, on the story of the Pulham family of Broxbourne, who were leading landscape / garden designers and manufacturers of the Victorian and Edwardian era. The touring exhibition will provide a small income stream through hire to a range of other local authority museums.

Officers were also recently successful in securing a grant of £20,386 from SHARE East of England, to allow us to undertake further security and environmental control improvements to the district museum and Lowewood, to support applications for 'display loans' from National and major partner museums, as part of our developing programme.

Community, Health and Wellbeing (CHWB): Our officers in CHWB have had a very busy few months and have also found time early in the New Year to support the Museum Team in transferring the museum collections from Oakwood Hill to the Waltham Abbey site.

A key piece of work that has been undertaken within our local secondary schools over the last few months' has been to coordinate and arrange the delivery of an educational presentation, to raise awareness of the issues around extremism and radicalisation. Over 6000 young people in the District have received the presentation, which has been funded through 'PREVENT Funding from the Home Office.

Specialist speaker, Irfan Chishit MBE and his colleague Dave Allport, were engaged to speak in school assemblies, and provided some counter narrative to extremist views,

including far-right ideologies. I am pleased to say that we have received resoundingly positive feedback from this initiative, from both pupils and teaching staff. Evaluation indicates that 99% of participating local pupils now appreciate the dangers of extremist propaganda and 87% understand how the issue of race can be used to divide people in communities.

Active Essex Apprentice: Our CHWB Team is currently hosting an apprentice placement in partnership with Active Essex, which is an Essex-wide organisation, driving an increase in sport and physical activity in Essex. Supported by colleagues, the apprentice, Said Hamed, has secured £788 Sportivate external funding to enhance the youth boxing programme that the team delivers at The Limes Centre in Chigwell. The funding will allow for the purchase of key equipment and further growth of the project.

Other funding successes: I have recently heard that our CHWB are in line to receive a further six months' funding from 'ForChildren', for our Inclusion Project, which works with children with additional needs and their families. This will see a further investment of around £30,000 to the district. The Team has also received, on behalf of the Primal Health Tennis Academy, £935 of new funding from Active Essex, to enable the delivery of free tennis sessions for teenage girls at Buckhurst Hill Tennis Club, as part of a drive to encourage more teenage girls into sport.

Limes Centre, Chigwell: For those Members who have attended events at the Limes Centre in Chigwell and are aware of the problems that we have had with the acoustics, I am pleased to report, that work is currently being completed on installation of acoustic panelling to both the main hall and the smaller activities hall. It is already evident that the problems with poor sound quality in the hall have now been resolved, thanks to work undertaken by Hall Stage, who are a specialist company providing such services to the entertainments industry. We are now looking forward to welcoming more wedding receptions and events to these excellent community facilities.

Leisure Contract: In response to the publication of the notice inviting perspective tenderers to express an interest in the new Leisure Management Contract, we received five Pre-Qualification Questionnaires from companies that we know have a good track record in leisure management.

I can report that following a full evaluation by the Officer Project Team and the Council's external consultants, my Portfolio Advisory Group at their last meeting agreed that all five companies should proceed to the next stage. This was by virtue of their experience and financial standing and as such, I am pleased to report that we have a strong shortlist. The first stage of the Competitive Dialogue (Contractors' Clarifications) is due to take place on the 8 February. Finally, the contract with the current contractor SLM, has been formally extended by up to one year from the 3 January 2016".