

Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet

Date: 14 February 2012

Subject: Leisure and Wellbeing Portfolio

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Ricki Gadsby

Recommending:

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

Leisure

I was delighted to be able to open the upgraded fitness suites at the Ongar and Epping Leisure Centres on 5 January. The fitness suites have been updated with the latest 'hi-tech' equipment and I have no doubt that they represent the very best of what's available to our leisure centre users. The new equipment was purchased by Sports & Leisure Management (SLM) using capital provided by the Council. As a result of that financial transfer the Council has received a significant discount on the annual revenue management fee for these two centres, making it financially beneficial for both the Council and SLM.

Olympic Games

We are now in the Olympic year of 2012 and the start of the Games, as measured by the start of the Torch relay is now just 16 weeks away, when the Torch commences its journey around the UK starting from Lands End. Whilst I still can't reveal the actual route or timings, work is now well underway in planning for the Torch to visit Waltham Abbey on 7 July 2012. A Community Task Force comprising all the necessary agencies and local communities has been established and has met a couple of times. Work has been split into two areas – one being technical/safety and the other event management. As to the Games proper, we are moving very rapidly into the delivery phase rather than planning stage, and arrangements for the White Water Centre are now well advanced, including all of the "Look and Feel" for the venue area and the park and ride at North Weald having been ordered.

Community Services

The Limes Centre – The new Limes Centre at Limes Farm, Chigwell is due to be formally opened at 4pm on Monday 20 February 2012 and members are invited to attend between 3pm and 6.45pm to view the facilities and some of the activities that will be available. Offering high quality community facilities and a wide range of services, this new centre will be the new home of the Chigwell based Housing team & a new Housing Benefits service plus a range of external partners who will provide a Children's Centre and Health Clinic. A programme of activities is being developed for people of all ages during the evening and at weekends which includes fitness and dance classes, film screening and tea dances. The venue also offers a facility for young people with its own kitchen and a fully fitted kitchen off of the main hall. A marketing exercise is currently underway to promote the venue for weddings and events.

NB. If you would like to attend the Limes Centre opening event on 20th February please email cburr@eppingforestdc.gov.uk

Works Like A Charm – During the redevelopment of Limes Farm Hall, the Council's Arts team have been working with residents of all ages to create a range of artwork for installation in an art trail in the new Limes Centre. Work has included transferring people's 'lucky messages' onto ceramic tiles

around the centre and a range of workshops are underway to produce pieces of work for installation in display boxes set into the fabric of the building. These workshops are continuing through to the summer.

Epping Forest & Lowewood Museum Services – On 1 February the Council took over the management of Broxbourne Borough Council's Museum Service based at Lowewood Museum, Hoddesdon, following development of a five year Service Level Agreement between the two authorities. Epping Forest Museum was approached by Broxbourne early 2011 with a request to consider the potential for a joint service, following the retirement of the management staff at Lowewood in February 2012. The approach was made due to the excellent reputation that the Council's own Museum Service has across the East Region for its outreach education and temporary exhibitions programme and is seen as an excellent opportunity for both museums to develop services even further and potentially secure external funding for cross border projects. The partnership has been applauded by Museums in Essex and by the Heritage Lottery Fund.

An excellent start to this partnership has seen the Museum attracting a grant of £1,000 to be spent across EFDM and Lowewood Museums on material supporting family learning.

Epping Forest Museum - The Council's Museum Service received an excellent review by VAQAS (Visitor Attraction Quality Assurance Scheme) run by Visit Britain which commended many aspects of the Museum's work during its re-qualification for the standard.

On Saturday 21 January the Museum celebrated Chinese New Year and the year of the dragon with a Chinese inspired lanterns workshop. Run by Chinese artist Hsiao Chi Tai, over 30 participants made a Chinese dragon lantern and the event received excellent feedback. This workshop is one of a series of events taking place at the museum in the lead up to the launch of our Stories of the World exhibition, China in the East. 'Stories of the World' is led by the Arts Council in partnership with the London Organising Committee of the Olympic Games and Paralympic Games (LOCOG), presenting exciting new museum exhibitions across the country. The next workshop to take place at the museum is 'Chinese Calligraphy' on 14 February and the exhibition opens at the museum on Saturday 7 July 2012.

Young Citizen of the Year – Judging has recently taken place for the Young Citizen of the Year and I was invited to take part in the interview process which was very inspiring. The calibre of applicants was extremely high this year and final judging took place on 11 January. The very worthy winner, whose name will be announced at the Civic Awards ceremony, is a young man who has raised in excess of £32K for charity.

Arts & Sports Awards – The level of applications for the annual Arts & Sports Awards were exceptionally high this year in both the arts and sports categories. The Arts overall winner was Alisha Margretson, aged 18 from Waltham Abbey. Alisha won the Award for her talent and commitment as a dancer. She is currently studying at the North London Dance Studios and the Award of £1500 will go towards her fees. The Sports Award winner was talented athlete Holly Pattie-Belleli who is a seventeen year old from Ongar, who competes in 100m and 400m hurdles and Heptathlon for Woodford Green Athletics Club. Hollie has won medals at Essex County, East of England and South of England Championships. Hollie's short term aim is to participate in the 2014 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow.