

Report to the Council

Subject: Leisure & Community Services

Date: 17 February 2015

Portfolio Holder: Councillor H Kane

Recommending:

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

Community Services:

Following the Council's Directorate re-structure in 2014, a further series of reviews have been undertaken for services within each of the new directorates.

Within my area of responsibility, in the Communities Directorate, the individual services that previously formed the Community Services Department, which were Community Arts, Sports and Health Development, Community Development, District Museum and Young People, have now been amalgamated into two key service functions, these being:

- Museum, Heritage and Culture, and
- Community, Health and Wellbeing

As part of this restructure, we are planning to accommodate all Museum, Heritage and Culture staff at the new District Museum facility in Sun Street, Waltham Abbey, and for the Community, Health and Wellbeing staff to be transferred to the Civic offices to be centralised with corporate colleagues. There are several benefits to this re-organisation, but the key one, is that the vacation of staff from the Hemnall Street Offices, will enable the Council to look at alternative uses for the buildings, with the aim of increasing revenue income for the Council in 16/17.

We also anticipate that the centralisation of these services at the Civic Offices will enable the Council to benefit from enhanced collaborative working with corporate colleagues in order to increase the potential to attract external funding for corporate-wide projects.

General Update

The Epping Forest Youth Futures programme has seen weekly workshops being delivered in 3 secondary schools since January. In each school, groups of 12 young people referred by teaching staff have participated in interactive classroom based sessions to improve their confidence, self esteem and general wellbeing. Since the Youth Futures programme was developed in 2013/14, the feedback from pupils and staff has been extremely positive and in many cases, young people no longer have absences from school and their attitudes towards their education have improved significantly.

In addition to the Youth Futures work that takes place in schools, a further 5 long-term NEET young people have just completed the Land Management course at the Lambourne End Outdoor Centre in Lambourne. This course was designed and developed by Epping Forest Youth Futures (an EFDC initiative) in conjunction with the centre.

The Community Cafe based at The Limes Centre is going from strength to strength with new volunteers leading the weekly sessions. The Cafe provides an opportunity for local residents to meet socially, whilst also being a point of contact for key agencies to actively engage with the community.

The newly introduced Norway House After-School Club which is provided by Council staff is growing in popularity with new families coming along each week. The club provides an important platform for children living at Norway House to make friends whilst based in the Hostel and parents have reported that their children feel less isolated as a result of the group sessions.

Reality Roadshow, which is the Council's locally designed safety programme for young people in secondary schools, is scheduled for delivery in St Johns School on 6th Feb and Roding Valley High School on 9th March. I am pleased to advise Members that every Year 9 pupil in the district will participate in Reality Roadshow this year, with scenarios being delivered by Essex Police, Safer Places, AlcoHelp, the Drugs Advisory Service and ex-offenders. This initiative is seen as crucial in the efforts to raise personal safety awareness amongst teenagers, at a time when issues around self-harm and substance misuse are increasing nationally.

Community Services has been commissioned by Essex County Council to develop and implement a 10 week programme of work, which provides an alternative learning environment for pupils with special learning needs in Year 3 & 4. It aims to develop children's confidence in their own capabilities and nurture their emotional and social development. The programme is delivered to the same cohort of children for one hour each week and the sessions consist of 30 minutes of creative activities within a classroom (recorded with worksheets) followed 30 minutes of physical activity. Each pupil is given a special folder to collate and showcase their work and each week they work towards setting goals. They each receive mentoring by the Coach provided by the Council and their Teaching Assistant to help them achieve their goals/targets. The project has commenced delivery and will work with 11 primary schools that have been identified by the Extended Services Co-ordinator for Epping Forest South Local Delivery Group. The project is currently delivering in three schools in Waltham Abbey (Upshire, Leverton and Hillhouse). I can update members on the remaining schools in my next report.

The Arts Council England funded touring exhibitions programme produced by Museums heritage and Culture has recently launched an exhibition on the Cold War, which draws on many links within the district. The exhibitions team is currently leading a group of 28 students aged 17 -19, at Epping Forest College to develop a new exhibition 'Mythical Beasts', which will launch at the end of March 2015, in a new exhibition space at the college. Bookings for the exhibitions produced are still being taken from museums across the east of England and beyond. These are providing an income for the service, while also promoting the district and advertising the museum.

The Education Outreach Service provides history workshops in Primary Schools supporting topics in the History National Curriculum. Pupils have the opportunity to work hands on with real historical objects to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding of the topic in question.

In September 2015 the new National Curriculum was introduced, bringing significant changes in the content maintained primary schools had to deliver. A completely new topic, Life in Britain from the Stone Age to the Iron Age, was introduced. This presented many challenges for teachers as the speed of the change meant there were very few resources to support the teaching of this topic, and for many people it was a complex subject they had no prior knowledge or experience of.

The museum's Education Outreach Service was able to offer support to teachers on this new topic, both through teacher training to build subject knowledge and confidence, and in a new workshop for schools that gave pupils the opportunity to work hands on with some of the oldest objects in the museum's collection. The museum was offered the opportunity to work in partnership with the Museum of London in developing the teacher training and schools resources, and was the only museum to be asked to do this. Since September 2014, the museum has worked with 18 schools throughout the District and beyond, delivering 41 workshops on this topic to over 1,100 pupils. It has also delivered 8 teacher training sessions on Prehistory to 27 teachers.

Demand for other workshops offered by the Education Outreach Service has also remained high. From October to December 2014, workshops were delivered to over 1500 pupils – one of the highest returns for a quarter to date. Jan 2015 has also been the busiest January to date with over 600 pupils taking part in workshops. Demand for the museum's loan boxes in which schools hire a set of resources to use in school themselves also remains good.

With funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund, as part of the museum development project, the service has expanded its public social media engagement, using Facebook, twitter, blogs and newsletters to supplement the online resources provided by our websites with over 9000 contacts being recorded in December accessing the service through this route. The museum is also becoming increasingly well regarded within the sector for the work it does in this area.

As part of our Heritage Lottery Funded project, Museums, Heritage and Culture have also been developing the support and opportunities we offer for volunteer engagement in supporting the work we do. Between October and December we logged over 250 hours of volunteer time given to support the service. With volunteers undertaking work in; collections care, exhibition preparation and supporting staff at events.

Volunteering opportunities will be increased in all areas of the work we undertake over the next year, with volunteers receiving training and support. Volunteers are drawn from a wide range of age groups and abilities; including people with an interest in this area of work and the time available to offer support, to those looking for opportunities to develop their CV's, people looking for opportunities to gain skills as a way back into work and others who benefit from the social aspect of being involved in this project.

Museums, Heritage and Culture is now in the third year of operating the Lowewood Museum on behalf of Broxbourne Borough Council. The period has seen a growth in audiences for the service overall and while the museum in Waltham Abbey is closed, it has been possible to provide a continuity of service at Lowewood. The wider geographical reach of the service has been welcomed by our key external funders; Arts Council England, The Heritage Lottery Fund and Share East.

On the 27th January Lowewood was host to a Broxbourne Council event to unveil a monument to the victims of the holocaust and worldwide genocide.

A current programme of exhibitions and events covering the period January to June 2015 has been produced and 2015 is being marketed as the 'Year of Heritage' in Broxbourne. The Museum is preparing an exhibition on the author Anthony Trollope and his links with the Borough as part of this programme. This will open on the 4th April 2015.

As part of our programming we are also piloting a number of new initiatives which will be adopted at the Epping Forest District Museum when it re-opens later this year. Among these was a particularly significant first for the museum was the delivery of Takeover Day at Lowewood Museum. This national programme gives young people the opportunity to take over a museum for a day. We worked with a group of 11 students from Broxbourne School

to create an exhibition, develop education activities and deliver an opening event at the museum itself on the 21st November 2014. Over 70 people attended on the day, and 30 pupils from a local primary school also visited to take part in the activities the students had developed.

With external funding from Share East and building on the resources we have in both museums to support reminiscence work, we have started a project to develop 6 'memory' boxes, which can be hired free of charge by local community groups. Each box will cover a decade, containing nostalgic original objects.

Transitions : Funding has been secured to print the Transitions resource pack developed with Essex County Council. The resource was developed with care homes and residents and focuses on those living with dementia. The pack is being given to all care homes in the district along with the opportunity for workshops for residents.

Creativity Awards: There were six award winners of the Creativity Awards this year ranging from theatre groups to individual musicians. The overall winner, who is studying operatic singing, will be performing in five community venues for free for residents in the district.

Motiv8: Work is underway in developing the annual dance showcase in partnership with the college. The event sees hundreds of young dancers given the chance to perform to friends in family.

Half Term Holidays: Community Services will be providing a wide variety of events and activities over half term for children and families, from a theatre show in Epping and a free library event in Loughton to playschemes and multi-sport sessions for children and young people with additional needs. I have included further details of some of these below, but Members can find out further information by contacting Community Services.

The Epping Forest Inclusion Project is providing 3 holiday sessions for children and young people with various additional needs. These include a Multi Sports Camp, with trampolining and siblings are also welcome to join in this activity, 'Own a Pony' morning where children get the chance to groom, feed, muck out and ride a pony over a 2 hour session and 'Yogini Tinies' workshop, which includes yoga using creative play, storytelling and music.

The Six For All Project for young people and adults with additional needs, will be providing a Bounce and Swim session that will include one hour of trampolining and a swimming session.

Leisure Management

In accordance with the Council's Leisure and Cultural Strategy adopted in December 2014, the appointment of specialist consultancy support to assist in the competitive dialogue process for the next Leisure Management Contract has commenced. I intend to form a Portfolio Holder Advisory Group to assist in this project, which is of significant importance to the Council and local residents. I will keep Council advised of progress on the project highlighting the key milestones and timescales.