

Cultural Services – Year End Service Plan Review (March 2018)

Leisure Development Programme Following Executive approval in November 2015 the procurement of an external operator to manage the Council's leisure facilities was completed in May 2017 with the appointment of SLM (operating as Everyone Active (EA)EA managing the 4 WDC leisure centres and the 2 dual use facilities on school sites. EA and the Council worked in partnership to re-open Phase I of the works at Newbold Comyn Leisure Centre open in August 2017, and St Nicholas Park Leisure Centre in September 2017. It was pleasing to see that despite being in the very early stages of a new partnership, the handover of these centres and the early months of the contract were relatively trouble free despite what were challenging circumstances due to the ongoing delay of the construction at Newbold Comyn. In the 9 months since the start of the contract, performance has been very encouraging. Given that work continues with the Leisure Centre construction projects at Newbold Comyn and St Nicholas Park, Everyone Active has done well to increase participation overall, but particularly with health and fitness activities and swimming lessons.

Everyone Active cards have been issued to date, allowing those who qualify for concessionary prices can do so without any stigma, and EA can contact all card holders to promote new initiatives or to deliver urgent information about facility opening times. Work is now focussing on the final stage of the construction at St Nicolas Park being completed before Easter 2018, with an official opening ceremony scheduled for late April 2018. The long awaited completion of Newbold Comyn has continued to be thwarted by uncontrollable issues with utilities and the latest target date for completion is summer 2018. Further updates will be communicated as soon as officers have dates that they can be confident will be achieved.

Planning ahead, the initial scoping on Phase II of the investment proposals (Kenilworth) has commenced with the Executive approving the next steps at their meeting in Feb 2018. Procurement is now underway to appoint professional services to work with officers to develop a range of options for Abbey Fields and Castle Farm, which will be brought back to the Executive in summer 2018, and then will form the basis for initial public consultation. The Phase II project is taking a holistic view across the whole of Kenilworth and engagement with local sports clubs, Everyone Active, and other stakeholders is considered to be essential in this project.

The new Sports & Leisure team in Cultural Services was established in Jan 2017 and in the last 12 months has recruited to the new Contract officer post, enabling the team to deliver its new role in managing the new leisure centre contract and deliver the active communities and outdoor sports services. One area of work that has growth significantly in the last 12 months has been the input into securing appropriate developer contributions for sports and leisure provision, and ensuring that these contributions are aligned to the needs evidenced by the Playing Pitch and Indoor Sports strategies. Both strategies are currently in the process of being updated and will be reported to councillors in summer 2018 for approval.

Arts Review – The outcomes of the Arts Review were officially implemented in February 2017. A year on and the new integrated Arts team is now well established. The Visitor Information Centre (VIC) team was added to the Arts team in April and was combined with the box office team to create a new Sales & Information team which is now operating from a new central information hub in the main concourse at the Royal Pump Rooms. This hub provides a local information service and

ticketing services. This area continues to be improved with the aim of making it a more creative, engaging space.

Contract Management – in addition to the new leisure centre contract, Cultural Services monitor and manage a number of key contracts. In November 2017, the Council were informed of the decision by Mack Golf to walk away from the golf contract operating at Newbold Comyn Golf Course. This was obviously very disappointing and comes after a great deal of work by both parties to find a solution to the well documented challenges that Mack have experienced. Mack terminated its relationship with the Council on 31st Jan 2018, and work is underway to agree a negotiated settlement with Mack, and to identify options for the future use of the open space and buildings that were managed as the golf course.

The Council took the option to extend the Kudos catering contract by 12 months. This contract will finish in February 2019. Work is underway with Complex Development Partnerships (CDP) to identify a suitable catering operator at the end of the Kudos contract in the Royal Pump Rooms and Jephson glasshouse. In the meantime, the Arts Manger is now managing the catering contract and has regular performance meetings with Kudos. Kudos have worked hard over the last 6 months to improve their café offering and positive feedback has increased as a result.

Other significant contracts managed by the team include the ongoing contracts with Mace Ltd and Speller Metcalfe (construction projects); annual pantomime production and the leisure centre contract with Everyone Active.

Strategic projects – the team have continued to work throughout the year with partners to progress a number of strategic projects including:

- Phase II (Kenilworth) which involves Kenilworth Wardens relocation to Castle Farm and the development of Wardens current site at Thickthorn; Kenilworth School relocation; Kenilworth Rugby Club relocation; and dialogue with a number of local sports clubs
- Europa Way and the delivery of a community stadium in partnership with Leamington FC.
- Commonwealth Games 2022 – delivery of Bowls and Parabowls events at Victoria Park and associated projects to optimise the impact of the event and provide legacies for the district

Leamington Spa Art Gallery & Museum - the Art Gallery & Museum continues to be a popular destination for local people and visitors alike attracting over 135,000 visitors a year.

The four temporary exhibitions this year were as diverse and popular as ever, attracting over 40,000 people. These included the 'OPEN 2017' (artists from across the west midlands), 'Drawn from Life' (touring Arts Council Collection), 'Holt: The Benevolent Despot' (local history), and Stuart Whipp's 'The Lights of Leamington' (contemporary art).

The newly appointed Learning & Engagement Officer has dramatically increased the amount school trip to the Royal Pump Rooms, meaning that more young people than ever before are engaging with the Art Gallery and Museum.

The main art gallery was also re-hung in February – with an emphasis on making it as accessible and engaging as possible. Feedback so far has been extremely positive. The regular series of ‘Friday Focus’ talks has grown in popularity recently and now averages 60-70 people attending every Friday lunchtime.

Arts Development – the service continues to support a wide range of arts projects ranging from national arts organisations based in the district to local community arts groups. The service also provides professional support for these organisations and small scale financial support through the Arts Grants scheme.

Royal Spa Centre - the venue has enjoyed a successful year attracting over 100,000 visitors in 2017/18 and including one of the most financially successful pantomime seasons ever, with over 22,800 people attending and attracting some of the best feedback ever received. Income from the pantomime increased by £21,000 (13% increase on the previous year) for the 2017 show, a tremendous achievement and credit to the whole Spa Centre team.

Leisure Centres – The initial hurdle facing and Everyone Active (EA) was to ensure that the transition for handover of the Leisure facilities happened without interruption of service. The staff who TUPE’d over to EA experienced a significant amount of support and training to help them adjust to the new organisation.

EA attended many local events to publicise the exciting new activities at the Leisure centres. The EA offered Health and Fitness testing for WDC staff as part of the Health & Wellbeing project. EA has also introduced “on-line booking systems” and “apps” and are providing online information to members through the Aqua Passport and activity tracker schemes. EA have invested significantly in existing staff by providing valuable training across the whole team.

The client team are building a strong positive working relationship with EA, and have been impressed by their approach to supporting the authority in achieve the objective local communities to play sport and participate in physical activity. We look forward to the coming year, which will see the development works completed and allow EA to have fully functional facilities by which they will be able to build on their promising start.

Active communities - work continues across the district with support for local communities and sports clubs to encourage residents to participate in active lifestyles. Sports England released the results of the new Active Lives Survey which shows this district to be very “active” and by far the most active in the sub-region. 75% of the adult population are considered to be active (ie take part in over 150 mins of activity a week). This is a tremendous result and evidence of the wide range of opportunities available and the vibrant local club and voluntary sector.

Looking ahead and Strategic Plans

There are 2 key areas that will have a significant impact on the future shape of this service.

The Leisure Development Programme – Phase 1 is nearing completion with ST Nicholas Park Leisure Centre being completed in March 2018, and Newbold Comyn Leisure Centre in July 2018. Both sites

have experienced significant construction challenges and delays, but with the impending completion of the projects the Council and Everyone Active are delighted with the facilities that will very shortly be available for the local community. Attendances at the facilities in the Everyone Active contract are generally exceeding target and feedback from customers is very encouraging at this early stage of the contract.

Officers are now in the process of procuring professional services for Phase II (Kenilworth) with the intention of a further report to the Executive in summer 2018, and then the commencement of public consultation to inform the proposals for Phase II.

The second key area is the ongoing debate around the **future use of our assets**. The Royal Pump Rooms and Town Hall are challenging assets to maintain, and are therefore costly for the Council to retain. Decisions around their future use will have a significant impact on the delivery of our Arts and Heritage service, and to the role of the Town Hall. The decision to progress the new Council HQ has provided some clarity around the future civic demands on the Town Hall and work is progressing to consider alternative uses for this asset. The future of the Royal Pump Rooms is linked to decisions made on the Creative Quarter project.

The Leisure Development programme team has recently been expanded to include 2 fixed term project officers to support the Community Stadium and Commonwealth Games project, 2 complex projects which will have impact across the district in the coming 3 to 4 years. Updates will be reported to Members on these projects as they evolve.