

Cultural Services – Annual Performance Report 2015/16

Service Plan Performance

Cultural Services provides a wide range of quality services for residents and visitors to the district. These services are delivered from council owned assets and also in partnership with a range of other organisations which together allows the service to reach a significant number of individuals and cater for their various needs.

In 2015/16 the Art Gallery and Museum at the Royal Pump Rooms attracted over 112,000 visitors; the Royal Spa Centre welcomed over 92,000 visitors; the leisure centres achieved over 260,000 swimmers and over 90,000 gym users in addition to others playing a range of sports through club or social activities. The Sports and Arts Development activities supported by the Council, continue to be successful in attracting and distributing grant funding to local organisations, providing support and advice, and enabling a range of new activities to be established across the district.

In supporting the delivery of the above services, the Cultural Services Business Support Team have introduced new systems and processes that have improved the efficiency of the service. Over £540,000 of direct debit gym memberships have been processed during the year; electronic invoicing has been introduced for school and club hire of leisure centres; trialling of the new OLR2 cash receipting system with colleagues from Finance was completed in preparation of introduction at the leisure centres and Royal Spa Centre in 2016.

Risks

The main risks facing Cultural Services during the year have been asset based risks, namely the deterioration of the dimmers and motors at the Royal Spa Centre and the ongoing threat to the Royal Pump Rooms from flood damage and the leaking roof. Work was completed in Q4 which lead to a report to the Executive to seek approval for replacing the dimmers and motors; work to address the failing roof to the Royal Pump Rooms has been identified in the Council's Asset Management Plan.

A further risk existed within the sports and leisure service, which identified the possible impact of the procurement process to identify an external partner. The staff in the team have experienced and will continue to experience, a period of unsettlement which has lead to some staff choosing to leave their positions at the leisure centres. The uncertain future of the service means that recruitment of staff to fill these vacancies has been challenging.

Workforce Planning

There have been a number of staff changes within the team during the year, including the appointment of new Operations Managers for Abbey Fields Swimming Pool and St Nicholas Park Leisure Centre. The small team at the Art Gallery & Museum successfully covered the maternity leave of the Senior Curator through a series of secondments which in turn offered opportunities within the team for valuable personal development. The Arts Review commenced which will see a revised structure brought forward in Sept 2016 that will accommodate the planned retirement of the Arts and Heritage Manager in Dec 2016.

Training of staff is a key activity within Cultural Services. A training matrix was developed across the service area to track training and qualifications of all team members. In addition to the ongoing training for operational staff (lifeguard qualifications, first aid, safeguarding and CSE), budget managers undertook "contract management" and procurement training during the year.

Budget

The service area identified and achieved the 5% savings on discretionary budgets with only minor impacts on service. Leisure centres and the Royal Spa Centre/Town Hall achieved their annual income targets. Of particular note was the performance of the Spa Centre ticket sales for non WDC shows and for the highly popular annual pantomime. Health and fitness membership income in the leisure centres exceeded target by c. £70,000 by the end of the year.

As identified in "Risks" above, and following a detailed feasibility study which allowed a specification to be developed, approval was given for funding from the Capital Investment Reserve for the replacement of the theatre dimmers and motors at the Royal Spa Centre . At the time of writing this report, a procurement exercise is underway to purchase these items.

The Leisure Development Programme progressed throughout the year to gain approval for the facility investment proposals to progress to RIBA Stage 3, and for the procurement process to commence to identify an external partner to manage the Council's leisure centres.

Workstreams and Projects

During the year, in addition to delivering the day to day services through the safe and effective management of the facilities and through a range of partnerships, the team were focussed on some high profile and strategic projects.

2015 saw the second combined National Bowls Championships at Victoria Park which were well received by Bowls England, players and visitors to the district. Officers from the Art Gallery & Museum, arts Development and the Royal Spa

Centre worked collaboratively to produce a new Arts Strategy for the district which will inform the review of the arts service in 2016. The Sports and Leisure team focused on the progression of the Leisure Development Programme, working up proposals for c. £12 million investment in leisure facilities and the appointment of an external partner to manage the Council's leisure centres from 2017.

New items for 2016/17 Service Plan

The 2016/17 Service Plan for Cultural Services includes the following key workstreams:

- Continue the Leisure Development Programme to delivery (construction and management)
- Complete restructure of leisure "client team" and business support team
- Complete the Arts Review and implement the new structure following Employment Committee in Sept 2016
- Contribute to the Europa Way and Leisure Investment Phase II (Kenilworth) projects
- Complete Equality Impact Assessments as required across the service