

Cultural Services – 2013/14

Contribution to Fit For the Future

The range of services delivered by my Culture Portfolio offers many opportunities to contribute to the three strands of FFF. The following summarises each of the projects included in the 2013/14 Culture Service Area Plan with examples of how the projects addressed FFF.

Financial summary – FFF (Target £88,000)

Sports and Leisure – due to a good first half of the year, these services are able to offer up a total of £60,565. This is largely from good half year performance in gyms and swimming lessons.

Art Gallery & Museum/Pump Rooms – £34,200. Revised recharges to WCC for Library repairs £30,000; £4,200 from Art Gallery restructure.

Service updates:

The Events Experiment was completed in May and a second Events Management Officer was added to the establishment. This enabled the management of events in the district to be better co-ordinated between, and with, both internal departments and external authorities. This has generated a greater robustness, reduced risk to the authority and improved customer satisfaction amongst the varied customers of this service. The development of standard procedures in conjunction with other service areas and partners has enabled the team to ensure that they are able to respond to the challenges and meet the requirements of the changing demands of new events, as they arise, in a consistent way.

Sports and Leisure facility management has been undertaking a complete analysis of our services which has underpinned the production of the “Vision and Principles” report taken to members in October 2013. The acceptance of this report by members of the high level principles for the service in future, enables other work streams to progress. A detailed review of the activity programme is underway in all the indoor facilities, looking to match provision with customer needs and at the same time maximise usage and income generation. The programmes have been developed with support from National Governing Bodies of sport, and will be circulated in early 2014 in a consultation process amongst users, stakeholders and partners with the aim of having the new programmes in place by January 2015. In taking this approach, we can demonstrate that this whole analysis and review process work contributes to all three elements of FFF.

The service has also commenced the commissioning of an Options Appraisal to consider how sports and leisure could be delivered in future. Given the impact that the outcome of this appraisal will have on WDC staff, customers, and external stakeholders my Head of Service and her senior officers are focussing on developing a ‘project brief’ for an external consultant. This ‘brief’ will require a set of clear and evidenced recommendations as the output of the Appraisal. It is anticipated that a report will be brought to members in April/May 2014 outlining the options for consideration.

Bowls England – this project is now well underway, with the various elements progressing in line with the project plan. Bowls England are established in their new Riverside House HQ. Work has commenced on the pavilion extension with completion due in late March 2014. The car parking

options are being considered with a report being brought to members in early 2014, and the irrigation work is due to commence in autumn 2014. The project has required cross council co-operation between many departments and with external groups and partners. A key element of the project, the maximisation of economic benefits from this project, is being led by colleagues from Development Services and will be summarised in a report to members in early 2014. Whilst there have been undoubted challenges within this project I am confident that the effort made by everyone connected with the project will be fully justified as Warwick District becomes recognised nationally, as the home of English Bowls.

The Art Gallery & Museum conducted a FFF review of their operational elements, which concluded with a report in May this year. The outcomes included a better understanding of the needs of customers and support services, the identification of new opportunities for working with external partners, and a streamlining of internal processes. The staff re-structure has enabled the focus of resources on new priorities and produced savings from differing ways of working. Work also continues on longer term recommendations from the review, including the closer integration of marketing with the rest of Cultural Services. The new team is now focusing on continuing the delivery of this nationally accredited service which is achieving record attendances year on year.

Marketing activities have been identified as a weakness in some elements of the service for some time. Each element of the service has a different approach to marketing and differing resources available for this function. In order to improve and integrate our marketing strategy across the service, a team has been established, lead by our officers with marketing responsibility. They will consider how we can co-ordinate and improve our strategies to disseminate our message more effectively. This is being supported by colleagues from Organisational Development and the Media teams to ensure that any corporate opportunities are also maximised.

Sky Blues in the Community (West Warwick) – the project commenced in March and to date has seen 185 sessions and 3,700 hours of activities delivered. At present there are at least 12 sessions taking place each week, based in the local area and delivered by a range of partners and volunteers. The project aimed to increase participation in physical activities (sport and arts) amongst those sectors of the community, who otherwise may not engage in such activities and thus contributes to the service delivery element of FFF. The SBitC team are funded until March 2015, however they already have in place a comprehensive sustainability plan through which they hope to continue the delivery of individual activities beyond the end of their contract.

In addition to the projects I have outlined above, which were included in the Service Area Plan at the start of the year, there have been ongoing improvements at the **Royal Spa Centre and Town Hall**. The restructure of the teams operating these venues was concluded earlier in the year. New ways of working have been introduced and a more customer focussed ethos is being developed. Clear objectives have been set for each team (technical, operations and customer services) with regular team meetings taking place. Investment has also been made in equipment, including new “management software” to assist in the commercial management of the venues; lighting and sound desks have been replaced and a major re-installation took place during August allowing the technical team to take ownership of the new equipment and satisfy themselves that it meets all health & safety regulations. It is also anticipated that the new digital cinema facility will be installed in January 2014.

Risk Management

We presented our Culture Risk Register to F&A in July 2013.

The key service risks are currently considered to be:

Catering contract – operated by Kudos who currently deliver catering services at the Royal Pump Rooms and Jephson Gardens. The contract commenced in Jan 2012 and expires in March 2018. Economic pressures and competition elsewhere in Leamington pose challenges for the operators in delivering a successful and quality service. Officers are working with Kudos to identify where improvements need to be made.

Golf contract– a report was brought to F&A in November to update members on the current position re the golf contract operated at Newbold Comyn by Mack Golf. As with the catering contract, there are challenges facing the contractor in operating this contract. The detail of these challenges was reported in the November F&A paper, but it is not appropriate to discuss these in an open meeting.

Working with Bowls England– as members will be aware from the November report to the Executive there is a significant risk related to this project in terms of the decision regarding car parking for the annual National Championships. Work is ongoing to identify the pros and cons of a shortlist of 3 parking sites, which will come to members early in 2014 for a decision to be made on the preferred option. Bowls England have been very clear about their needs in respect of parking and refer to the detail of the proposal put to them by the Council in July 2012 which included on site parking for the Championships.