

TOURISM, COMMUNITIES, CULTURE & LEISURE COMMITTEE

Thursday, 21 January 2021

Present: Councillor T Anderson (Chair)

Councillors	P Stuart	C Povall
	H Cameron	J Walsh
	J Johnson	KJ Williams
	C Jones	A Brame (In place of A Corkhill)
	B Kenny	

21 MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interests.

22 MINUTES

RESOLVED - That the minutes of the meeting of Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee meeting held on 23 November 201120 be approved for accuracy.

23 PUBLIC AND MEMBER QUESTIONS

There were no questions, petitions or statements received from the public or Members.

24 CULTURE AND HERITAGE UPDATE

A report of the Director of Regeneration and Place provided an update on the culture and heritage work programme being undertaken within the Regeneration and Place Directorate. In particular, the report detailed the development of a Culture and Heritage Strategy for Birkenhead, commissioned in support of the Council's ambitious regeneration plans. The key points were presented by Chief Regeneration Officer Sally Shah and Senior Manager Culture Strategy Jane Morgan.

The Council's regeneration plans provided significant opportunities for culture and heritage as well creativity and innovation. There were particular challenges for the creative sector brought about by COVID-19 as well as this being a catalyst to look at new ways of engaging with existing and future audiences. Town Deal proposals, including the emerging Dock Branch Park (formerly Green Corridor) project, were informed by culture and heritage considerations and opportunities.

With the involvement of a wide range of stakeholders, a strategy for Birkenhead was being prepared which was to set out clear priorities for culture and heritage linked to the Council's plans. This strategy was to provide a blueprint for further work to ensure culture and heritage is embedded in local masterplans as well as bringing forward a borough-wide strategy in due course.

In questions, Members were reassured that the focus on Birkenhead in respect of regeneration plans resulted from a strategic approach to local planning and unlocking major government support for development. Members were also reassured that heritage issues were being considered as part of plans and that key partners would be consulted throughout.

RESOLVED - That the action being undertaken to deliver the culture and heritage work programme and to develop a Culture and Heritage Strategy for Birkenhead be noted.

25 COMMUNITY SAFETY STRATEGY

A report of the Director of Neighbourhood Services outlined the development process for the Community Safety Strategy for 2021 to 2025. The report detailed the thematic framework within which the strategy was to operate. These themes were: Anti-Social Behaviour; Crime and Violence Reduction; Modern Slavery; Hate Crime; Emergency Planning; Road Safety; and Community Safety.

In addition, the report presented the innovative approach to building the Strategy in a collaborative, co-produced way with partners. The Strategy would be developed by working in partnership with key organisations across the borough to ensure comprehensive buy-in across the statutory, business, voluntary and community sectors and, as a consequence, maximise the impact/outcomes of the strategy and efforts to make a difference in our communities.

Mark Camborne, Assistant Director for Neighbourhoods and Transport, spoke to the report, and informed Members that the consultations had happened via the Community Safety Partnership and that detailed plans for each theme sat beneath the main Strategy. Engagement had included Members, third sector and voluntary groups using the network built up during Covid pandemic. The intention was to bring back the Strategy for sign-off in March or April.

Police Superintendent Martin Earl demonstrated to Members the Safer Wirral Tracker which was a dashboard showing police crime figures across the Wirral, including anti-social behaviour, which had risen due to breaches in Covid rules, domestic abuse and hate crime which had risen overall, and other types of crime which had shown a decreases year on year. Some figures stood out – violence was higher in Birkenhead and peaked among 26-

35 year olds. The focus for the near future was on preventive work and improving the victim's journey through the system. The Tracker was to be provided to Members.

Members questioned the logistics of the tracker and it was confirmed that the domestic violence campaign for silent calls to 999 followed by 55 as a way to report domestic abuse was captured, as was reporting on social media.

RESOLVED: That

- 1. The contents of the report be noted**
- 2. the co-production approach to developing the strategy be endorsed.**

26 **BUDGET CONSULTATION REPORT**

This report formed part of the Council's formal budget setting process, as set out in the Constitution and in accordance with the legal requirements to set a balanced and sustainable budget for 2021/22. Policy and Resources Committee had to recommend a 2021/22 balanced budget proposal to the Council for its meeting in March 2021, and this Committee had been given 6 proposals to consider.

Gail Mooney described the work so far including a consultation which had been launched on 21 December 2020 and closed on 22 January. This had included an online portal and surveys. Almost 13,000 people had accessed the portal and about 2,600 surveys had been completed. Part of registering comments was to provide a postcode which would allow an analysis of responses by area. Many ideas and questions had been suggested and all would be considered. There had also been question and answer sessions and petitions were expected. Policy and Resources Committee on 17 February would have full details of what had been received and a summary. Officers explained that the short municipal year caused by the Covid-19 pandemic made the timescales very short, and the costs on the Council of the pandemic had created a budget deficit which needed to be covered.

Members expressed strong concerns and frustration that there were options provided that had not previously been >to this Committee for consideration.

Each proposal was then discussed and comments included:

Culture and Business Economy Savings

These had been agreed in November and Members had no issues with them.

Close Europa Pools

Members were informed that the element of Europa Pools which was more expensive to operate was the fun pool, and there had been many requests to

keep the competitive pool open as it was the only one in the borough with a grandstand and a movable floor.

Financial figures were not available which made an informed decision impossible.

There would be an effect on ability to exercise which could impact on the Leisure Strategy, where Sport England would be undertaking a detailed needs analysis.

Europa Pools was not included in the latest business plan for the redevelopment of Birkenhead but remained as an option.

There were capital works needed at the fun pool to bring it up to standard.

Pause re-opening of Woodchurch Leisure Centre

The delay was likely to be until April 2022.

There were worries that it could be regarded as 'mothballed' and the delay would be used to justify permanent closure, but Members were informed that there were plans at the site for developments including new 3G football pitches and the improvement of existing grass pitches. The pool was in good condition.

This was another element that would impact on opportunities for exercise following the pandemic, which had benefits regarding physical and mental health and activity.

Review of 4 Golf Courses

Since the development of the initial savings option based on the provision of all golf as a non-statutory service, it had transpired that Hoylake Golf Course could not be included in the review as there was a Development Agreement in place until December 2022. Furthermore, the course is committed as a support facility and practice course for the 2023 Open Championship.

In 2020 Environment Scrutiny Committee had considered the future of golf courses in detail connected with call-in of a decision and had put forward proposals. Some of these were being implemented including plans, delayed by the pandemic, to develop Arrowe Park with improved Clubhouse and a sports village, and the recruitment of a head greenkeeper.

Brackenwood was important due to archaeological finds.

There may be opportunity to generate income around the Open Championship in 2023.

Courses were being surveyed to see what was involved in bringing them up to a good standard.

There had been a surge in play after the first lockdown.

Golf was important to the Leisure Strategy and the courses were important for introducing new people to golf.

Review of Museums Service

Members were informed that £212,000 of the proposed savings of £327,000 related to the Williamson. Initial savings were based on the inclusion of the Priory and Tramway Museum however these were subsequently removed.

The Williamson had recently had lighting upgraded and was a hub of cultural activities.

Artwork could be sold to generate funds however the museum had accredited museum status and could apply for specific funding pots which may not be available if it were to sell off artwork and so may not be available to the Council. Closing could actually create a negative effect on future budgets.

Members had received many letters and emails opposing the closure of the Williamson as people found relaxation, solace and socialising there.

The venue could be marketed for corporate business use.

It was a hub of the community with international connotations.

When the pandemic ends Members would want a Wirral worth living in and the Williamson was part of that – a jewel in the crown.

There may be legal covenants preventing any other use however further investigatory work with Legal services would be required to establish the extent of this.

Royden Park Commercial Development - Phase 1

It was unclear whether the income generated by the high ropes activity planned for Royden Park would affect the budget of this Committee.

RESOLVED:

That Policy and Resources Committee in February 2021 consider the comments on the budget proposals which fall under the remit of the Tourism, Communities and Leisure Committee.

27 **TOURISM, COMMUNITIES CULTURE AND LEISURE COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE**

The Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee, in co-operation with the other Policy and Service Committees, was responsible for proposing and delivering an annual committee work programme. This was to align with the corporate priorities of the Council, in particular the delivery of the key decisions which were within the remit of the Committee.

RESOLVED: That the work programme be noted.