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## TOURISM, COMMUNITIES, CULTURE & LEISURE COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 17 November 2021

Present: Councillor H Cameron (Chair)

Councillors M Booth B Kenny  
A Brame C Spriggs  
P Cleary KJ Williams  
P Gilchrist S Williams  
J Johnson G Wood

### 40 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and those watching the webcast.

### 41 APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence.

### 42 MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were asked to consider whether they had any disclosable pecuniary interests and/or any other relevant interest in connection with any item(s) on this agenda and, if so, to declare them and state the nature of the interest.

No such declarations were made.

### 43 MINUTES

**Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting of the Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee held on 12 October, 2021 be approved and adopted as a correct record.**

### 44 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

One question had been received from Steven Jones, which the Chair read out followed by the response, as follows:

#### **Question:**

The Oval sports hall is still closed for Covid vaccinations. However, the hall frequently seems to be closed and not being used much for this purpose. Why is an important sports hall being kept mothballed when other local buildings

could be used for vaccinating, such as Bebington Civic Centre for example? Also, why was the expensive sports hall wooden floor not covered before thousands of members of the public, many no doubt wearing normal shoes, were allowed through the hall for covid jabs? Many other local authorities have covered their sports hall floors using dedicated temporary coverings to prevent damage to the sports hall floor. Look at the damage to the Oval sports hall floor at the fire exit being used as the entrance for covid vaccinations. Pictures are available showing the floor pre and post covid vaccination usage - the damage caused by not covering the floor is clearly evident.

**Response:**

Thank you for your question. The agreement to utilise the sports hall at the Oval for COVID19 vaccinations was made early on in the pandemic between the Council and its healthcare partners as part of a joint agency response to the pandemic. This agreement is in place until March 2022 and the site will continue to support the operation during the uncertain Winter period. The NHS are currently using 5-7 vaccination lanes 2-3 days per week. As they enter the next phase of the booster programme in the coming 2-3 weeks that will increase to 4-6 days per week. Bebington Civic Centre could not accommodate the 5-7 lanes required and other activities are planned to take place at this site. The sports hall at The Oval is a sealed Granwood floor, not a wooden floor and as such it will not have significant damage from outdoor shoes etc. It has a rolling programme of cleaning and re-sealing and officers will ensure that all necessary maintenance is picked up prior to the site re-opening for indoor sports.

45 **STATEMENTS AND PETITIONS**

No statements, petitions or questions from Members had been received.

46 **GRANT FUNDING FOR DESTINATION MARKETING**

The Assistant Director: Chief Regeneration Officer introduced the report on Grant Funding for Destination Marketing. In 2019, prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Liverpool City Region Visitor Economy Group had developed a proposal for funding from the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority's (LCRCA) Single Investment Fund, to promote tourism across the city region. The proposal was revised in 2021 and was approved by the LCRCA in July 2021.

The report set out the activity that would be progressed through the Destination Marketing project and requested the Committee to delegate acceptance of the grant funding, allocated to Wirral Council, to the Director of Regeneration and Place in line with the priorities and projects outlined in the report. The grant would be spent on improvements to the visitwirral.com website and on advertising campaigns, to increase visits to Wirral. Following the Covid pandemic, it was part of a series of measures to support the

recovery of businesses in the visitor economy sector. Wirral was due to receive around £350,000 from the LCRCA, to be spread over three years

Responding to a number of comments from Members, the Assistant Director stated that the LCR Visitor Economy Recovery Strategy was due to be presented to Chief Executives and that she would provide feedback when this took place. Wirral Council's match funding of £150,000 had been agreed some time ago and was still contained in the budget currently.

She also agreed to provide a breakdown of the City Region's visitor economy and the number of jobs supported in Wirral as referred to in paragraph 3.2 of the report. With regard to the website the development of this would be undertaken on a City Region basis but the website would be tailored to each authority and there would be a strong focus for Wirral. Officers would also work within the Mersey Dee Alliance to make sure Wirral's connection to Chester was maximised.

The Chair suggested a short summary document be produced referencing the breakdown of visitor economy jobs in the borough alongside Key Performance Indicators relating to Wirral to be extracted from the relevant LCR documents.

**RECOMMENDED to the Policy and Resources Committee:**

- (1) that it be noted that the funding is subject to receiving and entering into a formal Grant Funding Agreement, which details the terms and conditions of the award;**
- (2) the Director of Regeneration and Place be authorised to approve the Grant Funding Agreement, thereby accepting the funds.**

47 **BIRKENHEAD CULTURE AND HERITAGE STRATEGY**

The Senior Manager, Culture Strategy introduced a report which provided an update on the development of a Culture and Heritage Strategy for Birkenhead, commissioned in support of the Council's ambitious regeneration plans. In addition to the aims of the Strategy, the report set out timescales, overarching themes and high level priorities. The long-term vision in the Strategy was aligned to the Birkenhead 2040 Framework but with an initial 5 year delivery timeframe (2021 – 2026) which was aligned to both the Wirral Plan and Economic Strategy.

The strategy would also be critical to underpinning key initiatives which impacted on the borough as a whole, such as the Liverpool City Region Borough of Culture status, which Wirral would hold again in 2024.

In line with the draft Strategy, officers were currently working to ensure the opportunities presented by the Birkenhead Regeneration Framework had

input in respect of culture and heritage. As an example of the joint working referenced in the document, officers were collaborating proactively across directorates to develop a programme for 2022 which would include Birkenhead Park's 175th anniversary celebrations.

The Senior Manager and Assistant Director: Chief Regeneration Officer responded to a number of comments on the Strategy. Further work was to be carried out to finalise the Strategy in consultation with creatives, communities and stakeholders. Work was also ongoing to develop a funding plan aligned to the Strategy alongside culture being a fundamental part of the regeneration programme which presented further opportunities. With regard to an evaluation of the 2019 Borough of Culture, this had been held in abeyance due to Covid pressures but work had been undertaken and would be reported to Members.

Members expressed their thanks and full support for all the work which had and was being undertaken with regard to the Strategy and all that it entailed.

On a motion by the Chair, seconded by Councillor Steve Williams, it was -

**Resolved – That,**

- (1) the draft Culture and Heritage Strategy for Birkenhead, be endorsed and;**
- (2) the Director of Regeneration and Place be requested to bring a further report for approval of the final strategy.**

#### 48 **PUBLIC HEALTH ANNUAL REPORT 2020/2021**

The Director of Public Health introduced the Public Health Annual Report (PHAR) which was her independent annual report and which was a statutory requirement.

The 2020/2021 PHAR described enduring health inequalities in Wirral, the immediate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on these differences in health outcomes and recommended actions that the Council would need to take to improve everyone's health. The PHAR was an important vehicle to identify key issues, flag up problems, report progress and inform local inter agency action. The purpose of the PHAR was to draw attention to issues of importance which had an impact on population health.

Since the Council took back responsibility for Public Health in 2013, it had published six reports on:

- Social isolation
- Healthy schools and children

- Domestic violence
- The roles of the Council and NHS in promoting health and wellbeing
- Problem gambling
- The role of culture in health and wellbeing.

These reports had led to action in the reduction of people smoking in the borough to levels below the national average; increased support for people who were feeling socially isolated plus significant activity across a range of partners to highlight and reduce the damage caused to Wirral's communities from alcohol abuse and gambling. The 2020/2021 PHAR sought to direct action that was needed to take to reduce the impact of health inequalities on Wirral's residents and improve health for everyone in the borough.

Members made a number of comments on the report, to which the Director responded. With regard to the Household Support Grant scheme she would ask the Assistant Director: Neighbourhood Safety and Transport to circulate a briefing with the criteria for applications for support on fuel and food poverty issues. In respect of the air quality assessment of 2019 she would find out further information in respect of vehicle ownership figures and if these were from the 2011 census. The Chair confirmed that extensive work on air quality was being undertaken by the Liverpool City Region and further details could be obtained from there.

Members welcomed the report and the Chair stated that Members were united in wanting to reduce health inequalities in the Borough despite some of the financial difficulties the Council faced.

On a motion by the Chair, seconded by Councillor Max Booth, it was -

**Resolved – That this Committee endorses the recommendations detailed within the Public Health Annual Report.**

#### 49 **BUDGET MONITORING QUARTER 2**

The Senior Finance Business Partner introduced a report which set out the financial monitoring information for the Committee as at quarter 2 (July – September) of 2021-22). The forecast year end position for Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure was an adverse variance of £0.158m against a budget of £10.059m, which was an improvement on quarter 1. The report detailed each service and the factors contributing to adverse or favourable variances within the budget.

In response to Members' comments, the Assistant Director: Leisure, Libraries and Customer Engagement, commented that he would circulate figures for the numbers of people who had continued their Invigor8 membership following the freezing of membership direct debits at the start of the

pandemic. He also outlined the issues with regard to the use of the Oval, which the NHS were still using.

On a motion by the Chair, seconded by Councillor Gill Wood, it was -

**Resolved – That,**

- (1) the projected year-end revenue forecast position of £0.158m adverse, as reported at quarter 2 (July – Sept) of 2021/22, be noted;**
- (2) the progress on the achievement of approved savings and the projected year end forecast position at quarter 2 (July – Sept) of 2021-22, be noted;**
- (3) the reserves allocated to the Committee for future one-off commitments, be noted;**
- (4) the projected year-end capital forecast position of £3.161m favourable, as reported at quarter 2 (July – Sept) of 2021-22, be noted.**

## 50 **TOURISM COMMITTEE BUDGET PAPER**

The Senior Finance Business Partner, introduced a report on the feedback and outcomes from the Budget Workshops which had been held in recent months. The Policy and Service Committees were responsible for those services being delivered under their operational headings within their annual budget envelope.

The Policy and Resources Committee, in consultation with the respective Policy and Service Committees, had been charged by Council to formulate a draft Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and budget to recommend to the Council. The Budget Workshops considered whether the proposals included in the MTFP for the 2022/23 budget, and beyond, were to be taken forward or whether they were to be replaced by alternative proposals that the committees would recommend.

The scale of the financial challenge that the Council faced could not be overstated. The short-term support afforded by government in the form of a capitalisation directive did not extend beyond 2021/22, reinforcing the requirement for an in-depth review of Council operations to enable considered and robust proposals to be made to Council in February 2022 for the 2022/23 budget allocation. This would require difficult decisions to ensure that a balanced budget could be presented.

The workshop had considered and agreed to all the savings put forward of £665k as outlined in an appendix to the report.

With regard to the proposed savings a Member suggested the need to be mindful of separating out efficiencies and income, as suggested increases in income were aspirational and Members had now been asked to focus on achievable savings.

The Chair referred to the external assurance reviews and key dates in the budget setting process and that this Committee would have oversight of its budget, whilst acknowledging that the ultimate decision maker in proposing a budget would be the Policy and Resources Committee.

On a motion by the Chair, seconded by Councillor Pat Cleary, it was -

**Resolved - That the Budget Workshop feedback and outcomes, as detailed in appendix 1, be agreed and be reported to Policy and Resources Committee for consideration.**

## 51 WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE

The Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee was responsible for proposing and delivering an annual committee work programme. This work programme 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.

The Chair referred to the need for the work programme to now have only items which had a significant impact on the Council's finances and that some items might have been taken off.

Responding to comments from Members, the Assistant Director: Leisure, Libraries and Customer Engagement referred to the two strategy documents due to come before the Committee on sports and on libraries and that the libraries one would give consideration to one stop shops.

On a motion by the Chair, seconded by Councillor Jenny Johnson, it was -

**Resolved - That the work programme for the Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee be altered just to include those specific items that deal with the financial position, medium term budget and the current assurance review recommendations.**

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