

AT A MEETING of the Culture and Communities Select Committee of
HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL held as a remote meeting on Thursday, 18th
March, 2021

Chairman:

* Councillor Anna McNair Scott

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| * Councillor Christopher Carter | * Councillor Pal Hayre |
| * Councillor John Bennison | * Councillor Dominic Hiscock |
| Councillor Fred Birkett | * Councillor Rob Mocatta |
| * Councillor Jackie Branson | * Councillor Michael White |
| * Councillor Ann Briggs | |
| * Councillor Zilliah Brooks | |
| * Councillor Peter Chegwyn | |
| * Councillor Daniel Clarke | |
| * Councillor Rod Cooper | |

*Present

Also present at the invitation of the Chairman:

Councillor Edward Heron – Executive Member for Recreation, Heritage,
Countryside and Rural Affairs

118. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies were received.

119. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were mindful that where they believed they had a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in any matter considered at the meeting they must declare that interest at the time of the relevant debate and, having regard to the circumstances described in Part 3, Paragraph 1.5 of the County Council's Members' Code of Conduct, leave the meeting while the matter was discussed, save for exercising any right to speak in accordance with Paragraph 1.6 of the Code. Furthermore Members were mindful that where they believed they had a Personal Interest in a matter being considered at the meeting they considered whether such interest should be declared, and having regard to Part 5, Paragraph 5 of the Code, considered whether it was appropriate to leave the meeting whilst the matter was discussed, save for exercising any right to speak in accordance with the Code.

120. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 January 2021 were agreed as a correct record.

121. DEPUTATIONS

There were no deputations.

122. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman was pleased to announce that Hampshire Outdoor Centres were working with the Government kickstart scheme encouraging young people into employment within the sector. The service had been granted funding to offer a variety of placements. The Chairman also noted that educational visits, subject to Government confirmation, would hopefully resume on 29 March with residential visits from 17 May with Covid secure measures in place.

The Committee heard that Hampshire Libraries had promoted a Winter Reading Challenge through January and February and that this had proven very successful with over 2000 children participating during lockdown. Furthermore, the Chairman announced that regional Census Support Centres were available within Hampshire Libraries to support individuals to complete the 2021 Census.

The Chairman was delighted to inform Members that the County Council had won a UK Civic Trust Award for the design of the Lookout at Lepe Country Park. Members passed their congratulations to all involved.

123. SUMMARY OF COVID IMPACTS AND RECOVERY POSITION

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Culture, Communities and Business Services providing a summary of the impacts of Covid-19 on cultural and community services over the past year during the course of the pandemic, and the current position in terms of re-opening and recovery.

In response to Members' questions, it was confirmed that:

- Trading Standards had continued to operate throughout the pandemic with some work carried out remotely and online whilst site visits had been undertaken in person where necessary.
- As Libraries re-opened in line with Government guidance over the coming weeks, the agreed new opening times would be fully implemented from 21 June onwards, with opening hours from April 12 onwards at around 75% of this target. This was due to the resource intensive, Covid related tasks that were required to be completed.
- Cafes and restaurants at Country Parks were planned to open in line with the Government guidance and roadmap.
- Staff surveys had been conducted across the County Council throughout the pandemic to monitor staff wellbeing. The Director agreed to enquire with the survey teams as to whether any data had been collected via staff age profile and experiences based upon age group.

Members were grateful for the comprehensive summary report and requested a further update in six months' time. Members also agreed to an additional recommendation as set out at ii below.

RESOLVED:

That the Culture and Communities Select Committee:

- i. notes the contents of the report which provides a summary of the exceptional events and responses by services to the Covid-19 crisis, and the ongoing challenges and opportunities.
- ii. expresses their admiration and gratitude for the work conducted throughout the pandemic and requests that the Director pass this on to all officers.

124. COUNTY FARMS POLICY

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Culture, Communities and Business Services providing a summary of the County Farms policy review process and conclusions and recommending the new Policy for approval.

In response to Members' questions, it was noted that:

- Start-up farm tenancies were offered on a seven year basis with a discretionary three year extension. The aspiration was that tenants were successful in remaining for the full ten years having had sufficient opportunity to establish their business.
- New entrant opportunities were subject to an open recruitment process and that the criteria required tenants to demonstrate suitable experience within the industry.
- The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs was setting up a New Entrant Support Scheme and the County Council was participating in discussions on the scheme and will seek to align its tenant selection criteria to the new scheme if appropriate.

RESOLVED:

That the Culture and Communities Select Committee recommends to the Executive Member for Recreation, Heritage, Countryside and Rural Affairs that he:

- i. Approves the new County Farms Policy set out at Appendix 1.
- ii. Notes that the future leadership of the County Farms Service will be provided by the Interim Assistant Director for Recreation and Natural Environment in CCBS.
- iii. Notes the intention to bring forward an annual performance report for the County Farms Service commencing in 2022.

125. RIGHTS OF WAY AND COUNTRYSIDE PATHS (COVID)

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Culture, Communities and Business Services providing an update on the use and condition of public rights of way and paths across the countryside estate over the past year, during the Covid 19 pandemic and outlining a proposal for funding remedial works to

identified priority rights of way and paths to improve their condition and enable their continued use.

In response to Members' questions, it was confirmed that:

- A downloadable signage toolkit would be accessible online shortly allowing all sites to be able to print and display signage as required.
- Grass cutting contracts were intended to be let this year.
- In the case of a right of way running through private land, the responsibility for the drainage of the path and any issues arising was largely ascertained on a case by case basis depending on the site in question.
- Volunteers were very highly valued and were keen to return when possible, to assist the Countryside Service in accordance with Government Covid guidance.

RESOLVED:

That the Culture and Communities Select Committee recommends to the Executive Member for Recreation, Heritage, Countryside and Rural Affairs that he:

- i. Notes the impact of increased use and weather conditions on the rights of way network and paths at country parks and countryside sites across Hampshire.
- ii. Approves the establishment of a £500,000 Path Recovery programme to carry out remedial works to improve the condition of the worst affected rights of way and countryside paths in 2021/22 to be funded from the CCBS accumulated Cost of Change reserve.

126. **WINCHESTER DISCOVERY CENTRE – FUTURE STRATEGY**

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Culture, Communities and Business Services outlining proposals for a new partnership model between Hampshire Library Service and Hampshire Cultural Trust (HCT) at Winchester Discovery Centre (WDC).

In response to Members' questions, it was confirmed that:

- A detailed business case was being prepared and that the numbers of staff affected was not yet confirmed. It was anticipated that staff changes would involve a reduction in management, the transfer of café staff to HC3S and the core Library teams being able to focus upon specific library tasks.
- Part of the principle of the partnership would be to revitalise the performance programme at WDC, opening in the evenings with increased access to performance events. HCT were hoping to reflect the growth in the performance programme that had been experienced in other arts centres since they had joined the Trust.

RESOLVED:

That the Culture and Communities Select Committee recommends to the Executive Member for Recreation, Heritage, Countryside and Rural Affairs that he:

- i. Approves plans to proceed with the proposed partnership model, subject to agreement being reached by both parties on final details of the arrangement.
- ii. Approves the commercial principles as set out in paragraph 48 and delegates authority to the Director of CCBS in consultation with the Deputy Chief Executive & Director of Corporate Resources and the Head of Legal Services to conclude the detailed financial agreement in line with the commercial principles.
- iii. Notes the HR implications as set out in paragraphs 57 to 62.
- iv. Authorises any other steps be taken that are reasonably necessary in order to implement the above recommendations.

That the Culture and Communities Select Committee notes that the following proposals are due to be considered at a future Executive Member for Commercial Strategy, Human Resources and Performance Decision Day:

- v. The detailed property arrangements by which the operational responsibility for WDC is transferred to HCT (including the nature and duration of tenure).
- vi. The detailed programme of property refurbishment and improvement outlined in paragraphs 63 to 67.
- vii. Proposals to transfer employment of some Hampshire County Council Catering Service ('HC3S') staff to HCT.

127. WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee received the report of the Director of Transformation and Governance which set out the Committee's upcoming work programme.

The following items were agreed to be added into the Work Programme:

- Regular Library Service overview/update – 20 September 2021
- Regular Hampshire Cultural Trust overview/update – 20 September 2021
- Further Covid update on cultural and community services – 29 November 2021

RESOLVED:

That the Work Programme be agreed subject to the additions set out above.