

AT A MEETING of the Culture and Communities Select Committee of
HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL held at the castle, Winchester on Monday,
29th November, 2021

Chairman:

* Councillor Rob Mocatta

Vice-Chairman:

* Councillor Jackie Branson

Councillor Lulu Bowerman	* Councillor Hugh Lumby
* Councillor Ann Briggs	* Councillor Lesley Meenaghan
* Councillor Steven Broomfield	* Councillor Tanya Park
Councillor Pamela Bryant	* Councillor Michael Thierry
* Councillor Peter Chegwyn	
Councillor Rod Cooper	
* Councillor Alex Crawford	
* Councillor Barry Dunning	
* Councillor Dominic Hiscock	

*Present

Also present with the agreement of the Chairman:

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

11. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Lulu Bowerman, Pamela Bryant and Rod Cooper. Councillor Michael Thierry was in attendance as the Conservative Deputy Member.

12. 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.

No interests were declared at this point in the meeting.

13. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 September 2021 were agreed as a correct record.

14. DEPUTATIONS

There were no deputations.

15. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman was pleased to announce that a bridleway in Binsted had recently re-opened after considerable restoration. Members heard that the Countryside team had worked alongside the British Horse Society to complete this £77,438 community project. It was highlighted that £50,000 of the funding had been generously granted by Tarmac through the Tarmac Landfill Communities Fund, with the remaining funds secured from Hampshire County Council, the BHS Ride Out Fund, Binsted Parish Council, South Downs National Park, BHS local Hampshire Committee and the local Ramblers committee. The Chairman highlighted how this had been a really good example of joining forces to improve the rights of way network.

The Chairman also highlighted to Members the inclusion of Hampshire Archives in the BBC's A303: Highway to the Sun documentary which had included footage of archival material filmed within the Hampshire Record Office Search Room, and which gave an excellent account of the service.

16. LIBRARY SERVICE UPDATE

The Select Committee received a report providing an update on the Library Service (Item 6 in the Minute Book). Members also received a presentation highlighting key areas of the report.

Councillor Steven Broomfield declared an interest at this point in proceedings as a Trustee at Fair Oak Community Library.

Members were taken through the presentation slides and details around the public and school library service were explained as well as the vision and aims of the service. In terms of the service's budget, officers explained that this was £13million expenditure, of which £10million was revenue and £3million income. Members attention was drawn to key dates relating to the transformation of the library service as part of Transformation to 2021 (T21), and it was noted that the culmination of savings for the service totalled £1,791,000 which encompassed savings to operations, delivering the service differently and the delivery of efficiencies. An example of this was the move of Emsworth library to Emsworth Community Centre, which realised savings of £30,000. Details of new community libraries in Hampshire were also noted.

The Committee heard how libraries operated during the Covid lockdown, which included the Ready Reads scheme and the Home Library Service. Officers also highlighted the role of the service in supporting 500 of the most vulnerable people in Hampshire through the home library service. In terms of recovery of the service following the lifting of Covid restrictions, it was noted that compared to pre-Covid, physical visits to libraries were at 50%, and it was important going forward to find the balance between investment in physical libraries as well as virtual elements.

Officers also drew Members attention to the work which had recently commenced at Winchester Discovery Centre and the new branding for this. It was also heard that work in relation to libraries and climate change had been undertaken in respect to LED lighting and double glazing in library buildings, and work with national partners on an eco-strategy. The partnership working between the Hampshire Library Service and the Hampshire Domestic Abuse Partnership was also highlighted. In conclusion it was heard that the T21 programme was now complete, and there was a huge amount of work to be undertaken going forward in recovering footfall and the promotion of libraries.

Members thanked the presenting officers for the informative update. Questions were raised from Members, and it was confirmed that groups, clubs and activities at libraries such as Rhymetime were recovering well since Covid restrictions had eased. Following a query on what was available at each library, information on this would be circulated to the Committee. Members also heard details of the higher cost to the library service of e-books compared to a physical book, as the price of an e-book could be dictated by the publisher. Members queried whether there had been any adverse feedback to the new opening hours following Executive Member decision, and it was heard that there hadn't been, and due to Covid restrictions, libraries have had to operate reduced hours for much of the year. The opportunities for delivering differently in libraries was highlighted, as well as opportunities for income generation such as room rental. In response to queries about community libraries, Officers highlighted the positive and supportive approach by communities, and it was also noted that as community libraries, they were now able to apply for funds such as lottery funding. Details of freehold transfers and leasing in respect of community libraries Elson and Lee, Lyndhurst and South Ham was also confirmed.

RESOLVED:

That the Culture and Communities Select Committee noted the contents of the report.

17. **OUTDOOR EDUCATION SERVICE OVERVIEW**

The Select Committee received a presentation providing an overview of the Hampshire Outdoor Centres (Item 7 in the Minute Book). The presentation was introduced and the mission of the service was highlighted in offering educational and recreational opportunities through four outdoor centres.

Further detail on each of the four outdoor centres was presented, and it was noted that three of the centres were in Hampshire; Calshot, Runways End and Tile Barn, and one of the centres, Argoed Lwyd, was situated in the Brecon

Beacons. In relation to Calshot, Members noted the coastal location, the velodrome and the Tudor Castle onsite. Members heard that the impact of the Covid pandemic had increased people's desire to holiday locally, and specifically to the coast, and combined with marketing and sales, officers were confident that visitor numbers would increase in the future. It was heard that Argoed Lwyd had evolved over the years and provided children of Hampshire with unique experiences such as rock climbing, and feedback received from children detailed the immense positive impact of these experiences. In relation to Runways End, it was noted that this was the first carbon neutral centre in Hampshire, and had recently received £70,000 climate workstream funding. Details of the business planning process and the performance journey of the service were also explained, and it was noted that the Covid pandemic had impacted on the service being cash neutral, but officers explained that this should be achieved by 2024/25.

Members thanked officers for the presentation and a number of questions were raised. Members questioned whether there was the opportunity to explore corporate bookings to the centres to generate further income. It was heard that there had been interest by companies in using Calshot for water sport activities, and also as a base for a 'pop-up' restaurant with diners being brought in by boat. Officers confirmed that there had been an increased focus on sales, engagement and marketing within the service and this had enabled other opportunities for the centres to be explored. It was also confirmed that as a result of brochures recently being sent out to schools, £200,000 worth of booking enquiries had been received. In relation to occupancy at the centres, it was noted that bookings were in place for school terms next year, but further information relating to capacity at each of the centres would be forwarded to the Committee. Members also questioned the financial situation of the centres, and information relating to this would also be circulated. The issue of rising sea levels around Calshot was queried, and it was confirmed that a piece of work was currently being undertaken with coastal partners in relation to this. Officers also confirmed that a future visit to Calshot would be arranged for the Select Committee.

RESOLVED:

That the Culture and Communities Select Committee noted the presentation.

18. TASK AND FINISH WORKING GROUP PROPOSAL

The Select Committee considered a report of the Chief Executive regarding the proposal that the Committee establish a Task and Finish Working Group to examine income generation for those services within the Culture, Communities and Business Services Department, that lie within the remit of the Culture and Communities Select Committee in the context of the SP23 programme (Item 8 in the Minute Book).

The report was taken as read and Members were content with the proposal. The membership of the Task and Finish Working Group was agreed by the Select Committee as below:

Councillor Jackie Branson
Councillor Rod Cooper
Councillor Alex Crawford
Councillor Dominic Hiscock
Councillor Hugh Lumby

The Select Committee also agreed that the Chairman, Councillor Rob Mocatta, attend meetings of the working group as an observer.

RESOLVED:

- i) That a Task and Finish Working Group be initiated to examine income generation for those services within the Culture, Communities and Business Services Department, that lie within the remit of the Culture and Communities Select Committee in the context of the SP23 programme, on the basis of the proposed Terms of Reference attached to the report.
- ii) That the following members were appointed to the Task and Finish Working Group in accordance with the Terms of Reference: Councillors Jackie Branson, Rod Cooper, Alex Crawford, Dominic Hiscock, Hugh Lumby. Councillor Rob Mocatta would attend in observer capacity.

19. WORK PROGRAMME

The Select Committee considered a report of the Chief Executive setting out the proposed work programme of the Committee (Item 9 in the Minute Book). In addition to the programme for formal meetings of the Select Committee, a schedule of proposed visits to sites around the County was appended to the work programme for information.

It was noted that the Archives Service update would be brought to the January 2022 meeting. In relation to pre-scrutiny of Calshot Futures, it was heard that the timing of this was to be determined. It was requested that an update from the Hampshire Cultural Trust and an update on the Cultural Strategy be brought to the Committee annually following the previous updates at the 20 September 2021 meeting. Following a request for an update on Energise Me, it was noted that this would be brought to a future meeting of the Committee.

RESOLVED:

That the Work Programme for the Select Committee was agreed with the additions detailed above.

Chairman,