

LEISURE AND YOUTH POLICY AND REVIEW PANEL

Meeting held on Monday, 1 February 2016 at the Concorde Room, Council Offices, Farnborough at 7.00 pm.

Voting Members

Cllr Mrs. D.B. Bedford (Vice-Chairman)

Cllr T.D. Bridgeman

Cllr J.H. Marsh

Cllr A.R. Newell

Cllr M. Staplehurst

Cllr B.A. Thomas

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor Liz Corps, Councillor Peter Crerar and Councillor Keith Dibble.

14. MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 9th November, 2015 were agreed as a correct record.

15. HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL LIBRARY SERVICES

The Panel welcomed Ms. Sara Teers, Head of Libraries and Registration Services at Hampshire County Council (HCC), who attended the meeting to update the Panel on the HCC Library Strategy Consultation, which had ended on the 16th January, 2016. The Hampshire Library and Information Services consisted of a range of library facilities in the County; these included, discovery centres, mobile libraries, community libraries, school libraries and an online/virtual library service. In 2015, the Service had a turnover of £14 million, received 6 million visits and issued 6.9 million books/items. It employed 525 staff (plus 150 additional members of staff at the registration service) and had over 1,000 volunteers.

Expenditure within the Service was noted and the Panel was advised that, to date, the Service had saved £5 million since 2009. However, a further, estimated, £1.7 million needed to be saved by 2020.

The Panel was made aware of the strategic aims to 2020 under the umbrella “delivering modern, comprehensive and efficient library services”. The aims were:

- Aim 1 – Support and encourage reading and literacy
- Aim 2 – Improve digital services and inclusion
- Aim 3 – Contribute to health and wellbeing of local communities
- Aim 4 – Provide access to trusted sources of information
- Aim 5 – Facilitate and provide learning

To assist in achieving these aims the Service had carried out a comprehensive needs assessment, which had looked at usage costs, location, catchment size, demographics, levels of deprivation and educational attainment. The outcome from the assessment helped determine community need and the importance of each library.

The Panel reviewed costings for the four main types of service provided: static, community, mobile and home. It was noted that the mobile library service cost in the region of £161 per active member (based on book issues) compared to £58 and £25 for static and community services, respectively. The home service, where books were delivered to individuals homes, cost £120 per active user.

It was noted that a new operating model was being proposed to enable service modernisation and efficiencies. The model would categorise the existing range of libraries by size, services offered, opening hours and current performance. Through the creation of this new operating model not only would the core library offer of book lending, baby bounce and rhyme, public IT, inter library loans etc. be preserved, but the opportunity to continue to enhance the Service would be enabled.

The new operating model would mean that existing libraries would be categorised by tier. The proposed four tiers were:

- Tier 1 – the largest libraries, including discovery centres, it was noted that the offer in the bigger libraries would be improved to bring them more in line with discovery centres. Farnborough had been categorised as a tier one library
- Tier 2 – mid-sized libraries, Aldershot had been categorised in this tier but had potential to move up to tier one if an increase in footfall could be achieved
- Tier 3 – small/neighbourhood libraries, some with potential to move up a tier e.g. Hythe, Alton and Romsey or alternatively the lower performing ones could be closed or moved to tier four if the need and resource was available
- Tier 4 – community libraries run by volunteers

The Panel noted the proposed building rationalisation and improvement programme, part of which would consider selling property, re-locating libraries currently in unsuitable locations and releasing space to partners to reduce operating cost and increase footfall. It was advised that flexible use of the book fund could release £500,000 per annum over the next four years to be used for investment on the infrastructure of the service. It was then proposed that this money would then be reduced from the budget as of 2020 on a permanent basis. In addition, it was advised that by the end of June, 2016 it was proposed that the high cost mobile library service would be replaced with modern alternatives. If supported, this service could be replaced with the existing home library service.

It was explained that enhancements were proposed to the IT and digital systems. The management system would be upgraded, self-service provisions would be rolled out at suitable locations, public IT would be improved through faster broadband, online payment services investigated and implemented and Maker Spacers would be set up in two tier one libraries. Maker Spacers offered space to assist business start-up and the availability of new technologies, i.e. 3D printing.

In summary, the consultation had received in excess of 5,750 responses, support had been strong towards sharing library buildings with partners, the removal of poorly used collections, the tier structure and investing £500,000 per annum over four years from the book fund. However, feedback had identified that moving specialist collections to other providers was not something users agreed with, neither was the suggestion to reduce the Book Fund by £500,000 per annum after 2020.

In general the closure of the mobile home service had been supported, although actual users of the services were against the proposal. With regard to alternatives to the Mobile Library Service, the strongest support from respondents was the Home Library Service followed by the new community library exchange service.

It was noted that Hampshire County Council's Executive Members would make a decision on the findings of the consultation in April, 2016 and strategy implementation would start in the summer of 2016.

The Panel discussed the presentation and a query was made on the timeline for the Farnborough Discovery Centre, it was advised that this would be dependent on opportunity and would most likely be part of the Farnborough Masterplan developments within the civic quarter.

A request was made for data on usage of the mobile library service by Borough, this information would be forwarded to the Head of Community and Environmental Services and circulated to the Panel.

The Chairman thanked Ms. Teers for her presentation.

16. LIDO REVIEW UPDATE

The Head of Community and Environmental Services, Mr. Peter Amies, provided an update on the ongoing work of the Lido Task and Finish Group in relation to the Lido Review. It was noted that a meeting of the Task and Finish Group had been held in mid-January, 2016 at which there had been representatives from the Aldershot Civic Society and Friends of Aldershot Lido (FOAL) in attendance.

It was advised that at the meeting Members had considered a vision for the Lido, and the Panel noted the importance of future proofing the facility by working together. It was also recognised that the size and depth of the pool may need to be rationalised to enable heating a body of water and the heritage of the facility should be preserved in any proposed changes.

It was noted that all the Council owned leisure facilities were due for retendering in 2019, these included the Farnborough Leisure Centre, Aldershot Pools, Aldershot Lido, Alpine Snowsports and Southwood Golf Course. It was imperative that the best deal was secured for the Council, which could include either bringing all the facilities together under one contract or there may be interest in some facilities, such as the Ski Centre and Golf Course, from more specialist contractors. The retendering would provide an opportunity to work with a wide range of leisure providers on options to make the facilities more attractive and financially viable.

Consideration was also being given to soft market testing for the Aldershot Indoor Pools and Lido site, to identify what the wider market place believed would provide the most attractive and financially sustainable option. The findings from this could be used to help shape the retendering process.

The Panel noted that due to the poor summer in 2015, the annual cost of the Lido had increased by £15,000 in accordance with the profit share deal with Places for People (PfP). In addition, the season ticket scheme had not worked as well as hoped, and it was felt that poor weather throughout the season may also have had an impact on sales. However, the reduced entry price from 3.30 p.m. had seen a significant increase in take up.

It was advised that representatives from FOAL, PfP and the Council would meet prior to the next Task and Finish Group meeting to discuss promotional ideas for the 2016 season, which would include use of social media.

The Chairman thanked Mr. Amies for his presentation.

17. LEISURE AND YOUTH BUDGET PORTFOLIO

The Head of Financial Services and Chief Finance Officer (Ms Amanda Fahey) attended the meeting to review the revenue budget portfolio relating to the Panel. The Panel went through the revenue budget by item and identified some potential areas for scrutiny, areas included:

- Community Leisure – play schemes and support to Rushmoor Healthy Living and the Healthy Adult programme
- Tourism – Grants to the Military Museum and Basingstoke Canal
- Public Hall and Community Centres – provision of facilities for educational, recreational, arts and social opportunities
- Special Events – support to and promotion of community event
- Community Schools – provision of community schools (Connaught)
- Town Twinning – encourage and facilitate educational, cultural and leisure links between Rushmoor and the twin towns
- Allotments – provision of allotment gardens

The Panel noted that the Capital Budget could be considered as a standalone item at a future meeting and would be discussed further alongside the areas identified at the next mid-cycle meeting.

The Chairman thanked Ms. Fahey for her attendance at the meeting.

18. **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Panel **NOTED** the current work programme.

The meeting closed at 8.05 pm.
