

# ***Report to the Council***

**Committee: Cabinet**

**Date: 25 April 2017**

**Subject: Leisure & Community Services**

**Portfolio Holder: Councillor H Kane**

---

## **Recommending:**

**That the report of the Leisure and Community Services Portfolio Holder be noted.**

---

## **Leisure Contract Update**

I was pleased to be present, when the new 20 year Leisure Contract with Places for People Leisure Management Ltd (PfP) was formally signed and sealed on Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> March at the Civic Offices. I joined senior officers and PfP executives, along with members of the legal teams from both organisations for the occasion.

The actual contract officially started on Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> April and overnight on Friday, the mobilisation team from PfP undertook deep cleaning of all the centres and installed new IT systems and some signage. On Saturday morning the only issues encountered were some short queues where members needed to exchange access cards and complete new forms. Existing staff transferring from the previous contractor were supported by PfP staff brought in specially to aid the transition. In general terms the handover went very well indeed.

Looking ahead, the site works start on the new Waltham Abbey Leisure Centre on July 17<sup>th</sup> followed by a construction period of around fifteen months. Barring unforeseen circumstances, the new centre should open to the public in November 2018. Members will have the opportunity to tour site before it opens.

The refurbishment works at both Loughton and Epping will start later this summer and should be completed by Spring 2018.

## **Community Services**

As usual, our Community Services Teams have been very busy working to improve the quality of lives of our local residents and I am pleased to report on recent activities and initiatives across the service area.

## **Museum, Heritage and Culture**

**Epping Forest District Museum (EFDM):** As part of the Arts Council funded No Borders Resilience Project, work on the commercial development of the MHC service continues to go from strength to strength, with a range of new income generating initiatives being established through the work of the Commercial Manager, Shane Bartley. This is building on the increased income generated through the new Museum Shop which has been 100% higher than original estimates. At the same time, establishment of the Development Trust is well underway, with active recruitment of Trustees due to commence in mid-May with an open day and open evening. Trustee recruitment packs have been produced and in early April, members of Cabinet and senior management of the Council undertook training provided by Legal consultants, Winckworth Sherwood on the operation and role of the Trust.

Following a range of difficulties in recruiting to the No Borders Fundraising Manager post due to high levels of competing job opportunities, Gareth Gault has now been appointed to the role and will be working with Winckworth Sherwood on the recruitment of trustees and development of the Trust. The other key priority for the role is to identify and secure external funding from charitable organisations and to investigate opportunities for legacy giving and individual donations.

A funding application of £1445 has also been successful from SHARE East, which will fund a range of visual impairment and family workshops, connected to EFDM Rural Life exhibition October - December 2017.

A total of **420605 people** have accessed the museums, online.

**Lowewood Museum:** Once again, our officers have been successful in securing external funding, with a sum of £68,500 secured from the Heritage Lottery Fund, for a project focussing on Stephen Warner – ‘One Man’s Journey Through War’. The project will involve work with Hertford Regional College, John Warner Secondary School and the Essex Regiment Museum to explore Stephen’s experiences during the First World War, told through his diaries held within the museum’s collection. The project will culminate in an exhibition at the museum in 2018 marking 100 years since the end of the war.

Numbers of visits continue to increase at Lowewood, with over 4000 in the last few months. In addition, over 24,000 remote users have accessed Lowewood through its website and social media interactions as well as research enquiries. The museums’ work was supported by over 156 volunteer hours during this period and programme highlights have included the successful launch of the Pulham’s of Broxbourne project, which was a joint initiative with B3Living, which included restoration of elements of the former Pulham factory site, the opening of an exhibition at the museum and production of a virtual garden video tour accessible through the Council’s You Tube feed. A conference on James Pulham and Sons held at Lowewood in March, attracted people from across the country, including Scotland and was very successful. Other new initiatives at Lowewood have included a public event for British Science Week, where over 100 people undertook rock experiments, sand art and bulb planting. Finally, a new cake and coffee area for the museum is currently being developed as part of the Arts Council England (ACE) Resilience No Borders project.

**‘Paths Unseen’:** Through external funding, our Culture Team has been working with Poet Keely Mills, in provision of workshops at Epping Forest College and with local writers’ groups; generating inspiration for poems which will form an exhibition at the Museum. The talents of illustrator Jef Winters, have also been acquired to provide illustrations to go with the poems and it is planned to launch the exhibition in May, when ‘The Space’ at the museum will be transformed into a woodland, and visitors will be able to share their own poems, stories and creativity. Both artists will be also running workshops for the public throughout the summer holidays (for children) and in September for adults and a live performance is planned to be held in the forest (weather pending) by theatre company 3 Acres and a Cow. The Paths Unseen exhibition will open at EFDM, in June

**How to...Draw:** Our How to Draw programme continues to be very successful and during February half term, two workshops were provided at the museum with level 1 and level 2 sessions available. Both sessions were very well attended, with level 1 being sold out. Participants learnt little tips and tricks to help develop their drawing skills and both level workshops will be repeated at Lowewood Museum in the May half term and again during the summer at a couple of venues. It is also planned to provide ‘How to Draw level 3’ sessions during the summer holidays.

**Other Museum, Heritage and Culture work:** A range of other exhibitions, events and activities have been provided by the team, which include:

- Design Icons EXhibition – celebrating iconic design in the last half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century
- Then and Now – a celebration of the district and how communities have developed over the last 100 years through our photographic and art collections
- 'Storybook' (at Lowewood) – celebrating 100 years of famous local children's authors in a family friendly exhibition

**Onsite museum visitors to EFDM:** It is worth noting that in the last six months since Epping Forest District Museum reopened, we've had over 7000 visitors onsite. We are now at the end of the HLF refunded refurbishment project so over the course of the first year since we reopened in March 2016, we have had over 15,000 people visit the new museum.

**Schools:** During this time, 206 pupils have visited the museum site to take part in workshops, 2201 pupils have engaged with the museum's collections through outreach workshops taking place in schools and 440 pupils have benefitted from museum loan box resources.

**First 'TeachMeet' :** The first joint meeting between Secondary and Primary History and Geography teachers was held at the museum in March 2017. This event focussed on projects, to share knowledge of what is being taught across the Key Stages and how best to support the transition between primary and secondary schools.

**Special Groups:** We have also had a range of visits from local groups including Beavers to to Lowewood Museum and Lea Valley U3A Art Group, who visited the District museum for a tour behind the scenes.

**Motiv8:** I was delighted to be able to attend the annual Motiv8 Youth Dance Platform, which took place on Monday 27<sup>th</sup> & Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> March 2017 at Epping Forest College. Over 150 young people from the age of 5-20 years of age performed their latest routines at this fantastic showcase and as usual, I was very impressed with the high level of performance. Local groups, schools and colleges in the Epping Forest district took part. The event was also part of U.DANCE – a national programme that gives young people the opportunity to perform on stage at least once a year. The successful partnership with Epping Forest College sees Performing Arts students, Photography, Media, Beauty, Music and Fine Art students also taking part. Motiv8 is a project over several months for the college culminating in the final performance at the end of March each year.

**Dance and Exercise classes for Older People:** As part of the drive to improve the health and wellbeing of older residents, we have developed a new partnership with Loughton Voluntary Care, to provide seated dance/ exercise sessions for older people in Loughton. A successful 6 week pilot took place in February and March where up to 25 residents of Loughton from either the Oakwood Hill Senior Citizens Club, Loughton Voluntary Care or the Community 'Stay Well' events have come together on a Thursday afternoon. Loughton Voluntary Care have completed a thorough evaluation of this project and there is a great evidence of need and that older people really want these fun and beneficial sessions. Many have made new friends through attending the pilot.

**Dance and Young People:** EFDC After School Dance programme is continuing to blossom and in addition to Roydon, Moreton and Nazeing Primary Schools, High Ongar Primary School now has classes set up by the Council during the school day on a Thursday afternoon. All schools are given performance opportunities and over 100 children are taking part in these activities each week.

**Keeping Dance Alive:** This is a new project commencing after the Easter holidays, with Staples Road Primary in Loughton and St John's School, in Buckhurst Hill. The theme of the dance project is 'Bard to Bollywood' this year, designed to mark the 2017 UK-India Year of Culture and commemorate the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of William Shakespeare and whose first folio of work will be touring India during 2017. An en masse dance piece will be taught over 8 weeks to these pupils and then they will perform together at The Loughton Community Day on Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> July. This will be a mix of Year 4 and Year 6 children. It also gives them the opportunity to contribute their creative ideas. We are working with Loughton Town Council on this.

**Museum Buildings and Facilities:** Huge steps forward have been made in starting to make the museum wider offer more accessible, through the installation of a new Collections Management System software (MuseumIndex+) and transfer of the first batch of data. This will enable us to link all images, audio, video, scans of related documents and any additional information (e.g. biographical details of previous owners, makers, etc; bibliographical references, results of research, etc) directly to the object record. Also, as the information recorded is enhanced, records can be made available to the public, through a 'Collections Online' portal (on the museum website), making the collections more easily and widely accessible. WE will also be able to record far more information than our previous system, speeding up enquiry-response time & aiding exhibition preparation/interpretation of displays.

We have also upgraded our Environmental monitoring systems across both Museums, with support of external funding, which includes coverage to detect water leaks and overflowing gutters, with the ability to activate remote alerts (through SMS message and/or e-mail to enable rapid response and avert /minimise risk of damage (to the museum collections, building & service). This provides accurate & detailed 24-hour data, which can be easily accessed & downloaded, helping us to make informed decisions about effective & efficient environmental controls for purposes of long-term preservation of the collections and enhancing our ability to attract loans from other museums, including national & potentially international museums.

Ultra-Violet light filtering has also been installed to all windows in EFDM & Lowewood Museum and both sites now conform to nationally recognised limits of U-V exposure (Ultra-Violet is the wavelength of light that causes the greatest, irreversible damage most quickly) so this is another contribution to collections care & again improves our standing for loan-requests.

### **Community, Health and Wellbeing**

**Sports Awards:** As usual, our annual sports awards attracted a high level of applicants this year and a winner and runner-up were chosen from a very talented field. The winner for the Sports Award 2017, is Daniel Rowden from Buckhurst Hill, who is an excellent 800m runner. In 2016, his successes included being ranked number 1 in the UK at an under 20 Level and 6th in Europe. He is the UK national champion in the 800m at under 20's and also a World Championship semi-finalist. Daniels objectives for 2017 are to medal at the Under 23 European Championships, or to qualify for the senior World Championships, in London. He has deferred his place at Imperial College London to study mechanical engineering, so that he can focus on his 2017 objectives and is currently juggling a part time job to enable him to undertake his training regime. Furthermore, Daniel is also a mentor and tutor to young people through his church.

The Runner Up for 2017, is Callum Burnett from Stapleford Abbots, who is an ice hockey player who has been consistently selected for the England teams since 2014 and in 2016

was selected for team GB at an under 16 level. In 2016, he helped GB win a silver medal at an international tournament in Madrid. Callum is well on his way to make the GB senior squad and has also been signed to play by the London Raiders. Callum's goals for 2017 are to consolidate his place in the GB team, but also head out to Canada to train with some of the best players in the world to improve his performance and make him a better player so that he can push for selection into GB's under 18's team.

**Active Living:** A new health and wellbeing programme has been developed by our CHWB team, which aims to encourage and assist people who are currently inactive, to take part in regular physical activity, through tailored 1:1 support. The Project will target people who are at risk of developing both mental and physical health issues related to physical inactivity or poor lifestyle choices, in order to help them improve their health and wellbeing. Our staff will work with participants to set a personal action plan that will make it simple for them to find ways to fit physical activity into their daily life. Participants will be referred to the project via GP's, Pharmacists and can self-refer. Once enrolled onto the project, participants will receive a 12 week induction, which aims to motivate behavioural change. Following the 12 week induction, participants will receive a free, three month pass to all community services activities, as well as on going 1:1 support to help keep them motivated. Active Living will initially be piloted in Epping and Waltham Abbey. At the end of the 12 months pilot, participants activity levels and health will be analysed to determine if the project has been successful and if so, it is planned to roll out the project across the district.

**Senior Safety Day:** Our team launched the first Senior Safety Day for the district, which took place at the Loughton Club, in Station Road, Loughton, on Wednesday 22nd March. Senior Safety Days have been designed to help our senior residents to keep safe in and around their homes. This is through a series of useful presentations from a range of partners, including Essex Fire and Rescue Service, Essex Police, Crime Stoppers and Neighbourhood Watch, who advise participants about fire and falls risk, fraud and scams. A number of Council departments and other agencies also provide information and advice at the event, including our Housing Services Care & Repair and Care line, Crime prevention, Essex Road Safety, Essex Ambulance Service, Age UK Community Agents and the NHS Community Nursing Team.

The event at Loughton Club was fully booked with 100 attendees, who gave really positive feedback about the Senior Safety Day, such as 'Very informative and interesting', 'Excellent and well presented', 'Thoroughly enjoyable, most useful, very good to meet organisations people could talk to, thank you very much'.

Another two 'Senior Safety Days' are being planned for later this year.

**Grant Aid for Community Groups:** Over the last financial year, £83,450 worth of grant aid has been awarded to community groups across the Epping Forest district to benefit local residents in a very wide range of ways. This has included use of the Council grants to purchase a wide variety of items, such as specialised camera equipment, security alarms, defibrillators, CCTV, camping equipment and much more. Local group 'Epping in Bloom' was one of the successful applicants earlier this year and responded by stating "Thank you very much we are so very pleased to receive this great news. This money will really help make a massive difference to the community garden and the new feature beds which will become brilliant floral and edible vegetable additions once they installed"

**Grant Aid Celebration Event:** The first ever Grant Aid Celebration Event took place on Friday 3rd March 2017 at the Civic Offices in Epping to say thank you to community and voluntary groups based in the district for their hard work in improving the health and wellbeing of our local residents. Representatives from 18 local community and voluntary groups in the Epping Forest district, who had received Grant Aid funding over the past year,

attended the celebration event. Presentations were delivered in the Council Chamber by the Chigwell Disabled Group, Ongar & Villages Voluntary Care and Lambourne End Centre showed how the money they received in grant aid helped their groups to operate and buy specialised equipment. If any Councillors are aware of any such groups who would benefit from Grant Aid funding please contact the Community & Grants Assistants Nicola Wilkinson or Louis Walton at [grantaids@eppingforestdc.gov.uk](mailto:grantaids@eppingforestdc.gov.uk) or 01992 564 484.

### **Epping Forest Youth Council**

Having only been elected in November 2016, our new Youth Councillors have been playing a very active role locally and have also had visits and presentations from Lorna Rolfe, High Sheriff of Essex, NHS NELFT (Mental Health Organisation) and the Essex Records Office.

On March 17<sup>th</sup>, four of the Youth Councillors provided their annual presentation to Members via the Communities Select Committee, and gave an outline of what the Youth Council had achieved over the last year, which had a particular focus on MiLife, our fantastic Emotional and Mental Health project for young people. They also told Members what other issues are concerning young people, as they will be considering these for work over the next year.

The Committee was so impressed with the presentation that it was suggested that EFYC be invited to have a co-opted representative at the Communities Select Committee.