

# ***Report to the Council***

**Committee:** Cabinet

**Date:** 26 July 2016

**Subject:** Leisure & Community Services

**Portfolio Holder:** Councillor H Kane

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## **Recommending:**

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

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## **Community Services**

**Museum Service:** Our District Museum is going from strength to strength following its re-opening earlier in the year. Apart from welcoming many new visitors and especially those with limited mobility who can now access all areas of the building, we are having great success in attracting online visitors, with a total of 354,357 interactions with the Museum's social media platforms in 2015/16. This compares to 107,256 in the previous financial year.

In its' first month of opening, the newly refurbished museum building attracted 3000 visitors, with around 2300 adults and 700 children and a steady flow of people continue to visit. It is anticipated that with the launch of the summer holiday programme in July, the numbers of children visiting the museum and participating in the range of activities available will significantly increase.

Anyone who attended the re-opening of Epping Forest District Museum will have seen two decorative trees laden with five hundred beautifully decorated egg shells, and these were all made by residents from across the Epping Forest District. The aim of the 'eggs' project was to promote the message that the new museum is about cultural engagement for everyone across the district and the eggs continue to be displayed in the museum's new space for learning and activities. Five different parishes took part in the 'eggs' project, with residents aged from five to seventy-five, who blew, primed and marbled the eggs in workshops led by the MHC team. The project reached new audiences, with participants travelling from as far as the Limes Estate in Chigwell, to see their eggs on display. For many this was their first time visiting the district museum.

**Museum Garden Regeneration:** To compliment the facilities in the Museum building, the museum garden has been renovated and this provided a perfect opportunity to engage with new volunteers. I was delighted that a dozen young people from Waltham Abbey Youth Group helped to plant up the garden, to be design ready for the grand opening. Then after the opening, a team of volunteers from Voluntary Action Epping Forest spent time in the garden, sowing seeds, weeding and painting the garden furniture. All participants were given a tour of the new museum and for many this was their first visit. I can highly recommend a visit to the museum garden, to see the excellent work that these groups have done and the wonderful new mosaic that features in the centre of the garden.

**Dance Residency and Performance:** A few weeks ago, I was delighted to see the Museum in a completely new light, when the collections sprang to life and over 250 visitors were led

through the galleries on an enchanting dance exploration. Choreographer in Residence, Elysia Tebb developed a dance interpretation, in collaboration with DNA Studios, inspired by the current *On the Move* exhibition and collections.

Working with performing arts students from Waltham Abbey-based DNA Studios, Elysia choreographed a dance piece with a transport related theme that was reflected in the movement and music used. The Penny Farthing on display, acted as a central focus for the dancers to move around in the temporary exhibitions gallery creating interesting and innovative patterns. The ensemble company performed this 15 minute piece before dispersing around the museum to some of the other galleries and Museum garden, where they performed their own individual pieces.

The performing arts students shared the dances they had improvised and choreographed during their residency of the museum which were inspired by some of the many collection objects and stories on display throughout the building, offering a new and slightly different take on the interpretation of the displays. Characters included Fairies from a Midsummer Night's dream; Tudors; local artist Hayden Mackey; a Policeman and the Salvation Army.

**Museum on the Move:** During May, the museum took part in an international competition called 'Museum Dance Off'. The Museum Heritage and Culture team and volunteers created a film called 'On the Move' which documents the installation of the brand new facility and celebrates its reopening. Thirty-six Museums entered across the globe and EFD Museum got through to the second round. This was a valuable marketing tool for the Museum, helping to raise its profile within the community and with other Museums overseas, whilst celebrating our reopening.

**Reminiscence Network East Conference Presentation:** Two of our staff were invited to give a presentation called *In the Mix* at the Reminiscence Network East Conference, at Norwich Castle Museum on 18 May. They shared information on how we work creatively with older people through care homes, specifically speaking about the *Transitions* projects – the 'Recipe Book' and 'Journeys in the Moment'. These projects involved artists working directly with care staff and activity organisers in 8 residential homes to develop creative activities, and in the process help them to recognize, develop and use their own creative skills. The initiatives developed new activities that had a recognisable impact on residents' well-being. During the projects, the good partnerships developed between care staff and artists meant that staff were wholly engaged, which resulted in improved wellbeing in residents being documented.

**After School Dance Clubs and The Big Dance Pledge 2016:** Earlier this term our after school dance clubs were working towards The Big Dance Pledge, which enables dancers to take part in a connected performance day with thousands of dancers in countries around the world. Dance Artist Akram Khan created the choreography and using the themes of 'overcoming adversity' and 'achievement'. Over 100 dancers from our dance clubs performed together at Chipping Ongar Primary School, alongside thousands of others interpreting the Pledge around the world.

**Astroturf Pitch at Town Mead:** I am pleased to advise members that the excellent 3<sup>rd</sup> Generation artificial football pitch that we co-provide with Waltham Abbey Town Council at Town Mead is proving to be a real success with local people and clubs from further afield. We have an excellent programme of bookings and from August this summer, Tottenham Hotspur will be using the pitch for 42 weeks (until May 2017) as part of their joint football education project with Epping Forest College. This will bring in an extra £19,000 of income and they will be using the pitch on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday for 4 hours each day and a Friday afternoon for 2 ½ hours.

**Crucial Crew:** Once again, I was delighted to attend the Crucial Crew event, which this year, was held at Debden House in Loughton. Over 1800 Year 6 pupils from Epping Forest and Brentwood took part in the event, which is an interactive safety initiative to educate our young people about staying safe and avoiding dangerous situations. The 10 and 11 year olds were given the chance to role play different scenarios, allowing them to experience risk without being put in any real danger. During the 2 weeks, they took part in various scenarios that included road safety, fire safety and personal safety, and got advice on cyberbullying, the health impacts and consequences of excessive alcohol and smoking, and the benefits of healthy living. The Crucial Crew experience really leaves all participants with the skills and knowledge to help keep them safe.

**£37,000 funding for the Epping Forest Inclusion Project:** Community Health and Wellbeing have been successful in a funding application to 4Children, to continue with the delivery of the very popular and successful Inclusion Project in Epping Forest. This funding is part of the provision of Essex Short Breaks, Clubs and Activities, which 4Children have been contracted to co-ordinate across Essex and the £37,000 has been awarded for us to continue to deliver the project, from 1st October 2016 to 30th September 2017.

The Inclusion Project provides sports and leisure opportunities for children and young people with disabilities and Special Educational Needs. During school term the project provides a range of after school sessions from Trampolining to Horse Riding and during school holidays, various sessions and activities are held, that where possible, include siblings and parents which parents are very grateful for. Activities available this summer include camping, relaxed performances, forest fun days and multi -sports camps. The Inclusion Project not only benefits the children, but the whole family and the inclusion of siblings at the holiday activities is crucial for parents.

**£9,500 - Active Essex Funding:** £9,500 has been successfully secured from Active Essex, to deliver a range of health and wellbeing initiatives to get Epping Forest residents more active. These include running programmes such as 'Couch to 5K' and parkrun, disability football festivals, walking football, mountain biking and festivals of healthy living across the district.

**Summer Activities Programme:** I encourage all members to look out for our Annual summer holiday activities brochure, which promotes the exciting programme of activities that are available for children, young people and families throughout the District. The types of activities and events available for toddlers to teens, include multi-sport days, play in the park, play in the forest, how to draw, children's shows, family workshops, mountain biking and much more. If any Members wish to see the activities in action, please contact James Warwick on Extn. 4350 to arrange a visit.

**EF Youth Council Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health Project 2016:** Over the last few months, our youth councillors have been working on an Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health Project for the young people of the Epping Forest district. The decision to develop this project was based on the concerns of young people, which have been raised through consultation and via survey results from 500 students at our Secondary schools. Each of the Secondary schools in the district have also been consulted and have confirmed that there is an evidenced need for mental health support for their students.

The project will be led by Community, Health and Wellbeing supported by the youth councillors, in partnership with NELFT NHS Trust, The Red Balloon Family and Essex County Council.

The aim of project is to work with pupils to raise awareness, build resilience, dispel the negative connotations surrounding mental health problem, give young people the tools to support themselves and their peers and to encourage them to seek help.

Workshops will take place in each secondary school and there will be an opportunity for participants to request additional support and advice, website guidance, group or 121 sessions. Training packs will also be provided for teachers and youth workers to continue the discussions.

### **Hillhouse Master Plan**

I am pleased to report that, following consultation with key stakeholders and local people (through a Community Planning Weekend), a Master Plan for the Hillhouse area of Waltham Abbey has now been formulated and published. The proposed development site at Hillhouse is in a relatively central, well-populated, part of Waltham Abbey, comprising land owned by the District Council and Essex County Council.

The Master Plan has been formulated by consultants, JTP, on behalf of the three key partners – the Council, Essex County Council and NHS England. A copy of the Master Plan is available on the Council's website, but the main components of the Master Plan include:

- A new swimming pool and leisure centre, incorporating a new community hall - to replace the existing swimming pool at Roundhills, Waltham Abbey, which is reaching the end of its operational life, and the Hillhouse Community Centre, which has recently had to close due to its poor condition;
- An Independent Living (sometimes referred to as Extra Care) Scheme - providing 1 and 2 bedroom self-contained affordable rented and open market flats for people over 55 years of age with identified care and support needs;
- A new health centre providing new, modern accommodation, to replace the existing Maynard Court Doctors Surgery, which will soon be no longer fit for purpose - to enable a wider range of health services to be provided for the benefit of the local community and to provide an opportunity for the practice to increase GP and nurse training on site;
- The retention of around half of the existing playing fields as informal recreation space; and
- The provision of an appropriate level of financial contribution towards alternative sports/recreation provision to be provided elsewhere in Waltham Abbey, to compensate for the loss of informal recreation space at Hillhouse.

The next stage is for the three key partners to submit an Outline Planning Application for the development of the area, in general accordance with the Master Plan, in order to seek approval to the general principle of development and to the general location and size of the three key components. It is planned to submit the planning application in the Autumn, which will be determined by the District Development Management Committee.

The costs of formulating the Master Plan and submitting the Outline Planning Application are being shared between the three key partners.

If Outline Planning Permission is received, the three key partners will then be responsible for obtaining Detailed Planning Permission and to procure, fund and deliver their own facility on the site.

### **Leisure Management**

Progress continues to be made on the procurement of a new Leisure Management Contractor, to manage the Council's facilities. A key objective of the procurement exercise is not only to increase participation whilst reducing revenue costs to the Council, but also to seek additional investment, not only in the existing Leisure facilities, but to provide a new state of the art Leisure Centre in Waltham Abbey, to replace the ageing swimming pool. Four good quality submissions have been received at the first stage of the competitive dialogue process. These are currently being evaluated by the Officer Working Group. I have a meeting of my Portfolio Advisory Group on the 25 July 2016, where a presentation will be made to Members on the initial findings. Another issue that will be considered at the Advisory Group, is the desirability of extending the current contract with SLM further to the 1 April 2017. The advantage of this would be that before the award of any new Contract in December, a decision would have been reached around the outline planning consent for the Hillhouse Redevelopment., of which the new Leisure Centre is an integral component. I will be able to update Members at Council as appropriate.