

Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet

Date: 29 September 2015

Subject: Leisure & Community Services

Portfolio Holder: Councillor H Kane

Recommending:

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

I am pleased to provide my report for September Council, which contains details of the fantastic range of summer activities that the Council's Community Services teams delivered during the summer holidays for children and young people of all ages and abilities and, information regarding a range of other items that will be of interest to Members.

Community Services

Summer Programme: Another busy and successful summer activities programme was provided across the district, with a total of just under 2000 people attending. There were a very wide range of choices of activities available, which included:

- Activity Camps (previously known as Playschemes) which ran from 8.45pm – 3.30pm each day for children 5 to 11 years, during 4 weeks of the summer holiday period;
- 'Play in the Park' – developed in partnership with Town and Parish Councils, these free 2 hour sessions focusing on playing games and having fun outdoors for 0 – 19 years, attracted up to 80 people at each session;
- Disability Inclusion Project – a variety of sports and leisure activities for children and young people with special educational needs. Activities included camping, trampolining, yoga, horse riding, family forest days and multi sports days;
- A host of other activities such as Soccer Tots, Mountain Biking, Dance workshops, Creative workshops (such as Little Red Riding Hood & Friends), My Monster and Me and Flyaway Katie, How to...draw and How to Colour in workshops, Animation in a day, Play in the Forest, Outdoor Adventure Activities, Make a Mini Museum workshops, Museum family days and sports sessions.

This year's summer family arts programme was successful in attracting 650 people, who attended events ranging from the theatre and puppet shows to dance and painting workshops. This year's highlights were: *How To Paint*, a series of artist led sessions in using oils, inks, watercolours and acrylic paints for children aged 7 plus, teaching colour theory and medium techniques; *My Pet Monster and Me*, Blunderbuss Theatre Company's delightful interpretation of this popular children's book; *Hip Hop Grooves*, a dance workshop

for children aged 4-9 years old in street dance led by a professional dancer from the popular Hip Hop Pop dance company.

We received excellent feedback on all of the activities provided and only a few sessions were disrupted by the poor weather conditions.

Reality Roadshow: The Community, Health & Wellbeing Team delivered Reality Roadshow health and safety events in Davenant and King Harold secondary schools at the end of the school summer term. Reality Roadshow is similar to Crucial Crew which is the Council's Primary school health & safety initiative, but it is much 'harder hitting', with very strong messages about bullying and substance abuse. Every Year 9 pupil in the district gets the opportunity to take part in the programme which includes a full day of inter-active scenarios focussing on issues including; Legal Highs, Alcohol Misuse, Internet Safety, Sexual Health, Healthy Relationships and the Consequences of Crime. The scenarios are delivered by a range of agencies including public sector and charities and will be delivered throughout secondary schools in the district during the academic year September '15 to July '16.

Youth Engagement: The Epping Forest Youth Council is in the process of organising a Youth Engagement Day 9th October. The event will be held in the Council Chamber at the Civic Offices and 80 teenagers from local schools will spend the day learning about local democracy and gaining skills in public speaking and debating.

Museum Redevelopment: In my previous report, I advised Council that work on the redevelopment of our museum in Sun Street, Waltham Abbey had commenced. I am pleased to say that the building work is progressing well and the internal walls that create the new spaces on the first floor of 41 Sun Street are now in place and it is possible to see the excellent facility that will be available to the public. Other work to build the lift and main staircase is underway and the final planning for exhibition design and display are taking place, with staff busy confirming objects that will be going on display in the new museum space.

A major removal exercise has also been undertaken by the Museum team, to transfer the reserve collection from Langston Road Depot, to temporary facilities in Oakwood Hill, Loughton. A team of volunteers have been involved in helping to pack the collection at Langston Road, prioritise items that will go on display in the new museum facilities and organise storage of items ready for the move down to the Museum site. The Museum is the first service to vacate Langston Road Depot, which is due for redevelopment as a shopping park.

I am very excited about the new opportunities that the museum redevelopment will bring to the district, as the new spaces available offer the opportunity for special exhibitions, on-site education and a range of community based activities in the activity room. It is also anticipated that the new facility will be a catalyst for the regeneration of Waltham Abbey Town Centre and will bring many more people to the Epping Forest District.

Museum Resilience Feasibility Study: Members will be aware, that the Council was successful in securing £55,000 funding from Arts Council England Resilience Fund, for a two part feasibility study looking into the establishment of a fundraising arm for the Museum, Heritage and Culture (MHC) Service, and, options for commercial opportunities available through the service and various skills of the staff.

Consultants were appointed in July and have held a series of meetings with the MHC team to draw up a skills audit, understand the services available and the Council's key objectives for its community. This along with a wide range of other research will help them draw up recommendations for developing new external funding streams to support the core budgets of the service and identify the potential commercial opportunities available through the range of services and facilities that will be provided from the new museum.

MHC Education and Outreach: The ongoing programme of education and outreach work delivered by staff has included a series of successful family drop in art and craft activities held at Waltham Abbey Library and at Lowewood Museum each week over the summer. These activities were supplemented this year with the Museum Explorer Passport, which was developed by the Audience Development Officer who is funded through the Heritage Lottery Fund Award. The Explorer Passport has encouraged family visits to museums across Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire and Essex and has brought new families to Lowewood Museum, as well as encouraging our local 'regulars' to visit other museums, and has been very well received. Young People were also offered the opportunity to take part in 'Arts Award', a national scheme run by Arts Council England. Several families signed up to take part in this new initiative and received a log book, which on completion, enables them to achieve the 'Discover Level' of Arts Award.

Lowewood Museum: We were delighted to welcome the Lord Lieutenant of Hertfordshire to Lowewood Museum on 30th July for her first visit and she was very impressed with how successfully the museum showcased local history and engaged with its audiences.

The opening of the James Ward Gallery on the 15th August also attracted a very good audience, with many coming particularly to meet the special animal guests who came from Paradise Wildlife Park to celebrate the work of this renowned animal artist.

The Youth Panel, which has been established for the MHC service by the Volunteer Coordinator who is also funded through our Heritage Lottery Award, have developed their first exhibition, 'School's Out'. They are taking responsibility for all aspects of the exhibition, from writing text panels, to selecting objects and creating interactives.

Finally, the Family Fun Day held at Lowewood Museum in August attracted over 200 people to the facility, with many new people.

Social Media: In case Members missed our Social Media article in the Council Bulletin, the Museum Service has been extremely successful in utilising social media. Interactions on social media accounts (including the museum's blog, Twitter and Facebook pages) between January and August 2015 has been 146,107, which I am sure Council will agree is excellent. Between the 4th quarter of 2014 and 1st quarter of 2015 there was an 88% increase in interactions and based on current figures, these statistics look to be maintained, with the likelihood that there will be an increase between the 1st and 2nd quarters of 2015.

I am also delighted to advise, that through the Museum Service outreach activities over the summer period, we engaged with over 750 people at a range of events across the district.

Ten Pieces BBC Project: Through a new BBC initiative, the Council has been working with Epping Primary School to open up the world of classical music to pupils. Ten Pieces is an exciting new initiative for primary and secondary schools focusing on classical music and

creativity. Led by BBC Learning, the project aims to unlock the world of classical music to children – and inspire them to develop their own creative responses to the pieces through music, dance or digital art. The repertoire includes a range of music from baroque to contemporary.

We secured the services of Phoebe Osborne, multi-instrumentalist, singer and composer, to work with pupils at Epping Primary School to create an original composition in response to Anna Meredith's *Connect It*. Over the course of two days Phoebe worked with over 60 children to encourage them to develop their own creative responses to the work of contemporary composer Meredith. During the sessions they were introduced to vocal and body percussion as well as the importance of pulse and working together. Further to developing the children's understanding of contemporary classical music the sessions also developed their self-esteem with individuals taking the lead in conducting their fellow classmates. Children were also encouraged to explore different art forms in response to the music using colours, shapes and movements to express how the piece made them feel. Participants shared the result of their sessions with Phoebe in a performance to parents and staff, the footage of which will be available to view on the BBC website in the coming weeks.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/articles/4KCVB2XVgPQ0JwnqLGJl8y0/about-bbc-ten-pieces>

Leisure Management Procurement

The Portfolio Holder Advisory Group for the new Leisure Management Contract met on the 17 September 2015, and considered the Draft Business Case and Procurement Strategy. The presentation by the Council's Consultants considered the current costs of the service and potential options to minimise the future revenue costs of the facilities. Based on the comprehensive building condition surveys undertaken, the Business Case looked at options to refurbish and in some instances, i.e. Waltham Abbey Swimming Pool, re-provide new facilities on alternative sites. A report will be considered by Cabinet in October, seeking agreement to the procurement strategy and the terms of a contract extension for up to a year to the existing management partner, SLM Ltd.