

LEISURE, CULTURE AND LIBRARIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

28 MAY 2014

PRESENT: Councillors Alan Mellins (Chairman), Claire Stretton (Vice-Chairman), Clive Bullock and Marion Mills.

Officers Robert Cowan, Michael Llewelyn, Ciara Maccooey, Kevin Mist, Mark Taylor and Julia White.

PART I

01/14 **ELECTION OF A CHAIRMAN**

The Panel elected Councillor Alan Mellins as the Chairman of the Panel for the 2014/2015 municipal year, and Councillor Claire Stretton as the Vice-Chairman of the Panel for the 2014/2015 municipal year.

02/14 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Peter Lawless and John Penfold.

03/14 **DECLARATION OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

04/14 **MINUTES**

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 8 April 2014 be confirmed.

05/14 **SCULPTURE PARK**

The Panel received an update regarding the Sculpture Park developments. It was noted that the report had gone to Cabinet who had asked the project be examined in more detail and a full consultation be undertaken. It was noted that

There were no comments from the Panel regarding this item.

In accordance with paragraph C2.2 of the Councils Constitution the Chairman of the Panel agreed to vary the order of business of the agenda.

06/14 **GUILDHALL UPDATE**

The Panel received a presentation regarding the Guildhall from Ciara Maccooey, Customer Service Manager, Mark Taylor, Head of Libraries, Arts and Heritage Services and Julia White, Visitor Manager.

The presentation had three parts: Library, Arts and Heritage (LAH), repairs and maintenance, and marketing and income opportunities.

The Panel first considered a summary of Libraries Arts and Heritage Activities. It was noted that the historic furniture had been renovated. It was noted that a local firm had French polished and re-seated the chairs in the Guildhall Chamber. The panel considered photographs of the tables and chairs in the Guildhall before and after they were restored.

Blinds had been installed for the windows on the staircase to provide UV control for the protection of the sensitive paintings on the stairs. A programme was in place for future cleaning and restoration of the civic collection portraits. The Panel noted that New external lighting to display Stained Glass at night was being designed within listed building constraints. A showing was to take place on 29 May 2014 to show the lead Member for Windsor.

HLF funding had enabled several development opportunities including conservation maintenance, extension of the audio tour to include the first floor, first floor digital 360 filming and a film tracking history of the building (1689-2014). There were also plans for a 'Court in Action' school sessions in which a Supreme Court Justice was to take part which would hopefully increase income. However, it was noted that there was a difficulty getting schools involved but schemes which were in place funded by lottery money were starting to see good results. The Victorian tapestry had also been restored.

The Panel noted the repair work and maintenance which had taken place. Roof repairs had been undertaken to fix leaks in the Ascot room and Chamber caused by heavy rain and blocked gullies. The gullies had been cleared and decoration repairs complete in Ascot room, with further re-decoration planned for the Chamber. Also, the flag had been replaced and the flagpole repaired on 22nd April 2014. Officers were in the process of installing a roof restraint system. A contractor had been appointed and officers were awaiting dates for the contractor to fit the system. This was subject to a Condition Survey which was a report commissioned to outline maintenance works required to the building over the next two to three years. It was possible that this might highlight some urgent works.

Members noted that there was a lot of maintenance work required for the masonry and stone work. This needed to be planned carefully as it would impact the building and users would not want a large amount of scaffolding on the building, for example, at their wedding. Also, work might obstruct the road which was to be avoided.

The Panel considered the marketing and income opportunities of the Guildhall. It was noted that a Spend-to-Save Proposal had been agreed by Members however no marketing had been carried out.

It was noted that there was an aim to inject life into the business of marketing the historic Guildhall building as a significant player in the wedding & event market in the region. Business development processes, systems and marketing were currently uncoordinated and ineffective and the majority of revenue

achieved was from walk-ins and personal referrals.

The 'invest-to-save' initiative aimed to address the shortfall on the Guildhall income budget. The income budget in 13/14 was £175k and the actual achieved was £139k which was higher than originally expected. The budget in 14/15 was £174k and would be equally challenging.

A limited investment in materials, marketing and resources, funded from existing budgets, was projected to generate a significant increase in bookings and fee income. This new income was expected to recover and exceed the investment cost and so remove the current budget pressure. A similar proposal was successfully presented to Cllrs Quick and Bateson by the Officer Working Group in July 2013.

Members noted restrictions on Guildhall usage. There was limited near-by parking and sealed-off ventilation in the kitchen prevented the use of the ovens. There was also a ban on dancing on certain floors.

The Panel considered Officers' proposals for the future of the Guildhall's marketing and income opportunities. It was noted that there needed to be development and implementation of proper commercial policies and procedures for hiring the Guildhall rooms.

Furthermore, an experienced freelance hospitality sales and marketing professional had been commissioned to move things forward on a project fee basis. This 'kick-off' project would run for approximately six weeks and deliver a detailed business plan, new supplier contracts and implementation of streamlined booking processes to meet the needs of key Guildhall stakeholders such as the Registrar, the Coroner and Democratic Services. A project fee of £7,500 had been negotiated. Members noted that a full-time, experienced conference and event professional would need to be employed in a Meeting & Event Co-Ordinator role. This was noted as costing approximately £30,000 on an initial 12 month contract. Customers would benefit from a single point of contact able to respond to and deliver all their meeting and event requirements. Complementary services would also to be provided by the Visitor Information Centre which would further enhance the Guildhall's offer and income for the council.

Additionally, preferred supplier contracts and partnering with local hotels would need to be organised. This was expected to generate exposure to a large potential customer base through cross marketing as well as increased revenue through commissions ranging from 3% to 20%, dependent on supplier and service offered.

These changes would see a shift in responsibility for sales and marketing of the Guildhall services into the Visitor Management and Marketing Team.

Projections carried out by the finance partner showed an additional income of £122k in 2014/15 from an initial investment of £32,000 from the current budget and an ongoing additional cost of £41,000 a year. This represented a 167% return on investment, giving a 138% increase in bookings for weddings and meetings in 2014/15.

Members noted other implications. It was highlighted that an increase in Guildhall usage would have a potentially detrimental impact on the museum tours which accessed the meeting rooms whenever they were empty.

Uplift in bookings would leave little capacity for regular museum tours. Alternatively, if museum tours had to be accommodated at regular times this would have a negative commercial impact.

There was potential to combine museum visits with the guided town walks to enhance the visitor experience. This would be negotiated by the Visitor Manager and, if agreed, sold via the VIC in addition to over the counter at the museum. A suitable advertising 'A' board could be placed outside the Guildhall to attract visitors.

Finally, Members considered the 'next steps' for the Guildhall. The 'kick-off' project had started and discussions were underway with potential partner hotels. Marketing collateral had begun and new photography was complete. The job specification for the Meeting & Event Co-ordinator role had been drafted ready for agreement before going through HR processes.

07/14

THAMES PATH MISSING LINK

The Panel received a report from Kevin Mist, Head of Leisure Services, regarding the Thames Path Missing Link. The project which sought link sections of public pathway which followed the River Thames was noted as well known.

The report set out three options for linking the path, recommending a road side path as the most appropriate option.

Members of the Ramblers Society attended the meeting. Their spokesperson, Mr David Bailey, expressed concern regarding the recommendations in the report, preferring a riverside path rather than a roadside path. The road was described as very busy. The Ramblers Society also expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of consultation which had taken place between officers of RBWM and themselves.

The Panel considered a letter from the Civic Society dated 27 May 2014 which responded to the report in March. It noted that the Civic Society was in favour of a board walk but they were concerned that the report's recommendations were not the same proposals they had previously considered. They noted that financially, the figures were unrecognisable. Also, they objected in principle to the parking arrangements. They stated the proposal was an unacceptable compromise and the path would be impassable during floods. The Civic Society urged the Council not to settle as the proposal satisfied nobody.

Members noted the financial argument for a roadside path as it was substantially less expensive. It was also less complex to install. Mr Mist noted that the roadside option had the support of residents and thus completion could be reached through agreement rather than by order. If the riverside option went ahead it was likely RBWM would have to pay compensation to residents and could face protracted legal appeals.

Members also noted that the Authority had to be proportionate and only invade into residents' property if they had to. Ultimately the development had to be safe.

It was noted that the Local Access Form fast response team were in favour of option one of the report which was described as best in the long run, though option 2 was an expedient resolution to safety concerns.

The Panel questioned what consultation had taken place. It was noted that a meeting of residents of effected properties had taken place. Also, correspondence received had informed the development of the project. Rights of Way officers were aware of all interested groups. All correspondence showed a complete split of opinion.

Members expressed concern that correspondence was from February and March after which point the project had substantially changed. Mr Mist informed the Panel that open space hadn't been made and, if the recommendations were approved by Cabinet, further consultation would begin. The footpath would also need planning permission.

After considering the information and the opinions of those effected. Members came to the following conclusions:

Members expressed a desire to find the best solution rather than just the cheapest.

The Panel were aware of several areas where uncertainty seemed to exist and where complete factual information could not be confirmed by those present at the meeting. It was also highlighted that the approval of the report's recommendation conflicted with Cabinet's decision to give the Panel overall oversight to the Sculpture Park, Gateway and Thames Path National Trail projects. A Task & Finish Group is being set up for this purpose.

Members were dissatisfied with the lack of consultation which had been undertaken in preparation of the report and recommendations. It was noted that most of the correspondence considered was outdated as the proposals had since changed significantly.

The Panel expressed concern regarding the possibility of legal challenges to both the roadside and riverside path options.

The Panel therefore could not endorse the recommendation without further consultation first taking place with residents and local groups with interests in the development.

The Panel requested Cabinet refer the report back to O&S to allow further consultation and for greater information to be provided.

RESOLVED: That the Panel does not endorse the recommendation of the report to Cabinet.

08/14

INTERGRATED PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT

The Panel received the Integrated Performance Monitoring Report from Kevin Mist and Mark Taylor.

The Panel noted the following:

- Visitor management and marketing had underachieved on income targets for several years and the additional £100,000 income target from 2013-14 exacerbated the issue. A business review was planned including input from the new Economic Development Director, Chris Hilton. Members requested Julia White, Visitor Manager, and Mr Hilton attend a future meeting of the Panel to discuss these developments.
- Leisure centres were noted as popular, well used and they had been on target to meet their annual income budgets until the final quarter of the year where a number of factors including local flooding had led to an income shortfall. As a result leisure centres had been £86,000 over budget for the year. This was offset in part by an underspend of £59,000 in leisure services budgets. Proposals to make changes to the governance arrangements for leisure centres were being explored in order to deliver tax efficiency savings in the new financial year.
- Attendance at leisure centres was noted as good. Attendance at the roller discos was also good, the number of swimmers using leisure centre pools had increased and gym extensions had seen an increase in attendance at leisure centre gyms.
- When considering leisure income/expenditure balance, the Panel noted March 2013 had seen high performance whereas March 2014 had seen low performance. This was noted as the result of the date of Easter changing, thus effecting cash flow generated from swimming lessons.
- Ground Maintenance was noted as difficult to score. Mr Mist informed the Panel that this was done by inspecting parks against certain criteria.
- The Panel considered 'increasing the number of external bookings for Council operated buildings'. It was noted that the target for 2013/14 had been 6000 and that the target had been surpassed at 7488. Members concurred that the way the information in the IPMR was presented made the results look worse than they were. This was due to a downward arrow in the 'Direction of Travel' column as growth in the third quarter had been greater than that in the fourth quarter. It was suggested a similar column be introduced to show the direction of travel for the year and not just the quarter.
- The Panel noted that libraries continued to receive support from volunteers which allowed enhancements for residents and assisted in achieving 'more for less' across the service. Events that had helped to engage residents of all ages in reading and learning were popular, although income targets remained a challenge during less busy winter months. The library service delivered a £13,000 underspend for the year.
- The Boyn Grove Library was nearly complete with only bits of 'fit out' to be installed. The project had come in slightly under budget.
- The number of participants in the 'So Much Improvement with a Little Exercise' programme was growing which was helped by the opening of the Larchfield Centre.

- The number of visitors to the Windsor and Royal Borough Museum had surpassed the target for 2013/14 of 50,000, bringing in 62,100 people. This was a large increase on the 39,586 people in 2012/13.
- Library/museum income had been at £209,152 in 2012/13, and increased to £391,119 which surpassed the annual target of £389,400.

09/14

WORK PROGRAMME

Members noted the work programme as detailed in the agenda and included additional items.

RESOLVED: That the following items be added to the work programme:

- **Invite Julie White, Visitor Manager and Chris Hilton, Regeneration and Economic Development Director to next meeting to discuss how visitor management and marketing will be improved.**
- **Set up a task and finish group for over-seeing the Sculpture Park, Gateway Project and Public Art.**
- **A further update on the Guildhall.**

10/14

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 – EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED: That under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the remainder of the meeting whilst discussion takes place on item 11 on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of part I of Schedule 12A of the Act.