

AT A MEETING of the Culture and Communities Select Committee of
HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL held as a remote meeting on Monday, 21st
September, 2020:

Chairman:

* Councillor Anna McNair Scott

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| * Councillor Christopher Carter | * Councillor Pal Hayre |
| * Councillor John Bennison | * Councillor Dominic Hiscock |
| Councillor Fred Birkett | * Councillor Rob Mocatta |
| Councillor Jackie Branson | * Councillor Michael White |
| * Councillor Ann Briggs | * Councillor Alan Dowden |
| * Councillor Zilliah Brooks | |
| * Councillor Peter Chegwyn | |
| Councillor Daniel Clarke | |
| * Councillor Rod Cooper | |

*Present

101. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors Jackie Branson and Daniel Clarke.

102. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were mindful that where they believed they had a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in any matter considered at the meeting they must declare that interest at the time of the relevant debate and, having regard to the circumstances described in Part 3, Paragraph 1.5 of the County Council's Members' Code of Conduct, leave the meeting while the matter was discussed, save for exercising any right to speak in accordance with Paragraph 1.6 of the Code. Furthermore Members were mindful that where they believed they had a Personal interest in a matter being considered at the meeting they considered whether such interest should be declared, and having regard to Part 5, Paragraph 5 of the Code, considered whether it was appropriate to leave the meeting whilst the matter was discussed, save for exercising any right to speak in accordance with the Code.

103. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 28 July 2020 were agreed as a correct record.

104. DEPUTATIONS

There were no deputations.

105. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman noted that all the services within the remit of the Committee had resumed service provision following the lifting of the Covid-19 lockdown. Many services had successfully adapted their provision in accordance with new regulations.

Members heard that the Library Service was progressing its Transformation process and that the opening timing consultation had recently closed. Following the difficult decision in July, there had been some encouraging expressions of interest from local communities around transitioning to Independent libraries.

The Chairman announced that the Library Service's annual Reading Challenge, which had been adapted for 2020 to facilitate participation throughout the pandemic, had been extremely successful. The Library Service were busy analysing the numbers and working through Hampshire schools and local libraries throughout October to ensure Challengers receive their medals.

106. HAMPSHIRE CULTURAL TRUST UPDATE

The Committee received a presentation from Paul Sapwell, the Chief Executive of the Hampshire Cultural Trust with an update on recent operations throughout the Covid-19 pandemic and with general updates.

In response to Members' questions, it was noted that:

- Gift Aid contributions were being promoted at all venues with an active campaign in museums to upsell Gift Aid. As bookings were increasingly being made online during the pandemic, it was becoming easier to contribute Gift Aid using the online ticket system.
- The Trust's initial funding model was based upon grant awards from founding Local Authorities and the original agreement had been to reduce these grants year on year. The Trust had been very successful in generating earned income to balance the reduction in funding although the 2020 year had presented a very different set of circumstances with a period of closure for all venues followed by restrictions on usual operations.
- The Trust had no plans to make large redundancies at the end of the furlough period.
- That the pandemic had been a challenging time for all venues across Hampshire particularly arts centres with significantly reduced performance programmes. Members noted that, in these circumstances, the strength of the Trust model was that these facilities could be subsidised by growth from other areas.
- The increased visits to the Aldershot Military Museum had been a success story for the Trust following focus upon community outreach and engagement working with those from military backgrounds.
- The Trust were confident that the proposed reduction in opening hours for Winchester Discovery Centre would not impact the quality of the exhibitions. The Trust were also working with the Council's Library Service to provide access outside of opening hours.

RESOLVED:

That the Culture and Communities Select Committee notes the presentation.

107. COUNTRY PARKS UPDATE/IMPACT OF COVID

The Committee received a presentation setting out recent country parks updates and the impact of the pandemic on operations on site. Members noted the importance of country parks and outdoor space during the period of lockdown, enabling people to spend time outside in the fresh air which had a positive impact on mental health and wellbeing. A service recovery strategy had been implemented, continually reviewing Government guidance to allow the popular facilities to re-open as safely as possible across the county.

The Committee also received an update on the ongoing Country Parks Transformation programme, reviewing the projects that had already been finalised and upcoming improvements planned.

In response to Members' questions, it was noted that:

- Car parking charges were set at seasonal rates and that off peak charging had also been introduced encouraging visitors into the parks during quieter months.
- Some site assets had been sold, such as houses that were previously lived in by rangers, and that there was no requirement for people to live on site.
- The current country parks membership offer was under review seeking to make it more suitable for a larger proportion of visitors.
- There were plans for a cycle hub at Queen Elizabeth Country Park to incorporate bike servicing, hire, storage and also would include electric bike facilities.

RESOLVED:

That the Culture and Communities Select Committee notes the presentation.

108. UPDATE ON LIBRARY OPENING TIMES CONSULTATION

The Committee received a presentation with information on the Library Service opening hours consultation which had run from 3-17 August 2020.

Members heard that the consultation had contained a proposed set of opening hours for each library in Hampshire and had asked for comment on it. Over four thousand responses had been received with 72% of respondents considering that their needs would be met by the proposed opening hours. The Committee noted how specific consideration had been given to areas which received higher dissatisfaction rates and reviewed some proposals which had been considered and discounted such as evening opening. The new opening hours structure was anticipated to be in place by 1 January 2021.

It was noted that the next stage of the consultation cycle involved a thorough staff consultation process which would run throughout September. This would

incorporate a formal consultation with all staff and the opportunity to apply for Voluntary Redundancy by individuals if desired. Members were reassured to learn of the extensive support networks in place to assist staff throughout this process. As the Library Service Transformation programme continued to progress, the Committee were keen to continue to receive regular updates.

RESOLVED:

That the Culture and Communities Select Committee notes the presentation.

109. **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Committee received the report of the Director of Transformation and Governance which set out the Committee's upcoming work programme.

RESOLVED:

Members agreed to cancel the 30 November 2020 meeting and to request that Energise Me be invited to speak at a later meeting. Furthermore, that updates from some of the new services (such as the Coroner's service and Registration service) be added into the programme for future meetings.