

AT A MEETING of the Culture and Communities Select Committee of
HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL held at the castle, Winchester on Monday,
17th January, 2022

Chairman:

* Councillor Rob Mocatta

Vice-Chairman

* Councillor Jackie Branson

* Councillor Lulu Bowerman
* Councillor Ann Briggs
* Councillor Steven Broomfield
* Councillor Pamela Bryant
* Councillor Peter Chegwyn
* Councillor Rod Cooper
Councillor Alex Crawford

* Councillor Barry Dunning
* Councillor Dominic Hiscock
* Councillor Hugh Lumby
* Councillor Lesley Meenaghan
* Councillor Tanya Park

* Present

Also present with the agreement of the Chairman:

Councillor Edward Heron, Executive Member for Recreation, Heritage and Rural Affairs

20. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Alex Crawford.

21. 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.

No declarations were made at this point in the meeting.

22. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 29 November 2021 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

23. DEPUTATIONS

There were no deputations on this occasion.

24. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman was pleased to announce that in November, the County Council signed a five year contract with Ancestry to digitise 500 years of archive records relating to family history to include parish registers and probate records dating from 1536 to 1921. It was highlighted that Ancestry, as a global leader in family history, will make the records available online to those that want to research their family history. As part of the agreement, access to the Ancestry website will be made available free of charge to Hampshire libraries and at the Record office during January. Three Ancestry operatives will be based at Hampshire Record Office for around a year to digitise the archive records and the first tranche of probate records is likely to be made available online during the summer 2022. The agreement with Ancestry will pay royalties to the County Council for public access to the online records and is estimated to generate over £10k per year which will contribute to the SP23 savings for the Archive Service.

The Chairman sadly announced the death of Julie Chambers, Strategic Manager for Trading Standards who passed away peacefully on the morning of the 20 December following a short illness. Julie's contribution to the County Council, through her 33 years of service in Trading Standards, was considerable, and her legacy would be lasting. Julie would be remembered for her immense knowledge of Trading Standards, her unfaltering commitment to supporting her team to develop their careers in the service and her ability to always find time for people despite her busy leadership role. On behalf of the Culture and Communities Select Committee the Chairman extended his condolences to Julie's family.

The Chairman highlighted that at Christmas, for the first time, Staunton Farm, hosted an outdoor light trail called 'Enlightened' in partnership with The Colour Project. This was an evening event, in addition to the Farm's normal activities, which ran throughout December and into January. The Chairman was pleased to announce that Enlightened received extremely positive reviews from visitors and sold over 25,000 tickets, which has generated over £40,000 additional income for the Countryside Service. The event was managed very professionally and ensured no disruption to Staunton's usual activities during the day and was a great example of extending the use of County Council sites to expand the offer for customers. The Chairman hoped that Members of the Select Committee who were able to attend enjoyed their visit.

The Chairman also highlighted that following several technical issues beyond the County Council's control, the Hantsweb Shop was unavailable from Christmas Eve. It was heard that this affected advance booking of tickets online and other services such as the purchase of season tickets and memberships. It was noted that the County Council was currently assessing the impact across the Services, but the impact did seem to be minimal with most online sales taking place before Christmas. The Chairman informed Members that IT colleagues worked closely with Services over the festive season to develop an alternative to Hantsweb shop called Shopify which went live on Monday 10 January, and the Chairman extended his thanks to all the staff involved in trying to resolve this issue over the festive season.

25. **2022/23 REVENUE BUDGET REPORT FOR CULTURE, COMMUNITIES AND BUSINESS SERVICES**

The Committee considered a report of the Directors of Culture, Communities and Business Services and Corporate Operations (Item 6 in the Minute Book), outlining the 2022/23 revenue budget for Recreation, Heritage and Rural Affairs Services within the Culture, Communities and Business Services, prior to decision by the Executive Member for Recreation, Heritage and Rural Affairs on 17 January 2022 (Item 6 in the Minute Book).

A presentation was shown to Members which highlighted key areas of the report. Members heard that savings to be achieved in order to balance the budget in 2023 had already been agreed by Council in November 2021 so these proposals did not contain any new savings proposals. A one year settlement for local government had been announced by the government in December 2021; funding in future years would be subject to changes in the formula used for allocating the funding which will be subject to the outcome of a consultation to be carried out in Spring 2022.

Officers drew attention to the 2022/23 revenue budget by service, cost type and funding source, and the importance of income generation as a key factor in the operation of these services was highlighted. The different capital schemes within the service were also explained as set out in slide 12 of the presentation. Members also heard detail around the key departmental challenges and priorities which included income generation, impact of covid, climate change, inflation and recruitment and retention. It was noted that a Task and Finish Working Group established by the Committee was currently examining income generation for services within the department.

In response to Members' questions it was confirmed that:

- In relation to tree planting, a potential site for a tree nursery was being looked at, but establishing this would need careful consideration. A number of other initiatives were also being considered including community nurseries.
- In relation to ash dieback, trees were carefully examined to minimise felling where possible. It was noted that a report would be brought to a future Cabinet meeting around funding.

- There has been work undertaken in examining opportunities for managing Basingstoke canal, but there were issues regarding the financial cost effectiveness of these.
- Officers were working closely with the Spring Arts and Heritage centre to examine the potential of a service-level agreement to enable library services to operate from the centre.

The Chairman moved to debate, where it was heard that one member would not be voting for the budget because of the significant cuts and impact on services.

The recommendation was proposed, and a vote was held with the following outcome:

For: 10
Against: 3

RESOLVED:

That, in regard to the revenue budget for Recreation, Heritage and Rural Affairs services, the Culture and Communities Select Committee supports the recommendations being proposed to the Executive Member for Recreation, Heritage and Rural Affairs.

26. **REGISTRATION SERVICE UPDATE**

The Select Committee received a presentation providing an overview of the Registration Service in Hampshire (Item 7 in the Minute Book). The presentation was introduced and it was explained that a range of services were provided which include the registration of births and deaths, as well as civil partnership ceremonies and British citizenship ceremonies. It was also noted that Hampshire was recognised as a leader in registration training.

Details were also heard of the changes to the Registration service brought about by the Covid pandemic, and Covid easements enabled telephone death registrations, and outdoor ceremonies. Slide 10 of the presentation detailed the number of deaths registered within 5 days in Hampshire for two separate weeks in early October 2021 and late November 2021. Although the number registered within 5 days was low in early October, this was indicative of the national picture of that time, and in line with other Local Authorities due to staff absences related to Covid. This figure had risen considerably by late November.

It was explained that whilst there were risks for the Registration Service going forward, with the law commission review of marriage reforms and independent celebrants, there were also opportunities which included developing the approved venues portfolio and to explore opportunities for Hampshire to become a training provider.

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

- The Registration Service was exploring the provision of non-statutory services such as funeral services, which could be provided in the future.

- Since the lifting of Covid restrictions, Citizenship ceremonies had resumed in the Great Hall, and Members were encouraged to attend if they wished.
- Officers highlighted the scope to expand the number of licensed venues in Hampshire further.
- In relation to a Member query about registration facilities in Havant, it was noted that The Plaza is licensed for civil partnerships and wedding ceremonies, and Havant library is able to provide birth and death registration.

The Committee thanked Officers for the informative presentation and noted the update.

27. **AN INTRODUCTION TO HAMPSHIRE ARCHIVES AND RECORDS**

The Committee received a presentation providing an introduction to Hampshire Archives and Records (Item 8 in the Minute Book). The presentation was introduced and the recent visit in November to the Hampshire Record Office by the Select Committee was highlighted.

In relation to the archives service, Members heard that this was one of the largest archives services in the United Kingdom, and had achieved Archive Service Accreditation since 2018. Officers explained the move towards digital access of archives through the contract with Ancestry, and sources of income generation for the archives service were highlighted which included venue hire and ticketed events. Members heard details about the Council's Record Management Service, and it was explained that work was ongoing with IT to explore digital retention instead of paper, but there were challenges such as ensuring digital records could be accessed successfully in 100 years' time.

The presentation also highlighted the Hampshire Archives Draft Strategy, and close partnership working with other services such as the library and registration service was noted. Slide 10 of the presentation provided a breakdown of the expenditure of the Archives and Records service, and it was heard that the majority of expenditure was premises related and employee costs. Funding received by the service was also highlighted, and it was heard that £80,000 of funding had been received from the Archives Trust for the cinescanner. Details of the Income Generation Strategy were explained, and the opportunities to generate income were set out at slide 11 of the presentation which included receipt of royalties from Ancestry, providing professional consultancy and the potential to explore membership and partnership arrangements.

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

- Digitisation of records is expensive, and priority is given to those records which are the most popular.
- In relation to the future of the Hampshire Records building, this would be examined as part of the Hampshire Archives Strategy
- A voluntary contribution of £4,000 is asked of depositors annually.

- A challenge for digitisation is to ensure systems used are accessible in the future, and this will be explored and developed as part of the Hampshire archives strategy.

The Committee thanked Officers for the informative presentation and noted the update.

28. **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Select Committee considered a report of the Chief Executive setting out the proposed work programme of the Committee (Item 9 in the Minute Book). In addition to the programme for formal meetings of the Select Committee, a schedule of proposed visits to sites around the County was appended to the work programme for information.

It was agreed that the following updates would be requested and the work programme amended accordingly:

- An update on effect of pandemic on Recreation, Heritage and Rural Affairs Services – to include details around recruitment issues and vacancies – would be added to the agenda for the 15 September meeting.
- The update from Arts Council England scheduled for the 23 November meeting - to include details of how arts are doing as part of cultural strategy, arts council funding and coping through the pandemic.

RESOLVED:

That the Work Programme for the Select Committee was agreed with the additions detailed above.

Chairman,