

## **Steve Charmley – Portfolio Holder Culture & Leisure**

### **Culture Leisure & Learning**

#### **Overview**

The new Culture & Leisure Division (including Learning Employment & Training Services) came together in April 2009 and has had a very successful first year. For example it has seen attendances into Libraries increase to 1.6m in the last 12 months and over 2m people made use of our Leisure facilities around the county.

Within Learning Employment and Training Services, they have engaged with over 9,000 workless clients and successfully assisted 1,800 of those clients back into employment.

Significant infrastructure improvements have also taken place in the last 12 months including:

- The £1.9m improvements to the Mere at Ellesmere
- New Leisure facilities at Church Stretton (£4m) and Much Wenlock (£9m)

#### **Key Achievements**

- Efficiency savings across Culture & Leisure have included:
  - Theatre Severn has reduced its subsidy from its budgeted £810,000 in 2009/10 down to £551,000 at year end due to a significant increase in ticket sales.
  - Leisure Services undertook a major review of its management operation and as a result delivered £240,000 in efficiency savings.
  - The Be Active Membership Scheme was launched in April 2010 this is very much about encouraging people to become a member and in turn would receive benefits including discounted admission prices on a range of our leisure activities. The cost of becoming a member is £5 with concessionary rates available and already of the target of 20,000 cards to be sold we have sold over 13,000.
  
- Community Development across Culture & Leisure has also been a strong focus.
  - The new Shropshire Play Partnership has formally approved the development of 11 play areas across Shropshire in 2009/10. In addition to the £526,968 of Play Builder investment in year 1, an additional £338,500 was raised from a range of external funding sources  
The work has also been recognised as a model of best practice in terms of the way the projects have fully engaged local

communities and children & young people in the design and development of these play areas.

- Arts Grants and Sports Grants Reviews have also taken place of which I have taken the lead on this to ensure that the proposed existing models are robustly challenged and that we engage with all key stakeholders involved to ensure that the most effective delivery of this grant funding is administered and makes the greatest impact at a local level.
- A number of reviews have taken place of which I have been actively engaged including a two stage Task & Finish Review on our Rights of Way Service (Definite Map). This has subsequently been followed on by a broader Task and Finish Review on the service and how well it is delivering in terms of maintenance and value for money. This second stage Task & Finish Review is due to be completed in the autumn of this year.
- A new Cultural Strategy for Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin was launched in January 2010 following extensive consultation and engagement with key partners and stakeholders throughout 2009.
- The 2012 London Olympic and Paralympics Games - I have personally been keen to see that we maximise the opportunities that are available to Shropshire in terms of both infrastructure improvements for the county, for example investment into a new Museum at Much Wenlock and improvements to the Gaskell Fields, as well as the wider impact that the Games can have, particularly with children and young people, where I have been keen to see all of our schools involved in the Get Set Education Programme.
- A Physical Activity Review has taken place across Shropshire, focussing in on four key sectors of working – cricket, rugby, walking and swimming. The project is coming to a conclusion with a Cabinet Report due on 4 August outlining the key findings. The focus will be to pilot this new way of working in Oswestry.
- A new Leisure Facilities Strategy was completed in March 2010 which provides a blue print in terms of future investment into Leisure Facilities across the county going forward.

## **Key Issues**

- The Transformation Agenda for Culture & Leisure (including Learning Employment & Training Services) is a key focus of activity over the next 12 to 18 months and I am personally keen to see how the excellent cultural landscape that we have and contribute to within Shropshire is maintained where possible in these challenging economic times. I am personally keen to see new ways of working being explored that ultimately ensure that

customers still have access to the range of cultural opportunities on offer, but at a price that Shropshire Council can afford.

- The ongoing development in the centre of Shrewsbury for a new county Museum will continue during 2010/11 and will be complete in the summer of 2012. In the interim period it is important to ascertain the future use for Rowley's House and I am keen to see this finalised and a way forward established by the year end.
- A new swimming pool for Shrewsbury has been debated at length in the last few years and I will ensure options are scoped over the next 12 months, as well as costings, in order that we are clear on a potential way forward for a new swimming pool for Shrewsbury.
- The Task and Finish Review of Mobile Library working in Shropshire is continuing through 2010 with an anticipated final report to Cabinet in January 2011. I will ensure it is mindful of the emerging locality agenda and creates a service that balances the needs of our communities at a price that the authority can afford.