



<u>Committee and Date</u>
Council
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PORTFOLIO HOLDER ANNUAL REPORT FOR CULTURE & LEISURE

Portfolio Holder: Lezley Picton
e-mail: Lezley.picton@shropshire.gov.uk

1.0 Shropshire Museums

- 1.1 **Shropshire Museum's Strategy**, supported by Resilience funding from Arts Council England, has been produced and will be presented to Cabinet in September. The strategy introduces a new vision for the service with a focus on developing family audiences, health and wellbeing partnerships, team working and organisational resilience.
- 1.2 Between February and April 2018 Shrewsbury Museum & Art Gallery hosted the **Brick History** exhibition from the studio of LEGO artist Warren Elmore. Exhibits took visitors on a tour of the pivotal moments in history, from the big bang to the invention of the internet. The centre piece of the exhibition was a 1.5m square castle bustling with activity in periods of both peace and war. The interactive LEGO Playzone on the museum balcony proved extremely popular. Visitors also participated in a 20 second tower building challenge. During this successful exhibition Shrewsbury Museum & Art Gallery received 18,500 visitors, part of an overall annual total of over 70,000 visitors.
- 1.3 The learning team further strengthened their partnership with Sevendale Specialist School with a successful Kids in Museums Takeover Day event in November. The team worked with 20 pupils from Severndale and an additional group from two mainstream schools, Wilfred Owen Primary School and The Mary Webb Secondary School. This created a wonderful atmosphere of collaboration and a supportive, mutually beneficial environment. Pupils curated an exhibition, greeted visitors and directed them around the museum, worked behind the counter in the Visitor Information Centre and 'took over' the museums regular Friday toddler group 'Mini Mammoths'. This event has been highlighted by the charity Kids in Museums as an example of good practice and features as a case study on the Kids in Museums website. This year's event explores the theme of communication and will involve a wider range of pupils with more profound needs.
- 1.4 In April 2017, following research for the catalogue raisonné of Francis Towne, Shropshire Museums recovered a stolen watercolour by the artist of Ludlow Castle. The work was taken from the Shrewsbury Gallery in the

1950s and later sold to Plymouth Museum and Art Gallery. A full audit of the Fine Art Collection was later undertaken, improving the collection's records. Alongside this work, the Friends of Shrewsbury Museum funded additional picture racking for the Fine Art Store at Shrewsbury Museum and Art Gallery to increase its capacity.

- 1.5 The catalogue of Shropshire Museums' Arms and Armour Collection was published in April 2017. This publication was the culmination of many years of voluntary work by both leading subject specialists and volunteers and was funded by The Arms and Armour Heritage Trust. Following the refurbishment of the Archaeology Store at the Museum Resource Centre in December 2017, work has started on the repacking of the Archaeology Collection to maximise the store's capacity and improve access. Shropshire Museums has made two major collection purchases to complement its collections: A Tudor purse hoard found near Ludlow, which will be displayed at the Buttercross Museum, Ludlow, and a medieval silver seal matrix from Wrockwardine, which will be displayed at Shrewsbury Museum and Art Gallery. Both purchases were 100% grant-aided, thanks to support from The Friends of Ludlow Museum, The Friends of Shrewsbury Museum, Art V&A Purchase Fund, The Headley Trust and the Art Fund.
- 1.6 **Acton Scott Historic Working Farm** has continued to attract audiences with the good weather proving encouraging to visitors. A new programme of events is planned for this season including 'Action Scott' in July, a weekend of activities and games to keep fit and healthy and 'Jurassic Farm' in August, exploring what would it be like if we farmed dinosaurs? At Acton Scott a full audit and rationalisation of the hand tool collection was started in January 2018, to complement work already undertaken on the machine and vehicle collection in 2016. The remaining collection was then packed and has been relocated to the Museum Resource Centre for better long-term storage and further documentation. Further rationalisation is now planned for the large-scale collections held at the Museum Store in Atcham.
- 1.7 **Shropshire Archives and Shropshire Arts Service** have continued to facilitate and deliver a wide range of arts and heritage projects to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the First World War. Building on this success, **Wilfred Owen 100, Shropshire Remembers**, funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, will commemorate the contribution of one of, if not the, greatest World War One poet. Across Shropshire over 100 exhibitions, workshops, talks, walks, events and activities are planned across the county for the 100 days from 4 August – 4 November 2018 to mark the 100th anniversary of his death at the age of 25 in November 1918, just 7 days before the armistice.
- 1.8 Shropshire Archives supports archive services at Oswestry Town Council. In March **Oswestry Town Archives** achieved the national archive accreditation standard. As one of the smallest local authority archives

service to achieve this demanding and far reaching standard, which is awarded by the National Archives, this is a huge achievement.

- 1.9 Work on the redeveloped Shropshire Archives **website** has continued with improved functionality including online registration and ordering for customers, and viewing of high resolution images. In addition, customers can now directly purchase copies and downloads of images of documents thereby opening up and improving access to the collections.

2.0 Leisure Services

Shropshire Community Leisure Trust

- 2.1 The Trust, with Serco Leisure as their managing agent, have operated 5 facilities on behalf of Shropshire Council since August 2012. 2017/18 was the fifth full year of contract operations and attendances across the 5 sites has increased by 6.5% compared with their first full year of operations (visits = 1,009,765). This increase contributed greatly to an overall attendance across all Shropshire managed, owned and supported leisure facilities of 1,980,432 for the year.
- 2.2 Investment is required at Shrewsbury Sports Village as the 3G artificial turf pitch and sub-structure requires replacing. It is hoped this work will be completed by autumn 2018 to allow Football Association registered fixtures and competitions to remain on site. In conjunction with Mid-Shropshire Wheelers the Sports Village again hosted a round of the Cyclo-Cross National Trophy in November 2017.
- 2.3 Following consultation and additional site appraisal work, the Council revised the decision on their preferred location for swimming provision in Shrewsbury. Further consultation will take place in 2018 to establish the next steps for development of a facility in the town centre

Teme Leisure

- 2.4 Teme Leisure continue to operate 4 leisure sites in the south of the county and have been able to maintain a high level of service despite the need to reduce budgets and the loss of joint-use funding.
- 2.5 Significant investment has been made by Teme at South Shropshire Leisure Centre (Ludlow) which has enabled them to maintain attendance levels across their portfolio.
- 2.6 Discussions are ongoing with local action groups who are concerned about the future of the facilities in their areas, particularly in Bishop's Castle and Church Stretton. With the assistance of the Community Enablement Team the SpArC Sports & Arts in South-West Shropshire trust foundation has continued to raise funding to support SpArC. The Council also invested capital on site to replace essential plant and refurbish changing rooms.

Indoor Leisure Facilities Strategy

- 2.7 Shropshire Council adopted a revised indoor Leisure Facilities Strategy in June of 2017.
- 2.8 The strategy sets out a hierarchy of leisure facility provision and describes, based on an assessment of need, how the Council will meet the recreational and sporting needs of Shropshire residents by supporting:

Six Tier 1 Leisure Hubs - 'destination' facilities within Shropshire's larger market towns that provide a wide range of facilities and leisure opportunities

Four Tier 2 Community Leisure Centres – 'local' facilities within smaller towns and settlements potentially providing a more limited range of leisure opportunities.

- 2.9 The first workshop, hosted by Energize CSP (County Sports Partnership), took place in September, bringing together all relevant stakeholders across the county to identify how they can contribute to identify sustainable options for all facilities in Shropshire.

Joint-Use Facilities

- 2.10 Shropshire Council remain on course to transfer management responsibility of joint-use facilities directly to schools or third party operators. This involves detailed negotiations with schools and academies on whose sites leisure facilities are managed directly by Leisure Services. Some delays have been experienced as schools balance capacity timescales whilst progressing with academy transfers.
- 2.11 All current joint-use agreements are different and complex, creating difficulties in agreeing transfer terms and conditions. However, we are targeting the transfer of the following facilities by spring term 2018:
- Much Wenlock Leisure Centre
 - Idsall Sports Centre
 - Roman Road Sports Centre (Meole Brace School)
- 2.12 Transferring management responsibilities reduces costs over a period of time, although Shropshire Council maintain tapered revenue support in some cases to transferred facilities to ensure the continuation of community use.
- 2.13 Leisure officers continue to offer support whilst the new operators maintain those opportunities. Reductions in joint-use funding to schools where leisure facilities are located commenced in April 2015 and will have a significant impact on how joint-use centres operate in the future.

The Council, schools and existing operators face a difficult challenge in establishing sustainable operational and management options.

Playing Pitch Strategy

- 2.14 Work will commence on replacing the existing Council Playing Pitch Strategy in 2018. This was completed in 2010 and is no longer 'fit for purpose' due to the change in Sport England guidance.
- 2.15 It is hoped this work will dovetail with the implementation of a Shropshire Local Football Facilities Plan, an initiative led by the Football Foundation and Football Association that will identify priorities for the development of the game across the county.
- 2.16 An updated Playing Pitch Strategy will enable National Governing Bodies, clubs and organisations access external funding to improve and expand facilities where there is an identified need.

Sports Development

- 2.17 By working closely with operating partners, funding agencies and other Council departments, the Sports Development officer has been fully involved in planning and implementing projects and initiatives, most notably the relocation of cricket/bowling clubs due to development and the installation of skateboard/BMX parks across Shropshire.
- 2.18 The Development Team continue to administer and support the Shropshire Schools Sports and Athletics Association, enabling schools throughout Shropshire to play competitively in a number of sports.
- 2.19 They also work closely with the County Sports Partnership to manage and administer the Shropshire Schools Games held bi-annually at Shrewsbury Sports Village.

Event Organisation & Management

- 2.20 The Leisure Services team continue to organise and manage major events within Shropshire, specifically the Severn Bridges Road Race, International Awards Evening and Sport Relief. The maximum limit of 450 entrants for the road race (held on 17 September) was achieved several weeks before the closing date.
- 2.21 Although no longer directly responsible, officers have been instrumental in securing the future of the Shropshire Triathlon as UK Triathlon take over management and operation of this long standing event which will take place on 16th September.

3.0 Outdoor Partnerships

3.1 Key achievements:

- New Shropshire's Great Outdoors Strategy published for public consultation
- Income generation of £464,455, this has almost quadrupled since 2012/13 (£118k)
- £886k LEADER funding allocated- 25 jobs secured to date
- An estimated 868,000 visits to Country Parks and Heritage Sites Over 1,100 improvements to Right of Way, Parks and Sites
- 26 improvements to the Definitive Map, responded to 447 planning applications and 5,811 Public Rights of Way Searches
- 963 volunteers, mostly 55+ years old, supplying over £337,000 worth of volunteer support, which is equivalent to 21 full time staff. Volunteer hours continue to grow
- Healthy Outdoors for Schools paid-for service launched- one school involved this summer
- 50 Wild Team volunteers have been involved this year and 12 volunteers in total have gone on to find employment or other volunteer roles from the scheme
- 134,000 users of the Shropshire's Great Outdoors website, 76% of whom were under 45
- 2,960 likes on Facebook and 2,258 Followers on Twitter
- Over 1,500 people took part in Walking for Health

3.2 A full report can be found here: <https://shropshire.gov.uk/outdoor-partnerships/plans-policies-and-strategies/>

Major projects:

3.3 Applications have been submitted for external funding to develop:

- A new extension to Severn Valley Country Park visitor centre to encourage more visitors and make the park more financially viable
- Heritage interpretation on Severn Valley Country Park and reminiscence with residents and ex-miners in the area
- A new café, indoor play facilities and water sports centre at Swan Hill, Ellesmere to encourage year-round visitors to The Mere and to raise more income from the park

3.4 The Shropshire Way Main Route South has been launched. The northern route should be launched this autumn.

3.5 Work is under way to update the Open Spaces standards and policies in the revised Local Plan.

3.6 A new media campaign will be launched this summer to help address conflicts between different types of users and between users and residents.

3.7 Key issues:

- Funding not yet secured for Shropshire Wild Teams and Walking for Health from April 2019. These initiatives will cease if funding is not secured.
- BVPI survey on the Rights of Way network suggest 66% is accessible. This has fallen from 85% in 2009/10 and demonstrates the reduction in investment in the network.
- Capital funding for major structures and surfacing issues needs to be identified. Some routes may need to have temporary closures served until repairs are made.
- New legislation may lead to increased work loads.

4.0 Arts Service

4.1 The Arts Development service has distributed grants to 26 Arts and Festival organisations across the county in 17/18. This develops our capacity to deliver high quality professional work to the people of Shropshire, through our partner organisations. In particular the Arts and Culture are playing a key role in Shropshire's trailblazing work on Arts and Health and Wellbeing, linking into the infrastructure of social prescribing and non – clinical approaches to health care.

4.2 The 4 Arts Council funded National Portfolio Organisations based in Shropshire (Meadow Arts, DaSh , Arts Alive and Pentabus Theatre Company) continue to deliver outstanding work engaging rural audiences, promoting the inclusion and equalities agenda, and bringing national and international recognition to Shropshire through their work here.

4.3 The Arts sector is strong, despite limited resources, and an army of passionate artists and volunteers keep the work vibrant and at the heart of communities.

4.4 Support has been given to many artists and organisations around funding and many successful applications have brought significant funding into the county.

4.5 Working in partnership to deliver Arts and Cultural experiences to Shropshire's people and visitors has led to creative ways of working, innovative artistic product and a collective desire to get Shropshire on the map as a culturally rich place to live and work.

5.0 Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership team

5.1 Taking action to conserve and enhance natural beauty

The Stiperstones & Corndon Hill Country Landscape Partnership Scheme (HLF funded) has been completed after a hugely successful five years. The Scheme involved over 500 volunteers, delivered over 120 public events and provided skills training to 300 people, as well as enhancing many natural and built heritage sites. The River Clun Recovery Project (WREN funded) has moved into its fourth and final year. Habitat enhancement works have been carried out or are planned at 32 sites, including soft revetment, fencing and tree planting to protect eroding riverbanks. Habitat mapping has been carried out on contract for Natural England, and practical work carried out for the Environment Agency's 'Unmuddying the Waters' project. The popular 'Shropshire Hills Shuttles' bus service resumed for 2018 in May with a new operator, and a Supporters scheme has been launched to raise funds. We are one of four areas nationally participating in the 'Our Common Cause' project, and are working with stakeholders at three upland commons - the Long Mynd, Stiperstones and Clee Liberty. A public appeal is raising money for erosion repairs on Caer Caradoc and new projects are being developed on supporting volunteers to look after 'At Risk' Ancient Monuments, on a package of engagement activities for young people, and for improved advice to farmers regarding the water environment.

5.2 Influencing others, working collaboratively from policy to grassroots level

The five yearly review of the statutory AONB Management Plan is under way, with public consultations and Partnership workshops held. Liaison has been improved to achieve better outcomes for the AONB through planning policy and decision making. We continue to work closely with the Shropshire Hills AONB Trust on the Conservation Fund grant scheme and Friends of the Shropshire Hills AONB. We run a number of local partnerships including for tourism (the Destination Partnership), and for the Wrekin area and the Clun catchment. 2018 is the 60th anniversary of the AONB, and awareness raising activities are including a celebration event, Hay Meadow Festival and work with partners.

5.3 Developing a robust, effective and financially sustainable AONB organisation

Following the announcement of the national 'Glover Review' of AONBs and National Parks, our proposal for an independent Conservation Board for the AONB was shelved, and the Partnership is working instead on updating and refining its Terms of Reference within the valuable hosting arrangement with Shropshire Council. Two years of funding have also been secured from HLF's 'Resilient Heritage' programme for capacity building, including support for business planning and developing income generation.

6.0 Theatre Services

- 6.1 Theatre Services continues to grow its audiences, for the first time ever, 2017/18 saw attendances rise to over 250,000 for ticketed events across both venues. This milestone has been achieved by staging/screening a record number of events. The OMH saw the largest increase, with attendance up over 8% on the previous year, with over 69,000 tickets sold.
- 6.2 2018/19 started in the best possible way at Theatre Severn with the biggest production ever staged at Theatre Severn. The professional touring musical ***Evita*** played with us for a week in April to sold-out audiences. This summer will again see both venues host events in the ***International Comedy Festival***, this year even more events are planned over the July weekend. The autumn season is just around the corner and highlights include acts such as ***Jason Donovan, Sir Michael Parkinson, Joan Armatrading***, as well as a packed programme of amateur productions from the local community.
- 6.3 Advance sales for the annual pantomime are again at record levels with over 56% of the tickets already sold or reserved. This year will be a record run of 69 performances.
- 6.4 2019 marks the 10th year since Theatre Severn opened and a re-staging of the especially commissioned inaugural production ***Romany Wood*** is planned (subject to a successful ACE funding bid).
- 6.5 A significant programme of investment will be undertaken at the OMH in September 2018 to improve the facilities, including work to the main entrance and refurbishment of the cinema seating. Work to increase the fire exit provision is also planned at the Theatre to address issues with restrictions on the number of performers permitted on stage.

7.0 Library Services

- 7.1 The Library Service Strategy is building on the work that is already being done with town and parish councils and other organisations to operate and fund libraries. We are continuing to build and develop our partnerships with local community organisations to secure sustainable futures for individual libraries. Whilst traditional book borrowing is declining digital loans remain on the increase and facilities are diversifying to meet changing customer demand. A 3-tier hierarchy of library branches inform how financial support will be prioritised. We have also consulted on and reduced the number of mobile library stops from 354 to 281, maintaining a service to those who are most in need.
- 7.2 As usual libraries are building up to the annual children's reading promotion the Summer Reading Challenge. This year's theme is 'Mischievous Makers' and early evidence indicates a high level of engagement across the county with a large number of planned events in

many libraries. The Reading Challenge builds on the work that libraries do throughout the year to encourage a love of reading for pleasure.

- 7.3 As part of Shropshire Councils Health and Well-being strategy to work with organisations and the public to have the greatest improvement to people’s health and wellbeing. Libraries are working with Help2Change and IT to input Health TV and Healthy Vending pilots in our main libraries to deliver local and national digital health messages to promote health equality and support Public Health’s information delivery and national health and wellbeing. Utilising the public library service Universal Offers as set by the Society of Chief Librarians and Libraries Taskforce.
- 7.4 Shropshire Libraries are also working in partnership with the Department of Works and Pensions and Customer Services to provide an assisted digital support service for Shropshire residents claiming Universal Credit
- 7.5 We also transforming the way our greatest asset our library staff work. We are updating our self-service in our libraries allowing staff to engage more with our customers. Developing work shadowing experiences, greater input into developing services and ensuring appropriate training opportunities are available at all levels.

8.0 Visitor Economy

- 8.1 The services throughout the portfolio have been working closely with the visitor economy and tourism sector throughout the county to promote Shropshire and the visitor offer.
- 8.2 Discussions are currently underway with a range of stakeholders about the strategic vision for the county as a sovereign shire and how closer working relationships can be achieved between the local authorities of the marches region and the Local Enterprise Partnership. This will increase access to funding and raise our profile with national agencies for key regional marketing opportunities.

List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)

N/a

Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder)

Lezley Picton

Local Member

All Members