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10

PORTFOLIO HOLDER REPORT FOR CULTURE AND LEISURE

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Leisure Services

Leisure Services had several areas to focus on during the past year. A major area of work that officers have contributed to is the project looking at the future of swimming provision in Shrewsbury.

Following extensive consultation on the options appraisal produced by external consultants a report was taken to Cabinet on 13 July. Although Cabinet was minded to confirm and approve in principle that the preferred location for the replacement of existing swimming provision is Shrewsbury Sports Village, a period of 12 months was granted to all parties wishing to develop alternative proposals to retain swimming provision on the existing site at The Quarry.

Any alternatives will need to meet the Council's key objectives of affordability and participation support in the future. A further report will be taken to Cabinet on the proposed next steps and the detail including timetable, process and terms of reference in relation to recommendation.

Other priorities included the monitoring of the management contracts with Shropshire Community Leisure Trust and Teme Leisure whilst working closely with them to improve services; management transfer of joint-use facilities, directly managing facilities whilst discussing future management options, and continuing to support clubs, coaches, schools and individuals to maximise opportunities for increasing participation in a wide range of sports and physical activities.

Shropshire Community Leisure Trust

The Trust, with Serco Leisure as their managing agent, have operated 5 facilities on behalf of Shropshire Council since August 2012. 2015/16 was the third full year of contract operations and attendances across the 5 sites have increased by 25% since the contract commenced with over a 1 million visits last year. This figure contributed significantly to an overall attendance across all Shropshire leisure facilities of 1,997,607.

Significant outlay has been necessary from Shropshire Council as landlord of the 5 facilities to enable the Trust to operate efficiently, examples of which include the upgrading of drainage on some football pitches at Shrewsbury Sports Village, identifying and repairing a major water leak at Whitchurch Swimming Centre, upgrading the air-conditioning at Oswestry Leisure Centre and replacement and upgrading of swimming pool plant items, particularly at The Quarry Swimming Centre.

The Trust themselves continue to improve the facilities under tenant responsibilities, investment in the changing rooms at Whitchurch is a good example.

Teme Leisure

Teme continue to operate 4 leisure sites in the south of the county and have been able to maintain a high level of service and number of visits despite a reduction in funding.

The announcement of the Financial Strategy by the Council in January, which placed all discretionary services at risk, resulted in officers from Teme and Leisure Services becoming proactively involved in discussions with local groups to identify sustainable operating models, particularly in Bishop's Castle and Church Stretton. These discussions will continue over the coming months.

Joint-Use Facilities

As a commissioning authority, the Council are continuing with a programme of facility management transfers of joint-use facilities. This involves detailed negotiations with schools, colleges and academies on whose sites leisure facilities are managed directly by Leisure Services.

All current joint-use agreements are different and complex, creating difficulties in agreeing transfer terms and conditions. Transferring management responsibilities reduces costs significantly over a period of time, although Shropshire Council maintain revenue support to transferred facilities to ensure the continuation of community use.

Leisure officers continue to offer support whilst the new operators maintain those opportunities.

In March 2014, Schools Forum made the decision to alter the way joint-use funding is distributed to schools across the county. 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 future operational and management options.

Sports & Play Development

A major restructure within Leisure Services resulted in the majority of development staff leaving the Council at the end of May. Development staff now consist of one full-time Development Officer and a part-time Administration Officer who also undertakes responsibility for facility administration.

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. The Play Store has also been retained, however, the role of Shropshire Council's Sports Development is now about support and not direct delivery.

Event Organisation & Management

The Leisure Services team continue to organise and manage major events within Shropshire, specifically the Severn Bridges Road Race and the International Awards Evening.

The TriUK Shropshire Triathlon took place in May following the award of European Championship qualification status. The Leisure Services team along with the Ellesmere organising committee ensured a successful event took place, attracting nearly 400 competitors.

Culture

Visitor Economy Team

Arts Service

Shropshire World War One Commemorations

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. A short film celebrating this achievement is now available on the Shropshire Council YouTube channel

<https://www.youtube.com/user/ShropshireCouncil>

Planning is also now underway with partners, for further World War One commemorations, culminating in events and activity in Shrewsbury to mark the centenary of the death of the poet Wilfred Owen in November 2018.

The WW1 consortium is currently developing a programme of activity for 2017/18, with collective funding bids being submitted to Arts Council and Heritage Lottery Fund.

Shropshire Boys Dancing: 2016 was the sixth year of Boys Dancing, a successful project between Shropshire Council and the West Midlands Boys Dance Alliance, funded by Arts Council England. Over 100 boys from schools across Shropshire, worked with professional male dance artist to create a unique performance, 'The Collectors', responding to the Shrewsbury Museum and Art Gallery's Collections. There was a live dance promenade event at the Museum & Art Gallery, to a sell-out audience.

Culture Consortium Shropshire: This network of arts and cultural organisations and provider's works with children and young people (aged 0-25) in Shropshire. The consortium has a shared vision that children and young people aspire, achieve, progress and lead through arts and culture. By working together collectively the consortium are starting to deliver an aspirational cultural offer for children and young people.

Consortium members have recently benefited from fund-raising training, joint marketing and publicity and organisational development.

Arts Revenue Clients: During 2015/16 the Shropshire Council Revenue Client grant of £120,712 helped 27 arts organisations and festivals lever into the County the sum of £3,026,866.51 of external earned income, from ticket sales; workshop fees; grants from funding bodies such as the Arts Council England, Heritage Lottery Fund, trusts, foundations and sponsorship.

These are organisations that deliver a regular high quality arts programme, are county wide and represent a number of art forms.

Shropshire Archives

Opening hours and Archives Accreditation

Following a public consultation in the spring, the service reviewed its opening hours in June and is now open as follows:

Wednesday	10.00am-4.00pm
Thursday	10.00am-4.00pm
Friday	10.00am-4.00pm
1st Saturday in the month	10.00am-4.00pm

Both the reading room and the search room are open during these times providing an improved service. This has been very much appreciated by customers. Opening hours, particularly on Saturday, will continue to be reviewed based on the level of use.

Shropshire Archives had applied for Archives Accreditation, the new national standard for archive services managed by the National Archives, in 2015. However, a decision on the application was deferred following concerns over budget pressures and limited opening hours. Following the introduction of the revised hours described above, Shropshire Archives will reapply this year, and a decision on the application will be made by early 2017.

Much Wenlock Borough Minute Books

Much Wenlock Town Council has secured Heritage Lottery funding to work on the conservation, digitisation and transcription of the two earliest surviving minute books for Much Wenlock, which date from 1495-1810. Mary Beard, Professor of Classics at Cambridge University, who is originally from Much Wenlock, is supporting the project as its patron. Work on the archive conservation of the volumes has now started, and Shropshire Archives is currently recruiting a team of volunteers to support the cataloguing and transcription work.

Shropshire Victoria County History

Work on the Shropshire Victoria County History (VCH), supported by the University of London, has now started with the appointment of Judith Everard as a part time editor to work on the history of Wem. The very successful history day in Wem held on 24 June 2016 attracted over 80 participants, and a great deal of support for VCH activity. A group of over 20 volunteers are also now engaged on various VCH related research projects

The museum learning team continued to work across the county to provide learning services to schools in Shropshire, Staffordshire, Herefordshire and Powys. The numbers of school children visiting Shrewsbury Museum increased by 47% from 2014/15 to 2015/16. We have introduced new workshops, CPD opportunities and after school clubs and are working in partnership with the Friends of the Flaxmill Maltings to provide a workshop programme for primary school children at Shrewsbury's Grade 1 listed Flax Mill.

Shrewsbury Museums

Shrewsbury Museum & Art Gallery entered its second trading year at the converted Music Hall in The Square. More than 80,000 people visited one or more of the galleries during the year. Alongside the five permanent galleries of Shropshire history the Museum & Art Gallery put on 16 temporary exhibitions from blockbusters like 'Secret Egypt', Vikings and Lego to local history themed shows about Mary Webb, Shropshire's railways and canals and the twinning with Zutphen. The Community Gallery allows local organisations to put on exhibitions on local subjects.

A chance meeting at the RAF Museum between a member of staff and the public relations officer of RAF Cosford airbase led to one of the most prestigious and high

profile exhibitions so far. The Defence School of Photography at RAF Cosford brought its centenary exhibition to the balcony at the Museum & Art Gallery. Along with some superb photos taken over 100 years was the original camera used in the Great Escape, an episode in WWII made famous by the 1960s film.

The ever changing exhibition programme means that Shrewsbury Museum & Art Gallery retains a high profile in the local media with regular coverage of new shows. We also attract national TV shows like 'Bargain Hunt'.

The Music Hall is growing in popularity as a venue for meetings, weddings and events. Due to Shrewsbury's location at the heart of the Welsh rail network quite a few national Welsh organisations are now using us the venue to hold meeting with delegates coming from all over the Principality.

Shrewsbury Castle and Shropshire Regimental Museum continue to be well visited. Apart from the normal visitor business the Castle is a popular venue for weddings and occasional outdoor concerts and drama.

Both venues participate in the national promotion Heritage Open Days on the second weekend of September when hundreds of venues all around the country throw open their doors free of charge.

Museum Learning and Activities Team

The learning team continued to offer an extensive range of adult education classes at Shrewsbury Museum, Shropshire Archives and Ludlow Museum Resource Centre. Courses in Life Drawing, Canal History, Geology, and creative writing were fully booked. Acton Scott Historic Working Farm had a particularly successful year with its programme of Rural Crafts and Trades. New courses on tool sharpening, game cookery and pig keeping have proved popular additions to the programme and are helping to preserve often forgotten and fast disappearing rural skills.

The team were proud to work with award winning short story writer and novelist Lisa Blower who became Shrewsbury Museum & Art Gallery's first writer in residence in March 2016. Lisa took inspiration from the museum's Mary Webb exhibition to create a contemporary reimagining of Mary Webb's classic novel *Gone to Earth*. She ran two novel writing courses (attended by 30 course participants), two workshops for children (70 participants), hosted two book group sessions (15 participants) and participated in a high profile series of talks and lectures in the museum and across the country.

The service hosted the regional finals of the National Poetry recitation competition Poetry By Heart. This prestigious event was attended by the Mayor of Shrewsbury and 16 talented representatives from 8 county wide secondary schools.

Shrewsbury Museum's Friday morning toddler group 'Mini Mammoths' has continued to grow. The service works with early years educators to offer an inclusive family learning experience for parents and carers with children 4 and under. Since establishing the group 52 families have taken part in the collections themed sessions. The weekly sessions involve songs, stories, role-play, craft and a healthy snack.

The team were delighted to welcome 14,400 visitors to our Brick City exhibition which featured models created by LEGO artist Warren Elsmore. Families queued around the block to see Warren's marvellous LEGO creations. A LEGO play zone on the museum balcony for families to create and play together was built especially.

Acton Scott Historic Working Farm

2015 was the 40th year of operation of Acton Scott as a Museum and visitor attraction operated by Shropshire Council. To mark this event the Farm staff joined forces with the Village of Acton Scott to run a traditional Village Fete, raising funds for St Mary's Church and almost doubling the contribution made in previous years.

A new newsletter was launched that is distributed to every visitor – "The Acton Scott Herald" was very well received as it promoted future events and the courses programme at the same time as giving visitors a sought after souvenir of their visit.

At the end of the 2015 season the shop was moved to the entrance end of the site and a new focus in the shop on local artists and products. The old shop was turned into the "Fleece Barn" and a new display of shearing, weaving and spinning was created in this area this is proving a valuable educational aspect as visitors make the link between modern farming methods and the time consuming processes to make and dye clothing in the past.

As well as the new shop, a new outdoor workshop for courses was created as well as a new play area nearer to the Café. The signage on site has been revamped and the new Café operator has brought his own style to running an exceptional quality offering that has been very well received by visitors in to the 2016 season.

The new admissions & shop combined, and entrance way into the farm has been a great success, saving on staffing of two separate areas (Admissions and Shop) in to one functional area as well as creating a gallery space for artists and a heated indoor space for craft activity and demonstrations.

The traditional Courses programme has been a phenomenal success – at least 5 additional courses have had to be arranged to accommodate the overflow of students wishing to attend and some exciting new courses being planned for the 2017 season.

Museum Collections

Shropshire Museums cares for almost 300,000 objects.

The majority of our objects have been donated over the past 170 years by Shropshire residents.

Under the National Planning Policy Framework we offer Shropshire's only archaeological archive deposition service to developers.

Our museums permanently display over 2,000 objects. Every year our changing displays and loans to other organisations bring an additional 1,000 objects out of store.

Our professional standards of collection care allow us to borrow famous artworks and important objects from private collectors and major UK museums.

Over 3,000 of our objects are studied every year as part of both UK and international research programmes, helping to advance our understanding of the past and the natural world.

Our volunteers contributed over 2,000 hours a year to improve online access to our collections. In the last year members of the Caughley Society have completed a full catalogue of our nationally important Caughley porcelain collection. The Friends of Ludlow Museum are currently working in partnership with the Natural History Museum to digitise the most significant specimens in our geology collection.

Our staff, in collaboration with the Portable Antiquities Scheme, identify and record around 600 objects every year for the public and the Coroner's Office.

In 2015 the first recorded hoard of Iron Age coins found in Shropshire was found and will be purchased for display thanks solely to grants from local and national funding bodies.

Theatre Services

Old Market Hall

There were 1,121 film screenings in 2015/16 and overall attendance was 66,644, 8% up on attendances for 2014/15. The venue continued to offer a diverse programme of popular, independent and world cinema, alongside live and specially recorded screenings from the National Theatre, Glyndebourne and Royal Opera House among others. The Old Market Hall also stepped up its regular commitment to Subtitled Screenings for deaf and hearing impaired audiences, and Relaxed Screenings, specially designed for children with Autism.

Theatre Severn

There were 495 ticketed performances at Theatre Severn (Walker Theatre or Auditorium) during 2015/16. This resulted in annual attendance of 169,579, up 6% on 2014/15. 31% of these tickets were sold to households outside of Shropshire, evidence of the venue's wider appeal and ability to draw audiences to Shrewsbury and Shropshire from further afield.

The Pantomime (DICK WHITTINGTON) again enjoyed a record-breaking season, with almost 40,000 people attending the show. The production sold out to 95% of capacity. At this stage of the year, sales for the forthcoming Pantomime season (CINDERELLA) are currently 12% ahead of sales for the previous year. An additional performance has been added due to demand, to make a total of 66 performances.

For the first time since Year One (2009/10), Theatre Severn recorded an average attendance of 75% across all events.

The first planned maintenance shutdown was carried out in January 2016 and was completed in 11 days against an expected 15 days. Fine tuning of various processes was completed during this time and this has resulted in the plant exceeding targets for availability and electricity output.

Emissions from the plant are monitored continually by Veolia and the Environment Agency. The information is also publicly available at <http://www.veolia.co.uk/shropshire/facilities-services/facilities-services/energy-waste/battlefield-emissions-air-data>

Shropshire Libraries

Shropshire Libraries has continued to progress in redesigning its library services utilizing a locality commissioning approach to develop new management arrangements for smaller libraries and some customer service points where appropriate.

In our smaller market towns traditional face to face services are being delivered through active community enterprises. These initiatives are best placed to utilise their links to maximise their contacts.

Libraries current net controllable budget is £2,536,560, which is split across the following functions:

- Six libraries in principal market towns: £1,306,730
- Sixteen smaller libraries: £310,980
- Mobile libraries: £171,910
- Management, administration, I.T. and support services: £746,940

The above budget takes into account £415,990 ongoing annual savings that are scheduled to be made within 2016/17 through a combination of efficiency savings and improved operating arrangements.

Seven libraries have been transferred to new local community management arrangements:

- Albrighton,
- Shifnal
- Broseley
- Cleobury Mortimer

- Craven Arms
- Bishops Castle
- Highley

Pontesbury and Gobowen continue to be managed by Shropshire Council, with financial support from the local parish councils and other funders. Similar discussions are underway at Bayston Hill and Much Wenlock.

In partnership with Adult Social care we are progressing with a preferred bidder to deliver Library Services from the Meres Day Centre. The new provider hopes to take on operation of the Library Service by October 2016.

Discussions to deliver new management arrangements for the larger principal market town libraries are also being progressed. Advanced conversations are taking place with Shrewsbury Town council and Market Drayton with proposals expected to be brought forward for public consultation in the autumn. Discussions are currently underway in Bridgnorth, Ludlow, Oswestry and Whitchurch with local Town Councils to explore opportunities for alternative local management arrangements.

Shawbury Library Closure

Despite lengthy discussions taking place, no suggestions for alternative management of Shawbury library service were developed. A lengthy process of local consultation and engagement recently closed proposing the potential closure of Shawbury library. Utilizing a detailed Needs Assessment, and an Equality and social inclusion impact assessments (ESIIA) to support the consultation and recommendations for alternative provision. A report went to Cabinet on the 13th July 2016 to recommend the closure of Shawbury library and delivery of a mobile library service.

Church Stretton Library

Following the Portfolio Holder decision to move the library of the 27th March 2015 has now been quashed, work is now underway to seek a suitable solution to develop alternative management arrangements. Church Stretton Town Council is issuing a numbered consultation to every household, seeking views on the willingness or not of local households to pay more on their local Council Tax for the continuation of two local services, the Library and the community use of the Leisure Centre and Swimming Pool

Library Opening Hours Review

The changes to opening times at libraries throughout the county are currently subject to public consultation for 12 libraries. The proposals to change library opening hours do not affect libraries that have already transferred to community management

arrangements or are being directly supported by local parish council and other funding.

The new times suggested reflect the on-going decline in static library visits and the increasing use of remote services and social inclusive impacts, on an analysis of visitor numbers to each of the libraries to identify the quietest periods. The proposals focus on reducing library opening hours at quieter times at evenings and weekends, ensuring that people have access to services across the county when they are most used.

The reductions to opening hours recommended below, following the outcome of public consultation, are forecast to result in ongoing annual savings of £52,360.

The recommendations resulting from the consultation are summarised below:

Principal market town libraries:	Opening hours recommendations
Bridgnorth	Open 9.30 – 6.00 on Mondays instead of 9.30 – 7.30. Open 9.30 – 3.00 on Saturdays instead of 9.30 – 5.00. Reduction = 11.5 hours (subject to the outcomes of the public consultation on Customer Service Point opening hours)
Ludlow	Open 9.30 – 6.00 on Mondays instead of 9.30 – 5.00. Open 9.30 – 5.00 on Fridays instead of 9.30 – 7.30. Open 9.30 – 1.00 on Saturdays instead of 9.00 – 5.00 Reduction = 6 hours
Market Drayton	Close at 5pm on Fridays instead of 6pm. Open 9.30 – 1.00 on Saturdays instead of 9.00 – 5.00. Reduction = 5.5 hours
Oswestry	Open from 9.30 Mon – Sat instead of 9.00. Open 9.30 – 4.00 on Saturdays instead of 9.00 – 5.00. Close at 5.00 on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday instead of 6pm Reduction = 8 hours
Shrewsbury	Close at 7pm on Tuesdays instead of 8pm. Close at 5pm on Thursdays instead of 8pm. Open 9.30 – 4.00 on Saturdays instead of 9.00 – 5.00. Do not open on Sundays. Reduction = 8.5 hours

Whitchurch	Open 9.30 – 5.00 on Mondays instead of 1.30 – 5.00. Close at 6pm on Tuesdays instead of 7.30pm. Close at 5pm on Thursdays instead of 6pm. Open 9.30 – 1.00 on Saturdays instead of 9.00 – 5.00. Reduction = 3 hours
Local market town libraries:	
Bayston Hill	Close at 5pm on Tuesdays instead of 7.30pm. Reduction = 2.5 hours.
Ellesmere	No change to opening hours as a preferred bidder has recently been secured to deliver Library Services from the Meres Community Centre.
Gobowen	Close at 5pm on Tuesdays instead of 7pm. Reduction = 2 hours
Much Wenlock	Close at 5pm on Tuesdays and Thursdays instead of 6pm. Reduction = 2 hours
Shrewsbury, the Lantern	Close at 5pm instead of 6pm on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays. Reduction = 3 hours
Wem	Close at 5pm on Tuesdays and Wednesdays instead of 6pm. Open 9.30 – 1.00 on Saturdays instead of 9.30 – 4.00. Reduction = 5 hours

Libraries Management and Administration Review

Review of the libraries management and administration is currently in the final stages following our staff consultation.

- The library management team will be reduced, making one of the posts of Library Area Manager redundant. The day to day operational management of the libraries will continue to be delivered by the existing renamed Library Managers.
- The deletion of 3 FTE existing Library Commissioning Manager posts, replacing them with 1.5 FTE Library Development Managers. The posts will have a combined role of leading in one or more specialist service areas plus the line management of the Team Librarians.
- A reduction in the number of Team Librarian posts and a reallocation of duties between posts in the new structure.

- The Library ICT Officer post will be deleted and some of the duties included as part of the new Team Librarian role to ensure the technological developments are implemented and ICT equipment is maintained.
- An amalgamation of Library Area Administration Officer role and Library Support assistants to continue support of transferred libraries in line with the service developments.

These savings amount to approximately £280,000 and are part of the £415,990 ongoing annual savings that are scheduled to be made within 2016/17 through a combination of efficiency savings and improved operating arrangements.