



<u>Committee and Date</u>
Council
21 September 2017

## PORTFOLIO HOLDER ANNUAL REPORT FOR CULTURE & LEISURE

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

### Shropshire Museums

**Shropshire Museum's Strategy** is under development to provide strategic direction for the service. This is being supported by Resilience funding from Arts Council England as part of Shropshire Museums' diversity project. This project will also develop new audiences for the service, and support sponsorship and fund raising activity. The project will be complete by April 2018.

Between February and June 2017 Shrewsbury Museum & Art Gallery hosted the '**Rhyme Around the World**' exhibition from Seven Stories, the National Children's Book Centre in Newcastle. This colourful, interactive exhibition took a fresh look at nursery rhymes and featured art work by many best-loved children's illustrators. To support the exhibition, the learning team offered a literacy programme funded by the Walker Trust to nurseries and primary schools across the county. Seven thousand children across Shropshire received an illustrated booklet featuring ten nursery rhymes to learn and recite. In all 1,779 children from 52 schools visited the exhibition. Building on this success, the learning team have secured funding to be part of the national programme **Great Art Quest**, run by Children & the Arts in 2018. This will create bespoke workshops to engage primary school children with the visual arts and storytelling.

Currently the Antarctica exhibition, funded by the Friends of Shrewsbury Museum, is proving very popular, especially the virtual reality experience of life on an Antarctic base station. Overall Shrewsbury Museum & Art Gallery is maintaining high levels of interest with almost 70,000 visits during 2016-2017. Future exhibitions planned for 2017-2018 include Last Samurai, the true story; Lego, Brick History; and Titanic, Honour and Glory, which should all prove popular.

Sevendale Specialist School are Shrewsbury Museum's first 'partner school'. A Kids in Museums Takeover Day event is planned, giving pupils between the ages of 8 -18 the chance to work in all departments of the museum, including the museum café and visitor information centre as well as the curatorial, education and marketing teams.

**Acton Scott Historic Working Farm** continues to be popular with families with the new fairy trail a big hit. Over 1,000 people came to the farm in July to take advantage of free entry for the Acton Scott fete. Volunteers who work in the Fleece barn at Acton Scott have been successful in reaching the finals of the West Midlands Volunteer of the year with winners announced on 18 September in Birmingham.

Grant funding has been received to work on two projects at **Ludlow Museum Resource Centre**. One to refurbish the exhibition space to allow material from National Museums to be displayed, and the second to improve the shelving of the key archaeological collections. The latter has been supported by both the Friends of Ludlow and Shrewsbury Museums.

### **Shropshire Archives**

Shropshire Archives was awarded **Archive Accreditation** by the National Archives in November 2017. Archive Accreditation is the new UK quality standard for archives. By achieving accredited status Shropshire Archives has met clearly defined national standards relating to management and resourcing; the care of its collections and what is offered to all our customers and users. It also means that the service can continue to act as a place approved for the deposit of public records, such as records of magistrate's courts, hospitals and other state bodies.

Capital funding was secured for a redeveloped Shropshire Archives **website**. As well as improving the online catalogue the site will also allow customers to directly purchase copies and downloads of images of documents. Work is progressing with colleagues in finance and IT services to complete this work.

Shropshire Archives and Shropshire Arts Service have continued to facilitate and deliver a wide range of arts and heritage projects to commemorate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the First World War. Building on this success, **Wilfred Owen 100, Shropshire Remembers** will commemorate the contribution of one of, if not the, greatest World War One poet. Across Shropshire over 100 events and activities are planned for the 100 days from August - November 2018 to mark the 100th anniversary of his death at the age of 25 in November 1918, just 7 days before the armistice. A Heritage Lottery Funding application is in progress to support this work.

### **Leisure Services**

#### **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. 2016/17 was the fourth full year of contract operations and attendances across the 5 sites has increased by 12% compared with their first full year of operations (visits = 1,063,765). This increase contributed greatly to an overall attendance across all Shropshire managed, owned and supported leisure facilities of 2,001,122.

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 the end of 2017 to allow Football Association registered fixtures and competitions to remain on site.

In conjunction with Mid-Shropshire Wheelers the Sports Village will again host a round of the Cyclo-Cross National Trophy in November 2017.

The Council have decided to revisit the options for retaining swimming provision within Shrewsbury Town Centre and as a result the development of a full business case for relocation to the Sports Village has been put on hold.

## **Teme Leisure**

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 and increase the annual number of visits by 3% despite the need to reduce budgets and the loss of joint-use funding

Significant investment has been made by Teme at South Shropshire Leisure Centre (Ludlow) which has enabled them to maintain attendance levels across their portfolio.

Closer and frequent discussions have taken place in the last 12 months 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 are also investing capital on site to replace essential plant and refurbish changing rooms.

## **Indoor Leisure Facilities Strategy**

Shropshire Council adopted a revised indoor Leisure Facilities Strategy in June of this year.

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.

The first workshop, hosted by Energize CSP (County Sports Partnership), took place in early 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**

Shropshire Council are continuing a programme of facility management transfers of joint-use facilities. This involves detailed negotiations with schools 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. However, we are targeting the transfer of the following facilities by the end of the financial year:

- Much Wenlock Leisure Centre
- Idsall Sports Centre
- Roman Road Sports Centre (Meole Brace School)

Transferring management responsibilities reduces costs over a period of time, although Shropshire Council maintain tapered 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. 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 Development**

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.

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.

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**

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.

### **Outdoor Partnerships**

#### **Key achievements in 2016/17:**

- Maintaining improvements year on year to the third largest Rights of Way network in the country (5,600km- that's the equivalent of Shrewsbury to New York!)
- Securing the Green Flag Award again for Severn Valley Country Park and The Mere at Ellesmere
- Managing 23 Country Parks and Countryside Heritage Sites to cater for almost 1 million visits
- Facilitating 1,291 children on school visits to Severn Valley Country Park (43% increase on previous year)
- Developing the Shropshire's Great Outdoors brand- 103,000 users of [www.shropshiresgreatoutdoors.co.uk](http://www.shropshiresgreatoutdoors.co.uk), 74% of whom are under 45
- Co-ordinating 1,177 active volunteers through Parish Paths Partnerships, Volunteer Rangers, Shropshire Wild Teams and Walking for Health Walks Leaders
- Co-ordinating 56 Walking for Health schemes, with over 1,800 people taking part
- Developing new activity to maximise health benefits and economic growth through outdoor recreation
- Managing the £2.2m rural development grant scheme 'Southern Shropshire LEADER', which aims to achieve 73 new jobs by Dec 2019

- Income generation of £400,000
- Volunteers from Severn Valley Country Park have picked up the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service. They are being presented with the award by the High Sheriff on the 19<sup>th</sup> of September.

A full report of the work of Outdoor Partnerships can be found here:

<https://www.shropshire.gov.uk/outdoor-recreation/strategic-documents-for-outdoor-recreation/>

### **Shropshire's Great Outdoors Strategy Board**

The Shropshire's Great Outdoors Strategy Board has replaced the Local Access Forum as the statutory Advisory Committee on access and outdoor recreation. The Board has adopted a wider remit, aiming to make outdoor recreation in Shropshire more financially independent and resilient, more strategically important across a range of sectors and more action driven. More details can be found here:

<https://www.shropshire.gov.uk/outdoor-recreation/countryside-access-and-public-rights-of-way/shropshires-great-outdoors-strategy-board/>

### **Shropshire's Great Outdoors Strategy**

We are currently reviewing the Countryside Access Strategy 2008-2018 and will be publishing a new Shropshire's Great Outdoors Strategy in April 2018. This will incorporate the Rights of Way Improvement Plan, as required by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.

### **Theatre Services**

Last year Theatre Severn achieved 76% attendance across all ticketed events, which is the highest to date, even beating the attendance figure in first year of opening. The number of ticketed events held was up to over 500. The OMH too has seen record attendance figures on many months throughout the last 12 months with an average attendance of 70% with almost 65k paid attendances. The summer saw the Venue partake in the inaugural Comedy Festival, hosting 5 successful events there over the weekend. This August saw record film attendances with over 4,700 tickets sold. Forthcoming films currently on sale include Victoria & Abdul, Borg/McEnroe, Goodbye Christopher Robin & Detroit. Relaxed screenings are also a feature of the autumn season. Investment will be required in 2018 to refurbish the cinema seating.

The new Autumn season has just begun at Theatre Severn with 5 nights of warm ups for the new tour of Greg Davies, all sold out. Highlights of the new season include Lulu, Elaine Page, Roy Wood, The Wedding Singer & David Walliams' Awful Auntie. Advance sales for the annual pantomime are at record levels with over 60% of the tickets already sold or reserved. This year will be a record run of 67 performances. There are three major professional touring musicals visiting the town in the first six months of 2018, starting in March with the new musical based on the music of Dusty Springfield 'Son of a Preacher Man' closely followed by 'Evita' & 'Spamalot' in the late Spring.

### **Library Services**

The draft **Library Service Strategy** is currently out to public consultation which closes on the 6<sup>th</sup> October. The five year strategy builds on the work that is already

being done with town and parish councils and other organisations to operate and fund libraries differently. It sets out a 3-tier hierarchy of library branches to inform how financial support will be prioritised, with each library continuing to provide specified core and targeted services. The strategy also proposes a reduction in the number of mobile library stops from 354 to 277, with a view to deleting underused stops while maintaining a service to those who are most in need.

We are continuing to build and develop our **partnerships with local community organisations** to secure sustainable futures for individual libraries. Eight libraries are now run by organisations within the communities they serve, with a further two libraries receiving significant levels of funding from local partners. The most recent library to be transferred to alternative management is Ellesmere which is now being operated by Bethphage in the former Meres Day Centre building now renamed as 'Our Space'. Elsewhere, work to extensively refurbish Much Wenlock library is due to begin soon as part of a 7-year funding agreement with Much Wenlock Town Council.

As usual libraries have been busy with the annual children's reading promotion the **Summer Reading Challenge**. This year's theme was 'Animal Agents' and early evidence indicates a high level of engagement across the county with a large number of well-attended events in many libraries. The Reading Challenge builds on the work that libraries do throughout the year via engagement with schools to encourage a love of reading for pleasure.

Shropshire Libraries have just been awarded a **Marketing Excellence Award** relating to 'Picture This', an Arts Council England funded creative arts programme aimed at young people. The award recognises the innovative marketing and promotion for the project which aimed to alter perceptions of what libraries are and enable children to engage with creative arts in a range of different ways.

<b>List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)</b>
<b>Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder)</b> Lezley Picton
<b>Local Member</b> All Members