



<u>Committee and Date</u>
Council
25 September 2014
10.00 am

<u>Item</u>
13
<u>Public</u>

**COUNCILLOR GWILYM BUTLER
PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR LEISURE, LIBRARIES AND
CULTURE**

1.0 Summary

This report provides information on the key achievements and developments over the past year.

2.0 The specific portfolio purpose is:

To work with the portfolio holders with Area Commissioning responsibility to radically redesign:

- Shropshire Council's commissioning of leisure outcomes to maximise healthy living opportunities, reducing costly dependency on health-care in later life as much as possible.
- The way we enable communities to access books and other learning materials, primarily focusing on investment that supports the links between early reading and life-long skills, employability and well-being.
- Shropshire Council's commissioning of cultural activity and management of assets only where this can demonstrate a sufficient multiplier effect on benefiting the economy of Shropshire.
- To ensure that the council's commissioning decisions complement rather than duplicate or inadvertently compete with the capacity of the open-market to provide them – for example in sport and leisure.
- To lead on the Council's relationship with the voluntary and community sector through the Shropshire VCS Assembly working with the other portfolio holders with commissioning responsibilities, both area and thematic, to identify opportunities the sector can play in effective commissioning.

REPORT

3.0 Theatre Services

- 3.1 There were 1,060 film screenings at the Old Market Hall last year and overall attendance was 62% (53,652). This was 2.5% down on attendances for 2012/13. This was largely due to one particular film (*Diana*) that had poor

attendances nationally, giving average attendances of only 17% over 41 screenings. Café Bar takings were 2% up on 2012/13, providing income of £328K. The overall surplus generated at the Old Market Hall rose from £62,690 in 2012/13 to £64,950 in 2013/14 (excluding 'below the line' costs).

- 3.2 New digital projection equipment will be installed during the course of this financial year. Participating in the National live screenings season has also seen an increase in attendance and added a new dimension to the film programme.
- 3.3 At Theatre Severn, 414 performances took place during 2013/14 with an overall audience of 144,893. This was a 5% decrease on 2012/13, however, average attendances per performance increased by 8% to 68% overall. The Pantomime contributed to this result by achieving its most successful season ever, with almost 37,000 people attending. The production sold out to 98% of capacity. At this stage of the year, sales for the forthcoming Pantomime season are currently 15% ahead of sales for the previous year. Income from private hirers also showed an increase of 18% to £156K. The subsidy on Theatre Severn fell from £354,100 in 2012/13 to £274,910 in 2013/14 (excluding 'below the line' costs).
- 3.5 This year the purchase and installation of digital projection equipment to the Walker Theatre, allowing expansion of the rapidly growing 'live screenings' market is also being pursued.
- 3.6 The Restaurant, Chapel Bar & Kiosks have increased turnover by 15% from the previous year. An exercise is currently underway to look into possible outsourcing of the catering operation.

4.0 Shropshire Outdoor Partnerships

- 4.1 In 2013/14 the Outdoor Recreation service undertook a business planning exercise to identify ways to better meet customer needs whilst making significant savings. The business plan outcome identified 4 areas, where potential new ways of service delivery should be considered.
- **Future management of green/open spaces** – to start negotiations to transfer local green spaces to Town and Parish Councils. This transfer will support better decision making at a local level supporting the wider local commissioning approach and meeting local needs. To date Shrewsbury and Bridgnorth Town Councils have agreed to take on their local green spaces. Further negotiations with other Town and Parish Councils will take place in the coming months.
 - **Grounds Maintenance Options** - if Town and Parish Councils are not interested in taking on local green space sites, then Outdoor Partnerships will look to set annual area grounds maintenance contracts with local providers to reduce annual costs whilst increasing standards. Last year new contracts were agreed at Severn Valley Country Park, Birchmeadow in Broseley and Stanmore Park, near

Bridgnorth, providing a saving of £50K. The Service will be advertising local area contracts to test local contractor costs.

- **Review of Country Park Assets** – this is to reduce costs and increase income at Severn Valley Country Park and the Mere to achieve cost neutral management, i.e. income generated covers the running cost. At Severn Valley Country Park income generation activities will bring in an additional income of £14K. At The Mere, Ellesmere, work is ongoing to maximise income potential from its land building assets. The Mere Cottage and Castlefields car park are currently advertised for commercial business opportunities, which could bring in an additional rental income. The sale of Swan Hill depot has been agreed subject to contract, bringing in further additional capital receipt for the Council.

- 4.2 Severn Valley Country Park has received its 10th consecutive Green Flag award, the best in Shropshire. Whilst The Mere was awarded its 1st Green Flag.
- 4.3 Increasing volunteer opportunities and partnerships will provide wider health and wellbeing benefits to the local community as well as reducing maintenance costs through practical works. Since April 2014, 665 volunteers have provided 7,474 hours of volunteer time, which is estimated to have saved £57K to Shropshire Council. A review of volunteering opportunities is underway with a series of volunteer forums being held around the county. These will help to understand the support existing volunteers need and what equipment, training etc is required, as well as celebrating the great work being done, and investigating future volunteering opportunities.
- 4.4 Walking for Health continues to grow and benefit the health of many people with new groups being formed in Clun and Bishop's Castle. We now have 55 walking groups with 1,133 walkers being supported by 287 volunteers who gave 2,700 hours of their time leading the walks.
- 4.5 Continued partnership working with the Probation Service has provided 7,667 hours of manpower labour across the Public Rights of Way network, Countryside Parks and Sites, Green Spaces and Play Areas, with an estimated saving to the Council of around £40K

5.0 Libraries

- 5.1 Shropshire Libraries are managed as part of the area directorates, alongside other community services. There is a network of 22 community libraries, each with its own branch manager, providing library access across the county. 4 mobile libraries cover the north, central, south east and south west of the county.
- 5.2 The Library redesign currently underway proposes to provide a more affordable service that embraces different delivery models; through face to face, digital and virtually, through an outreach programme targeted to meet council outcomes for specific groups, and through a reconfigured network of

libraries. Shropshire Council will aim to deliver library services by working in partnership with communities so that tailored services can be developed to support the needs of people in their communities and also those who may have specific needs that may affect their access to library services.

- 5.3 Six strategic community hubs in major towns are being developed to improve accessibility and cater for larger populations in towns. Oswestry, Ludlow and Bridgnorth hubs are being fine-tuned to enable a more streamlined service offer that will include the library, customer service provision and registrar. Our remaining libraries will offer a core community service provision similar to Highley and Craven Arms Community Centre and a varied range of opening hours but with participation from town or parish councils, voluntary and community groups the aim will be to increase these opening hours.

Libraries will continue to promote the skill and enjoyment of reading for all ages and improving the customer offer through a refreshed library management system as well as:

- Supporting learning in schools and informal learning and skills development
- Providing an information and enquiry service on all subjects
- Reducing the digital divide by reinvesting in modern public access computer services at no charge to customers and to support new users
- Supporting Shropshire Council in delivering in communities by working in Hubs providing a cost effective focal point for the local delivery of a range of council services.

- 5.4 In terms of service development Shropshire Libraries are adopting the Universal Offers with The Society of Chief Librarians, The Arts Council, The Reading Agency and other partners. These are four key areas of service delivery which customers regard as integral to public libraries and developed a shared strategy for the future:

- Reading Offer
- Information offer
- Digital offer
- Health offer

- 5.5 The aim of each of the offers is to develop a core package of partnerships, resources and advocacy messages at a national level which can be delivered locally to meet differing local needs. The Universal Offers provide a positive vision for the future of public libraries; they are a promise to our customers and a commitment to quality provision across these four core areas of our service.

- 5.6 Reading Offer - this offer sets out what public libraries will offer in order to provide a modern reading service within a local community. It aims to focus libraries' attention and efforts on promoting key shared reading programmes. It is supported by the reading calendar, a toolbox of reading programmes and a raft of national partnerships. This offer has been developed in partnership with The Reading Agency.

- 5.7 Information Offer - the focus of the offer is on libraries' role in supporting people to access information and services online in life-critical areas such as careers and job seeking; health, personal financial information and benefits. Central to this offer is helping people to use vital government online information services.
- 5.8 Digital Offer - this offer recognises that the development of digital services, skills and access underpins so much of a 21st century library service. As such, it supports and enables the delivery of all of the Universal Offers. As a baseline every public library service should provide:
- Free internet access (for a minimum period of time)
 - Clear and accessible online information about library services
 - Staff trained to help customers access digital information
- 5.9 Health Offer - this offer expresses the public library contribution to the positive health and well-being of local communities, with a commitment to provide services that include public health information and promotion, sign posting and referrals as well as creative and social reading activity. In 2013 the Reading Well Books on Prescription Scheme was launched. This is a national programme endorsed by key health professionals and organisations and, within the first six months of the programme, is already being delivered across 87% of public library authorities.
- 5.10 The Galaxy Saas/Arena is an ongoing project to move the Library Management System to a Software as a Service model in order to make savings on server maintenance and replacement and improve the system architecture. The project also involves an upgrade of the public web interface to Axiell Arena. Arena provides a framework of content and interactive services that can be extended and revised to develop community and social networking functions.
- 5.11 As part of the universal offer we propose to install self-service machines in libraries in order to improve the service to customers, make efficiency savings and extend opening hours. Self-service facilities are also crucial to the development of community run libraries such as the Craven Arms model.
- 5.12 There continues to be an ongoing customer usage PC replacement program covering all public access machines in libraries. This enables libraries to be part of the digital by default program giving access to Shropshire residents who do not have access to a PC or broadband.
- 5.13 Shropshire Libraries have introduced E- materials to enhance the library reading stock and further develop our inclusive 24 hour provision to Shropshire residents. We have launched an Initial introduction of E-magazines with a selection of 20 popular titles. Also being considered is the possible replacement of hard copy magazines to develop wider cost effective solutions. E-books will follow later in the year as we update our library management system to be supplied by Askews book supplier.

5.14 Shropshire Council currently delivers Visitor Information provision at key destinations throughout the County. Provision varies from stand-alone Visitor Information Centres (VIC) at Ludlow and Mile End, Oswestry through to service provision within Customer First Points. In line with service redesign recommendations that create more localised service provision that is more efficient and sustainable is now being established. Shropshire Council and Ludlow Assembly Rooms are finalising an agreement for the continued running of the VIC. Similar negotiations are taking place for example in Church Stretton, Market Drayton and Oswestry.

6.0 Leisure Services

6.1 Shropshire Community Leisure Trust with Serco Leisure as their managing agent, have operated 5 facilities on behalf of Shropshire Council since August 2012. 2013/14 was the first full year of contract operations and attendances across the 5 sites increased by 15.7% compared with the previous year. This increase contributed greatly to an overall attendance across all Shropshire leisure facilities of just below 2,100,000, the largest annual usage figure recorded. Working in partnership with the Council, £245,000 of funding was acquired to refurbish the changing rooms at Market Drayton Swimming Centre and the Trust have introduced many improvements across the portfolio of facilities.

6.2 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 attendances. Significant investment has been made at South Shropshire Leisure Centre (Ludlow) which has resulted in increased attendances.

6.3 A programme of facility management transfers of all joint-use facilities has continued as part of the wider local commissioning approach. This has involved 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, however, the following facilities have been successfully transferred in 2013/14:

- Thomas Adams Sports Centre, Wem
- Lakelands Sports Centre, Ellesmere

This has contributed towards the 2014/15 saving that Leisure has been able to achieve of £305,370. Whitchurch Joint Use Centre has been successfully transferred during 2014/15, and this will contribute towards achieving 2015/16's savings target.

6.4 A number of Sports and Play Development projects and initiatives have been developed and supported by the team. These include:

- Neighbourhood Life, aimed at promoting physical activity to sedentary members of the public. Initially this will commence in Shrewsbury, Ludlow and Oswestry and highlights partnership working between Public Health, Sports Development and both facility operators,

Shropshire Community Leisure Trust and Teme Leisure.

- Specific Play Development schemes have continued to flourish including the Community Play Store, Out 2 Play Project and Play Week.
- Shropshire Schools Sports and Athletics Association, enabling schools throughout Shropshire to play competitively in a number of sports.
- Sportivate projects, people aged 19-25 taking part in regular sport and physical activity and Sport Makers, more people engaged with sport through volunteering.
- School Games programmes which enable more young people to become engaged in competitive sport.
- Return 2 Rounders programmes with successful leagues/sessions now operating in Shrewsbury, Oswestry and Ludlow.

6.5 The Leisure Services team continue to organise and manage major events within Shropshire, including the Ellesmere Triathlon, Severn Bridges Road Race and Sport Relief. The TRI UK Ellesmere Triathlon again achieved World Championship qualifying status and attracted over 400 competitors. Three of the age-group qualifiers from Ellesmere won medals at the World Championships held in Edmonton in August 2014, 2 gold and 1 bronze.

6.6 Shrewsbury Swimming Pool - reflecting the age, condition and future potential maintenance liabilities of the pool the future of swimming provision within Shrewsbury is under on-going consideration. Following confirmation by Cabinet officers have formed a Project Board with external inputs from Sport England, the Amateur Swimming Association and Energize, the County Sports Partnership. Alongside this we are continuing to liaise with the Quarry Swimming Pool Forum and other key stakeholders. The Board has recently commissioned both a building condition survey of the existing swimming pool and an appraisal of different location options within Shrewsbury. We anticipate that at the end of the year this will be used to inform public and stakeholder consultation on the different options and subsequently to potentially inform the development of a new significant capital project.

7.0 Arts Development Service

7.1 Four Economic Impact Assessments were delivered for Shrewsbury festivals in the last 12 months - the Cartoon Festival, River Festival, Food Festival and Folk Festival. The aim was to identify and quantify the additional spending that different types of events bring into the area, and therefore understand the impact of events on the visitor economy. Additional spending by visitors to these festivals is broken down as follows - The Cartoon Festival generated £194,462, The River Festival generated £166,961, The Food Festival

generated £180,510 and the Folk Festival generated £548,077 – all of which totalled £1,090,010 additional spending in the area.

The results for all the festivals show the value of events to the local economy as visitors spend in accommodation, shops, and restaurants and on travel and other attractions.

7.2 In 2013/14, £143,900 of the arts budget was invested through grants into local arts organisations, venues and festivals, who deliver a regular programme of arts activity across the county. In 2012/13 these revenue clients brought into the county over £800,000 from grants, earned income etc. In 2014/15 with £145,900 investment from Shropshire Council, these organisations and festivals will increase their income to £996,000.

7.4 During the last 12 months, the Arts Service has been successful in securing a variety of funding from grant bodies such as the Arts Council to deliver a range of projects including:

- First World War Commemorative Activities. Arts Council England awarded £99,067 and the Heritage Lottery Fund granted a further £91,300 for 19 arts and heritage projects to help communities commemorate the centenary anniversaries of the First World War. The Arts & Festival activities will make a significant contribution to the following partners' activity; Pentabus Theatre, Wem Town Hall, QUBE (Oswestry Community Action), Shrewsbury 6th Form College, Shrewsbury Museum and Art Gallery, St Chads Music Festival, Shropshire Boys Dancing, Shrewsbury Bookfest and Acton Scott Historic Working Farm.
- Arts Council England awarded £10,500 to develop an Arts Strategy for the Flax Mill Maltings. This will provide a framework and overarching artistic vision for the site exploring the potential for the arts. It will also identify ways the public can engage with the Flax Mill Maltings in the short, medium and long term.
- Boys Dancing develops and celebrates dance for boys and young men, providing them with the challenge, exhilaration, discipline and fun of making and sharing dance. External funding has provided more than £30,000 toward the project. During the last 2 years hundreds of boys and young men from Shropshire, led by a team of professional artists have participated, choreographed and performed in live dance pieces and films. The project has been shortlisted for the National Lottery Awards best Arts Project.
- The Arts Service has been working in partnership with Arts Connect West Midlands, local schools, arts organisations and venues to deliver a programme of activity for children and young people. Arts Connect have invested £11,000 into Shropshire during the last 12 months.

- Shrewsbury Museum and Art Gallery Contemporary Art Projects -the Arts Council England funding of £99,000 has supported the commission of 6 new contemporary art interventions, by international artists. The pieces are now on exhibition throughout the Music Hall.

8. Youth Activities

A significant amount of work has been undertaken over the last twelve months to redesign, consult, evaluate and prepare for the implementation of a new youth activities commissioning approach with effect from 1 April 2015. This began in January 2014 when the Council embarked on an extensive consultation programme which set out the proposals for a new commissioning model for youth activities whereby the Council becomes a commissioner rather than a direct provider of youth services in the county.

This approach empowers local communities and young people to identify the demand for youth activities in their local area, informed by knowledge of existing community based provision, and procure resources and activities to meet these needs placing the involvement of young people in local decision making.

The Council also set out the proposal to contract an infrastructure partner to support, check and develop community based youth activity providers to ensure that the strategic and local outcomes for young people are fulfilled. The consultation involved wide ranging discussion and input from a range of partners, stakeholders, young people, front line workers and provider organisations.

In July 2014 we considered and approved a report that set out how feedback to the proposed commissioning and contracting approach had led to certain modifications. One of the key features being the need to find new and innovative ways of engaging young people in local decision making which works and which reduces bureaucracy.

In August 2014 the Council published the invitation to tender notice for the infrastructure partner. Tenders will be evaluated in October 2014. The partner will be selected in December 2014 and will have a three month lead in period before the new commissioning model is implemented in April 2015.

From September 2014 local joint committees will be briefed and supported in terms of their role in local commissioning and the procurement of youth activities. The Council's commissioning and community enablement team will provide support for LJsCs and assist with the engagement of young people in the new process. LJsCs will be informed of what level of funds they will receive, based on need, and decide whether to procure existing youth activities providers and/ or seek new providers to meet the needs of young people in their local area. The infrastructure partner will also provide support for good commissioning practice.

Existing arrangements for the provision of youth services and contracts between Shropshire Council, Shropshire Youth Association and specific voluntary and community based organisations will remain in place until 31 March 2015. Further consultation is planned with these organisations and with staff throughout the autumn 2014 and spring 2015.

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

Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder) Gwilym Butler

Local Member Countywide.

Appendices None.