

Culture and Leisure Sub-Committee

28 November 2017

Present: Councillor S Day (Chair)
Councillors L Bell, D Drummond, P Earley, D McMeekan and
A Waggott-Fairley.

Also Present: Councillor E N Darke, Cabinet Member for Leisure, Culture
and Tourism.

CL18/11/17 Apologies

Apologies were received on behalf of Councillors J Cassidy, L Darke and P Oliver.

CL19/11/17 Substitute Members

Pursuant to the Council's Constitution, the appointment of the following substitute member was reported:

Councillor P Earley for Councillor J Cassidy.

CL20/11/17 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest reported.

CL21/11/17 Minutes

Resolved that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 24 October 2017 be confirmed and signed by the Chair.

CL22/11/17 Whitley Bay Customer First Centre

The Sub-committee received a report from the Senior Manager, Cultural Services, which outlined the work and activities delivered through Whitley Bay Customer First Centre (CFC) in the context of the Authority's wider move towards the development of community hubs.

Whitley Bay Customer First Centre was a £7.075 million PFI new build facility, supported by PFI credits of £7.5 million that opened to the public on 2 April 2013. The facility replaced the old Whitley Bay library on Park Road that was no longer fit for purpose, the Tourist Information Centre that was attached to the library, and the Customer Service Centre that was located on Victoria Terrace.

The building was designed not only to provide modernised facilities, but to locate a number of services under one roof to provide convenience to customers and efficiencies associated with the closure of a number of older buildings. It was located in a central location, with good transport links and close to the central shopping area.

The building was leased from Lift Co over 25 years. Facilities Management including repairs and maintenance was carried out by Robertsons on behalf of the Authority.

The building offered a large library over two floors and a dedicated Customer Service Centre, with self service payment kiosks for Council payments such as rent and Council Tax. There were a number of community rooms that can be used for activities and hired by the community. An art exhibition area offers local artists and crafts people a space to display their work. A separate health suite was available on the first floor, which currently housed the locality teams for the area, who ran birth registrations, a baby clinic and a 'stay and play' session from the building. On the second floor, in addition to the Customer Service Centre, there was a large office, which currently housed Adult Social Care teams, who were moved from other obsolete buildings such as Camden House.

The library provided a range of modern services, including a good selection of books for all ages, self service loan, return and renew, public access PCs, free wifi, online resources and e-books and study facilities. It was popular with a range of customers using the building for a variety of purposes and was particularly popular with young people using the library to study. There were public toilets on every floor of the building, including a Changing Places facility for those with severe disabilities.

The facility offered a range of activities and events that supported the local community, including regular room bookings from a diverse range of community groups and businesses. The centre was also used regularly by the Authority for public consultation and engagement events as detailed in the report.

With regard to performance of the CFC, in the last financial year 2016/17 there were:

- 299,389 visitors
- 115,718 items loaned
- 38,378 logins to the public PCs
- 8,706 people attended events
- 923 room bookings
- 17,077 Customer Services payment kiosk transactions
- 16,949 visitors to Customer Services

Approximately 63% of library loan transactions were currently self service and there was an average of around 4,000 enquiries each month.

In conclusion, Whitley Bay Customer First Centre functioned as an effective community hub covering the Whitley Bay area, combining a wide range of services and a high level of community access. The interactions provided by the CFC supported community cohesion objectives and helped break down social isolation for many vulnerable members of the community.

During a tour of the centre Members made some positive comments in relation to the diversity in functions, in particular the customer based self-service facilities.

It was **agreed** that the report on the Whitley Bay Customer First Centre be noted.

CL23/11/17 Report of the Cultural Development Plan Sub- Group - Delivering an effective cultural offer

The Sub-Committee received a report produced by the Cultural Development Plan Sub Group on findings relating to the scrutiny review of events spend and delivery in North Tyneside, South Tyneside and Sunderland.

The Chair of the Cultural Development Plan Sub Group, Councillor Sarah Day, introduced the

report of the sub group and set out the context in relation to its recommendations.

The main objective of the review was on 'How can the Authority deliver an effective cultural offer in a shrinking financial environment?'

The sub group held several meetings at which Members considered the cultural offer in the Borough and received presentations from officers about their service areas. This enabled the group to gain a greater insight into:

- how the cultural services we deliver as an Authority worked;
- how the funding was structured;
- the partnerships required to deliver much of the cultural programme; and
- some of the challenges of sustaining the offer in a shrinking financial environment.

The group found that to consider the entire cultural offer was too broad a canvass and after some discussion decided to focus on the events programme in particular. This in itself presented a number of challenges in relation to the range of events delivered. From Mouth of the Tyne Festival at one end, to support for smaller community based events at the other. It did however give the group the opportunity to make some comparisons with neighbouring authorities namely - South Tyneside and Sunderland, based on the available information, and to get some sense of the impact of North Tyneside's investment in this area.

As indicated in the report, North Tyneside Council delivered a competitive programme with considerably less investment than its immediate neighbours and continued to attract a healthy number of visitors.

In focusing on the summer events programme the review allowed the group time to contribute towards the budget and financial planning framework discussions for 2018/19, and to support the Cabinet Member for Leisure, Culture and Tourism in delivering an effective cultural offer, taking these considerations into account.

The main findings and recommendations of the sub group were set out in paragraphs 2, 3 and 4 of the report.

The Culture and Leisure Sub-Committee was asked to endorse the three proposed recommendations of the Cultural Development Plan sub Group set out below for submission to the Overview, Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee on the 4 December 2017, for referral to Cabinet on the 11 December 2017.

The recommendations of the Cultural Development Plan Sub Group were, that Cabinet:

- i) In order to sustain events delivery and support tourism into North Tyneside the circa £100k currently provided through the Service Improvement Fund should be consolidated as part of the core events budget.
- ii) North Tyneside a survey of the arts and tourism sectors should be undertaken in order to gain more detailed information on ways in which added value can be increased and support can be more targeted.
- iii) The Sub Group to analyse the outcomes of the industry surveys alongside a range of market intelligence gathered throughout the year including events and visitor surveys. The findings will generate future recommendations for action.

The sub group concluded that the difference between the approach of the three local authorities to delivery of the summer events programme made some areas of direct comparison difficult however, it was possible to draw some conclusions in order to support the proposed recommendations based on the deliberations of the sub group, as follows:-

- a) Trend data assessed through the industry standard for the tourism sector was the Scarborough Tourism Economic Assessment Model (STEAM), did not indicate significant differences in visitor levels in spite of differences in events spend; and
- b) Across all three local authorities it was clear that events and the wider tourism offer were a significant part of the local economy and should be given greater priority in the deliberations of the North East Local Enterprise Partnership, and in relation to North of Tyne devolution.

Councillor Day, on behalf of the Culture and Leisure Sub-Committee, thanked her colleagues Councillors Drummond, McMeekan and Craven, who contributed to the review and the officers from Cultural Services and Democratic Services who had facilitated the work of the Group.

It was **agreed** that the report be received and the recommendations of the Cultural Development Plan Sub Group be submitted to the Overview, Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee for consideration and referral to Cabinet.