



## REPORT TO COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE – 5 JULY 2018

### CULTURE & SPORT – DELIVERING THE STRATEGIES

#### 1 Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to:

- 1.1 consider the development areas outlined below; and
- 1.2 provide appropriate comment and guidance to the Culture & Sport Sub-committee

#### 2 Background / Discussion

- 2.1 At its meeting of 26<sup>th</sup> April 2018 Full Council agreed new ten-year strategies for Culture and for Sport & Physical Activity, designed in consultation with partners, service users and the wider community, to deliver on the Council's Priorities, particularly the commitment to impact positively on Health & Wellbeing outcomes. At the same meeting it was agreed to pilot a new way of delivering these services in a Business Unit, and that the Communities Committee would have delegated authority for cultural services and for oversight of the Business Unit. The Communities Committee agreed, at the meeting on 31<sup>st</sup> May 2018, the establishment of a sub-committee to more effectively support the development of the Culture & Sport Business Unit (CSBU). A separate report updates members of the Committee on the development of the CSBU.
- 2.2 The new sub-committee is specifically designed to harness a new range of experiences, knowledge and perspectives in supporting the creative development of culture and sport services. At all times the sub-committee is guided by the new strategies agreed by Full Council, however Communities Committee retains also the responsibility for the more detailed strategic developments which will implement the strategies. The benefits of the sub-committee will be maximised if its contribution to significant policy development is guided by the prior consideration of the Communities Committee. This report seeks to outline proposals for development of policies which will drive forward the new strategies, for members' early consideration, with the objective to providing guidance and direction to the Sub-committee.

#### Building the Best Library Service

- 2.3 Aberdeenshire Council has one of the best records in Scotland of investing in its library service. Despite this, there is a concerning trend of reducing usage in some of the mid-range libraries, whereas the overall figure is increasing as a result of investment in new campus libraries. These new libraries offer a 21<sup>st</sup> century environment in which to take up the services on offer – including books, toys, games, periodicals, internet access, ICT access, learning activities, reader development activities, etc

- 2.4 The Council recognises the high regard in which the Libraries & Information Service is held by its users, with the most recent user survey reporting 98% satisfaction, and the unique, positive contribution a library service makes to community cohesion, individual learning and individual wellbeing. The Service has been considering how best to support the service's development, in line with best practice learning from across the country, to ensure it is best positioned to bring the maximum positive impact to communities for the next decade, whilst retaining the best of current provision. The Service believes the key benefits it should be seeking from refreshed library services would be:
- Wider geographic reach
  - Focus on targeted interventions in literacy and informal learning
  - Refurbishment of libraries fit for the 21<sup>st</sup> century
  - A more effective, less carbon-intensive mobile provision
  - The best online services and digital approaches to community information and 'signposting'
- 2.5 The Service is mindful of the wider financial climate in which libraries and the public sector is operating, however seeks to be ambitious for a more effective library service within that context. This may require specific approaches in each of our individual communities to craft an offer which continues to support current usage patterns, but reaches out to the majority of people who are currently non-users. This may include, in some cases, carefully considered dis-investment in some of the buildings portfolio, as agreed in the new strategies,
- 2.6 Supporting schools and school libraries is a key part of the mission for the Libraries & Information Service. Development work will need to include users of this service.
- 2.7 Key principles in taking forward this discussion will be to engage meaningfully with members of the sub-committee, driven by this committee's guidance, prior to consultation with local people about service principles, on a network by network basis. This information would then be considered at area committees, and the Education & Children's Services Committee, potentially in a workshop format, prior to consideration by the Communities Committee in autumn.

### **Active Everywhere**

- 2.8 In a similar vein, it is widely recognised that the Council's historic investment in major new sporting facilities has had an impressive impact on levels of physical activity in the communities. Evidence suggests that there is a disproportionately positive impact on people from within lower SIMD deciles.
- 2.9 It is also clear however that provision of good facilities tends to encourage the physically active to become more active, whereas the greatest long-term social and health benefits come from supporting people who are currently inactive, to become active. Physical inactivity is explicitly recognised as the biggest factor in reducing life expectancy and quality of life, adding considerable pressures on health and social care which will increase significantly over time.

- 2.10 The historic focus of the Sport & Physical Activity Service has tended to be on facility provision, whereas, to achieve the new strategic outcomes, there is a need to re-balance resources towards reaching out to support people who would benefit from being more active. This will include:
- older people in walking, rambling, gardening etc
  - teenagers at most risk of giving up on physical activity
  - people living in SIMD deciles where health outcome are already poorer
- 2.11 A second focus will be on seeking to re-balance resources to support upgrading mid-scale facilities, given there is clear evidence that the quality of provision can act as a barrier to non-users.
- 2.12 Cognisant again of the financial constraints in which the public sector is operating, the service will work to increase the range of activities and offers in facilities at full-cost-recovery-plus whilst retaining subsidised access. . This will maximise the appropriate financial return on the council's significant investment in facilities, to be re-invested in wider social benefits. This review will seek to identify times at which facilities are least used.
- 2.13 Key principles in taking forward this discussion will be to engage meaningfully with members of the sub-committee, driven by this committee's guidance, prior to consultation with local people about service principles, on a network by network basis. This information would then be considered at area committees, potentially in a workshop format, prior to consideration by the Communities Committee in autumn.

### **Aberdeenshire Pitches Strategy**

- 2.14 Work is currently started on mapping the provision of outdoor sports pitches and facilities, recognising the huge usage numbers across Aberdeenshire in a wide variety of field sports, most frequently organised by volunteers from local communities. Currently artificial pitches are let by the schools side of ECS, or the Culture & Sport services depending upon whether their primary function is a school resource or a community resource, whilst always seeking to maximise benefits to the whole community. Grass pitches are usually let and managed by Landscape Services. This can cause significant confusion and inconsistency for users.
- 2.15 The three services involved are working towards integrating the letting and administration of outdoor pitches and sports facilities under the banner of the Council's Culture & Sport Business Unit, with a view to providing consistency and transparency to users in their booking process and usage.
- 2.16 At the same time, the Service's mapping is designed to deliver to elected members a comprehensive scheduled of current pitches and outdoor assets. Members will be aware that several pitches would benefit from upgrading, and of growing pressures from the success of local clubs for enhanced facilities including floodlighting and artificial pitches. The anticipated review would include the requirements and aspirations of sports clubs and users, usage patterns and local demographics. User demands for enhanced facilities are challenging in the current financial climate. The review will seek to identify sources of external funding, and examples of community fund-raising to support members' consideration.

- 2.17 The development of the Pitches Strategy will be predicated on meaningful engagement with local users and sports clubs, and with elected members in local wards or area committee. It is anticipated that the strategy will be considered in the sub-committee before being tabled for Communities Committee' consideration in the autumn.

### **Arts & Heritage**

- 2.18 The staffing structure for Arts & Heritage services has been realigned with the objectives of the Cultural Strategy, whilst retaining strengths in supporting the nationally recognised museum collections. The service's future development will provide a greater focus on:
- developing exhibitions, particularly popular exhibitions which can generate income either through special charges or donations
  - bringing local objects out on display wherever possible
  - developing the use of our theatres for music, comedy, theatre, film etc, working alongside the valued existing community groups
  - development of a pilot Doric & Traditional Music Festival, working with Economic Development and the Festivals Unit of VisitAberdeenShire
  - supporting third sector partners and strengthening the local "cultural infrastructure" (eg networking, shared training opportunities, co-operative marketing, etc)

### **Community & Town Halls and Venues**

- 2.19 The Council has agreed that the management of community and town halls, currently sitting with the Property Service, will be moved within the Culture & Sport Business Unit. With three objectives:
- providing venues for culture and sport "content" designed to maximise the vibrancy of local villages and towns
  - developing a service area with particular specialism in supporting events' hires, including aligning this service with the current catering service to maximise usage and income
  - further developing the asset rationalisation programme led by Property Services and Area Managers to ensure the best fit between requirements and affordability

### **Wider Context**

- 2.20 As highlighted in the new strategies, the approach the service is taking in developing these initiatives is predicated on meaningful engagement with elected members in their localities, local people, clubs and partner agencies. This engagement will be proportionate and reasonable, focussed on being inclusive whilst supporting timeous delivery of change and positive benefits.
- 2.21 The objective of the strategies is to increase positive outcomes for communities – particularly in Health & Wellbeing, but also in other areas such as Learning & Achievement, Inclusion & Diversity and Economic Development. At the same time there is a recognition of the financial context in which the services operate. Proposals will need to balance these factors.

- 2.22 The Head of Finance and Monitoring Officer within Business Services have been consulted in the preparation of this report and their comments have been incorporated within the report and are satisfied that the report complies with the Scheme of Governance and relevant legislation.

### **3 Scheme of Governance**

- 3.1 The Committee is able to consider this item in terms of Section C.6 of the List of Committee Powers in Part 2A of the Scheme of Governance as it relates to library and museum services, sports, culture and heritage.

### **4 Implications and Risk**

- 4.1 An equality impact assessment is not required because no specific changes are being agreed as a result of this report. As part of the development process EIAs will be developed and presented to the Subcommittee and Committee.
- 4.2 There are no staffing and financial implications arising directly from this report.
- 4.3 The following Risks have been identified as relevant to this matter on a Corporate Level: Failure to identify the most effective ways of delivering culture and sport services may reduce the impact of the services and impair the capacity to deliver on the Council priority, "Encourage active lifestyles and promote well-being with a focus on obesity & mental health". It could also impair the capacity to achieve the priority of "A future Fit ECS Estate", the priority of "Support(ing) inclusive, Vibrant and Healthy Communities" as detailed on page 24 of the Strategic Risk Register pertaining to Education and Children's Services.
- 4.4 There are no Town Centre First Principle implications arising directly from this report, however the principles will inform the development of specific policy areas.

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Date: 28<sup>th</sup> June 2018

