

REPORT TO COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE – 6 JUNE 2019

DEVELOPING LIVE LIFE ABERDEENSHIRE BUSINESS UNIT - UPDATE

1 Recommendations

The Communities Committee is recommended to:

1.1 Consider progress made in developing the culture & sport business unit

2 Background / Discussion

2.1 At its meeting on December 20, 2018, the Communities Committee agreed a report, "Delivering the Culture & Sport Business Unit", and requested quarterly updates during 2019 of progress in developing the unit. This report outlines some of the key development areas.

Launch of "Live Life Aberdeenshire"

2.2 Over the weekend of 25th-27th January, the Council launched Live Life Aberdeenshire, it's "new and innovative way of delivering high quality sports and cultural services that fulfil the aspirations of our communities". Around Aberdeenshire all culture and sports facilities offered something to tempt people to engage with the services. This included:

- taster activity sessions
- free access to swims
- sport fairs – with representatives from local voluntary organisation
- free entry to Macduff Aquarium
- A virtual cycle tour in local libraries
- Wellbeing sessions
- Free musical events in libraries
- Customer engagement – asking users and non-users about programme developments

2.3 The theme of launch was 'New Year, New You, New Us', emphasising business as usual (January being a key time to sell sports memberships), and a focus on the customer, with 'New Us' being the third element.

2.4 17,474 people took part in the activities, many for the first time; which is over 3,000 more than in the same period the previous year. The services made a big push to get people to sign up for membership, recording 10% more sales than the previous year. The arts and sports outreach teams ran special events in schools, communities and LLA extending the reach of the launch significantly.

2.5 Local facilities and managers were supported to have accounts on social media up and running to promote activities locally. The twitter hashtags #NewYearNewYouNewUs and #LiveLifeAberdeenshire were well used and helped create a significant buzz around the launch activities. Buildings had LLA

logo posters, and staff had LLA branded t-shirts to embed the new logo, which works exceptionally well in print and online.

- 2.6 At the same time LLA launched its new website, which received widespread acclaim for being both good-looking and easy to use. The website subsequently won an award at the Edge Conference, and has had 221,207 visits, or 93,765 users to date.
- 2.7 In the same report, Committee agreed LLA's "brand values":
- Local
 - Customer first
 - Safe, healthy and a great place to work

Services are delivering on making these real straight away, for example:

- Delegated budgets to local librarians
- Community bus providing transport from Laurencekirk village to Mearns Campus library organised locally with delegated budgets
- LLA website designed with customers in mind, including online booking and "live chat" using Artificial Intelligence
- Individual facilities have their own social media accounts, managed by local staff
- Sports teams being tasked with developing local programmes in consultation with their communities

These have also been the theme of two management team sessions, and were at the heart of a wider management seminar designed to embed and extend the values, and make them real in the lives of all staff. Along with the Statement of Ambition agreed by Communities Committee at the same meeting, there is a significant resource for the services to develop a new, more entrepreneurial culture for the staff team.

Governance

- 2.8 The Culture & Sport Sub-committee met formally for the first time on 8th February, and subsequently on 6th March, and 18th April. As well as formal business the members met for development sessions on the same day. The formal agenda has had a focus on inviting frontline staff and local managers to present to the Sub-committee about topics such as the launch, and the impact of the new strategies. This has facilitated a more discursive approach to the Sub-committee's leadership and scrutiny role, but also been appreciated by staff in terms of celebrating success.
- 2.9 The Sub-committee decided to develop its work by using working groups, with topics agreed following several prioritisation sessions. These groups include a member who is a councillor and one who is not. The working group's initial topics are:
- Property maintenance processes
 - Fundraising
 - Support to the business planning change process
 - Policy & budget

The groups are specifically supported by LLA officers however the directors of Education & Children's Services (ECS) and Business Services have both

attended meetings to be clear that there is a cross-Council commitment to support the development work. Working groups report back in to the development sessions of the Sub-committee, with the option to commission more formal reports if required.

Supporting Staff

- 2.10 Following consultation with the management team, the weekly management huddles have been continued as a light touch way of promoting good, fast communication. These are virtual meetings, which are agenda-free and designed for professional dialogue rather than structured, minuted meetings. (There is clearly a place for the latter approach also.) Joining the huddle is voluntary depending on diaries, with no papers or preparation required, and a resistance to specific tasks coming out of the discussion. They are as short as need be, but no longer than an hour. Feedback is that they are valued and valuable.
- 2.11 In the first quarter the service committed to a wider 'management seminar, which is scheduled for 28th May. Titled "New Us" and with the topic of "Inspiring and Leading Change". Over 100 local managers and staff are invited to attend at Fraserburgh Community & Sports Centre – the largest ever gathering of Aberdeenshire's culture and sport staff.
- 2.12 Arrangements are being made to align the management and booking of community centres and town halls in to LLA, on the basis that they are services which would benefit from the new, more-entrepreneurial operating context envisaged for LLA. The front-end management of outdoor sports facilities is being considered as part of a parallel process agreed by this committee following discussion around Portlethen pitches. ECS is considering whether there is benefit in aligning school community and sports lets within LLA. These services would sit in a single Events & Lets team under the LLA Service Manager – Facilities. Discussions are underway with HR&OD colleagues to facilitate this change.

Design phase

- 2.13 Work continues on exploring options for a different operational context for LLA, designed to maximise income and impact. "Quick wins" are being finalised for sharing with the staff team at the "New Us" management seminar. These originated in a session with LLA Managers which was led by the question of 'how to make the boat go faster' – what changes we can make to help managers focus on the core task of increasing participation and impact and generating additional revenue.
- 2.14 This work is led by a project board chaired by the Director of ECS. More fundamentally, the board is looking at what changes can be put in place to embed a more business-like context for planning, budgeting and decision-making to best support the Council's social objectives. There is a cross-Council team looking at ambitions for ICT/digital, staff development and facilities-development, to build in to a five-year business plan, co-authored with LLA and Finance services. This development has evolved from the positive and meaningful dialogue across the Council about what constitutes the best-fit, bespoke environment for these services, firmly embedded within the Council's

existing structures. The conversations across services are both creative and fundamental. It is worth noting that this part of the process is perhaps worth taking time to explore most fully, with the objective of delivering longer-term benefits as a result.

Year One themes

- 2.15 At its December meeting the Communities Committee agreed five key themes for LLA in its pilot year:
- Embedding the brand values (discussed above)
 - Improving Marketing
 - Improving digital services
 - Raising new funds from non-council sources
 - Positive impacts on health and wellbeing
- 2.15 LLA has created a marketing working group, comprising officers from across the services. As part of the development of the LLA brand, a report was received from the industry experts who supported that process, to benchmark LLA programming against similar authorities across Scotland and the UK to identify areas of operation where there should be capacity to increase participation and income.
- 2.16 Improved digital services is being picked up by a working group of LLA and ICT staff, which has the objective of being aspirational and ambitious is developing a vision for digital approaches and services which best meet the needs of LLA and its users, within the context of strengthening the service's financial performance. This work will feed in to the five year Business Plan, which will drive the operational implementation of the ten year strategies agreed by Council.
- 2.17 One of the Sub-committee working groups is focussed on raising new funds, and is developing two pilot projects. The Sub-committee Policy & Budget working group is considering how best to develop the health and well-being links between LLA and colleagues in the health service. At service level, there have been meetings with Area Managers to focus on developing LLA's contribution to the health and wellbeing (and learning and regeneration) outcomes in Locality Plans. Services have continued to have this as a focus, driven by the Strategies agreed by Full Council in April 2018. These include:
- Developing and embedding the Macmillan Move More programme across LLA, including culture and libraries; and developing the pathway for participants after their referral period
 - Developed a temporary Walk Co-ordinator, to support community focussed walking activities, and structured programmes encouraging walks; funded by Paths For All
 - Supporting initiatives responding to local health and wellbeing needs – including competitive Walking Netball in Turiff, and Inclusive Archery supporting engagement by people with autism in Ellon
- 2.18 The service has a commitment to report back on Success Criteria for the business unit development following a report agreed by the Committee at its 20th December 2018 meeting. The measures are powerful and complex, and will be reported back at the next cycle of this committee.

- 2.19 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 in this report and are satisfied that the report complies with the Scheme of Governance and relevant legislation. The Heads of ICT, HR&OD and Property have also been consulted.

3 Scheme of Governance

- 3.1 The Committee is able to consider this item in terms of Part 2A of the Scheme of Governance.

4 Implications and Risk

- 4.1 An equality impact assessment is not required as no decisions are being taken as a result of this report.
- 4.2 There are no staffing or financial implications implicit arising from this report.
- 4.3 The following Risks have been identified as relevant to this matter on a Corporate Level -
ACORP 001- Budget Pressures, in that there is a risk that income targets may not be reached if action is not taken to adapt the pricing strategy. The following Risks have been identified as relevant to this matter on a Strategic Level, ECSSRS004 – supporting inclusive and healthy vibrant communities in that further significantly increased prices carry the potential of creating a barrier to access to healthy lifestyles for some participant groups.

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Report prepared by John Harding, Head of Service – Live Life Aberdeenshire
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