

ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL

COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

CULTURE AND SPORT SUB-COMMITTEE

WOODHILL HOUSE, ABERDEEN, 8 FEBRUARY, 2019

Present: Mr D Cook, (Chair); Councillor A Forsyth, Mr J Knowles, Councillor C Pike, and Councillor A Simpson (Vice-Chair).

Apologies: Councillor L Berry, Ms K Penman, and Mr C Sutherland.

Officers: Head of Lifelong Learning and Leisure; Head of HR & OD; Service Managers, Business Development, Facilities and Funding, and Sport and Physical Activity; Accountancy Finance Manager; Principal Solicitor (Governance); and Committee Officer (J McRobbie).

In Attendance: Councillors EA Stirling and I Walker, Chair and Vice -Chair of the Communities Committee; Community Leisure Officer (C Russell); Learning Officer (L Murison); and Reader and Events Development Librarian (J Coroon); and Libraries Service Manager, Project Manager (S Jamieson); Digital Development Officer, Project Team Member – Libraries (G Leggat); and System Support, Libraries, (G Leggat); and Community Leisure Officer, Project Team Member – Sports (S Grant).

1. SEDERUNT AND DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

The Chair asked if members had interests to declare. No interests were declared.

2. STATEMENT ON EQUALITIES

In making decisions on the following items of business, the Sub-Committee agreed, in terms of Section 149 of the Equality Act, 2010:-

- (1) to have due regard to the need to:-
 - (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
 - (b) advance equality of opportunity between those who share a protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and
 - (c) foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and persons who do not share it. and
- (2) where an Equality Impact Assessment was provided, to consider its contents and take those into account when reaching a decision.

3. INTRODUCTION BY CHAIR

Mr Cook welcomed those members present to the first formal meeting of the Sub-Committee, thanking them for their commitment to date and expressing hope for successful joint working in future days. He invited Cllrs Stirling and Walker of Aberdeenshire Council, as Chair and Vice-Chair of the Sub-Committee's parent, Communities, Committee to address the meeting.

Cllr Stirling spoke of her appreciation for the work undertaken by the Sub-Committee in its informal meetings to date, welcoming the innovative approach being piloted in respect of the delivery of sport and culture across Aberdeenshire, involving appointed external members who would bring their expertise to the table. This presented a great opportunity to make a real difference to the authority, and she hoped that, with the support of officers, the Sub-Committee would be the catalyst for greater empowerment of staff to make more decisions at a more local level. Councillor Stirling concluded by wishing the Sub-Committee success in the next 12 months of the pilot year, giving reassurances that there would be frequent opportunities for dialogue, formal and informal, between the Communities Committee and the Sub-Committee, as required, to support and not stifle the process.

Mr Cook, on behalf of the Sub-Committee, thanked Councillors Stirling and Walker for attending the meeting and the words of encouragement and support.

4. DEVELOPING THE CULTURE AND SPORT BUSINESS UNIT (LIVE LIFE ABERDEENSHIRE)

There had been circulated a report dated 29 January, 2019 by the Director of Education and Children's Services, Aberdeenshire Council, requesting members' consideration of a trio of reports which had been considered by the Communities Committee at its meeting on 20 December, 2018, relating to (a) Delivering the Culture and Sport Business Unit, (b) Assessment Criteria for the Culture and Sport Business Unit Pilot; and (c) Culture and Sport Performance Reporting.

Having heard from officers of the various comments and amendments which the Communities Committee had made on the reports, there was discussion of challenges faced in establishing baseline figures for performance monitoring, especially those relating to difficult to reach groups; the sequence of reporting progress to the parent committee; the sub-committee's own monitoring requirements, which may be content to consider raw data rather than "cleansed" data; the costs of establishing the new "Live Life Aberdeenshire" brand; the increasing potential for the Sub-Committee to set its own agendae for meetings; the type of financial information which would assist the Sub-Committee in considering the effect of its work; the required interface on costings of the Council's health and wellbeing strategies and intent, with not all areas capable of breaking even, let alone demonstrating profit; the need to support existing staff that the altered approach was not intended to put jobs at risk, particularly relevant in the context of the Council's recent budget statement which proposed to use job vacancies as part of the balanced budget; the lessons which could be learnt from organisations such as Macbi; and the period in which a realistic expectation of organisational cultural change might be expected.

The Sub-Committee **agreed:-**

- (1) to note for their interest the reports as approved by the Communities Committee; and
- (2) that specific areas of interest be pursued, either through officer-led reports, or via the various working groups already established by the Sub-Committee, and reported in due course.

5. PRESENTATION – LIVE LIFE ABERDEENSHIRE WEBSITE

The Chair, on behalf of the Sub-Committee, welcomed Sharon Jamieson, Libraries Services Manager, Gavin Leggat, Digital Development Officer, and Stuart Grant, Community Leisure Officer, as representatives of the cross-service Project Team which had worked, over a tight timescale, on the revamped website for Live Life Aberdeenshire.

The Sub-Committee heard from the project team representatives of the challenges in developing the website from its previous iteration, with difficulties in updating pages, responsiveness, constraint of Council website guidelines, lack of high image content, inability

of facilities to sell themselves, and the lack of identity. In contrast, the new website provided an ability for customers to have a shop-like experience, had allowed the development of a “Live Chat” option, using iterative AI to recognise and answer the most frequently asked questions, however voiced, with staff back-up for those issues to which “Livvy” could not (yet) respond; the ability to provide information within a few clicks; increased team ownership of the site; and the opportunity for local staff to work with their local pages, updated for each venue. Officers also provided information to the Sub-Committee on how the future phases of the website were scheduled to be developed, with the current phase to be completed by mid-February, and Phase 2 completed by 31 March, 2019.

Having discussed the website hits since 26 January, 2019, and the public engagement demonstrated by the voucher downloads in the same period; the plans for the further development of the site; and the project’s nomination for an EDGE (Affirming the Transformational Power and Creativity of Libraries in a Changing World) Award, the Sub-Committee **agreed:-**

- (1) to welcome the website development with its clear branding, yet reflection of individual facilities, as a positive tool for staff empowerment;
- (2) to comment “Livvy” as a constantly evolving method of extending customer response opportunities 24/7;
- (3) that officers consider and report when possible on options to add a donation button to the online payment facility;
- (4) that website analytics inform the Sub-Committee’s future consideration of Performance Indicators;
- (5) to welcome the localised ownership of venue pages to allow for easier communication with customers, and explanation of, scheduled, and unscheduled closures or changed to expected activity; and
- (6) to commend staff, both within the service and in IT, on their excellent and inspirational work in developing the website to date.

6. PRESENTATION – LIVE LIFE ABERDEENSHIRE SHOWCASE WEEKEND

The Chair, on behalf of the Sub-Committee welcomed Camille Russell, (Community Leisure Officer), Leslie Murison (Learning Officer), and Jackie Coroon, Reader and Events Development Librarian to the meeting, which thereafter received a presentation on the Live Life Aberdeenshire Launch weekend, with over 300 activity sessions across all sports, arts/heritage, and library facilities. Officers spoke of the successful use of social media to engage the communities of Aberdeenshire with the events; the different types of session offered as taster sessions; partners’ participation in the sessions; customer feedback; and proposals for future development of the events on offer.

There was discussion of the successes and learning points of the launch weekend, and members spoke of their own experiences at some of the events, and the expectation that staff had been empowered by the positive approach.

It was **agreed:-**

- (1) to commend staff for the very successful launch; and
- (2) to await the future developments, informed by customer and staff feedback.

7. FINANCIAL MONITORING AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2019

There had been circulated a report dated 30 January, 2019 by the Director of Education and Children's Services, (a) reporting the revenue and capital monitoring for culture and sports to 31 December, 2018 and (b) seeking members' consideration of the report.

There was discussion of the forecast outturn; the methods by which financial data was captured and reported; the role of the Sub-Committee in monitoring the information; the residual imprint in reporting of the previous separation of the budget into client and trading operating accounts; the potential requirement to consider income targets against income generated, with narrative reasons for any variance; consideration of financial information being best presented on an individual location/ facility basis; and the benefit of holding a workshop to explore the current processes behind budget monitoring and consider how best to support the Sub-Committee's need for specific financial information.

The Sub-Committee **agreed:-**

- (1) that a budget monitoring workshop be scheduled in early course; and
- (2) to note, in all other respects, the revenue and capital monitoring for culture and sports as at 31 December, 2018.