

CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL

23 September 2020

COUNCILLOR V GAY - CABINET MEMBER FOR CULTURE & WELLBEING

For the period June 2020 to September 2020

1 Progress on Portfolio Matters.

Business as usual activity

Grants

Arts & Culture Fund – There has been a reduction in grant applications as a result of Covid 19. Only two grant applications were received for the period March 2020 – July 2020. Grants were awarded to North Norfolk Writers Group - £2,000 and “Extraordinary Lives” poetry project £2,500. Unfortunately due to Covid 19 some previously funded projects had to be cancelled, postponed or delivered virtually.

Community Transport Fund – No grant applications were received between March 2020 and July 2020. It is likely that this is due to the impact of Covid 19 on Community Transport services. Organisations that provide community transport will be proactively contacted and encouraged to apply to the current round.

The new North Norfolk Sustainable Communities Fund reflects the Council's increased focus on environmental and community sustainability and wellbeing. The fund aims to support communities in developing new and innovative projects to improve their environment as well as health and social wellbeing. The first round of this received 10 applications: one application was ineligible and one was withdrawn as alternative funding was sourced.

The Panel will meet on 7th October to consider eight applications for grants between £1,000 & £15,000. For projects requesting grants under £1,000 a smaller monthly Panel will meet to enable decisions on these grant applications to be made more quickly.

Wellbeing/Social Prescribing

The Council has contracts to deliver Social Prescribing services in North Norfolk on behalf of Norfolk County Council and two Primary Care Networks in North Norfolk. The five Social Prescribing Officers support vulnerable people to help them deal with or manage complex or significant issues which are impacting on their health and wellbeing. Currently this is not a self-referral service. Organisations such as Health, social care, police, housing associations and internal NNDC services with consent refer vulnerable people for support. During June, July & August 104 referrals were received.

In total this year so far 315 referrals have been received.

This figure is lower than in previous years (probably due to Covid and people not going to their GPs as much); although since the lockdown restrictions ended the number of referrals have increased. It is anticipated as the longer term effects of Covid become known, in particular the economic impacts (especially with the impending end of the Job Retention Scheme and suspension of evictions) there will be a significant increase in referrals.

The District Council has submitted its thoughts to a consultation on the Norfolk Older People's Social Care Strategy.

The Council is working with the Sue Lambert Trust to help the Trust in providing assistance with remote meetings for its clients.

Information, Advice & Guidance

The Council has previously funded Norfolk Citizens Advice to provide an Information, Advice & Guidance service. In line with NCC this is now being reviewed. Due to Covid 19, Norfolk CA have been unable to reopen offices in North Norfolk and are offering a telephone and web based service only.

An interim grant has been given to Norfolk Citizens Advice whilst a review of IAG services is carried out.

Leisure Facilities

The fitness suites (gyms) at all three main Council owned leisure centres (Fakenham, Splash and Victory) reopened on 25 July, with group exercise recommencing at Fakenham and Splash also. The two swimming pools, at Splash and Victory, reopened on 22 August. The three dual-use sports centres (based at the three Academy sites) will reopen in November.

The Leisure Operator has implemented extensive measures to safeguard their customers and staff, including enhanced cleaning regimes, hand sanitiser throughout, floor markings, signage and gym equipment being moved into adjacent studios (to ensure customers can participate at a safe distance). Initial feedback from customers has been very positive, and that they are happy to be able to return in safe manner.

The first throughput figures (visits) for the three facilities in August were 12,813. Whilst these are approximately one third of what we would normally expect, they are higher than estimated and quite encouraging.

Following the period of temporary closure, there has been a 17% loss of members to those facilities. Thus in an effort to incentivise customers to return, and given the now limited offer/provision, membership prices have been reduced as follows:

Fakenham:	£20/month
Splash:	£20/month
Victory:	£24.99
Cromer Gym:	£15.00

Countryside

The relaxing of restrictions on movement saw a significant increase in visitors to our country parks and woodland sites. For example, Holt Country Park (HCP) had an increase of over 3,000 visitors compared to July and August 2019.

The Visitor Centre at the site has been redesigned and reopened, and good feedback has been received from customers.

A new sculpture was installed and unveiled at HCP and discussions regarding the installation of additional sculpture across the Council's woodland sites are being held.

The Green Flag inspections (being undertaken via mystery visits) are taking place during September (somewhat later than usual, due to the pandemic), with results due in October.

Due to Covid there will be no Countryside events until February 2021 at the earliest. This enables the team to investigate alternative options, such as self-led trails for future holiday periods such as Easter, Halloween and Christmas.

The team is investigating the possibility of providing volunteer days for Council staff to assist with projects at our sites as part of the Council's volunteer scheme. This would be a good opportunity to bring staff and teams safely back together following the Covid restrictions, whilst supporting one of the Council's services.

Parkrun

Parkrun UK announced that it is aiming to restart their England based events towards the end of October (date to be confirmed). It is unclear at this stage whether the Parkrun at Sheringham will be able to commence but Officers are in discussions with the National Trust team at Sheringham Park, in order to agree when it will be safe to recommence this popular event.

Beaches

Due to the Coronavirus pandemic it was not possible to provide a full beach safety service across all of our six Blue Flag beaches this year. However, the RNLI Lifeguards have provided patrols at Sheringham, Mundesley, Cromer and Sea Palling.

The relaxation of Government restrictions saw a large increase in visitors to the District and its resorts. There were no major incidents at the Council-run beaches. Full visitor numbers and incidents statistics will be reported at the end of the year.

Culture

The Pier operator recommenced trading on the Pier on 13 June. Initially this only included take-away refreshments, gifts and merchandise.

The Council has provided support and advice the operator, which has led to an independent organisation providing an indoor show entitled, 'Strictly Variety' in the theatre. It is believed that this was the first Covid-safe indoor theatre show in the country; it comprised single person acts, and operated with comprehensive social distancing measures, with vastly reduced audience numbers. The shows have reportedly been a great success and, to-date, every show has been sold out. The shows will help inform how and when other shows may be able to be planned and operated.

The District Council has also continued with its Orchestras Live programme and has supported a live outdoor concert at Mannington Hall, supported by mini-performances outside local care homes. These outreach activities went down very well indeed and, like the pier variety shows, the main event was sold out. This demonstrates a demand for such concerts and shows that they can be staged in a Covid-secure way, although to a much reduced audience. This event was promoted by Sheringham Little Theatre, for which it raised funds.

Covid 19 related activity

As the lockdown eased and shielding was paused the requests for support from vulnerable people reduced considerably. Requests for support with prescriptions or shopping are primarily being assigned to Voluntary Norfolk (to DBS checked volunteers). The Council is signposting people experiencing economic hardship, for people on an income-related benefit, to the Norfolk Assistance Scheme, which is able to provide financial support (e.g. for the purchase of furniture, white goods etc.). People requesting the Companionship Calls which the Council previously undertook, are referred (with consent) to Voluntary Norfolk or a local community organisation.

The Council is working with Norfolk County Council to provide a local Contact Tracing service in North Norfolk. This is for people who have tested positive for Covid 19 but where national or NCC contact tracers have been unable to reach them by phone. A team of NNDC officers will be available to visit people to request that they register details of people they have been in contact with. Support will be also offered to people who have tested positive for Covid 19 to enable them to self-isolate.

2 Forthcoming Activities and Developments.

The Mammoth Marathon did not go ahead this year but plans are afoot to stage it next May, with the majority of participants choosing to retain their registration for the postponed event.

The Norfolk Records Committee, of which I am a member, has not met in any form since March. But by the time you read this the County Archives will have reopened (on September 15th). Researchers will be obliged to book their place and their documents in advance but this will be very welcome

news to family historians, community groups and students.

3 Meetings attended

Apart from my regular Council meetings, I have attended meetings of the Health and Well Being Board for Norfolk, the Norfolk Joint Museums Committee, the Board of the Sheringham Little Theatre and a briefing meeting on the subject of the Cromer Museum. By the time that you read this I shall also have attended another meeting of the District Councils' sub-committee of the Health and Well Being Board.