

AT A MEETING of the CULTURE, COMMUNITIES AND RURAL AFFAIRS
SELECT COMMITTEE of the COUNTY COUNCIL held at The Castle,
Winchester on Thursday, 4 November 2010.

PRESENT

Chairman:
p Councillor Elaine Still

Vice-Chairman:
p Councillor Alan Rice, TD

Councillors:

p Alan Broadhurst
p Peter Chegwyn
a Peter Edgar
a Michael Geddes
Ron Hussey
p Roger Kimber

p Peter Mason
p Alexis McEvoy
p Frank Pearce
p Jenny Radley
p Thomas Thacker

Also in attendance: Councillor Margaret Snaith-Tempia, Executive Member for Culture and Recreation, Councillor Keith Chapman, Chairman of Policy & Resources Select Committee, and Cllr Andrew Joy, Member for Alton Town.

46. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Peter Edgar, who was on other County Council business, and Cllr Michael Geddes.

47. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Members were mindful that, where they believed they had a personal or personal prejudicial interest in any matter to be considered at the meeting, they should normally at the time of the debate declare their interest, and having regard to the circumstances described in paragraphs 9, 10, 11 and 12 of the County Council's Code of Conduct, consider whether to leave the meeting whilst the matter was discussed save for exercising any right to speak in accordance with Paragraph 12 of the Code.

Yinnon Ezra, Director of the Culture Communities and Rural Affairs Department – declared he is trustee and Board Member of the Museums Libraries and Archives Council (Item 5)

Cllr Roger Kimber – declared he is one of the County

Council representatives on the Aldershot Military Museum Joint Committee (Item 5)

Cllr Tom Thacker – declared he is due to become a trustee of the Hampshire Buildings Preservation Trust (Item 5)

48. **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Culture, Communities & Rural Affairs Select Committee Meeting held on 8 July 2010 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

49. **CHAIRMAN'S COMMUNICATIONS**

- a) The Chairman reminded Members that each Select Committee usually had a briefing on Budgets and Performance around the end of November, to support Members scrutiny of the budget at the January Select Committee meetings. Considering the committee diary to avoid clashes, the date for the budget briefing for this committee was Thursday 2nd December at 10.30am. The Chairman encouraged Members to attend this briefing where possible.
- b) The Chairman reported that at the last meeting, Members requested an update on announcements by central government relevant to the remit of this committee. A bulletin of such announcements had been circulated by email to committee members.
- c) The Chairman announced that at the April meeting Members had requested a visit to the Basingstoke Canal and the date identified for this visit was 18 November in the morning.
- d) The Chairman noted that Cabinet had agreed at their September meeting for detailed work to be undertaken on a proposed merger of the County Council's Culture, Communities and Rural Affairs Department with the Property, Business, Regulatory and IT Department. The Chairman reported that the Chief Executive intended to take a further report to Cabinet later in November detailing the financial, service and other implications of the proposal. The Chairman announced that it had been arranged for the Members of this Committee to receive a briefing on the proposed merger on 30 November at 2pm.

50. **DEPUTATION**

The Committee received a deputation on behalf of 'Save the Alton Museums' by Luath Grant Ferguson and Rosie Hayward, requesting that the proposals for the re-organisation of the Museums Service be re-considered in relation to the impact of the proposals on the accessibility of the Curtis Museum and Allen Gallery in Alton.

The Chairman acknowledged that the 'Save the Alton Museums' Campaign had also submitted a petition to the Council objecting to the proposals, which had been signed by over 4,600 people. The Chairman thanked the deputation for making their views known to the committee.

The Chairman then invited Cllr Andrew Joy, the County Councillor for Alton Town, to speak, who also commented regarding the impact of the proposals on the Alton museum.

51. **MUSEUMS AND ARTS FUTURE PLANNING**

The Director of Culture, Communities and Rural Affairs presented a report (Item 5 in the Minute Book) regarding the proposals for Phase 1 of the Museums and Arts Service review. It was reported that the department considered the proposals provided the best way to position the service for the future, and tribute was paid to staff at all levels who were continuing to work hard despite the uncertainty.

It was explained that 'Renaissance' funding received by the County Council was currently £1,150,000, and that this would come to an end at 31 March 2011. The government recently announced that 'Renaissance' would be continuing, however there would be a 15% cut to the funding, and the criteria for awarding the funding would change. It was noted that reductions likely to the core Culture Communities and Rural Affairs Department budget would compound the situation.

While the Department was applying for transition funding to support the change from the current structure to the new 'Renaissance' set up, the outcome of this application would not be known until February. The Department considered a potential funding gap of a million pounds was too great a risk, and therefore had brought forward plans to adapt the service, which if approved by the Executive Member later this month would enable the service to operate at lower cost as of

April 2011.

The decision had been taken to ensure the staff affected were the first to know the detail of the proposals prior to other stakeholders, to avoid the situation of staff finding out via the press. Members supported this approach. It was reported that the staff consultation had raised a number of technical issues which had resulted in amendments to the proposals, for example aligning with the recently agreed corporate policy to limit inclusion in ring fencing arrangements to those who had at least 4 years service.

It was noted that due to the scale of the funding reductions, capacity would be an issue, and it would not be possible to continue doing everything the service had done up to now and that services would need to be prioritised.

It was confirmed that there was no intention to close sites or remove core funding, and that the County wished to sustain community museums, but that support was required from partner agencies. Existing partnership support was a key criteria in considering the viability of continued staff presence at museums, and the relative lack of support from other partners for the Curtis Museum and Allen Gallery in Alton contributed to proposed staff changes at that site. Members supported this principle. It was noted that East Hampshire District Council did not provide funding to the Alton museum.

It was reported that discussions were ongoing with partners to identify alternative solutions for those sites that would see a reduction in full time staff presence.

Members asked questions to clarify points, for example whether community museums charge for entry. It was reported that community museums operate on a principle of free access, to encourage repeat visits from the local community. The option of museums being run by volunteers was suggested, and it was reported that should transition funding be secured, this could be used to support the development of a volunteer base in areas where full time paid staff were being reduced, with professional support provided by the 'area community museums curator' role set out in the proposals.

Members commented that it would be useful to have figures for visitor numbers and costs of venues, to see comparative usage and cost per head.

Members acknowledged the strength of feeling from the community in Alton, including the petition and other

letters and emails. Cllr Chegwyn proposed an amendment to the recommendations, that the following be added to the end of recommendation 1):

‘Except for the proposals relating to the Curtis Museum & Allen Gallery Alton, Bursledon Windmill and Aldershot Military Museum, on which the Select Committee believes further consideration and consultation with interested parties is needed to provide proposals more acceptable to local communities, museums staff and museum users.’

It was suggested that it would not be feasible to delay the process just for three venues, as the ring fencing arrangements would involve staff at those venues. Members acknowledged that if a delay was sought to the whole process, that would impact on having new arrangements in place in time for the new financial year.

The Chairman drew Members attention to the fact that Recommendation 3) indicated that work would be ongoing to identify arrangements with partners and communities that could supplement the proposed staffing arrangements.

The amendment was put to the vote and lost by 6 votes to 4. The recommendations as stated in the report were then put to the vote and agreed by 6 votes to 4. Therefore, the Select Committee agreed to support the following recommendations to the Executive Member:

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1) Taking account of the proposed strategic direction and heritage asset management approach, approves the Phase 1 reorganisation of the Hampshire Museums and Arts Service and implementation of the necessary measures to meet the financial implications and necessary timescales associated with significant funding changes.
- 2) Supports the adjustments made in response to the staff consultation process together with the objective of minimising the number of compulsory redundancies that may be required and implementing appropriate employment procedures to deliver this.
- 3) Recognises the representations and responses made in relation to the local impact of proposals, reaffirms the commitment to ongoing core support, and confirms that the maximum amount of time and effort possible will be allocated in seeking appropriate and sustainable community partnership arrangements.

4) Fully supports ongoing efforts made by the Museums and Arts Service to develop a formal business plan that seeks to achieve transitional Renaissance Funding for the 2011/12 financial year.

5) Approves a consortium bid to the MLA/DCMS involving other services and Museums for potential future New Renaissance funding in an attempt to secure the maximum amount of future funding for museums across Hampshire.

52. **RESTRUCTURE OF THE LIBRARY SERVICE, PHASE 2 – REVIEW OF THE MOBILE LIBRARY SERVICE**

The Director of Culture Communities and Rural Affairs gave a presentation on the Review of the Mobile Library Service (Item 4 in the Minute Book). It was reported that the operation of the Mobile Library Service was being reviewed as part of seeking budget savings. The aim was to prioritise the stops made, given that visits were down 23% and book issues down 39% (for 2009/10 compared to 2004/5).

It was noted that the Mobile Library Service was composed of four elements: public, community, home and family. The public service stopped in communities not near a static library, the community service visited nursing and residential homes, the home service involved staff taking books to the homes of the housebound, and the family service stopped at locations such as playgroups in target low literacy areas.

It was reported that changes were being considered such as changing the timing of stops (as in some places the vehicles only stopped for five minutes), and potentially changing the frequency of when routes were run. It was also being suggested that a mobile vehicle wouldn't stop within two miles of a static library. Members commented that in some cases this policy may not be appropriate, if access to the static library was difficult on foot or by public transport. It was reported that a consultation was being launched, and local knowledge on areas where this was the case was welcomed.

It was reported that a consultation on the service was being undertaken with library staff and the unions, County Councillors, users, managers of nursing homes and non users, with a deadline of 6 December 2010. Copies of the consultation document were circulated to the Members present. It was noted that the timing of the review was for draft proposals to be drafted in January

Action: Add update on the Review of the Mobile Library Service to the work programme

for further consultation, with a final decision expected in March or April, and implementation expected over the summer. Implementation of changes may be phased in if necessary. It was suggested that an update on the review could be brought back to the committee in the new year.

RESOLVED:

That the approach being taken in relation to the review of the Mobile Library Service is supported by the committee.

53. **RURAL DELIVERY ACTION PLAN 'COMMUNITY LEISURE AND CULTURE' THEME UPDATE**

The Director of Culture, Communities and Rural Affairs presented a report providing an update on the 'community leisure and culture' theme within the Rural Delivery Action Plan (see Item 7 in the Minute Book). It was reported that of the 61 actions under this theme, 70% were proceeding as planned and a further 25% were broadly on track. Examples of schemes within the plan were mentioned such as providing courses on I.T. skills for people in rural communities, to support access to information and services on the web.

It was noted that in the context of budget reductions it would be important to target projects effectively based on data and local knowledge. It would also be important to seek external match funding and to work with partner agencies, and to continue to develop innovative ideas for supporting rural communities.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

54. **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Chief Executive presented the Committee's Work Programme (Item 8 in the Minute Book). Members requested an update regarding the Runways End project.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee's Work Programme be approved, subject to the issues raised at this meeting.

Action: work programme be updated