

People Select Committee

Overview Meeting 2022

14 February 2022

The Environment, Culture, Leisure and Events

Context

Members are reminded of the Council's Vision that supports decision-making:

A place where people are healthy, safe and protected from harm

- This means the Borough will be a place where:
 - People live in cohesive and safe communities
 - People are supported and protected from harm
 - People live healthy lives

A place that is clean, vibrant and attractive

- This means we will enjoy:
 - Great places to live and visit
 - Clean and green spaces
 - Rich cultural experiences

A place with a thriving economy where everyone has opportunities to succeed

- This means that the Borough will have:
 - A growing economy
 - Improved education and skills development
 - Job creation and increased employment

The Council plays its part in making sure this is achieved by being a Council that is ambitious, effective and proud to serve.

- This means that we will make sure that we provide:
 - Financial sustainability and value for money
 - Dedicated and resourceful employees
 - Strong leadership and governance

Performance Reporting

Performance across the Council Plan was reported on a six-monthly basis to Executive Scrutiny Committee. Please see the link:

<http://www.egenda.stockton.gov.uk/aksstockton/users/public/admin/kab71.pl?cmte=SCR>

THE ENVIRONMENT, CULTURE, LEISURE AND EVENTS

Director – Reuben Kench

Relevant services include:

- Customer and Digital Services
- Museum and Heritage Service
- Events Service
- Libraries and Information
- Learning and Skills
- Environment, Leisure and Green Infrastructure

Council Plan 2021-2024

The Council Plan sets out the aims and objectives for all services and is refreshed on an annual basis.

The key 2021-2022 priorities for The Environment, Culture, Leisure and Events directorate are attached at Appendix 1.

Emerging Issues

Service delivery is influenced by a range of internal and external factors that develop over time. Emerging challenges and opportunities are summarised as follows:

Environment, Leisure & Green Infrastructure

- Changes to our climate and biodiversity represent unprecedented threats to the wellbeing of our communities and our response should touch almost everything we do and involve all of society. We now have an obligation to reduce carbon, mitigate for extreme weather, increase biodiversity and to reduce consumption whilst tackling our waste. Although this is a challenge, raised public awareness is also an opportunity to engage with a wider audience.
- A sedentary lifestyle and inactivity are not new challenges but the societal impacts on a less active community are significant, increasing and wide ranging.

Customer and Digital services:

- Supporting the development of the Community Mental Hub. This will potentially include the design and development of digital solutions for processes and information sharing and the provision of Customer Contact Centre support and services. The Council is working in partnership with TEWV on this project.
- Design, develop and support the provision of a booking system and associated digital solutions for the delivery of the Holiday Activity Fund for children in receipt of free school meals. The Council is working in partnership with Catalyst and activity providers on this project.

Libraries & Information

Service delivery is influenced by a range of internal and external factors that develop over time. Emerging challenges and opportunities are summarised as follows:

- Recovery from COVID pandemic in face to face library services. The succession of lockdowns, restrictions and changes to service delivery have resulted in a change in

behaviour of customers. More digital reading has taken place but physical book issues are starting to recover

Learning & Skills

- COVID-19, the Omicron variant and associated government guidance continues to impact the number of learners returning to education and/or the achievement rates of those enrolled on programmes. Referrals from strategic partners such as Job Centre Plus have significantly reduced due to the associated guidance which has restricted access to learning opportunities and increased the economic and wellbeing risk to those most vulnerable and furthest from the labour market.
- Engagement work in communities continues to be limited with restrictions in partnership work such as with schools to support families and parents through family learning programmes. Whilst apprenticeship opportunities continue to be developed with employers with the support of apprenticeship grants, difficulties remain in the recruitment process due to the limited engagement opportunities and low confidence in those seeking to enter the workplace in the current pandemic.

Events

- Anticipated loss of current Fireworks firing site as land is being developed. The scale of audiences and logistics in relation to the Fireworks display is challenging and may not be possible to find an alternative location of the size currently used.
- Early preparation and consideration of the 2023 Events Programme and potential impact due to the loss of the Riverside area and changes to the town centre.

Preston Park Museum & Grounds (PPMG)

- There has been a rise in ASB within the park at certain times and particularly during hot weather. There is a particular challenge associated with conflict between people swimming and boats on the river. We are working with enforcement and the police in relation to ASB and exploring measures we can put in place to counter this.

Priorities for the year ahead

Libraries & Information

- Stockton's Mobile Library is now at the end of its life and the coming year will see the need to specify and procure a new vehicle to maintain services in communities at a distance from a static library. The library also serves a number of workplaces, local schools and vulnerable people who are not able to visit static libraries.
- The British Library funded partnership Business and Intellectual Property Centre has now been launched and in its second year, will expand its operation to the four other Teesside local authority library services. A second Business Information Specialist has been appointed to support this work.
- A new Libraries Accreditation Scheme is being finalised by the Arts Council and Libraries Connected with a projected launch in 2023. Preparations will need to be made if we wish to take part in the early tranches of the scheme which is proposed to be administered by Arts Council England alongside the Museum scheme.
- A number of promotions, campaigns and regular events will be organised across the year in line with the Libraries Connected Universal Offers Calendar including Stockton Children's Book of the Year, Crossing the Tees Book Festival, TeesPride LGBTQ mini festival Summer Reading Challenge and the Platinum Jubilee.
- Changes to the Bookstart Scheme administered by BookTrust which require closer links to Early Years Strategy to achieve new targeted approach.

Customer and Digital services:

- Achieving Customer Service Excellence Full Accreditation
- Achieving and sustaining compliance with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) requirements for Council owned Digital Products, i.e. Websites, apps and portals
- Redesign of service delivery to include digital solutions incorporating GOSS self-service solutions (Next phase)
- Increase customer contact through digital channels

Environment, Leisure & Green Infrastructure

- We will commence the Implementation of the first stage objectives of the carbon reduction and environmental sustainability strategy and develop the partnership and community work as a basis for subsequent activity.
- We will initiate a pipeline of funding opportunities and concentrate on energy efficiency measures for both our assets and residential properties. We will be refreshing our greenspace strategies and enact the requirements of the Environment Bill whilst concentrating on increasing net biodiversity and tree cover.
- We will enact the Physical Activity action plan, deliver the Playing Pitch Strategy and increase volunteering and engagement within our Directorate.

Learning & Skills

- Build confidence and support for vulnerable people to return to learning and commence their journey to inclusive growth
- Increase engagement with key strategic partners, employers and communities to develop a responsive curriculum aligned to arising local needs
- Increase participation numbers to maximise use of AEB funding contract and use of the apprenticeship levy
- Support the development of the new SBC Employment and Training Hub
- Implement the proposed new Learner Services function to support the progression of learners into a positive destination

Events

- Full reinstatement of the Council's annual event programme and continued development and support for events across the Borough, working with external event organisers
- Work with Town Centre Team and ensure a co-ordinated approach to the first phase of the riverside redevelopment
- Prepare and submit next Arts Council England NPO funding for 2023 – 2027 (SIRF)
- Further develop and progress plans for S&DR 200th Anniversary in 2025
- Increase the resilience to Independent Safety Advisory Group, including the appointment of a 2nd chairperson
- Explore environmental impact, waste and carbon reduction opportunities for Festival and Events

Preston Park Museum & Grounds

- Following the success of securing the Levelling Up Fund, PPMG team will be working closely with the Town Centre Team on the capital development scheme this year. The priority will be appointing an architect and design & construction team to develop plans further.
- Shaping and developing the TVMG consortium Arts Council England NPO application, as lead authority for the Tees Valley Group

Challenges and opportunities

Libraries & Information

- Continued funding for BIPC
- ACE Funding for Jubilee projects
- Proposed Libraries Accreditation Scheme

Customer and Digital services:

- Customer expectations of digital services have increased due to the pandemic, therefore accelerating digital engagement. Increased pressure to deliver digital services but improved digital skills and take up.
- Cabinet Office audits of Council owned websites present a challenge in sustaining compliance with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG). The guidelines also present an opportunity to ensure that digital products and services developed and procured by the Council are inclusive by design.

Learning & Skills

- Maximise opportunities arising from SBC Employment and Training Hub to engage, recruit and deliver programmes which serve local residents and employers
- Fulfil Adult Education Budget participation targets to safeguard future funding and seek growth opportunities to further support residents and employers

Events

- Uncertainty re COVID and impact on Outdoor Events for 2022/23 and next 4 years.
- Early preparation and consideration of the 2023/24 Events Programme which will be significantly impacted by the riverside redevelopment work
- Work with Town Centre Team and ensure a co-ordinated approach re project timescales, opportunities to influence and shape the new event space.
- Difficulties in recruitment event professionals to vacancies in the Event Service

Preston Park Museum & Grounds

- The main challenge remains around capacity within the team. We struggled to fill maternity leave posts last year and have 4 members of the team currently on maternity leave, including two senior officers. These absences will make it more difficult for senior staff to focus on the LUF funded developments
- Challenges remain around the uncertainty of covid and longer term impact on the service. Although family audiences have returned at weekends, we are still seeing a drop in mid week adult audiences which will ultimately impact our overall visitor figures.
- Schools are still catching up on lost learning which means they are not prioritising visiting museums. However this has provided us with the opportunity to develop or successful digital workshops more.
- We have submitted a bid via the Arts Council for our Spence Collection to receive national designation for it's significance. We are confident in the bid and hopefully if successful this will bring about national interest in our collection and assist in future funding bid.

Potential Areas for In-Depth Review

Members are reminded that topics are being sought for the Scrutiny Work Programme 2022-2023. Using the information provided as part of the performance updates and this

Overview meeting, the Committee is invited to identify potential topics for review within this theme.

Proposed topic suggestion to be considered at Executive Scrutiny Committee on 22 March 2022.

Events

- Expansion of Park and Ride facilities across events

Appendix 1: Council Plan – Key Priorities 2021-2022 (The Environment, Culture, Leisure and Events)

Making the borough a place that is clean, vibrant and attractive means creating:

- Great places to live and visit
- Clean and green spaces
- Rich cultural experiences

We have identified these key priorities for 2021-22 to help us achieve this vision. This year we will:

- Develop an ambitious carbon reduction and environmental sustainability strategy for the Borough.
- Develop and adapt our events programme across the Borough to respond to the pandemic and inspire confidence about our futures.
- Attract new visitors and tell the stories of our communities through Preston Hall Museum & Grounds.

Making the borough a place with a thriving economy where everyone has opportunities to succeed means creating:

- A growing economy
- Improved education and skills development
- Job creation and increased employment

We have identified these key priorities for 2021-22 to help us achieve this vision. This year we will:

- Increase skills and employment prospects including a new Employment and Training Hub to support people into work, including those most impacted by COVID-19.

We are committed to being a Council that is ambitious, effective and proud to serve means providing:

- Financial sustainability and value for money
- Dedicated and resourceful employees
- Strong leadership and governance

We have identified these key priorities for 2021-22 to help us achieve this vision. This year we will:

- Review our office accommodation and exploit digital technologies to ensure maximum cost effectiveness and accessibility, including learning from the arrangements put in place in response to COVID-19.
- Launch an updated website with new and improved online services.
- Create opportunities for work experience, internships and apprenticeships in the Council's workforce.