

NEWARK AND SHERWOOD DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of **Leisure & Environment Committee** held in the Civic Suite, Castle House, Great North Road, Newark NG24 1BY on Tuesday, 16 November 2021 at 6.00 pm.

PRESENT: Councillor R Jackson (Chairman)

Councillor L Brailsford, Councillor S Carlton, Councillor M Cope, Councillor D Cumberlidge, Councillor P Harris, Councillor Mrs L Hurst, Councillor J Kellas, Councillor J Lee and Councillor T Wildgust (substitute).

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor L Goff

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillor N Mison (Vice-Chairman) and Councillor Mrs Y Woodhead (Committee Member)

29 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS AND AS TO THE PARTY WHIP

Councillor S. Carlton declared an Other Registerable Interest in Agenda Item No. 6 – Update on A4Today's Recovery, as he was a Council appointed Director for Active4Today.

Councillor P Harris declared an Other Registerable Interest in Agenda Item No. 6 – Update on Active4Today's Recovery, as he was a Southwell Leisure Centre Trustee.

The Business Manager – Financial Services declared an Other Registerable Interest in Agenda Item No. 6 – Update on Active4Today's Recovery, as he was a Council appointed Board Member for Active4Today.

30 DECLARATION OF ANY INTENTIONS TO RECORD THE MEETING

NOTED that the Council would undertake an audio recording and live streaming of the meeting.

31 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 21 SEPTEMBER 2021

AGREED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 21 September 2021, be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

32 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The Chairman provided an update to the Committee on the developments that had taken place within the Committee's remit since the last meeting held on 21 September 2021.

The Chairman reported that it was pleasing to note that a recovery was underway within Active4Today, as it recovered from the challenges of the past 20 months.

The membership base was now at 80% of what was pre-Covid, after stubbornly staying about 30% down since the centres were able to re-open earlier that year. In addition, Southwell Leisure Centre was now also being run by Active4Today, after the transfer was completed on 1 October. The Chairman commented that he was confident that the Council was on the road to recovery, even though the costs associated with running the centres continued to be higher into next year than they were pre-Covid. He commented that when he was the portfolio holder for leisure and culture, he could remember the leisure centres costing around £1-million a year. Pre-Covid the costs were reduced to around £250,000 and that was where the Chairman wanted it to return to or lower, over the medium term.

At the last Leisure and Environment Committee meeting, the Committee received an update on the National Waste and Resources Strategy, which was being wrapped up in the new Environment Bill. When first published in December 2018, the National Waste and Resources Strategy proposed widespread changes to the recycling landscape, including standardised and separate kerbside collection of a range of materials. The Environment Act was last week approved by Parliament, meaning the legislation was now law and ministers had the power to introduce a range of waste reforms. However, the line from government was that DEFRA was still working on responses to a number of consultations on the changes, which remained live until next year. As such, there wasn't a detailed description about what the exact requirements would be or crucially how the new burdens would be funded. As soon as information became available, colleagues would produce a report for committee consideration.

The Committee were informed of the significant growth that had happened in the garden recycling service since the service was brought back in house on 1 April 2020. Due to some minor disruption at the height of the covid response, a decision was taken to offer the service at the discounted rate of £30 in 2021. That price was due to increase next year but given the growth in the service and the Council's recycling rate as a result, a report had been requested to be brought to the January 2022 committee for Member consideration about future pricing. At the September's Leisure and Environment Committee meeting, a report on the Council's Climate Strategy and Action Plan and the progress that had been made in delivering it was considered. The Committee was also informed of the Council's first two electric vehicles, which were being driven by the Community Protection team. This small scale pilot would enable the Council to better understand the opportunities and challenges in operating electric vehicles, ahead of the phasing out of new, petrol and diesel powered vehicles from 2030. In addition, a report would also be presented to the Council's policy and finance committee in November, recommending the Council invested in a range of photovoltaic panels at a number of council assets, including the leisure centres in Newark, Southwell and Ollerton, which were amongst the Council's principle sources of carbon emissions.

It was reported that since the last meeting, the Council had also continued to make excellent progress in their work to make Newark and Sherwood cleaner. At the start of November, the council and its partners undertook a Day of Action in Clipstone which was very well received by the community. Over the course of the day, more than ten tonnes of waste and litter was removed.

It was further reported that Newark town centre had won an award from East Midlands in Bloom, which was the Highest Achievement Level for the area of the Wharf. The Chairman thanked all involved with that project including the streetscene team.

At the last Committee it was agreed to enter into a one-year pilot with a waste enforcement company called WISE. The company started work on Monday, 25 October 2001 and since that time they had issued 354 fixed penalty notices for littering and dog fouling as of Friday, 12 November 2021.

33 UPDATE ON A4T'S RECOVERY

The Committee considered the report presented by the Health Improvement & Community Relations Manager which sought to provide Members with an update of Active4Today (the Company) for the period 12 April to 31 October 2021 following the sustained impact of Covid on the Company's operations.

It was noted that the business focus of A4T was on rebuilding the membership base to what it was pre-pandemic and that continued to be the priority. Good progress had been made as outlined in the Appendix A to the report, which set out the performance of A4T and its recovery activities over the period 12 April to 31 October 2021.

Given the unprecedented impacts of the virus and the disruption caused to the leisure offer the current performance indicators as outlined in Appendix B to the report showed the comparison of current data against the corresponding period in October 2019 (pre-pandemic) and October 2020 in order to demonstrate the current position in respect of memberships and user figures. In addition to centre based activities, the Sports Development Team had started to re-engage with community partners such as schools, health and sporting organisations and was making good progress in terms of assisting in the regeneration of projects and activities to encourage wider participation in physical activity and sport and further details were provided in Appendix C to the report.

The report highlighted the membership position since the centres re-opened in April 2021 and showed a positive uplift in all areas of membership generally. In addition Southwell Leisure Centre memberships were now included in the data following the successful transfer of its management function to A4T with effect from 1 October 2021. As at 31 October 2021 of the 9,608 live members currently paying a direct debit membership, there were approximately 112 who had frozen their memberships for either medical reasons or financial reasons in line with the Freeze Policy.

On the current live membership base of A4T, it was now operating at 80% of live members against pre-Covid numbers primarily due to its efforts to maintain its relationship with members which had proved to be a successful strategy. After reviewing national industry performance and data available from Sport England and UKActive, the membership nationally was averaging around 55%, which was significantly lower than the position with A4T. Although users were down as expected the improving membership base and a gradual return to business as usual across all

aspects of the leisure offer participation rates were growing and during the period 12 April to 31 October 2021, user visits across all sites reached 468,237 which was encouraging with notable examples such as the increase in users and memberships at the Dukeries following the opening of the new swimming pool.

The report provided the current income and expenditure financial summary of the Company and showed the original, revised and profiled budgeted income and expenditure up to period 7 October, set against actual income and expenditure for the same period.

The budget would be subject to further revisions throughout the year, as a result of the lower than expected starting position of the membership. This was significant for A4T, as the budget for 2021 – 2022 was based on a higher membership and income target starting point. However, conversely expenditure would also continue to be revised as savings (especially in salaries) work through the finance. However, currently the forecast to year end was looking more favourable and it was estimated that the anticipated deficit of £840K would reduce by £98K.

At the time of transfer Southwell Leisure Centre's original forecasted budget for the 2021-2022 financial year had estimated a deficit at year end of approximately £230k. However, having revised the current budget and reviewed all staffing, programming and membership income, A4T had forecasted a new budget position, which now showed a deficit of circa £125k, an estimated saving over the original budget of approximately £105k. Over the next several weeks the remaining processes undertaken at Southwell would be investigated and integrated into A4T, with the revised budget position being used to develop a budget for the site, in readiness for the 2022-2023 financial year.

As part of the Company's work to rebuild its operations and membership base to levels which it experienced pre-Covid, the Company had successfully launched the new swimming pool at the Dukeries Leisure Centre. Since the opening of the facility, memberships for both adults and children had increased steadily and sessions included swimming lessons, laned swimming, parent and toddler sessions and fun swims with an inflatable for the younger swimmers of the community.

A Member commented on the closure of LA Fitness and whether the Council's leisure facilities could be advertised more as a few members of the public had commented on the limited service the leisure centres provided for them.

The Managing Director Active4Today confirmed that forty of the LA Fitness (Sports Direct) customers had signed over to Active4Today. A corporate deal had also been achieved by Active4Today with some Sports Direct customers where this was appropriate and consistent with A4T's current scheme.

A Member asked whether people living in social housing were being encouraged to use the leisure facilities. The Managing Director confirmed that primary users had been actively targeted first. Various targets were being reviewed to engage with customers that were less likely to engage in fitness. Targeted work was being undertaken in Ollerton and concessionary prices were being offered. Bursaries were

also being made available for young people across the district.

The local Ward Member for Ollerton commented on the pool at Ollerton being a wonderful asset and asked whether there was anything that could be done to encourage customers to become members rather than paying for one off use of the pool. The Managing Director confirmed that customers were encouraged to pre-book swimming, in order to ensure capacity levels and an enjoyable experience. 95% of customers were buying membership on-line, a call centre had also been developed which was able to deal with general queries.

The Committee was also informed of the Changing Places funding scheme that had been pursued for the Dukeries, which offered suitably accessible changing facilities and specialist equipment for severely disabled people. The space configuration available at the Dukeries leisure centre was not to the required standard to secure MHCLG grant funding for the CPT scheme, however that space was being designed to accommodate some equipment. A report regarding the Changing Places proposals and associated costs would be brought to a future meeting of the Committee. A Member commented that funding may be available through Nottinghamshire County Council if there was a need for adults with learning difficulties, with joint funding through Social Care.

AGREED that:

- (a) the Active4Today progress report for year to date be noted;
- (b) the ongoing impacts of Covid on the Company's performance be closely monitored and proposals to support the Company through the pandemic be brought to future meetings of the Committee; and
- (c) the proposed Key Performance Indicators for Membership and Usage for year to date 2021/22 (Appendix B) be noted.

34 BUDGET MONITORING REVENUE AND CAPITAL OUTTURN REPORT

The Committee considered the report presented by the Business Manager Financial Services which compared the Revised Budgets for the period ending 31 March 2022 with the Projected Outturn forecast for that period, based on meetings with Financial Services staff and the appropriate Business Manager. These were based on six months' performance information on the Council's revenue and capital budgets, including: General Fund (GF) Revenue; and Capital Programme.

The current position for the Council was a favourable variance outturn against usable reserves of £0.188m. This was prior to any return funding from the Nottinghamshire Business Rates Pool, for which S151 Officers across the County were working to review the position.

The forecast outturn position for the Leisure & Environment Committee was a favourable variance of £0.124m. Appendix A of the Policy and Finance Committee report, which was appended to the report, contained the main reasons for this

variance, whilst Appendix B summarised the changes in variance between the report and the previous report.

It was noted that the projected outturn variances were still somewhat indicative, and that those would become more accurate in subsequent months, as officers continued to refine budgets and forecasts in light of the latest information available.

AGREED that the content of the report be noted.

35 COMMUNITY PLAN PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Committee considered the report presented by the Director of Customer Services and Organisational Development, which presented the year to date performance report covering Q1 and Q2 (April to September 2021). The Committee were asked to review and comment on the Community Plan Performance report attached as appendix one to the report and note the RIPA and Ombudsman reports (appendices 3 and 4) to the report.

Quarter 1 had not been reported to Committee as the development of the new style of reporting was underway. Instead a year to date (combined quarter 1 and quarter 2) report had been developed and was attached as appendix one.

It was noted that this report measured performance against the updated Community Plan (as refocused by the Policy and Finance report on 23.09.21) and as such the performance would capture activities not currently mentioned in the Community Plan such as the Levelling Up Fund.

A Member sought clarification regarding the following:

- (i) How many new homes are carbon neutral? And how many are off gas (non gas boilers).
- (ii) 3 fixed CCTV cameras updated to evidential quality, how many more aren't evidential quality?
- (iii) What action had been taken to facilitate intermodal interchange with bus companies and what has happened?
- (iv) Considering our quarter 1 performance shouldn't we revisit our recycling target? Especially as our target is one of the lowest in the country.

The Director of Communities and Environment confirmed that this would be considered for the next year's target.

- (v) The housing repairs end to end time for all reactive repairs, the target was 6 days and we were performing at 27 days at the moment, why?

The Transformation Manager confirmed that the Covid 19 Pandemic had impacted on the repairs response rate, as only major works had been undertaken to minimise the number of maintenance staff entering tenant's homes and reduce the risk of

infection. It was confirmed that the end to end time should reduce as work began to get back to normal. A written answer would be circulated after the meeting to Members of the Committee for the other questions raised.

A Member commented that past achievements such as the compost bin scheme should be included in the achievement data. The Chairman commented that whilst the Council needed to do as much as they could regarding recycling, in terms of the recycling bin the district was limited as to what could be recycled due to the contract in place with Veolia and what they would take.

The local Ward Member for Edwinstowe and Clipstone thanked Officers for delivering the recent day of action in Clipstone and commented that the key element was to create a lasting legacy.

The local Ward Member for Southwell commented that there was an error within the report, the day of action for Southwell was March 2022 and not October as stated.

AGREED that:

- (a) Members review the Community Plan Performance report attached as Appendix 1;
- (b) the RIPA and Ombudsman reports (Appendices 3 and 4 to the report), be noted; and
- (c) Written answer be provided to Members of the Committee regarding the questions raised.

36 FORWARD PLAN (DECEMBER 2021 TO NOVEMBER 2022)

The Committee considered the Forward Plan for the Leisure & Environment Committee for the period 1 December 2021 to 30 September 2022 and were encouraged to submit any areas of work they wanted to address for the forthcoming year.

AGREED (unanimously) that the Forward Plan be noted and that the following items be added:

- (i) New Waste Strategy, information from Defra to be reported to a future meeting;
- (ii) Green waste recycling and Glass collection; and
- (iii) Active4Today's Business Plan.

Meeting closed at 6.55 pm.

Chairman