COUNCIL MEETING – 9 JULY 2019

REPORT OF THE ARTS & LEISURE SUB-COMMITTEE

16 April 2019

Present: Councillors Harrington (Chairman), Griffiths (Vice-Chairman), Maguire, Morrall, Scarborough and Simmons.

Also present: Mrs L Elliott, (Managing Director), Miss K Denton, (Assistant Director), Mrs G Chapman (Principal Community Support Manager), Mr M Cleverley (General Manager at Castle Theatre) and Miss E McGinlay (Electoral Services Officer).

(The meeting commenced at 2pm.)

1. **ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN**

   **RESOLVED** that Councillor Harrington be appointed as chairman.

2. **APOLOGIES**

   **RESOLVED** that apologies were received from Councillor Bailey.

3. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

   **RESOLVED** to note that no declarations were made.

4. **ARTS & LEISURE SUB-COMMITTEE – TERMS OF REFERENCE**

   The annexed circulated report of the managing director was received to seek approval to the terms of reference for the arts & leisure sub-committee.

   It had been agreed at the council meeting on 22 May 2018 that this sub-committee be established to consider any matters relating to the allocation of grant funding to the arts, cultural and leisure sectors, management and performance of Castle Theatre and the provision of cultural and leisure facilities in the borough.

   Members considered the appended draft terms of reference for the sub-committee and recommended that these be approved by the services committee.

   **RESOLVED to RECOMMEND** that services committee approve the terms of reference for the arts & leisure sub-committee.

5. **CASTLE THEATRE UPDATE REPORT**

   The annexed circulated report of the assistant director was received to provide the committee with a report on the performance of Parkwood Leisure Ltd
(Parkwood), under its contract with the council for the operation and management of Castle Theatre.

The report provided a summary of the performance and activity for the theatre through the council’s agreement with Parkwood in the first three months of operation under the new management. It gave an update on the financial statistics, programming, health and safety and marketing of the venue.

The general manager of the theatre addressed the committee and confirmed that he had recently carried out a user group meeting with some representatives of the community groups who use the theatre. He explained that there had been some concerns raised by the community users at the proposed price increases to the hire charges at the theatre, which would be coming into effect in January 2020.

Members were assured that the meeting with community users had concluded somewhat positively and explained the reasoning behind the increase in hire fees at the theatre. As highlighted by the financial summary in the update report, the venue had recognised a loss of over £40,000 during the first three months of operation in 2019 as a result of unsustainable fees and this was the main reason for the increase to hire fees.

Members discussed the report and increase to the hire fees at the theatre and agreed that a members briefing note be issued to inform all members of the pricing structure with comparative information to demonstrate the need for the increase.

The general manager explained that a review of the prices would be undertaken once the catering facilities had been brought back in house and the audience levels have grown.

RESOLVED that:

i. The position regarding the performance to date be noted;
ii. The matters brought to the attention of the service operator have been noted.

6. **PROVISION OF FACILITIES AT REDWELL LEISURE CENTRE**

The annexed circulated report of the assistant director was received to seek approval to review the facilities available at Redwell Leisure Centre, by considering local needs and the long term viability of the centre, including options for refurbishment.

The report highlighted that considerable investment had been put into the other council-owned leisure centre in the borough, the Waendel Centre, which provided a modern, town centre facility offering a range of services comparable with commercial operators. It confirmed that the Redwell Leisure Centre was less up to date and its future offer needs to be considered soon, particularly in light of the imminent addition of a 3G all weather sports pitch.
It was highlighted that the feasibility study and options appraisal would provide members with a wide range of options which would not only offer the option of a simple refurbishment to the venue, but may suggest alternative routes of how the council offers leisure facilities to its residents.

Members discussed the report and highlighted how important it was to provide sufficient leisure facilities, especially given the growing health and wellbeing agenda and the imminent increase in population in the borough, due to housing developments at Stanton Cross and Wellingborough North. It was agreed that there was also a need to look at the venue’s ability to be self-sufficient, or to generate surplus revenue in the future.

RESOLVED that options be explored regarding the facilities and services operating from the Redwell Leisure Centre, and that a further report on the assessment and feasibility of the options be received at the next committee meeting.

Chairman

The meeting concluded at 3.25pm.