

meeting COUNTY COUNCIL

date 19<sup>th</sup> May 2011

agenda item number **11a vi.**

## **REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CULTURE AND COMMUNITY**

REPORT FOR THE PERIOD MARCH 2011 – APRIL 2011

1. The following are summaries of work relating to my portfolio. This report reflects the wide range of initiatives being undertaken, all of which help improve and enhance the quality of life for Nottinghamshire people.

### **LIBRARIES**

#### **Services for people with visual impairment**

2. I am pleased to welcome the adoption in Nottinghamshire of the "Six steps to library services for blind and partially sighted people", agreed between the charity Share the Vision and the Society of Chief Librarians. This includes use of specialist websites, accessibility software at larger libraries and participation in 'Make a Noise in Libraries Fortnight'. We are also committed to support four reading groups for people with visual impairments in Mansfield, West Bridgford, Sutton in Ashfield and Worksop libraries. In addition libraries continue to provide large print books and spoken word services in every library as part of our ongoing commitment to providing a comprehensive service to customers with visual impairments,

#### **E-Books from Libraries**

3. I am pleased to note that we intend to launch a new service to provide electronic books to borrow for Nottinghamshire residents. E-Books are an increasingly popular form of reading material and devices to read them with are now widely available
4. Library customers will be able to download electronic versions of popular titles from the County Council web site for a loan period of 3 weeks. A range of e-Book readers can be used, including mobile phones, Apple's iPad and the Sony e-Reader.
5. There will be a small charge of £1.00 per download, which is excellent value. Most people wish to read an e-book only once, so it makes good sense to offer a

service that allows libraries to recycle e-books in the same way that printed copies have always been used.

6. The service will go live during the summer. It is fully supported in partnership with our main library book supplier and by a wide range of publishers. There will be an initial stock of 500 titles available, with the option to increase numbers if the service proves popular enough.
7. The aim is for the new service to pay for itself within the first year.

## **NOTTINGHAMSHIRE ARCHIVES**

8. Nottinghamshire Archives has been rated the best local authority archive service in the East Midlands and in the top 10% in the country.
9. In the self-assessment of local authority archive services in England and Wales carried out by The National Archives in 2010, Nottinghamshire Archives was judged to be to be a four star service. This places Nottinghamshire County Council's Archives amongst the top 10% of archive services in the country. Nottinghamshire Archives achieved an overall score of 80% (up from 79.5% in 2008) which was the highest in the East Midlands, and the highest of all the 124 local authority archive services.

## **COUNTRYSIDE AND CONSERVATION**

### **Sherwood Forest Visitor Centre**

10. Refurbishment work at Sherwood Forest Visitor Centre, which began in March, has been completed well in time for the start of the spring tourist season. The ladies' and gents' toilets were given a makeover, exterior fascias and walls repainted, paths in the Visitor Centre complex resurfaced and a new floor laid in one of the shops. New equipment in the Audio Visual theatre now enables visitors to enjoy an introductory film about Sherwood Forest and the Dukeries on a 40 inch screen. The improvements have been well received by visitors. Meanwhile the Country Parks Catering Team has applied for a license to hold civil wedding ceremonies in the Oak Room, a former exhibition area, in response to a demand reported by the Registration Service for civil wedding venues in the Sherwood Forest area.

### **Rufford Abbey Country Park**

11. At Rufford Abbey Country Park, after many months of cold weather, high temperatures and sunshine for the start of the Easter Holidays boosted visitor numbers. A popular children's Easter Egg trail attracted 300 participants in the first day and around 1000 were expected to sell before Good Friday. The Lakeside Garden Centre at Rufford Mill has now been demolished, and plans are being considered for alternative uses of the area, including the possibility for much needed extra parking space at this popular park.

## **Bestwood Country Park**

12. Bestwood Country Park has begun its annual events programme, which includes health walks, conservation volunteer days and bird walks. April saw the Winding Engine House of the former Bestwood Colliery open to visitors for the new season. The Winding Engine House volunteer group lead tours every Saturday morning between April and October. This enables visitors and local people to view the interior and 1876 winding engine, restored by the County Council with the aid of a Heritage Lottery grant.
13. Discussions are taking place with the Friends of Bestwood Country Park, the Bestwood Parish Council and the local County Councillors as to how best they, and other community organisations with an interest in the future of the park, can assist in its future development.

## **SPORTS**

### **Sports Partnership contracts**

14. The Sports and Arts Service has secured £64,000 to deliver coaching & sports leadership development across the County on behalf of the Nottinghamshire Sports Partnership. The leadership programme, Sport Makers, will use the inspirational pull of London 2012 to recruit, train and deploy new sports volunteers aged 16 years and over to support sports participation across the county. Volunteers will have a positive and inspiring introduction to the world of sports volunteering via a series of workshops delivered locally and will be found placements in various settings. The aspiration is that many will continue to give of their time, further increasing sport participation long after the 2012 Games are held in the UK.
15. The Coaching Development programme will increase the number of qualified coaches and help identify coaching opportunities as well as continuing to support new and existing coaches through coach management and continuous professional development programmes.

### **Golf development**

16. The service has been working with the governing bodies of golf to increase participation in the sport. Seventeen golf clubs across Nottinghamshire have now signed up to run 5 weeks of group coaching for adults, as part of a Nottinghamshire County Golf Partnership initiative called Get into the Swing. Subsidy from Sport England enables the courses to be run at a cost of only £25 and sessions will be starting evenings and weekends in May. If these pilot sessions are completed the partnership plans to repeat the offer twice a year.

## **ARTS**

### **Arts Council funding secured**

17. The Sports and Arts service was also successful in securing funding from Arts Council England for delivery of strategic arts in education programmes supporting young people's access to excellent arts opportunities in and outside of school. Our service will be working with The Mighty Creatives and arts officers in each local authority area across the East Midlands as part of the regional consortium ALEM (Arts Learning East Midlands). The funding secured will support the continued regional coordination of the Arts Award (a nationally recognised qualification for young people aged 13-25), Artsmark (a quality badge for schools supporting them to improve and celebrate their arts offer for local communities), plus a number of other new initiatives creating new local opportunities for participation in the arts.
18. The service has also been awarded £387,000 over 3 years from Arts Council England on behalf of the Nottinghamshire, Lincolnshire & Leicestershire Rural Touring Partnership. Funding will support a broad range of live performances in villages and community halls across Nottinghamshire and partner counties, as well as linked education and outreach projects and support for the wide network of local volunteer promoters.

### **Arts with looked after children**

19. The Service is about to embark on an exciting new programme using the arts to contribute to improved outcomes for Nottinghamshire's Looked After Young People. Working with County Council colleagues, local artists and The Mighty Creatives (the regional young people's creative development agency) we will be delivering a series of projects throughout April to December 2011 supporting Looked After Young People to explore and articulate their experiences of educational provision and of living in care in Nottinghamshire. The programme will result in a showcase event at Broadway Cinema Nottingham, recommendations for improved practice and new training for relevant Looked After Young People professionals.

### **Rufford Craft Centre**

20. The programme at Rufford Craft Centre continues to attract a wide range of participants. During school holiday periods we will be offering family fun tasters encouraging visitors to drop in and "have a go" together with weekend adult courses run by professional artists.. In the next two months the family workshop programme includes felt making, pinhole camera photography and clay tile making.
21. Planning is advanced for the major event of the year, Earth and Fire International Ceramic Fair, which takes over the grounds of Rufford Abbey in June. A festival of clay in all its many and varied forms the weekend features over a hundred stalls from some of the best potters in Europe, a programme of demonstrations

and talks, trade stalls and campus area featuring upcoming recent graduates. The event attracts over 7,000 visitors from across the country.

## **ECONOMIC REGENERATION**

### **Nottinghamshire Business Engagement Group**

22. I am pleased to report that the Nottinghamshire Business Engagement Group (NBEG) continues to grow. The Southwell, Bingham and Collingham business clubs, and the newly formed British Indian Business Forum have all recently joined the group, with over 20 business organisations represented at the meetings.
23. Crucially, NBEG is proving a vital link for small businesses and wider developments such as the D2N2 Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP). Trevor Fletcher, the D2N2 Nottinghamshire private sector representative on the LEP Board recently attended his first NBEG meeting to hear at first hand the issues affecting local and (particularly) small businesses.
24. This followed a facilitated session with the NBEG membership where they set out the priorities they would wish the LEP to address and Councillor Girling as the County Council's Business Engagement Champion and NBEG Chairman has helpfully made reference to these issues in various meetings on NBEG's behalf, including at the last Joint Leadership Board. Trevor Fletcher has made a commitment to attend future NBEG meetings, welcoming the ability to listen to and communicate with local businesses as provided via the Group.

### **Nottingham Post Business Awards – Company of the Year**

25. As previously reported, Nottinghamshire County Council is jointly sponsoring with KPMG the Nottingham Post Company of the Year award. This year marks the 25th anniversary of these awards. The initial judging of the applications has taken place and four finalists have been selected. They are :
  - Direct Health - one of the largest private domiciliary care providers in the UK.
  - Heart Internet - one of the fastest growing IT companies in the UK, providing web hosting and dedicated server services.
  - SMS Electronics - formed in 2002 following a Management Buy-Out of Siemens Communications' manufacturing division. A manufacturing business which has seen significant growth, particularly in export sales.
  - Synseal - the largest UK owned PVC systems business which now employs 500 people.
26. The entrants for the award, and particularly the finalists, demonstrate the diversity of businesses which make up Nottinghamshire's economy, highlighting that there are many businesses in Nottinghamshire that have achieved significant growth despite a difficult economic climate. The winner of the Company of the Year award will be announced at an Awards Dinner on 7<sup>th</sup> July.

## **Innovation Centres**

27. Effective from the 1st April 2011, the County Council has awarded a contract to Oxford Innovation to manage three business innovation centres, namely the Mansfield i-centre, Newark Beacon, and the Turbine at Worksop.
28. The three centres together are home to 150 innovative small local businesses which benefit from specialist business advice and support and high quality office, workshop and meeting space. This represents the successful culmination of many months of preparation, with Councillor Girling chairing the management meetings held with the District Councils and other interested parties.
29. Oxford Innovation already manages 15 business and innovation centres across the UK, with over 400 occupiers, and has a proven track record in delivering specialist business advice to new and high growth (fast developing) companies to help them expand.

## **Green Technology Business Network**

30. Supported by the County Council, the Green Technology Business Network has been set up to support the growth of Small and Medium Enterprises in the growing environmental technology sector across Nottinghamshire. This is a sector which to date embraces wind turbines, hybrid and electric cars, software design, cooling units, haulage, solar homes and manufacturers of industrial waste-to-energy units.
31. The sector has a healthy diversity, yet is unified by a common theme – the need to reduce energy and resource use, and to cut carbon emissions. Businesses in this sector are also proving united in that they are all innovators in their field.
32. Nottingham's and Nottinghamshire's green-tech sector is growing. Against a background of national and international targets on emission reductions and spiralling energy costs, industrial and domestic energy consumers are increasingly seeking products and industrial methods that reduce bills and carbon emissions
33. Over the course of this year, a programme of regular business presentation events, supplemented by appropriate site visits, breakfast seminars and workshops are being held. Networking is encouraged and importantly, the network is beginning to see its influence go beyond those businesses directly involved in the green technology sector. Through Councillor Girling, links with the wider NBEG membership are being facilitated.

## **COUNCILLOR JOHN COTTEE**

Cabinet Member for Culture and Community