

meeting **COUNTY COUNCIL**

date **28 January 2010**

agenda item number **7a vi**

REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CULTURE AND COMMUNITY

REPORT FOR THE PERIOD NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2009

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

COUNTRY PARKS AND CONSERVATION

Bestwood Country Park

2. Three rangers were bestowed with Community Awards by the Divisional Commander of the Nottinghamshire Constabulary. The rangers' unique knowledge of the area and organisational skills greatly assisted police efforts to ensure the safety of a missing person in January 2009.
3. The Friends of Bestwood (FoB), working with the rangers, have organised a school poster competition for the nearby Bigwood School to promote positive aspects of the country park. The Council's Chief Executive, Mick Burrows, along with three local residents (two artists and a freelance journalist) picked the four winning entries at an awards ceremony. The winners received prizes provided by the Friends of Bestwood and the winning artwork will be reproduced in poster form to promote Bestwood Country Park throughout the local area. All the entrants' artwork will form a temporary display in the new Dynamo House facility which will be opening in Spring 2010.

Rufford Abbey Country Park

4. This Christmas saw two very successful Christmas events at Rufford Abbey. The Aurora and Christmas Gift Market weekend of the 6th & 7th of December and the Aurora and Children's Christmas Dream weekend of the 12th and 13th attracted a combined audience of 3,954 visitors. I would like to congratulate all those who were involved in the staging of these events.

Sherwood Forest National Nature Reserve and Visitor Centre

5. Sherwood Forest National Nature Reserve had a popular and full Christmas events programme with upwards of nineteen activities which were all well attended.

Greenwood Community Forest Partnership

6. The events programme organised by the partnership continues to encourage hard-to-reach groups in disadvantaged areas to access and respect green spaces in their community. Events will be taking place at Bestwood Country Park, Brierley Forest Country Park, Linby Trail and Moor Pond Wood and further details can be found at: <http://www.greenwoodforest.org.uk/events.php>

Relations with Derbyshire

7. The Leader and myself met with the Leader of Derbyshire and Culture Portfolio Holder on January 14th to discuss areas of common interest and ways in which we can work together to improve the cultural and tourism offer of the two counties, where there is clearly a great deal of mutually beneficial outcome. There are already projects which we co-support – Creswell Crags, Chesterfield Canal with the potential for some joined up working across other areas, eg countryside and libraries.

Robin Hood

8. Members will be aware that on May 14th this year, the new Robin Hood film starring Russell Crowe will be released. It is expected that this will generate a huge amount of local, national and international interest, with a big increase in tourism to Sherwood Forest and surrounding areas, as well as Nottingham City. I have been in discussions with the Sheriff as to how best we can make the most of this for our communities. We will be ‘dressing’ a number of villages to celebrate this event leading into the summer activity period. We will also be promoting Robin Hood and the legend through the Libraries.

LIBRARIES

Nottinghamshire Bookstart

9. This programme encourages all parents and carers to enjoy books with their children from as early an age as possible. Bookstart in Nottinghamshire has successfully achieved 100% coverage with every eligible baby and pre-school child receiving their baby packs and Treasure Chest packs in 2008/9. This is above the national average of 94% and 97% respectively. These figures are very encouraging, and point to the effectiveness of the work that the Library Service’s Early Years Team does with some of the most vulnerable families in Nottinghamshire.

10. The Team is currently working with 23 Children's Centres to gift 2,000 free books received from National Bookstart. As a condition of receiving the free baby books, Children's Centre staff will promote the benefits of reading and sharing books with babies and children to all the families they have contact with in the coming weeks.

Library Improvements

11. Sutton-in-Ashfield library is undergoing a number of improvements to the layout of the building and the organisation of the stock, including the installation of self service equipment, a measure that will free up staff time to provide direct assistance to customers in choosing stock and answering queries.

12. Recent Events at Local Libraries

- Newark library ran a session for young people aged 10-18 to create a manga mural based on the graphic novels that originated in Japan. The artwork will be on display in the library over the next few months.
- A number of local libraries ran pre Christmas craft workshops including many free activities for adults and children, eg: Christmas decorations, stained glass windows and cross stitch cards.

SPORTS SERVICE

Coaching and workforce development

13. In November 2009, coaches from the Talented Coaches programme attended an evaluation evening as the year long programme of training and support drew to a close. The feedback was extremely positive, especially with the quality of training provided and the opportunity it provided to work with international coaches.
14. Following the launch of the Nottinghamshire coach audit, I am pleased to report that over 500 coaches from a wide range of sports responded. This data will shape the planning of coaching development in the county over the next 2 years.
15. £2000 has been awarded to coaches through the coach scholarship scheme and 23 coaches are progressing to the next level of award. In support of the sporting workforce in Nottinghamshire and to monitor quality, several coach and tutor observations have been undertaken with young leaders taking part in the Step into Sport project, as well as visiting more experienced deliverers from the Talented Coaches programme and from Nottingham Rugby Club.
16. Nottingham Rugby Club has received a grant of £25,000 to help continue to fund their community work. This includes coaching in schools and junior clubs, rugby camps and taster sessions and promoting rugby across the county.
17. The Play Sport multi-skills project has delivered 4 training courses to a range of participants including support for young people with disabilities. It has supported potential coaches on Recruit into Coaching days and delivered training for young

leaders on multi skills and inclusion. Coaches have liaised with our basketball development officer to develop a calendar of 7 courses for 2010 to increase the number of qualified basketball coaches, referees and table officials operating within the county.

Support for Vulnerable Groups

18. As part of our work with sport and mental healthcare we have been involved in the organisation and running of the Positive Goals league. Exercise has a positive impact on mental health and playing football has been found to improve and maintain not only fitness, but also concentration and engagement, and can help develop social networking. Two rounds have now been completed with 9 teams from 9 different organisations taking part. The project is run in partnership with the National Health Service Trust, Notts Football Association and Arnold Town Football Club.

County Development Plans

19. Three workshop-style events to support and progress county development plans for the sports of cycling, triathlon, and gymnastics were well attended. Each sport hopes to have a finished plan by spring 2010 to provide them with a strategic direction based on local need and respective governing body plans.

Sporting Successes

20. Four Nova swimmers, Beijing Olympian Jess Sylvester, Emma Bird, Sasha Matthews, and Katherine Wyld represented Great Britain at the European Short-Course Championships in Turkey 10-13 December. This provided ideal high level competition ahead of preparations for next year's Commonwealth Games.

21. Sports Review of the Year

The 2009/10 Sports Review of the year will be held at the East Midlands Conference Centre at the University of Nottingham on Friday February 5th starting at 6.30 pm. All Members have been invited and I hope that as many of you as possible can attend, as this is one of the highlights of the Council's sporting year, where we are celebrating success and recognising the contribution of all those who give up their time to volunteer in the organisation of sports across the County.

ARTS SERVICE

Supporting Older People to Engage with the Arts

22. A key aim of the Arts Service is to increase opportunities and participation in the arts, particularly amongst those groups who have specific difficulties which exclude them. The over 50s have been identified as one such group.

23. The County Council strategy for older people 'Nottinghamshire Opportunity Age 2009-12' recognises the importance of arts activity and partnerships that promote arts and leisure and engage older people. Through collaboration with Newark & Sherwood District Council and funding from the Arts Council England, the Arts Service has developed the Visible Project which addresses the lack of arts opportunities for older people.
24. With the extra funding Visible can deliver an extended two year programme of activity with 160 participants, up to 40 artists and begin to develop the programme in other districts. Visible is primarily aimed at 'active' older people but will work with vulnerable people referred from older people's services. Participants will be supported to develop an Arts Festival as a showcase for their work and given opportunities to gain Discovery Awards, an accreditation specifically recognising the achievement of older people.

Support for work with vulnerable groups

25. The Arts Service supports Mansfield based Random Line, an organisation specialising in creative work with people with learning disabilities to engage with the arts. They are embarking on a national tour of their latest work, Second Skin, which will be performed to audiences across the country.
26. The service also supported the West Bridgford based Salamanda Tandem. They have been awarded a major grant from the Arts Council, to provide professional development opportunities and increase the pool of trained artists in the county to work with disabled people.

ECONOMIC REGENERATION

Engagement with Businesses

27. The County Council is to sign the Small Business Engagement Accord, a national campaign co-ordinated by the Federation of Small Businesses which helps local authorities improve their engagement with local business communities. Small and medium-sized businesses play a vital role in terms of jobs, investment and the economic vitality of local economies and dominate the Nottinghamshire economy. Effective engagement with them is an important part of ensuring a vibrant economy and signing the Accord will augment other initiatives currently underway with small businesses.
28. Cllr Keith Girling was nominated as the County Council's Business Engagement Champion. Through liaison with Strategic Directors and Service Heads, he will ensure that the 14 principles in the Accord are met by the County Council and that regular meetings with key business organisations take place. Cllr Girling is already engaging with local businesses through participation in meetings held by key business networks and clubs.

Making the Connection Project

29. Council has approved a three year extension to its highly successful recruitment and skills solution service - Making the Connection, which works with communities across Nottinghamshire to help people find jobs. The MtC team works with employers and organisations to identify local employers' needs, develop training programmes and recruit local unemployed people onto a training gateway. Since 2007 the project has helped 30 employers to recruit locally and over 1000 people towards jobs with those employers. The service is free to employers on the proviso that they offer guaranteed interviews. The project is part funded by emda but the £290,000 pledged by the County Council, secures the future of the project for the next three years and demonstrates the Council's commitment to helping businesses and the local workforce.

Councillor John Cottee
Cabinet Member for Culture and Community