



meeting

COUNTY COUNCIL

date

18th May 2006

agenda item number

REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CULTURE

REPORT FOR THE PERIOD TO MAY 2006

1. The following are summaries of work relating to my portfolio since my last report to Council.

The Bramley Centre, Southwell

2. Tuesday 11th April saw the official opening of the Bramley Centre at Southwell by the Chairman of the County Council, Councillor Alan Davison. Housing the public library, a youth centre and the Registrar's service the new building opened to the public in early February and has proved a great success. Over 60 people attended the event including partners, stakeholders and members of the local community.

Libraries, Archives & Information

Balderton Library

3. Balderton Library re-opened to the public on 2nd May following a major refurbishment. The latter has seen a total transformation of the old Wesleyan Chapel which has involved structural alterations, an increase in the floor area for public use, total redecoration and re-carpeting and the installation of new shelving and furniture. The result is a dramatically improved library and one which will serve the local community well for many years to come. This is the third library in year 1 of the Library refurbishment programme to be completed.

Newark Library

4. Newark Library hosted an exhibition to support a major programme of events in the town organised by the English Civil War Society to mark the 360th anniversary of the end of the Siege of Newark. A series of exhibition panels were loaned by Rufford Country Park and displayed in the library. A newly revised booklist entitled "The World Turned Upside Downe - a selection of

books available from Nottinghamshire libraries" has been produced and will be available at Newark and around the county.

Try-IT - Bircotes Library

5. Try-IT has been an exciting and innovative project in 8 Nottinghamshire Libraries, providing basic computer and Internet skills learning opportunities. In keeping with the spirit of national government's 'Framework for the Future' and building upon the public's view of libraries being attractive places to learn, over 3,000 people in Nottinghamshire are now active participants in the digital revolution thanks to the scheme. Some of these people had previously tried formal weekly courses in IT, yet had found them difficult, off-putting, even counter productive, whereas through the skills and patience of library staff these people have learnt vital ICT skills through nothing more than an hour long session in the library.
6. The Try-IT scheme has recently been expanded, thanks to a Challenge fund bid of £20,000, to include such libraries as Bircotes in the very north of the county, and its popularity has shown no sign of abating. Within days of announcing that computer tuition would be a new service, Bircotes had a waiting list for 20 sessions. Given the friendly nature of the staff at Bircotes, and the recent refurbishment, the learning is set in an informal atmosphere.
7. Bircotes library is helping to build the level of computer literacy in its village, increasing usage of its People's Network machines, and offering people a service that seems not to be offered by any other service provider.
8. Through the Try-IT scheme and other such initiatives, Nottinghamshire public libraries are proving to be an evolving and adaptable service, offering great value for money through our accessible teaching of ICT skills in this often bewildering digital age.

Nottinghamshire Archives

9. As a follow up to BBC family history programme *Who Do You Think You Are?*, Nottinghamshire Archives is running a *Family History Hour* series. On every Thursday between 27th April and 25th May at 5.30pm a member of the Archives staff will introduce a different family history source. The sessions include registration, records, census, probate records and internet sources. All sessions have been fully booked showing the continuing popularity of family history.
10. Nottinghamshire Archives have also extended the range of family history sources available to the public by microfilming Nottinghamshire parish registers. Recording baptisms, marriages and burials, these records are a major source for genealogists and are held at Nottinghamshire Archives, which acts as the diocesan record office for the Diocese of Southwell. The pre-1900 registers were filmed some years ago and the series has now been extended to 1950 and beyond. These can now be viewed on microfiche at Nottinghamshire Archives, Nottingham Central Library and libraries

throughout the county so both improving public access and reducing wear and tear on the original volumes.

Young People

Youth Service

Sutton Celebration Event

11. I attended a celebration event at Sutton Youth Centre on the evening of 12th April. Young people were presented with certificates for youth activities and achievement awards such as the Poland Auschwitz/Holocaust work, skate project, Sutton Motor Project and 'Baby Think it Over' programme. Over 35 young people attended the event, although 120 young people achieved an accredited award across the Sutton area this year.

The Mill Adventure Base

12. I am pleased to report that the Mill Adventure Base at Sutton-in-Ashfield, which was the result of a £1.4 million capital development programme, is now operational and young people are involved in a range of activities.

Play

Nottinghamshire Play Conference

13. I attended the Play Conference on Saturday 13th May which was held at the Dukeries Training Centre for workers, volunteers, public and private sectors, parents and children. The conference focused on encouraging the development of Friends of Play and the Children & Young People's group, two important forums which form part of Play Notts.

Leisure and Culture

Arts

14. The roof repairs at Rufford had resulted in a three month closure of the gallery and it was therefore a welcome relief to open the doors again with three new exhibitions. North Nottinghamshire ceramic artist, Sue Disley teamed up with Derbyshire's Angela Verdon to present a new collection of work in the main gallery whilst textiles and salt glaze work from Ireland was presented in the ceramic centre. Outside, in the Orangery, large-scale work by Jim Robison completed the new programme. A full house attended the opening event
15. The workshop weekends at Rufford continue to be very popular. Most sessions are booked up as soon as they are advertised and waiting lists are now normal. Sessions offered include mosaic, kiln formed glass and Chinese brush painting. Demand has also grown for the more advanced 10 week courses and additional courses have been developed in ceramics and glass making.

16. Spring is traditionally a very busy time for the Village Ventures programme with 27 performances taking place in village halls in a six week period. The events chosen by the local villages is extremely diverse. Music events include: songs from the kit kat club of the thirties at Everton and Gunthorpe; a capella singing and comedy from the Singing Sous Chefs at West Bridgford, Hickling and Upton; jazz from the Geoff Castle Trio in South Clifton, Sutton in Ashfield and Whatton in the Vale; country music from the exceptional Hank Wangford at Nuthall and Lowdham; Irish music at Thurgaton, Woodborough and Orston and virtuoso Gambian music from Zubop at Norwell. The younger village audiences are not overlooked with Clydebuilt Puppet Theatre visiting Gamston, Kirkby, East Markham and Oxtun.
17. The arts programme with Social Services (Involve) has mounted an exhibition at Hucknall Library and completed a very successful event at Lowdham Village Hall where day centre clients presented a fashion show complete with catwalk.

Sport

National Watersports Centre

18. A number of meetings have been held in response to the decision made by Sport England to withdraw their funding, in 2009, from the National Watersports Centre at Holme Pierrepont. Officers are charged with providing short, medium and long term development proposals for the site and members will be included in a cross party reference group to ensure a high level of communication.
19. We are particularly pleased with the media coverage to date, especially that of the Evening Post which has covered the issue on a number of occasions and has been supportive of the County Council's position. 1400 responses have been received to date via the County Council's website in response to an offer to residents and users to have their say.

Sports Service

20. The Sports Service has in recent months reported on its strategic work across the county and its work to influence the voluntary sports sector. This report concentrates instead on a few examples of the large volume of ongoing delivery that still directly impacts on local people.

Pathways Roadshow

21. On 28th April, 20 of our Sport Direct beneficiaries met at the Summit Centre, Kirkby-in-Ashfield. The 'Pathways Roadshow' event is designed to help beneficiaries make choices on ways into employment having developed skills and obtained sports qualifications through our training programmes. Beneficiaries accessed advice from our partners at Yes 2 Work, Ready 4 Work and Job Centre plus as well as carrying out job searches on the Connexions bus. There were talks from the Nottinghamshire CVS (Council for Voluntary Service) and also from Sports Service staff on pathways to

sports coaching employment. This successful event was an excellent opportunity for the beneficiaries to gather together and share experiences of the project and new ideas, while also giving the opportunity to talk to them, monitor how much they have achieved on the project, and most importantly, support them in making choices about how to develop both personally and professionally.

Talent Identification Course

22. On 18th April at Nottinghamshire County Cricket Club, the service ran a pilot workshop for experienced coaches at level 2 and higher which examined the coaching process in relation to the specific skills and principles of talent identification. The course was run by Bill Furniss – County Swimming Coach and Development Officer and was supported by our Active Sports Coaching Development Officer. The course covered coaching children and asked coaches to examine their own coaching philosophy. The course was fully subscribed (15 coaches) and was very well received. It is hoped this will be the first in a series of courses at a more advanced level.

Star Track Athletics Days

23. Over 40 children attended the athletics days which ran from 19th – 21st April at Ashfield School. These were run in tandem with the City and we arranged a bus link from Eastwood Sports Centre to bring in children from the Broxtowe area who were keen to take part.
24. Star Track, sponsored by Norwich Union, provides an all-year round opportunity for children aged from 8 to 15 of all standards to develop and hone their athletics skills within structured and exciting coaching programmes. It is often a first taste of athletics for children and measures their success through the achievement of a range of dynamic awards.
25. Every child on the scheme received a Norwich Union Star Track goodie bag. These included a backpack, t-shirt, water-bottle, certificate, handbook and calendar.
26. It is hoped these participants will continue their interest in athletics through follow-on activities in schools and clubs. It is also important to engage clubs, coaches and officials to develop the scheme thus improving the quality of athletics provision in the County. These events were run with the support of Sutton-in-Ashfield Harriers Athletics Club, Ashfield District Council and Notts Athletic Club.

Basketball

27. It was a busy month for our basketball squads as the season came to a close. This year's School of Basketball began on 20th April at the Jesse Boot Wildcats Arena with over 40 children from right across the County registered to play mini basketball. The School of Basketball is designed for players to develop their skills and to test these out in practice games. Awards were presented to players who performed well over the 2 days. Each child was

presented with a certificate and a report card at the end of the course. Coaches at the event included former Notts Nova basketball players who are now playing and studying in America. There will be a further set of training camps held at the end of May for both mini and teen players. Demand is already high.

28. On 29th April Nottinghamshire hosted our annual Invitational Mini Basketball Rally at Portland Leisure Centre. Thirteen teams took part with 5 Mini Nova teams competing. Mini Nova Squads that have been training in their regional groups for the whole season were merged to form 5 squads representing Year 7 boys, Year 6 and 7 girls, Year 6 boys and 2 mixed squads of Year 5 players. The squads performed well in a highly competitive and entertaining tournament.
29. Mini Basketball Rallies are again well subscribed. Round robin matches for up to 8 mini basketball teams played at school venues took place with the following schools acting as hosts: Leamington Primary School (Ashfield), St Peters Primary School (Newark & Sherwood), Radcliffe on Trent Primary School (Rushcliffe) and Jesse Gray Primary School (Rushcliffe). Each participating school was presented with a certificate and fair play is encouraged at all times. The winners of the Dick Chester memorial trophy for fair play will be named at the end of May.
30. The end of the competitive season was marked by the annual awards evening on 11th May held at the Polish Eagle Club on Sherwood Rise where all of the squads gathered to honour their team members in the categories of Most Improved Player and Most Valuable Player in each age group as well as rewarding team helpers and volunteers.

Tourism and Country Parks

"Sherwood Forest: The Living Legend"

31. The Big Lottery Fund (BLF) Living Landmarks bid in the £25m-£50m category for Sherwood Forest was submitted in early January this year by the County Council on behalf of a partnership of organisations from the public, private and voluntary sectors. The bid includes funding for a new Visitors' Centre, re-creation of the Forest, regeneration programmes in the villages and improvements to the walking and cycling routes between local towns and villages near the Forest and within the Forest itself.
32. I am very pleased to advise that the bid has now been "long-listed". As a result there will be a two-day Project Review Visit to Nottinghamshire held on Friday, 19th May, and Monday, 22nd May, undertaken by BLF staff and their consultants. The purpose of the visit is to scrutinise the bid, examine its outline business case and to assess whether it should be "short-listed" and thus qualify for up to £500,000 of development funding.
33. A decision on short-listing is expected in August 2006 and the final bid is due to be submitted by May 2007. A final list of projects will then be subject to a public television vote in Autumn 2007 to select a single winner.

Rufford Country Park

34. The toilet block at Rufford Abbey re-opened early April following a £73,000 refurbishment of the facilities. The refurbishment has doubled the number of ladies toilets and includes a larger disabled toilet which complies with the latest Disability Discrimination Act guidelines. There are also improved facilities for parents with small children which now include both baby changing facilities and a feeding room for nursing mothers.
35. A new phase of development planning is now underway with a bid to the Alliance Sub-Regional Strategic Partnership (SSP) for 50% funding towards a £600,000 programme of works at Rufford. The funding will contribute towards:-
 - Conversion of buildings at Rufford Mill to enhance conference, training and event spaces.
 - Creation of a Play Village with a "Saxon" theme.
 - The introduction of a Children's Garden within the existing formal gardens.
36. The outcome of the bid to the SSP will be known in June 2006.

Councillor Chris Baron
Cabinet Member for Culture