



**ADULTS AND COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE -
2 NOVEMBER 2020**

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS PROGRAMME

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF ADULTS AND COMMUNITIES

Purpose of report

1. The purpose of this report is to advise the Committee on the formation and work of the Communities and Wellbeing's new Audience Development Team within the Adults and Communities Department.

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

2. In September 2020, the Cabinet approved the Adults and Communities Department Strategy 2020-24 "Delivering Wellbeing and Opportunity in Leicestershire". The Strategy places a strong focus on the development of digital solutions in service provision.
3. The Adults and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the Strategy at its meeting of 7 September 2020.
4. The Audience Development Team's work is also derived from, and informed by, the current 'Leicestershire's Better Care Fund Plan 2019/20' specifically asset-based community development to support health, wellbeing and prevention, and contributes to wider corporate work on community and volunteer based recovery.

Background

5. Emerging research conducted over the last 10 years has drawn together compelling evidence of the positive impact engagement in cultural activity can have on participants mental and physical health. Specific epidemiology studies have also suggested the potential of such activity to significantly reduce risk of mortality in the longer term.
6. Libraries and museums are additionally low cost when compared to health and social care services and can be strategically positioned with greater ease, flexibility and responsiveness in order to contribute to the prevention agenda.
7. Against this background, and as part of a major restructure of the Communities and Wellbeing Service, a new Audience Development Team was formed in July of this year. The purpose of the new team is to widen the wellbeing benefits associated with cultural participation to include new audiences and to develop self-sustaining

capacity within local communities to develop their own bespoke programmes of cultural activity.

8. The Audience Development Team is part funded through the current round of the Better Care Fund allocation with a specific remit to address and mitigate the impact of social isolation.
9. The ongoing work of the Audience Development Team comprises of three linked strands, which are outlined as follows:

Supporting Community Capacity building through Community Managed Libraries and Independent Museums

10. This strand will deliver funding and pathfinder projects in partnership with community groups, such as Community Managed Libraries, to support them to develop sustainable programmes of cultural events and activities. The programmes developed will encompass a wide range of activities, such as participative arts sessions, as well as sustaining and increasing the use of local heritage and cultural resources, to create Cultural Community Networks.
11. The established Networks will develop their own local bespoke cultural programmes of activity that best fit local circumstances and need. Networks will be able to apply for seed funding where a focus is demonstrated on addressing social isolation within their respective communities. This in turn will provide a basis for referral by Local Area Co-ordinators, enablement workers and local GP networks.
12. The Team will provide advice, training, joint demonstration projects and expertise to recruit and support new volunteers. Currently, there are nine Community Managed Libraries identified as potential Cultural Communities Network pathfinders. The Appendix attached to this report provides further detail on the Cultural Communities Network, including the grants available to partners.

Themed, time limited, projects to identified target audiences

13. This strand focuses on projects developed for specific targeted groups who may most benefit from participation in cultural activity, whether it be based on their care needs, challenges in terms of accessing services or groups that are particularly vulnerable to the impact of social isolation, such as carers. Wherever possible, projects will be planned and delivered through a co-creation approach.
14. Projects are time limited and each initiative will, in the planning stage, identify progression routes beyond the project itself, such as learning opportunities or volunteering. The projects will also form new links between the Council's internal teams, local communities and external countywide organisations.
15. In addition, the Team has a broader remit of developing activity that encourages under-represented groups and individuals to make use of the County Council's own cultural assets within the Communities and Wellbeing Service, to realise its own aims and aspirations.
16. The Appendix attached to this report provides further details of current activity in the Council's Libraries and Museums, including co-created exhibitions "Black Lives

Matter Too!” and “Do You See What I See?”. Notably participants in these projects felt 87% happier, 78% felt listened to and 92% felt they had a closer connection to the local community as a result. ‘Terrible Tales’ is a programme of cultural activity designed for children in care and their families. Activities are scheduled to take place at museum and heritage sites from October through to March 2021, with support from the virtual school and in line with Covid-19 restrictions.

Development of Communities and Wellbeing volunteering offer

17. This strand will continue to build on the strong existing volunteer offer within the Communities and Wellbeing Service, to ensure volunteering activity is developed to support outcomes around health and wellbeing, adding value to core activity and providing opportunities for the development of new skills and experience. The Service supports up to 750 formally registered volunteers a year, across 150 different roles.
18. Consideration will also be given to the different types of volunteering opportunities, i.e. more flexible short-term projects, remote offers and more opportunities shared among partnerships. The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic has demonstrated the need and value of a more flexible approach.
19. The Team are also developing asset-based community led volunteering opportunities. Their role includes ensuring that any volunteers recruited receive support and training, so they become self-sustaining.
20. “1485 around the World” is a research project led by around 50 volunteers from Adult Learning Skills for Life courses and staff at Bosworth Battlefield to explore what was happening across the globe during 1485. NextGen Heritage Fest is a young people’s forum who are developing the first Leicestershire Heritage Festival. More detail about these projects is available in the Appendix.
21. A new evaluation framework is being introduced to more effectively capture the potential wellbeing outcomes experienced by participants in the outlined initiatives. This will form part of the ongoing quarterly performance reporting suite for the Communities and Wellbeing Service.
22. The impact of the current Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted a number of challenges and opportunities for the work of the Team. It is recognised that going forward there will likely be more demand for remote digital services to complement the face to face activities taking place in community venues (once these are able to be re-established). Such digital activity will therefore integrate closely with the programmes developed as part of the Cultural Community Networks rather than be developed as standalone virtual offers.
23. An example of this approach is the intended development of the Home Library Service to include virtual support through volunteers in the shape of shared activity, such as through remote shared reading groups, live-streamed library events, local reading schemes and by broadening the scheme to become a Home Culture Service, which would offer access to a wider range of resources and support to those suffering from, or at risk of, social isolation and would also create a referral pathway to Adult Social Care and Public Health services.

Resource Implications

24. The Team was formed on 1 July 2020 and is currently in receipt of funding from the Improved Better Care Fund which is confirmed until March 2021. There is an intention to continue this additional funding until June 2021, to support the work of this Team for a full year. The total allocation for the Team is £250,000 and includes a commissioning pot, to directly support independent groups and organisations that can help deliver health and wellbeing outcomes.
25. Funding arrangements will be reviewed early in 2021, as part of a review of the effectiveness of the programmes and progress against milestones relating to the new arrangements. This would determine whether additional funding would be made available to continue this activity beyond June 2021.
26. The Director of Corporate Resources and the Director of Law and Governance have been consulted on the contents of this report.

Conclusions

27. The Committee is asked to note the work of the Audience Development Team and the shift in emphasis towards evidenced wellbeing impacts through the activity of the County Council's libraries and museums.
28. The Committee is also invited to comment on the greater role of the Communities and Wellbeing Service in supporting and assisting in developing local community cultural assets, partnerships and on the ground activity.

Background papers

Report to the Cabinet: 18 September 2020: Adults and Communities Department Strategy 2020-24 – Delivering Wellbeing and Opportunity in Leicestershire

<http://politics.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=135&MId=5997&Ver=4>

Leicestershire's Better Care Fund Plan 2019/20 –

<http://politics.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=1038&MId=5742&Ver=4>

Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure

29. None. However, once Community Managed Libraries participating in pathfinder projects have confirmed their involvement, Members for the respective divisions will be briefed.

Equality and Human Rights Implications

30. There are no identified negative equality or human rights implications arising from the content of this report.
31. The work of the Team represents additional activity that will actively target vulnerable and under-represented groups of potential service users and therefore will potentially generate positive equality impacts for participants. It is envisaged that the introduction of wellbeing focused evaluation and monitoring framework will capture any positive impacts and/or identify any unanticipated negative impacts.

Appendix

Participation Bulletin - October 2020

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