

Leisure and Culture Sub Committee

(Via Microsoft Teams)

Members Present:

10 March 2022

Chairperson: Councillor S.H.Reynolds

Councillors: S.Miller, S.Renkes, J.Hale, D.Whitelock and J.Jones

Officers In Attendance P.Walker, W.John, P.Doyle and C.Davies.

Cabinet Invitees: Councillors P.A.Rees and A.R.Lockyer

1. **Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The minutes from the meetings held on 23 September 2021 and 16 December 2021 were agreed as accurate records of the meetings.

2. **Monitoring of Margam Park - Verbal Update**

The Committee received a verbal update regarding the monitoring of Margam Park. It was noted to Members that the orangery had become a dedicated vaccination centre, and the staff and volunteers were thanked for all their hard work. The majority of the renovation work of the orangery had been completed before the Health Board had opened the vaccination centre, as the orangery was a successful wedding venue in South Wales. It was noted that the women's toilets and the bride's room had been refurbished, in addition to the bar area being renovated. Fairytale Village, which was adjacent to the orangery, had been completely refurbished during the first lockdown; since then, a grant for £17,000 had been secured to refurbish the interior of the small cottages and the castle ahead of Easter. Members learnt that the eating areas had been invested in, including the purchase of a catering trailer.

The Members were informed that 72 weddings were booked for the 2022 season, which was much higher than previous years. It was noted that £135,000 had been secured from heritage lottery funding

to prepare a feasibility report on the future of Margam Castle. The officer explained that the plan was to then apply for approximately £30million to repair the castle.

It was expressed to the Committee that the financial position was very positive; it was noted that due to the income streams and being below the ring-fenced budget, money had been reinvested back in to Margam Park, which would result in the increase of income streams. The officer outlined the current statistics in regards to the budget, such as the number of visitors, and the money generated in comparison to the projected figures. It was noted that there had been publicising opportunities recently, such as Lorraine, in addition to filming companies returning to the park for production, including BBC, Disney, and Netflix.

In response to queries from the Committee, it was clarified that the catering van had cost approximately £20,000.

The Committee noted that the refurbishments to the women's toilets were positive, but asked for further information on the disabled facilities in place within the park. In response, it was noted that there were currently good facilities in the orangery and that the service was in the process of reinvesting some of the profit from 2021-22 to refurbish two of the toilet blocks in the park, which included a complete refurbishment of the disabled facilities, under the Welsh Government Scheme. In addition to this, a grant had been applied for to put additional disabled facilities in the toilet blocks by the engine house and in the courtyard.

In response to queries regarding the loss of income due to the pandemic, it was confirmed that all of the lost income from weddings and the use of the orangery had been fully recovered from Welsh Government, which was approximately £270,000.

Cabinet Member personal thanks to Paul and the team

The Committee and the Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Culture thanked the service for their hard work.

3. **Neath Port Talbot Library Service Update - Presentation**

The Committee were presented with an update regarding the Neath Port Talbot Library Service, and it was noted that unfortunately due to

the pandemic, there had been a delay to the Welsh Public Library Standards report, which would have been normally scheduled to be presented to the Committee. The Committee heard how the service had responded to the pandemic, how they were now delivering the library service, an update on the community managed libraries, and how the service was performing and achieving the strategic aims.

The Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Culture praised the Reading Challenge Programme, and the establishment of the new library in Neath.

The Committee thanked the library service for their hard work, particularly throughout the lockdowns.

4. **Quarter 3 Performance Management Data (1st April 2021- 31st December 2021)**

The Committee were provided with quarter 3 performance management data, for the period 1st April 2021 to 31st December 2021 for Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning Directorate relating to Leisure and Culture.

In response to queries received, it was noted that there would be additional background to the data collected outlined in the Welsh Public Standards report regarding the visitor figures at libraries. It was hoped that there would be a big improvement to these figures, as there had been a rise in visitors recently, as Covid-19 restrictions were easing. It was also confirmed that data for online usage had been collected.

5. **Forward Work Programme**

The Committee noted the Forward Work Programme for the Leisure and Culture Sub-Committee.

6. **Urgent Items**

There were none.

CHAIRPERSON