

EXETER CITY COUNCIL

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - COMMUNITY 2 JUNE 2009

REVIEW OF LEISURE & MUSEUMS STRATEGY

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To review progress towards the key outcomes in the strategy, and consider what changes to the strategy might be necessary in the light of altered circumstances.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Last year, following an extensive consultation process involving a wide range of organisations and individuals, the Council adopted its new Leisure & Museums Strategy, 2007 – 2012. This is the first occasion on which the Committee has had the opportunity to review progress on the strategy. The complete strategy document can be found on the Council's website.
- 2.2 The strategy set out the core business of the Leisure & Museums Unit, the key outcomes it was seeking to achieve on behalf of the Council and, in more detail, the objectives and outcomes of the various services provided by the Unit.

3. CORE BUSINESS OF THE LEISURE & MUSEUMS UNIT

- 3.1 The main activities of the Unit can be summarised in a simple table:

	Learning	Health	Communities	Environment	Quality of Life
Play	X	X	X		X
Museum	X		X		X
Sport and Physical Activity	X	X	X		X
Canal and Countryside	X	X		X	X

- 3.2 Down the left hand side are the four services provided by the Unit, and across the top the five corporate objectives to which the Unit contributes. A blank box indicates that a particular service does not contribute directly to the corporate objective above, although clearly most of them have secondary benefits which they bring to those objectives.
- 3.3 Although the Unit recently shed some work when it re-structured, the essential four core elements of its work remain the same. In fact a large proportion of the capacity which was lost was devoted to community work, but not through any of the four services – it was acquired almost accidentally as part of the Unit's landlord role for community centres owned by the Council.

4. KEY OUTCOMES FOR LEISURE & MUSEUMS

4.1 As the strategy itself points out, key outcomes are hard to quantify and hard to measure, but nevertheless they are the best way of summarising why the City Council maintains the Leisure & Museums Unit, and how its successes or failures should be generally measured.

4.2 Again they outcomes are presented in the form of a table:

Outcome	Measured Against
More people finding inspiration enjoyment and fulfilment from the programmes of the Unit	Baseline survey
More people taking moderate exercise at least 3 times a week	MORI Active People survey 2006
More people taking part in activities and events and getting more out of them	2006 usage figures Satisfaction survey 2006 Individual service surveys and audience research
More people using and helping to take care of the Valley Parks, the Canal and bio-diversity in the city	Current levels of engagement and participation
More groups and organisations engaging with L&M programme in their own neighbourhood, and undertaking independent programmes themselves	2007 assessment
More people more satisfied with opportunities for learning, exercise and with their environment	Satisfaction survey 2006

4.3 Appendix I attempts to analyse how well the Unit has done in achieving those outcomes in the first year of the adopted strategy's life. We have been able to assess the Unit's success with some hard evidence: the Active People survey for example has shown how a much larger proportion of the people of Exeter has been undertaking the advised amount of physical activity (three sessions of at least 30 minutes per week), placing Exeter near the top of the South West league.

4.4 Other elements can only be assessed using our own knowledge of the work: levels of engagement and participation for example. In the case of the first item, people finding enjoyment and inspiration, it was our intention to set up a baseline survey, but this has not yet been possible.

5. SERVICE OUTCOMES

5.1 Appendix II shows the full list of Service Outcomes, 19 in all, plus 9 support outcomes. Some have been successfully delivered, while others have suffered from the recent reductions in expenditure and service – workplace health and Splash most notably. Others again have not been satisfactorily achieved due to pressures of work elsewhere, or changes in policy.

5.2 Beneath the broad objectives set out in the strategy, the general work programme is governed by team based service plans (for museum, countryside, canal, play, sports development and facilities) each of which is driven by the principles in the main strategy.

6. CONCLUSIONS AND TRENDS

6.1 The analysis of outcomes in Appendices I and II suggests a number of interesting observations:

6.2 Usage and participation in Leisure & Museums services has not yet suffered during the recession. Given that most of our services and activities are free or cheap compared to the competition it would be surprising and concerning were it otherwise, but it is useful to know.

6.3 The appetite for involvement in decision making is strong, especially where a sense of community develops round an activity, or opposition to an activity. On the positive side we have seen how well Living Here has grown as a set of loosely connected groups and activities in West Exe, largely self-directed, with the enthusiastic co-operation of existing groups and new ones. More challengingly we have also seen how local communities have thrown up keenly engaged groups who want to involve themselves with the design of parks and play areas. At the public inquiry for the Harbour Revision Order, the Council faced a dedicated team of objectors willing to devote time and effort into opposing a move they strongly disagreed with. The Leisure & Museums team is learning how to manage this process, which is welcome in that it brings local engagement. This does however require additional work to ensure that the less vocal elements of the same community can be heard too and that we fulfil our responsibilities under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.

6.4 Less effort has gone into working towards the outcomes of the strategy than might otherwise have been the case because of the very large projects the Unit is engaged with – the RAMM development in particular, but also the stalled project for a new pool, and the negotiations round the new Renaissance agreement which came into effect at the beginning of April this year. In addition we had to re-organise the Unit to make expenditure cuts which weren't predicted when the strategy was first begun.

6.5 The level of public satisfaction with our services however is welcome, and we must continue to strive to deserve it, by ensuring widespread activities, good facilities and encouraging imaginative staff in every area.

7. RECOMMENDED

- 1) that the report be noted.

HEAD OF LEISURE & MUSEUMS

S:PA/LP/ Committee/609SCC8
20.5.09

COMMUNITY & ENVIRONMENT DIRECTORATE

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended)
Background papers used in compiling this report: