

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 15 DECEMBER 2017

Statement from: Councillor C N Worth, Executive Councillor for Culture and Emergency Services

CULTURE

Library Service

We are now in Year 2 of the 5 year contract, with the option to extend for an additional 5 years up to 2025.

The service continues to achieve high satisfaction rates and in the Annual User Survey conducted over 10 core libraries between 19 July and 16 August, they achieved an overall satisfaction rate of 100%.

The modernisation and updates to the appearance and zoning of the libraries has enhanced the service offer and GLL continue to strive to improve the user experience through innovation and creativity in the libraries.

Through the summer period from July to September, community use of libraries increased by 879 hours, when compared to this time last year.

To build a community connection and promote the use of core libraries by local communities, a wide range of cultural and learning activities are held throughout the year. Library staff responded creatively to local interests and provide a range of activities which ensure that the library becomes the centre of the local community. In Quarter 2 a total of 1,268 activities were organised and delivered and an additional 533 activities were offered in core libraries in partnership with groups and individuals from the local community (*Story/Rhyme Time; Adult Activity; Children/Family Activity; Class/Group Visits; IT Sessions; Community Group Promotional Stand and Room use/hire*)

The Summer Reading Challenge launch event at Lincolnshire Wildlife Park with Michaela Strachan, linked to a range of activities throughout the summer around the Animal Agent theme. This, coupled with featured author events (*Stephen Booth; Christina James; Sarah Ward; Richard Leatherhead and Martin Davies*), have proved really popular. This has been evident in reported performance where during August 164,072 visits were achieved, which is 24,251 above target.

GLL continue to review the service to ensure that it meets the needs of the local communities they serve. One such innovation is that GLL have developed the library website to include enhanced information regarding specialist services such as Reading Groups; full mobile library details and route information and improved guidance e.g. the use of online services such as e-books.

Activity programmes have also been changed to enable those customers who find it difficult to visit during standard opening hours to attend, e.g. Lincoln Central Library's 'Library Lates' programme. GLL have also extended library open times to coincide with community events, e.g. Sleaford and Woodhall Spa Community Christmas Markets.

The Arts Council England (ACE) funded ForgingLincs project, which enables core libraries to work with local young people to improve employability skills and combat social isolation, is progressing to plan. Strong links between GLL and the University of Lincoln, The Network, Job Centre Plus centres and community organisations have been built.

Extensive outreach work with the target audience (unemployed 16 to 25 year olds) has been undertaken to ensure that facilities provided meet the needs and demands of this often hard to reach group.

Standalone IT hardware is currently being installed at the four major 'Library Labs' offering software related to coding; graphics; digital photography and film; with internet connectivity where needed via Wi-Fi. Workshops tailored to participants' needs will be run through autumn and winter and will be delivered in partnership with the University of Lincoln tutors and students. Workshops in digital sound and music have already been held in partnership with SoundLincs, with more planned in the coming months.

We recognise that there has been an issue with the Library ICT speed and connectivity in recent months and this is being addressed. During October, the KPI target relating to the 'number of visitors' was unfortunately not met. However, on balance, between April-October the total visits are 1% higher than the same period in 2016 and the issue figures, numbers attending activities and hours of community use are on the rise.

Community Hubs

The 36 Community Hubs continue to be fully supported by GLL. There are 4 Library Development Officers (LDOs) providing support. Hubs are divided between the LDOs based on geographical location.

In October, GLL facilitated a Community Hub get together at the Central Library, with the attendance of the LCC Libraries Client Lead. This session gave the opportunity for group discussions, giving the volunteers an opportunity to share good practice and discuss other pertinent topics and finished with a Q&A session. Feedback from attendees was that this session was well received and they looked forward to future sessions.

There have been a number of changes to sites; North Hykeham moved from Middle Street in September and re-opened at Valerian Place on 14 October and the Middle Street site has been declared surplus to requirements. Welton closed in October and will be re-opening once their new site is completed at Manor Park in November. Handover to the Co-operative is imminent. Burgh le Marsh will be closing in November in preparation for their relocation to newly built premises at Tinkers Green early in the New Year.

Battles & Dynasties and Domesday

Nearly 80,000 people came to see the Domesday Book at Lincoln Castle this summer, the first time that this precious part of the nation's history has been displayed outside of Lincoln. The display formed part of the Battles and Dynasties

Exhibition which also saw 7,000 people visit The Collection to see an amazing collection of treasures never brought together before.

The quality of the exhibition, the range and depth of artefacts and their significance saw visitors commenting that this was the best exhibition the County had ever hosted. The premise of the exhibition was the significance of the Battle of Lincoln 1217 and the combination of this exhibition and re-enactments at both Lincoln Castle and Lincoln Cathedral delivered a local story to a very large audience.

Future of the Monson Papers Secured

Two grants worth a combined total of £262,500 have secured the future of one of Lincolnshire Archives' most popular collections.

Thanks to a grant of £242,500 from the National Heritage Memorial Fund and one of £20,000 from the Friends of the National Libraries, the County Council has been able to purchase the Monson papers, which are currently housed at Lincolnshire Archives.

The papers are of immense local importance, with some documents being of national, and even international, significance. The core collection dates from 1221 to 1947 and comprises the estate and archive of the Monson family, the Barons Monson of Burton by Lincoln, together with family and personal papers and antiquarian collections. It is one of the largest estate collections at the Archives, consisting of many thousands of documents.

Manorial Documents Register Project

The National Archives are progressively revising and making available online the Manorial Documents Register and have provided £70,000 grant funding to finance the revision of the Manorial Documents Register for Lincolnshire. Over the next two years, Lincolnshire County Council's Heritage Service will be working in partnership with the University of Lincoln, who are taking the lead in the delivery of this project.

New Arms & Armour and Stone Carving Displays

In the Victorian Prison at Lincoln Castle, some prime examples of our collection of arms and armour have been presented to dramatic effect in a display of 'Dressed to Kill' with three suits of armour in front of the large window in the Male Prison making an imposing statement and reflecting the medieval story of the inner ward of the Castle on which the Prison stands. Within one of the Prison rooms there is also a series of table cases displaying armour from the Civil War to the 19th Century.

At The Collection, a display of carved Lincolnshire limestone pieces from Roman to Medieval times has been displayed in the Orientation Hall along with temporary and changing displays of the archaeology from the Eastern Bypass works.

These new displays utilise LCC's own Collections which would otherwise be in storage and are part of an ongoing programme to bring more of our stories out of our stores and to the public.

Morning Explorers Autism Friendly Hour at Lincoln Castle

We have received overwhelming interest in our Morning Explorers sessions that we held for the first time this year. The bespoke experience especially created for families who have autistic children, has had lots of positive feedback.

A look ahead to 2018

Our aim continues to be about refreshing our offer and reaching new visitors. We also want to ensure that we give our visitors a reason to return and with the launch of our Annual Pass at Lincoln Castle, it will be even easier for families to enjoy Lincoln Castle again and again.

Next year, Lincoln Castle will be celebrating its 950th Anniversary by hosting a family friendly summer exhibition of 'LEGO'. The Lego building blocks will appear for the school summer holiday in the form of 'Kingdom', an installation of life size Lego models of fantasy and medieval legend complete with dragons, griffins, a knight and a full size throne fit for selfies. There will be interactive Lego activities based in the Heritage Skills Centre and a unique model that can be bought and made as a souvenir.

Other activity at the Castle will include a return of the popular Grand Medieval Joust and the Steampunk Festival which will also incorporate the Museum of Lincolnshire Life this next year as the centre for Junior Steampunks with a range of children's activity. Third Party events continue to be curated so as to match the quality of the Castle visitor experience, with several concerts and outdoor films, including The Dambusters as another reflection of the RAF centenary. The Comedy Feast is also set to return.

The Collection will host the Bastion in the Air Exhibition, an LCC originated and HLF funded exhibition commemorating the RAF centenary. This exhibition, which will have an admission charge, includes the largest model zeppelin ever made and chart the unique contribution of the City and county to military aviation. The exhibition will be complemented by other events including a prelude to the exhibition with 'Kings in the Sky', a large outdoor event at the Castle with a replica WW1 biplane and full size replica Spitfire on the Castle lawns. We intend to follow up Bastion in the Air with an exhibition of David Ross's personal post-1960 'Brit Art' art collection, which could include works by eminent British artists from the last half century; Freud, Hirst, Riley and Hockney. As Brit Art continues to be world leading, we are sure that this collection of work by household names will draw good audiences in the autumn and winter.

FIRE AND RESCUE / EMERGENCY PLANNING

General

Notable incidents over the last few months have included two '10 pump' incidents, one at a factory in Grantham where chemicals were being processed and the other at a recycling site in Bourne. Both incidents were ongoing concurrently which, whilst stretching resources, were brought to a successful conclusion without serious impact on the communities.

Both Fire and Rescue and Emergency Planning were also directly involved in the incident at Woodhall Spa, also referred to as operation Saddleback, involving the discovery of mustard gas. Fire and Rescue supported the incident by providing decontamination support throughout and also the use of Woodhall Spa fire station as a multi-agency forward command post. The Emergency Planning team played an important role in the management of the incident and have continued to support East Lindsey District Council throughout recovery.

The team have also undertaken leading roles in the design and facilitation of several high profile LRF events including a Command and Control review, a Move to Critical workshop and the Duke of Cornwall Safety Awards ceremony. The latter saw the award of certificates to around 30 members of various youth organisations in recognition of their enhanced knowledge and skills in supporting the recovery phase following an event. Planning for high profile events has included the inaugural RAF Scampton Air Show and the Lincoln Christmas Market.

Working in partnership with the Lead Local Flood Authority, Fire and Rescue have also taken delivery of two high volume pump sets to support response to the flood threat in the County. Training on the new equipment, which will be based at Gainsborough and Wragby, is now underway with the expectation that the equipment will be available for use by the year end.

Blue Light Collaboration

With the move to the new shared Fire and Police Headquarters at Nettleham now well embedded, work has continued to focus on the South Park development with the planning application now complete and enabling works underway. The operational crews based at South Park moved into their temporary station on the existing site in November. The plans to move the control room to the shared site at Nettleham remain on target as do plans to occupy the new shared fire and ambulance station and county council office accommodation at Sleaford in the New Year. On 17 November Victoria Atkins MP formally opened the joint fire and ambulance station at Louth which is the first station in the county where crews from the two different services are co-located under one roof.

Grenfell

In the aftermath of the Grenfell fire, our fire safety teams have continued to provide support and guidance as appropriate around the county. We have also contributed on a regional basis to the independent review of building regulations and fire safety. Members of our Emergency Planning team were invited to visit Grenfell Tower following the fire as guests of Ealing Borough Council. A number of lessons were identified in respect to local planning for Lincolnshire and a subsequent report produced. This included nine recommendations which have been endorsed by both Corporate Management Board and Informal Executive. The team were also able to share some of their own planning with the London Boroughs around spontaneous volunteers, currently regarded as best practice nationally. The team have subsequently delivered training falling out of this experience and other national events to the Greater Lincolnshire Leaders' and Chief Executives' Group.

Fire Peer Challenge

Fire and Rescue were assessed as part of the Operational Assessment and Fire Peer Challenge process at the end of September. This involved a team from outside the Service reviewing a number of key aspects of service provision with a focus on: the changes implemented over the last few years as a result of budget pressures; the effectiveness of our collaborative working with other emergency services; and elements of workforce reform. While the final report is still awaited, initial feedback from the Peer team has been positive. The intent will be to take the report, with any corresponding action plan, to the Public Protection and Communities scrutiny committee once the report has been finalised.

Long Service Awards

On 16 November, the Service held its annual Long Service Awards Ceremony at the Lincolnshire Showroom. The Lord Lieutenant presented ten recipients with their Long Service and Good Conduct medals, recognising their twenty years of meritorious service and good conduct. Five members of the Service received their County Council long service twenty years certificate and four members their thirty years certificate. There were also two Chief Fire Officer's commendations awarded, recognising the professionalism and commitment of crews operating under notably difficult circumstances.

REGISTRATION AND CORONER'S SERVICES

Registration Service

The Registration Service continues to respond to customer need at key moments in their lives. Our comprehensive customer satisfaction survey in August resulted in over 242 survey forms returned. It is a huge credit to staff that 100% of people were satisfied with the service. 96.2% rated the service as 'Very Good or Excellent'. This demonstrates how staff continue to excel in the delivery of service.

We had our external assessment of our commitment to Customer Service Excellence and once again I am delighted to announce extremely high adherence to the standard, with only one partial 'Compliance' due to a lack of credit/debit card facility. However, an additional 'Compliance Plus' was awarded recognising the extensive stakeholder engagement and partnership working completed over the last year.

The last few months have seen new strands to the service introduced including the introduction of new national fees in October 2017 for corrections and foreign divorces. In addition, Lincolnshire is one of only five local authorities working with the Home Office in piloting the collection of an individual's Biometric Residence Permit on the day of their citizenship ceremony. Our commitment to public protection and counter fraud is embedded in the service.

We were also very privileged to be invited to the opening of the Swanpool Suite at Lincoln County Hospital. This is a new service for bereaved families, whereby the family of the deceased can collect all personal belongings and the Medical Certificate of Cause of Death from a dedicated team within the Bereavement Suite.

We are working with the team to see how we can facilitate death registration appointments at the same time and hope to pilot this soon.

The proposals in relation to death certification reform and the introduction of medical examiners were discussed in the House of Lords on 18 October, with a potential implementation date of April 2019. Whilst this has been delayed nationally, there are additional considerations which will link into hospital programmes for learning from deaths. We eagerly await further communications from central government departments to inform the implementation plan.

A new website, appointment diary system and electronic payment mechanism has been commissioned and we hope that this will be available early in 2018 and that it will transform the way the public can access the service.

Lincolnshire Coroner's Service

The Coroner's Service continues on its transformation journey following the merger of the two coroner areas on 1 August 2017. The appointment of an Area Coroner has been recommended following an open recruitment process supported by the national Chief Coroner.

The employment of Coroner's Officers transferred from Lincolnshire Police to Lincolnshire County Council in April 2017, supporting the closer working relationships between all parties and is delivering an improved experience for bereaved families.

Improvement and changes to working practices are also demonstrating improvements in timescales for the issue of coronial paperwork. We continue to look at opportunities for a more digital service delivery via a new IT platform. This will improve the work flow for the investigation of deaths. In addition, we remain committed to working with partner agencies to improve both communication and processes.

The Coroner's Service continues to play an active role in supporting emergency planning work for winter planning and in the event of a mass fatalities incident.

The vision of providing the BEST service – A Bereavement Experience which is Sensitive and Timely – continues.

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