

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 15 SEPTEMBER 2017

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

CULTURE

Library Service

The contract commenced on 1 April 2016, with a seamless handover. Members of the public experienced no disruption and have recorded a 99% satisfaction rate.

Since then, GLL have had a positive impact within Lincolnshire; increasing the number of events held across the sites and encouraging community use within the service. Regular activities at core libraries, such as 'messy mornings', 'digital drop-ins', and 'knit and natter', have increased by 171% between April 2016 and January 2017. Core libraries participated in national library and literary promotions including Harry Potter Book Night and the Where's Wally 30th Anniversary. The 2016 summer reading challenge saw staff double the usual number of activities delivered in core libraries and as a result there was a 30% increase in participation when compared with 2015. Figures for 2017 also look positive.

Core library staff also started to connect to their local communities and encourage use of the library as a public space. New and existing links have been built upon and there are now a variety of community groups holding both regular and irregular surgeries and community drop-ins. Staff also invite community groups to join in with their scheduled promotions such as Dementia Awareness Week and Local History Month. Beyond this, GLL have updated the garden, children's area and teenage area in Lincoln Central, provided a new look at Boston and improvements to Skegness, Sleaford, Gainsborough, and Stamford.

Over the coming year, GLL are reviewing the current opening hours for the core sites with the intention of extending, where possible, to ensure the provision matches need. They are also implementing the ACE Innovation funded project 'ForgingLincs' which will see a £230k investment in core libraries to work with local young people to improve employability skills and combat social isolation.

Performance is monitored on a monthly basis with contractual clauses available to impose financial penalties should targets be missed. Throughout the first year, GLL has consistently exceeded the targets associated with a number of their KPIs, particularly around the percentage of books delivered within the specified number of days; the percentage of scheduled events delivered in core sites and number of hours community use at all core sites. The initial few months of the contract did see performance fluctuate slightly with regard to some KPI's, as to be expected as with any new contract.

The concluding quarters of 2016/17 (quarter 3 and quarter 4) saw a dramatic improvement across areas with March experiencing a 13.9% increase against target for number of visits to sites and an 18.7% increase for stock issues. As a result, all KPIs bar one achieved their end of year performance target.

The only KPI that did not achieve its annual target and thus has incurred a financial penalty relates to the percentage of scheduled mobile stops that are achieved. There have been months where the target has successfully been achieved, however, due to road traffic accidents/closures or unexpected breakdowns other months have been missed. GLL are currently reviewing the mobile service delivery to rectify this issue and remedial actions have been put in place to improve performance.

GLL are also supporting 36 Community Hubs. Performance reporting is not a requirement of the hubs' grant agreements however, all have been reported to having been utilised frequently by its customers and embedded within the local communities.

Tennyson Research Centre

On Friday 14 July, the Tennyson Research Centre was officially re-opened at its new home, the Lincolnshire Archives. The collection contains the library, letters, papers and possessions of Alfred Tennyson and his family, the most significant collection on the poet in the world. As a result of the move, the Centre will now be open for twice as long, being accessible for 30 hours over five days of the week rather than 15 hours over three days at its former home, Lincoln Central Library. In addition, Lincolnshire Archives provides a much better environment in which to store the collection, ensuring it is preserved for future generations.

Battles and Dynasties

We are proud that Lincoln Castle is the first and only venue outside of London to host the Domesday Book, and this pride is matched by the unmissable, once in a lifetime opportunity to see an amazing array of artefacts at The Collection. Together, these displays form the Battles and Dynasties Exhibition which has received some of the best feedback we have ever had and to date over 40,000 visitors have seen one or both parts of the Exhibition.

Lincoln Castle Awards

Lincoln Castle continues to receive national recognition for the quality of its visitor experience. In June, it was officially crowned as the UK's Most Popular Castle as part of an online poll organised by TripAdvisor, receiving over 43% of total votes. More recently, the site has retained its accreditation of Visit England's Quality Assured Visitor Attraction. Standout scores were received for the staff, who achieved a very impressive 97% as part of the audit. On the strength of this assessed visit, Lincoln Castle will be put forward for consideration of Visit England's 'Welcome' accolade.

Wolf Hall – Gainsborough Old Hall

This exhibition of costumes from the BBC's phenomenally successful show, has seen an increase in paying visitors of 27% compared to last year and the exhibition has also brought a change in the demographic of visitors to the Old Hall. At the time of writing this statement, over 9,000 visitors had enjoyed the exhibition which was on target to reach over 12,000 visits before it concluded on the August Bank Holiday.. This has resulted in increase of over £12,000 in admissions income alone.

Staff Restructure

July 1st saw the successful implementation of a new staff structure that makes way for a new service delivery model that truly focuses on both the customer at the heart of the service but also commercialisation; which in turn leads the way for the review of governance we are undertaking to ensure the service is fit for future generations to enjoy.

FIRE AND RESCUE / EMERGENCY PLANNING

National Fire Reform

The Home Office fire reform programme continues at pace with the National Fire Chiefs Council, supported by its various coordinating committees, now up and running. A number of Police and Crime Commissioners have also launched consultations with a view to taking responsibility for their Fire and Rescue Service. Essex will be the first area to have a Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner with the transition expected to take place by 1 October 2017. The Minister for Policing and Fire has also announced the establishment of an independent inspectorate for fire and rescue authorities in England. This will be facilitated by an expansion of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary which will re-brand as Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services. It is anticipated all fire and rescue services will be inspected over a two year period starting in 2018.

Blue Light Collaboration

In March, Fire and Rescue successfully completed its headquarters move to the new shared Fire and Police Headquarters at Nettleham. Whilst this was a significant undertaking, the transition went smoothly and is testament to the huge amount of work by all involved both in preparation for, and during, the decant. The Leader's statement contains more detail of further plans in connection with the collaboration.

Grenfell Tower

The shocking scenes from the Grenfell Tower incident have, not surprisingly, dominated the news over recent months and our thoughts remain with all those affected by the fire. Like other services, our fire safety teams have been focusing on ensuring our high rise buildings in particular are safe and they continue to provide support and guidance around the county as appropriate. At the end of July, the Government announced the independent review of building regulations and fire safety which will examine the regulatory system around the design, construction and on-going management of buildings in relation to fire safety as well as related compliance and enforcement issues.

Retained Duty System Review

The Service continues to implement recommendations falling out of its review to ensure our Retained Duty System remains fit for purpose. This review covered a broad spectrum of topics ranging from recruitment and selection through to training and payment systems. Key progress to date includes; refinement of a number of recruitment processes; refocusing of resources to facilitate targeted recruitment plans and provide better support and engagement to personnel; development of a

new learning management system providing a more flexible approach to training; and the establishment of a bespoke training course which has been run successfully at Bardney to support recruitment. An update was provided to the Public Protection and Communities Scrutiny Committee in July which continues to monitor progress.

Fire Peer Challenge

Looking ahead, Fire and Rescue will be undertaking an Operational Assessment and Fire Peer Challenge at the end of September when a team from outside the service will carry out a review across a number of key aspects of service provision. This will enable the service to access independent input to support improvement as appropriate and will provide a sense check prior to the introduction of the inspection regime next year.

Tidal Surge Event

There was an ominous start to the New Year with the Environment Agency forecasting a potential tidal surge and high wind event along the East coast on, of all days, Friday 13 January. With the warning acting as a trigger for the Local Resilience Forum, partners were swift to respond, activating existing plans as appropriate. This facilitated the pre-deployment of assets, timely messaging to the public assisted by the military and limited evacuation of those considered most at risk. Whilst fortunately the anticipated flooding did not materialise along Lincolnshire's coast, the event demonstrated that our preparations were sound. Of course, there are always lessons to be learned and these are being taken forward by the forum as appropriate.

REGISTRATION AND CORONER'S SERVICES

Registration Service

The Registration Service has completed another busy year. The volume of marriages increased significantly and the service remains committed to delivering couples a wide range of choices on their special day. Sadly, the volume of death registrations also increased significantly and we continue to work with partner organisations to improve the timeliness of these registrations, providing training and newsletters. Staff continue to excel in the delivery of service and once again we are delighted to announce that the service achieved 100% compliance with the Government's standards for Customer Service Excellence. This continues to be a remarkable achievement which reflects the commitment and dedication of all staff working in the service. Lincolnshire is one of only a handful of Registration Services who hold this prestigious award.

Nationally, legislative opportunities continue to move forward although we anticipate these will be impacted with a slower pace of change with the national priorities in relation to Brexit. The proposals in relation to death certification reform and the introduction of medical examiners have been delayed nationally, although Lincolnshire plays an active role in the planning for this.

Other legislative initiatives include the potential for a 'schedule' system for marriages.

A new element to the service was initiated in Autumn 2016 with the launch of the European Passport Return Service to supplement other nationality and citizenship services. In addition, a new website, appointment diary system and electronic payment mechanism has been commissioned and we hope that this will transform the way the public can make bookings for the service.

Lincolnshire Coroner's Service

On 1 August 2017 there was a merger of the two coroner areas in Lincolnshire (South and Central), following public consultation by the Ministry of Justice in February. The Senior Coroner for the new combined area, Stuart Fisher, has stated his commitment to providing a modern, effective and efficient service and the Coroner's Service continues on its transformation journey. 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.

2017 has seen another year of high levels of referrals to the coroner, which matches the trend nationally. This continues to put a strain on resources and budget, however, the risks to service delivery are being mitigated by the employment of additional staffing and the continuing review of processes.

Changes to working practices have resulted in customer focused performance evidenced by a dramatic reduction in the number of complaints received.

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

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