

## **COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 26 SEPTEMBER 2014**

**Statement from: Councillor C N Worth, Executive Councillor for  
Libraries, Heritage, Culture, Registration and Coroners  
Service**

### **Libraries**

Members will be aware of the very detailed work we have undertaken to move the library service in Lincolnshire to a modern and sustainable footing – and to make its contribution to the savings the Council must make to balance its books over the coming years of austerity in public finances. You will also be aware that certain elements of the Council's approach to these changes, in particular some flaws in the way we engaged with communities and organisations, have been highlighted by the High Court following a local citizen's request for a judicial review of our decisions on the library service.

Officers of the Council have now had the opportunity to properly reflect on the judgement. The primary steps will see Council re-engaging with the public and organisations to set out the minimum standard of service we want for local people and hear ideas and proposals for how these can be delivered within the budget set.

Additionally, we are working with Greenwich Leisure Ltd (GLL) in the expectation that they will resubmit the expression of interest originally submitted and that this will be considered through our established 'Right to Challenge' process. All of this activity will shape a new decision of the Executive on the future model for the service, as well as a decision on how this future shape should be secured by the Council – in clear understanding that acceptance of a valid expression of interest under the provisions of the 2011 Localism Act during this re-engagement would, by law, trigger competition for library services.

I hope members will use the opportunities for further involvement that will be available in the autumn to contribute to this debate on the future of these essential services.

### **Lincoln Castle Revealed**

Lincoln Castle Revealed has been ten years in the planning, fundraising and delivery. I am proud to report that that we are on schedule, if tightly, to deliver the project on timetable and on budget, to open on 1 April, 2015 with an Official Opening in the June. We have had setbacks along the way, but I think we should take some satisfaction that as heritage projects were collapsing across the country due to the downturn, the County Council pressed on, securing £12m from Heritage Lottery Fund, to turn what was the most enormous liability for Lincolnshire into an asset which will transform our tourism offer.

Timing is critical because the Castle is still a building site, but plans are in place to promote Lincoln Castle Revealed internationally, nationally and regionally. Journalists from around the world are already booked in throughout the autumn and early spring to fit their particular deadlines but it is vital that locally, our own tourist industry and all those who have a front line role with visitors are fully briefed and can explain Lincoln Castle Revealed to their guests and customers. Throughout the January-March 2015 period they will visit the Castle for familiarisation visits, but we

kicked off on 23 September, 2014 with a very successful Countdown to Lincoln Castle Revealed event that with a combination of presentations and workshops upped the excitement levels and helped businesses to understand the opportunities for their own business.

### **Heritage Service Awards**

The Heritage Service has secured a number of awards recently. During the summer, Trip Advisor commended the quality of the visitor experience at The Collection, Museum of Lincolnshire Life, Gainsborough Old Hall and the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight Visitor Centre.

At the Lincolnshire Heritage Awards in July, The Best Exhibition Award was awarded to the recent Joseph Banks a Great Endeavour exhibition, and Gainsborough Old Hall was awarded the Inspiration Award for its Wall Painting Interpretation and Access Project. Later in the month the quality of the education programme at the Old Hall was recognised by the Sandford Heritage Education Trust, which means that the site has maintained this level of quality since 1988.

### **Archives Accreditation**

Talking of Accreditation, the National Archives reviewed Lincolnshire Archives during the spring of 2014 and granted the service Full Accreditation under a newly revised national Accreditation Scheme. The Accreditation Panel commented that Lincolnshire Archives 'is both strong and comprehensive across the Accreditation standard and its elements'. They noted the progress on digital records as especially pleasing and of wider interest in the sector. The work on volunteering and on developing learning events and partnership working to broaden audiences are important areas and where the service has made significant progress and will develop further.

### **Funding Secured**

Unsurprisingly, all this success has also translated into financial reward with The Collection securing over £210,000 from Arts Council England's National Portfolio for its contemporary visual arts programme for 2015-2018.

Lincolnshire Archives has also been successful in securing £98,100 from the Heritage Lottery Fund for the digitisation of the Siemens/Ruston and Hornsby Archive. This will enable up to 150,000 photographic negatives, 150 reels of cine film and the recorded memories of former workers are all to be digitised, catalogued and made available online in a project of national significance.

### **Battle of Britain Memorial Flight Visitor Centre**

During August and September, RAF Coningsby has been home to the last two fully operational Lancaster bombers with the arrival of the Canadian Warplane Heritage Museum's aircraft. Even though the Visitor Centre staff and volunteer guides have been working seven days a week for the duration of the visit, it has still been necessary to introduce a pre-booked ticketing system for hanger tours. However, for those who have been unable to obtain a ticket the two iconic aircraft have been flying together for a series of historic displays this summer.

## **Registration & Celebratory**

There was a fantastic response to the Registrars display at the Lincolnshire Show, celebrating marriage in the war years. This generated some evocative memories and also highlighted the changes to the choices couples make when planning their special day. The service is working with the Lincolnshire Archives team on exciting new proposals for new premises linked to The Collection. Although this is in the very early stages, we are keen to be involved in design options which may facilitate a move of the Register Office in the future.

A new celebratory brochure is due to be launched in the new few weeks. This publication is used as a marketing tool to promote the full range of ceremonies across over 100 venues in Lincolnshire.

The annual customer satisfaction survey took place in the month of August.

The date for the first conversions of Civil Partnerships to Marriage has been announced by the government as 10 December and we have had a number of enquires and bookings from same sex couples.

## **Coroners**

The Chief Coroner (for England and Wales) visited Lincolnshire on 29 July and met with the Leader, Chief Executive of the Council together with the Director of Public Health and other senior colleagues. This gave the Chief Coroner an opportunity to share his vision of coronial services.

Following a comprehensive audit of the Coroners Service, an action plan based on the recommendations has been completed and is work in progress and will be shared with the Audit Committee on 22 September.