

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 19 DECEMBER 2014

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

Libraries

The pace of work around libraries has accelerated again in the last month. September and October saw a great deal of engagement with Greenwich Leisure Ltd to support them to submit an updated expression of interest under Localism legislation. They received additional information and access to sites, staff and customers as well as regular contact with senior officers. This did result in an additional expression of interest being received by us on 31 October.

This expression, along with one further proposal received from the additional general consultation also undertaken in October, was submitted to an officer panel in accordance with the Council's Right to Challenge Scheme. I received the panel's recommendations on 3 December and have accepted that the proposal from GLL is valid under the requirements of the law and our scheme.

Law therefore requires that the Council now plans to expose the Library Service to competition. The Executive will receive options for pursuing this competition alongside proposals for the future shape of the Library Service at its meeting on 3 February 2015.

These proposals will be informed by the analysis of the consultation responses received during the additional consultation exercise also completed in October 2014.

Summer Reading Challenge 2014

The theme of the Summer Reading Challenge 2014, in which children are asked to read six books over the summer holidays, was Myths and Legends. National statistics show that nearly 840,000 children took part (3.6% up on 2013) and borrowed an estimated 18m books. 81,908 of these children joined their local library to take part. In Lincolnshire 2,391 took part in the challenge, including 132 who joined the library specially, and together they borrowed 103,907 books.

Lincoln Castle Revealed

Work on Lincoln Castle Revealed is tight but on schedule. The scaffolding on the North wall is currently being taken down and the new stair and lift towers are now in place, the stair tower having been delivered in one piece and craned over the castle walls. Front and rear ranges of the prison have been handed over for the fit-out. We have decided to install a further, more advanced specification of fire protection in the Magna Carta Vault. This has caused a slight delay but Woodhead Heritage have increased their hours on site to bring this element back into schedule.

Heritage Trust Lincolnshire

Heritage Trust Lincolnshire continues to act as the Buildings Preservation Trust in Lincolnshire, and is currently working on five projects, having submitted funding bids of approximately £4.2 million. Educational opportunities are provided through the

GROW programme, for which HTL has recently been awarded a further contract for 2014/15, and after school archaeology clubs are now running in 5 local schools. The Trust also provides many volunteering opportunities – 285 volunteers have taken part in recent activities. They continue to manage the Temple Bruer site on behalf of LCC. Heritage Open Days are managed by HTL on behalf of the National Trust and the recent 113 events held in September 2014 attracted over 26,000 visitors.

The Annual General Meeting was held on 29 October 2014 where Her Majesty's Lord Lieutenant Tony Worth was welcomed as the new patron.

Visitor Numbers and Satisfaction are up at Heritage Sites

By the end of September 2014 the Heritage Service had welcomed 235,402 visitors to its sites which is 5% more than the same period in 2013, in spite of all of the building works at Lincoln Castle. Visits to the Museum of Lincolnshire Life were up most, with a 21% increase following the completion of the Bringing the Barracks to Life project.

Analysis of over 2,900 visitor surveys revealed that in the first two quarters of 2014 96.3% of visitors rated their overall level of satisfaction with their visit to a Heritage Service site as good or very good, compared to 94.3% in 2013. The highest level of satisfaction was with visits to Lincolnshire Archives at 97% good or very good overall.

Battle of Britain Memorial Flight Visitor Centre

As reported in my last statement to Council, during August and September RAF Coningsby hosted the Canadian Warplane Heritage Museum's Lancaster bomber. The Visitor Centre welcomed 14,089 visitors using a pre-booked ticketing system for hanger tours when the Canadian Lancaster was on site. This number was 26% more than in 2013. Allowing for the costs of additional staffing and facilities to host this event, the Visitor Centre was able to generate an additional £40,000. Under our unique agreement with the Ministry of Defence a proportion of any surplus at the end of the financial year will be shared with them.

War Memorial Project

The Lincolnshire Remembrance: Memories and Memorials project is going from strength to strength. The level of interest in and enthusiasm for the project from Lincolnshire people has been astounding, and the feedback the project team have received on the activities that have been delivered has been overwhelmingly positive.

Registration & Celebratory

On 23 October the Deputy Registrar General (DRG) for England and Wales visited Lincolnshire and attended a meeting attended by Registration staff. This was one of the first visits by the DRG to services and he was able to provide an overview of his role and how that links into the strategic development of policy for Registrars. He was also very interested in developments in Lincolnshire and enjoyed meeting a large number of staff. He acknowledged the very important role staff play in safeguarding the integrity of the registration of key life events and also highlighting potential sham marriages.

The Registration Service has been developing a new range of marriage ceremonies over the last few months in consultation with staff and following feedback from families. There are now three choices available – the Legal, Standard and Enhanced ceremony choices. This is complemented by a new promotional brochure.

To ensure compliance with the Government's standards for Customer Service Excellence, a re-inspection took place on 5 November. Although we await formal notification of the award, the service has been told they were 100% compliant with this award. There are very few Registration Services in the country with this award and it reflects the high standards that are achieved. This has been particularly demonstrated over recent weeks when the Registration On Line (RON) national IT system has been either unavailable or unreliable, yet staff continued to maintain appointment times and ensure families left with their registration documents, often after a manual version needed to be prepared. This is also confirmed by the 99% satisfaction levels reached following a comprehensive survey in August.

A Bereavement Conference was held on 22 October in liaison with United Lincolnshire Hospitals Trust. This enabled delegates to look at death certification issues and understand the impact of the Francis Enquiry, the existing Coroners Service, the Medical Examiner pilot in Sheffield, clinical governance, palliative care; and served as a launch-pad for further development work on improved services for bereaved families. A further workshop/engagement event was held with CCG colleagues and Crematorium Medical Referees to see how we could start working towards improving the quality of existing Medical Certificates of Cause of Death, after a further announcement of the delay to Medical Examiner proposals.

From 10 December, legislation allows the conversion of Civil Partnerships to marriage, and Lincolnshire has a large number of conversions and ceremonies booked, reflecting the wishes of couples and to reflect their wish to celebrate this.

Coroners

The Coroners Service launched new web pages in October. This comprehensive site provides information on the Coroners Service, information on the role of the Coroner, and also lists of upcoming inquests and those that have been concluded. An e-form to allow GPs and medical practitioners to contact the Coroners Officer is in the final stages of development and will be piloted. This should make referrals to the Coroner more effective, timely, and efficient and provide an audit trail of referrals.

In liaison with Emergency Planning colleagues, work has been completed on Flu Pandemic, Excess Deaths and the Temporary Mortuary Plan. Our Public Health colleagues are developing a training event in December to support funeral directors with infection control. This initiative has been well received by the funeral directors and pre-empts an inspection programme to begin in February 2015.

Adult safeguarding has also been high on the agenda with proactive work being completed with the Deprivation of Liberty Safeguarding Team (DOLS). The Coroner needs to be made aware of all deaths where there is a DOLS in place for an individual. We have written to all nursing homes, updated GPs and funeral directors by way of a newsletter on the requirement for those individuals who die and who are

subject to a DOLS. A further letter to be placed on each individual file is also in development.

Lincolnshire County Council is also working with Lincolnshire Police to review the Coroners Officers to ensure they are adequately resourced in terms of manpower, training, equipment and to ensure processes are efficient.