

## Community & Leisure Cabinet Committee

Monday, 13 March 2023

7.30 pm

### Present:

Shane Mochrie-Cox (Chair)

Councillors: Helen Ashenden  
John Caller  
Aaron Elliot  
Sarah Gow  
Leslie Hoskins  
Nirmal Khabra  
Christina Rolles

Simon Hookway	Assistant Director (Communities)
Virginie Whittaker	Tourism and Town Twinning Manager
Adrian Hickmott	Leisure and Resilience Manager
Stephen Wren	Manager Director (Gravesham Community Leisure Ltd.)
Wayne Pedrick	Head of Operations (Gravesham Community Leisure Ltd.)
Chloe Taylor	Committee Services Officer (Minutes)

### 31. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Gurjit Bains, Cllr Emma Morley, Cllr Tony Rana (Cllrs Hoskins, Caller and Gow substituted respectively), and Cllr Ejaz Aslam.

### 32. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Community and Leisure Cabinet Committee held on Tuesday 31 January 2023, were agreed and signed by the Chair.

### 33. Declarations of Interest

Cllr Shane Mochrie-Cox declared an interest as he is a Council appointee on Gravesham Community Leisure Limited (GCLL) and The Gr@nd CIC.

### 34. GCLL/Leisure Centres Update

The Managing Director (Gravesham Community Leisure Ltd.) took Members of the Community and Leisure Cabinet Committee through a presentation outlining the changes that have happened at Gravesham Community Leisure Ltd (GCLL) over the last six months, and highlighted their ambitions for 2023.

For the presentation, please see the link below:

[\(Public Pack\)Supplementary - GCLL Presentation Agenda Supplement for Community & Leisure Cabinet Committee, 13/03/2023 19:30 \(gravesham.gov.uk\)](#)

The Managing Director (Gravesham Community Leisure Ltd.) introduced himself to Members and advised that he joined GCLL last summer, replacing Robert Swain. The Committee were presented with GCLL's shared vision, and the following aims were raised:

- The latter part of last year was spent evaluating the important aims for 2023. These aims covered not just what was important for GCLL, but for the wider community.
- Continuing the working relationship with Gravesham Borough Council (GBC).
- Post-pandemic, a sense of community had played an important role, and as such it was crucial that this is reflected in the shared vision.
- Since the start of the pandemic, leisure centres have been closing. The Managing Director (Gravesham Community Leisure Ltd.) assured members that they were trying to avoid this by keeping the two sites commercially sustainable.
- The two sites were community owned, with over 70% of the staff living in Gravesham. It was within their shared vision that this continues to happen.
- GCLL were members of a professional network of governing bodies where they seek advice.
- Members were informed about the makeup of staff at GCLL. They employed a total of 158 staff; 112 females and 46 males.
- The current attrition rate was 0.6%.

The Managing Director (Gravesham Community Leisure Ltd.) outlined statistics with the Committee and highlighted the following:

- When the pandemic hit, there was a drop in attendees of more than 50%. Trying to get members back after lockdown was difficult. During the pandemic, GCLL offered members online activities, but the attendance details of these were not included within the statistics.
- Attendees had definitely picked up, with numbers now showing over a quarter of a million over the two sites.
- Swimming had been greatly affected by the pandemic, but they were getting back to pre-pandemic levels of over 2,000.
- Health and Fitness was going in the right direction getting back up to 3,000+. They hope to be over 4,000 within the next year.

The Head of Operations presented Members with an overview of the changes that had occurred within the last year and explained that:

- There was a national shortage on the recruitment of staff with skilled leisure qualifications such as lifeguards and fitness instructors. GCLL had engaged with governing bodies to work on a training metric so that training could be performed in house. This included first aid courses and swimming teacher courses.
- They were providing fully funded training for staff, as well as apprenticeship schemes. There were three members of staff due to finish their apprenticeship within the next few months.
- They were working on their work experience scheme, which had been running since the beginning of the pandemic, and as such, they were proud to be able to bring this back.
- A new app had been developed. Pre-pandemic, you were unable to sign up without visiting the centre. Residents were now able to sign up via the app. The app would

also send members notifications on cancellations.

- The Sports Link Programme had more attendees in 2023 than pre-pandemic levels by almost double.
- There was excitement amongst the staff and members about the new Cascades development.
- GCLL used artificial intelligence to collect customer feedback. This predicted whether a member was going to leave the organisation and corresponds with the customer. If they were not using the centre, this would encourage them to come back, and members received notifications about their workouts.
- Customers were able to leave feedback on their experiences gathered by a Net Promoter Scores (NPS). The Head of Operations noted that they were only concerns about the Members they couldn't reach. If members were unhappy and left negative feedback, they were able to engage with them and find out what improvements could be made.
- They aim to introduce pro-insight to make sure that all procedures were happening as they should. This included mystery shoppers using the swimming pools once a month and feeding back on how they can improve.
- The use of Survey Monkey had helped them to analyse why members were leaving. The majority of the results reflected that they were leaving the area.
- The biggest challenge they faced was if members opted out of all communication. If the customer does not want to be reached it makes feedback difficult to achieve. An alternative to this challenge was to reach them via reception desks and in house conversations.
- Capital Investment over the next zero to two years would establish a continuation of investment and maintenance. With years two to ten of investment plans being based on GCLL's discussions with GBC in respect of Cygnet Leisure Centre.
- They had seen a big increase in utility cost, with a 70% increase in gas prices, and an increase of 42% for electricity. They were working with GBC to see what resources they had to lower these costs. It averaged at a £500,000 increase across the two centres.

The Managing Director (Gravesham Community Leisure Ltd.) outlined the ambitions moving forward and explained that:

- In 2023, they intended to capture the digital world and increase their use of social media. GCLL had around 10,000 followers on various platforms. They share interesting content that they believe the community will like.
- Communities Active 2023 – They have activities running all the time to keep them engaged and use the facilities. The community outreach was geared around the health and fitness membership.

The Managing Director (Gravesham Community Leisure Ltd.) and the Head of Operations fielded questions from Members and explained the following:

- All staff have access to a training platform with over 150 courses. A staff survey was due to be circulated which allowed them raise opportunities for training and ask staff what they would like to undertake. This was not restricted in terms of age, meaning it would give them the chance to have a one to one with someone their own age.
- In terms of equal pay, there was no disparity. As an operator, they were paying above minimum wage, and everyone had moved along the pay scale consecutively.

- Group activities were any group more than two, and it was about making a space available for them. They asked the community what group activities they want to be held.

The Chair thanked the Managing Director (Gravesham Community Leisure Ltd.) and the Head of Operations for the presentation and report.

### **35. Gravesham Tourism and Heritage Strategy**

The Tourism and Town Twinning Manager presented the Members of the Community and Leisure Cabinet Committee with a report detailing the progress on the delivery of the Tourism and Heritage Strategies objectives, achievements, and challenges of the past year. The report also outlined the project aims for the year to come.

- Research had been done to find out what accommodation was available in the area via AirDNA, which looked at the area and how much this brings to the visitor economy. GBC had signed onto this service for another year.
- The Cambridge Visitor Impact Model report for 2021 shows that, although we are not back to pre-pandemic level, the visitor economy figures and visits for the area have improved and looking much healthier.
- Links had been made with Badgells Wood campsite in Meopham. As there were not many campsites in the area, it was felt that this would be a good addition to the visitors offer, especially in the summer months. Links had also been made with the Roost Group, a luxury serviced visitor accommodation, offering holiday properties in the town centre and near chalk.
- Increased guided tours, including tours for Viking Cruise ship passengers on visits to the London International Cruise Terminal at Tilbury.
- The Borough hosted the Commonwealth Games Baton Relay last July, and this helped to put Gravesham on the map.
- High profile visits and events took place in the past 12 months. Visit Kent hosted a networking event at the Gurdwara; the CEO of Gloucester County visited Gravesend and was offered a tour of the Borough, strengthening our links around Pocahontas and America; and more recently, a group of 20 UK Tour Operators were offered a guided tour of Gravesend with the view to promote the area to their groups.
- The Tourism & Town Twinning Manager, working with local tourism businesses and attractions, has put together a full programme of events for English Tourism Week (17 to 26 March) to showcase what the Borough offers.
- An exhibition on items from Gravesham's collection of artefacts was being hosted in the Blake Gallery (13 to 31 March).

Going forward, a historic cycle tour led in partnership with Born2Ride instructors, was going to be trailed on the last Sunday of each month from April to August.

Additionally, the Tourism and Town Twinning Manager was looking at options to develop a new and updated website, as the current one is no longer fit for purpose

The Chair gave thanks to Lyndsey Thompson (Senior Arts and Culture Officer) for her hard work in compiling a comprehensive list of artefacts that all contributed to the historic story of Gravesham. The artefacts were being held at various locations, but they were looking to see if they could all be stored in one area.

The Tourism and Town Twinning Manager fielded questions from Members and explained the following:

- Footpaths and gates were the responsibility of Kent County Council. The Tourism and Town Twinning Manager confirmed they were aware of the unkept gates and footpaths, and assured Members this would be chased.
- Members noted an action of the Committee to write to the relevant Cabinet Member at KCC to get this looked at.
- Language schools were popular in Kent, but there has been a drop in the amount hosted. It was suggested that this idea be put forward to bring those visits back into the borough.
- The information regarding the Born2Ride historic cycling tours was not yet publicised on the website but should be by the end of the week.

### **36. Serious Violence Duty - Policy Statement March 2023**

The Assistant Director (Communities) introduced Members to the report which outlined the new duty placed upon local authorities. The Statement informed Members on how Gravesham Borough Council will meet this obligation and to address and reduce serious crime, whilst putting forward the best case to access funding in support of this.

The Chair assured Members that there was a good system of safeguarding partnerships, and the policy will reflect that this should be a partnership of locally focused resources. The priorities the Government allocate funding to will vary, and as such there will be a focus on what Gravesham considers to be its issues and the funding will be argued in relation to those key areas.

The committee agreed, subject to any minor amendments necessary, that the portfolio holder adopt the policy via a statement of Individual Cabinet Member's Decision.

### **37. Corporate Performance Update: Quarter Three 2022-23**

The Assistant Director (Communities) presented Members of the Committee with an update against the Performance Management Framework, as introduced within the council's Corporate Plan for Quarter Three 2022-23 (October to December 2022).

Members were taken page by page and updated on the performance indicators.

Members noted the report.

### **38. Any other business which by reason of special circumstances the Chair is of the opinion should be considered as a matter of urgency.**

As this was the final Community and Leisure Cabinet Committee before the Local Elections in May 2023, the Chair expressed his thanks to the Committee for their hard work in helping to improve the Borough.

**Close of meeting**

The meeting ended at 8.52pm