

Community & Leisure Cabinet Committee

Tuesday, 10 September 2024

7.30 pm

Present:

Cllr Deborah Croxton (Chair)

Councillors: Helen Ashenden
Derek Ashenden
Gurdip Ram Bungar
Alan Metcalf
Benjamin Sizer
Peter Scollard
Alison Williams

Virginie Whittaker Tourism and Heritage Manager
Danielle Lock Leisure Manager
Adrian Hickmott Leisure & Resilience Manager
Keith Grimley Senior Economic Development Officer
Chloe Taylor Committee Services Officer (Minutes)

9. Apologies

An apology for absence was received from Cllr Aslam and Cllr Thandi. Cllr D Ashenden and Cllr Williams substituted.

An apology was also received from Cllr Rolles.

10. Minutes

The minutes of the Community and Leisure Cabinet Committee held on Thursday, 30 May 2024 were agreed and signed by the Chair.

11. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made.

12. Corporate Performance: Quarter One 2024-25

Before proceeding, the Chair advised that the committee membership had changed following the publication of the agenda. This meant that it reflected the previous committee members. All future agendas would reflect the updated membership.

The Leisure & Resilience Manager advised the report provided the committee with an update against the specific policy requirements and the associated performance indicators. It covered the Quarter One period, which ran from April – June 2024.

The committee noted the report.

13. Corporate Register of Partnership - July 2024

The Leisure & Resilience Manager presented the committee with a report that detailed the council's involvement in partnerships that were within the remit of the committee.

The committee noted the report.

14. Sport, Leisure and Active Recreation Strategy Update

The Leisure Manager presented the committee with an update on the progress of the Sport, Leisure and Active Recreation Strategy. The following key points were highlighted:

- The Strategy was released in October 2022 at the Sport, Wellbeing and Community network.
- The core of the sports strategy was to get the inactive residents of Gravesham active. It also outlined the pathways to try and reduce the number of inactive residents within the borough.
- According to the Sport England Active Live survey, Gravesham was the most inactive borough in Kent, with over 39% of the population participating in less than 30 minutes of exercise per week.
- The reports detailed the action plan and highlighted some of the projects and initiatives which show the power of sport to not only change fitness but employability.
- Through the 'Learn to Swim' programme, it was acknowledged that some families could not afford to buy swimsuits and towels and GBC assisted in the purchasing of those.
- On the back of this project, GCLL had taken the participants on board into their own swim programme and that ambition was to offer them lifeguard training (when they were old enough) in order give them job prospects at the end.
- The female coaching programme aimed to provide women with full coaching qualifications to help them enter into employment. It was a part of a national initiative called project 500 which aimed to address the disparity between the amount of women coaches in sport vs men – only 30% of coaches in sport were women.
- The summer fun programme involved a huge amount of work and was a fully detailed programme – more information would be shared at the committee meeting in November.

Following questions and comments from members, it was explained that:

- Section 2.2 - RIBA stages referred to the stages of development of a project from initial design to final completion of build.
- Some of the children included in the 'Learn to Swim' programme had been experiencing bullying and were finding it hard to make friends. The programme had encouraged them to make friends. It was felt that the programme had had a positive impact on their lives.
- The funding stream currently being looked at for Cascades 2 was LUF 3. The council are waiting to see how this particular round of Government funding was going to be rolled out in the future due to the recent change in Government.
- Based on the Football Foundation grading, all 20 council owned pitches were graded either adequate or poor.

- The football season runs from the beginning of September until the end of May and across the 20 pitches, it was estimated that there was over 400 people a week using them. Use was predominantly seen on Sunday's (both morning and afternoons). The works had enabled them to aerate the ground, so the wear was less intensive during the drier months, and to allowed them to use a higher quality grass seed.
- Swimming lessons at both Cascades and Cygnets were very popular. Adult swim classes had been held in the past, but there was a stigma around older people who do not have the capacity to swim.

The committee noted the report.

15. Lawn Tennis Association: Gravesham Park Tennis - Project Update

The Leisure Manager updated the committee on the repairs and improvement works across the 7 owned tennis courts at Windmill Gardens, Wombwell Park and Woodlands Park. The committee were advised that since the report was written, there were the following updates:

- They were unable to launch the event on Friday 20 September due to some issues with the LTA appointed contractor resulting in works on the fence not being completed. An update meeting was scheduled with the contractors on Thursday 12 September.
- The council had secured five park tennis activator volunteers, predominantly from local tennis clubs, who had offered to give up their time on weekends to deliver park tennis sessions. These were a mix of coaching, fun drills and skill development sessions. They will be run on a weekday morning (estimated around 10:00am) and will be free for families and children.

Following questions and comments from members, the following was explained:

- Originally, the plan was to hold a court launch at Wombwell Park on Wednesday 14 August, however the court works had not been completed but a lot of promotion was done with the locals who used the courts to further explain the scheme. Initially, it was felt that there was some trepidation around paying for the courts – the Leisure Manager explained that the gating system will protect the courts.
- The council was offering a rolling pricing scheme. A pay and play session would be priced at £6.50, however they were offering a season ticket for £45 which allowed for the courts to be booked up to five times a week covering up to five people within a household.
- Regrettably, fewer social media posts had been shared than what they would have liked but this was due to works not having been completed. However, ahead of the full launch there will be social media campaigns.
- The Leisure Manager was in the process of finalising the website where all bookings will take place including packages such as the seasonal ticket.
- The pay and play free sessions will also be booked via the website. Residents will complete the booking as normal, but the balance will show as £0, and they will receive their pin to enter the gated court.
- There will be promotion around the courts, and consideration had been given to offering events at Wombwell Park as part of the summer fun programme.
- One of the LTAs ambitions was to monitor how many users the courts had, as there was currently no way to monitor it. There were rough estimations based on the pay

and play site at Windmill Hill. The numbers were not massively high, but once more promotion had been done, they were hopeful numbers would increase.

- The Leisure Manager informed members that the Parks and Open Spaces Manager had done an extensive amount of work on this project.

The committee noted the report.

16. St George's Workspace & Call for Employment Sites

The Senior Economic Development Officer gave members a presentation on the call for employment sites within the borough and flexible workspaces within St George's Centre. The presentation can be accessed using the following link: [CLCC ED Update 10 Sept.pdf](#)

Call for Employment Sites

- This was part of a wider employment land and workspace assessment which looked at ensuring the borough could provide for the local economy.
- The council were looking to go out the community to look for employment sites, which meant a piece of land, an existing building or a vacant site that could be redeveloped to provide for the local economy.
- The Senior Economic Development Officer advised that if any site owners, business occupiers, or existing landowners had ideas for these sites, then they were invited to put those forward via the online form.
- The idea will then go through a standard assessment process to look at how deliverable they might be in terms of viability, such as transport links, and does it appeal to the market etc.
- This gives the council the opportunity to look at a range of opportunities all at once, as opposed to planning applications/proposals as/when they come forward.
- Anyone with access to Google maps, can submit a prospective site for consideration, by the end of October (via [Call for employment sites – Gravesham Borough Council](#))

St George's Flexible Workspace – AKA 'Tech Hub'

- This project started as a tech hub, looking at the creative and digital sector and was partly driven by business network events where small business had asked why there were no tech hubs within the borough that could be used as a flexible workspace.
- However, this workspace is intended to be an inclusive affordable and not limited to creative and digital businesses.
- There was £370k from Getting Building Fund supplied by central government. There was a requirement for this to be spent by 31st December 2024 meaning there was a timeline to operate on.
- They were not at the stage where they could announce the operator of the space, but it was likely that it would be with an operator that was well established, particularly in the Brighton/Lewis area. In partnership with a successful local firm, familiar with Gravesham.
- There was a lot of work going on behind the scenes, particularly with the property team and around the refurbishment works that needed to be done to create the space.
- The space would be a mix of fixed office space and hot desking. From the operators who viewed the space, there was a consistent message that there should be a mix,

such as fixed desks or sealed office space with a license and the remaining space filled with hot desks available for co-working etc.

- The budget/funding specifically provides for a substantial sum to make sure that there was the provision for cutting edge connectivity.
- The council had spoken with operators who had successful existing centres which have operated sustainably. There would be a mix of established businesses and start up businesses within the space.
- There was a long list of partners that had been involved and when the project went public there was a lot of support online. Kent Business school were interested in the space, as well as North Kent College, and were keen to be involved and help in the promotion of the site.

The committee noted the report.

17. Place Branding Update

The Tourism and Heritage Manager gave the committee a presentation to update them on the place branding work. The presentation can be accessed using this link: [\(Public Pack\)Supplementary - Place Branding Update Agenda Supplement for Community & Leisure Cabinet Committee, 10/09/2024 19:30 \(gravesham.gov.uk\)](#)

The following key points were raised:

- In March 2024, an update was given on the Gravesham Tourism and Heritage Strategy. The council has decided to take further steps in responding to these ambitions and to Gravesham's potential as a growing destination.
- With Central Government Funding, the council were able to appoint Pillory Barn to undertake a place branding study to help celebrate the borough of Gravesham, its towns and villages, its history, and its great tourism offers and experiences.
- The place branding included online and in-person consultations and involved stakeholders.
- A brand book and toolkit had been produced.
- The place branding focused on tourism primarily and the 'visit' element and as a brand narrative it could be extended further.
- Five main brand themes were identified through the consultation: Historic Riverside Towns, Idyllic Kentish Villages and Outstanding Countryside, Events and Experiences, Legendary Myths and Stories, and Kentish Food and Drink.
- Once the brand themes were identified, work started on the branding campaign to assist in delivering key messages to visitors and showcasing local attractions.
- The tag line's adaptable and versatile.
- The council had secured a partnership with Southeastern Trains where posters showcasing what's happening in Gravesham, will be on platforms across Kent and beyond – this is a free service. The next poster was due to be displayed in October to promote the Lights Switch On in November.
- Via the funding, a two-week campaign with HS1 trains was secured, meaning a mixture of the five posters would be displayed (one in each carriage).
- A new tourism website had been re-design and launched www.visitgravesham.co.uk

Following questions and comments from members, it was explained that:

- Whilst the council will not put on an event for another organisation, the team will offer any help, support and guidance they can, to help those wanting to deliver their own event.
- Depending on the platform it's being advertised on the poster will be adapted and will contain information and examples of places/events.

The committee noted the report.

Close of meeting

The meeting ended at 8.24pm