

CULTURAL AND ECONOMIC SERVICES COMMITTEE (14TH JUNE 2021)

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The activities and responsibilities of the Cultural and Economic Service (C&E) are broad and diverse. Below are brief updates on service activity to inform Committee of projects completed and ongoing.

3 INFORMATION

3.2 Town Centre Wi-Fi

- 3.2.1 When signing up, individuals are asked to give their marketing consent. If they agree, their contact is stored within the contractor's system. The table below records the visitors stored in the database, those giving marketing consent, per month between January and May 2021.

Month	Monthly registration	Weekly registrations	Daily registrations	Comments
January	29	7	1	31 days
February	28	9	1	28 days
March	57	14	2	31 days
April	85	21	3	30 days 12 April 2021, non-essential trade reopened
May	87	22	3	31 days

- 3.2.3 People can sign up to the WiFi through their Facebook account or by completing a registration form. Officers received contact from a member of the public requesting that more options be added to the registration form question on gender. Instead of two options, 'male' or 'female', a third option of 'other' has now been added. This change improved the equality of the registration process and influenced a change across the country where the WiFi contractor provides its service.

3.3 Town Centre Geo-Sense, footfall monitoring

- 3.3.1 Committee is now able to compare the first full year of data with this second year. The anniversary date for going live with the footfall kit is 2nd January (2020).

Month	Average visitors per day <u>2020</u>	Average visitors per day <u>2021</u>	Comments
January	7947	2752	31 days
February	8182	3117	28 days
March	6146	3407	31 days
April	3885	4021	30 days 12 April 2021, non-essential trade reopened
May	4391	3999	31 days

3.4 Public Convenience (Multi-Storey Car Park)

3.4.1 Officers have been informed by Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) that they await an update from central government, due in June, on a grant prospectus that would fund specialist Changing Places facilities. CBC would likely submit an expression of interest followed by an application depending on the grant conditions. One of which may include the requirement for match funding.

3.5 Pigeon Management Grant Scheme

3.5.1 Applications came in for 18 properties for an overall grant fund total of £20,358.18. (£34k was allocated to this project). By the end of May, 7 properties had completed the work and received their grant payment. All but one of these properties were not classified as being Grade II listed.

3.5.2 As a condition of the grant, applicants for the remaining 11 properties with Grade II status had to seek CBC Planning consent prior to starting the works. Due the time this process may take, Committee had previously been asked to extend the completion deadline for works, (Ref. 88/CE).

3.6 Greensand Ridge Walk and Cycleway Gateway Feature

3.6.1 The Gateway Feature project, led by The Greensand Trust, has progressed work and at the time of writing this report, an artist was due to be commissioned. The deadline for the project's completion is 30th September 2021 and prior to this date, an element of public engagement will take place towards influencing the final design and informing people of the plans to install the gateway feature.

3.6.2 The budget for the artwork is £18,000, consisting of £13k from a local charity trust with other grant funds secured by the Greensand Trust. In addition to this, the Council has made available funds up to £10k for a bottled water facility to be added to the project. The £10k was received by the Council in the form of a donation with the purpose to assist Council in achieving its aims. Securing the water facility was a condition set by the local charitable trust. It

complements the Council's own strategic ambition to install water drinking fountains in the larger parks. (Ref. 41, Five Year Plan 2019-2014) and Council's Environmental Aims to encourage people to drink water (No. 8. To encourage the parish to drink more water).

3.7 Buzzard Trails

- 3.7.1 Committee confirmed its support to fund work on creating an interpretation of The Greensand Trust's, (TGT), Sands of Time trail, for the Buzzard Trails app. (Ref: 74/CE, b). Work commenced early 2021 with a TGT officer reviewing the content, images, and audio transcripts for transfer to the app. It will likely be a shorter version of the trail because the content of the original audio memories is long, and the trail crosses the boundary line into Health and Reach so six out of the 9 trail locations will be included. The app. will serve to bring Sands of Time trail to more people and then signpost them to the website hosting the complete trail. This work is ongoing at the time of writing the report.

4 BLACK HISTORY MONTH

- 4.1 Committee requested that officers explore the potential for delivering an event for Black History Month UK (BHM), promoting a period to highlight and celebrate the lives and work of black people in our country, and across the world. BHM takes place annually and internationally over the month of October. One idea was to deliver a themed Living History Day (LHD). Following the completion of the Task and Finish review of the Living History Day event, a themed event is no longer being considered.
- 4.2 During the review of LHD, an idea was put forward to celebrate residents of black heritage in The Buzzard Trails – Living History Trail. Further consideration on this idea from officers led to a recommendation that trail characters of any given background should reference deceased residents thus protecting living people. Celebration of living individuals could be better served through the Council's Community Volunteer Award or by bestowing an Honorary Freeman to an individual.
- 4.3 The approach recommended to committee is to commence its first year of council wide BHM celebration through a series of activities and allow this to build over coming years, recruiting people of black heritage to influence and take a lead in delivering activities for future years. This first year would take on a purpose of raising the profile of the BHM awareness month and its purpose. Importantly, it sends a positive message to our communities on our intent for inclusivity for future celebration.
- 4.4 Committee will be mindful that adding to delivery work programmes will require resources of people and budgets. It is hoped that working with representative groups would serve to ensure authenticity whilst managing

future resources. Committee may wish to include a budget growth item for future years during budget setting considerations.

4.5 At the time of drafting this report, initial preparation of activities for October 2021 include:

1. Free 2-hour sessions a week beginning week through October for 4 weeks providing discussion/awareness sessions hosted at the TACTIC centre. The theme of “the much-needed conversation”, as per the Local Government Association’s equalities statement adopted by Council. A session programme is being drafted by a community member.
2. Leighton-Linslade Carnival and UK centre for Carnival Arts (UKCCA) dedicated About Town newsletter article.
3. TACTIC themed activity.

4.6 Utilising annual budgets, UKCCA has been funded to deliver carnival costume making workshops with TACTIC’s young people. Young people will attend part of the Carnival procession alongside UKCCA representation. This cultural exchange supports the Carnival’s 60th Anniversary year as well as Luton’s 45th anniversary. Whilst quite different in delivery styles, the common theme of carnival will provide a positive sharing platform for raising awareness of Black Caribbean culture in a fun way and through a shared experience.

5 COP26 (United Nations Conference on Climate Change)

5.1 In exploring BHM, Committee also asked officers to explore how Council may raise the profile of how climate issues in the UK impact on people in other countries. The theme of this year’s Fairtrade Fortnight campaign was Climate, Fairtrade and You. It raised awareness of how Fairtrade farmers are suffering because of pollution created elsewhere impacting on growing conditions in Fairtrade communities.

5.2 This year, the COP26 summit is being hosted in Glasgow from 1st to 12th November. The summit brings parties together to push forward actions towards the goals of the Paris Agreement and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.

5.3 Fairtrade joining forces with the Climate Change Coalition is planning a national campaign, The Great Big Green Week, 18th to 26th September 2021 seeks to gather people’s messages (pictures, letters, poems, etc), on the issues of climate change they want leaders to address in time to send them to the gathering for COP26 (via Non-Government Organisations like Fairtrade (NGOs) . Fairtrade Leighton-Linslade steering group has welcomed the offer to partner with the Council on delivering this campaign.

5.4 This work supports Councils Environmental Ambition No. 4. to encourage social and environmental responsibility.

- 5.5 Committee may also note that it is the 15th anniversary year of the formation of Fairtrade Leighton-Linslade steering group and the Town's Fairtrade Town accreditation. At the time of drafting this report, content copy was being signed off for the About Town newsletter to celebrate this and raise awareness of The Great Big Green Week in the next issue of the Council's newsletter.
- 5.6 In the September and October newsletter issue, a template page will be created for residents to write, paint, etc. their climate messages and hopes for the future. They will be encouraged to display them in their home windows and send photographs to the Fairtrade Leighton-Linslade Facebook page so that their messages can be shared in time for the COP26 conference.
- 5.7 Officers believe that partnering with local representative and interest groups is a more sustainable and learning approach for undertaking such work, similar to that said at para. 4.4. Committee will be mindful that adding to delivery work programmes will require resources of people and budgets. It is hoped that working with representative groups would serve to ensure authenticity whilst managing future resources. Committee may wish to include budget growth item for future years during budget setting considerations.

6 DIVERSITY DAY

- 6.1 At its last meeting, Committee asked officers to consider the idea of delivering a Diversity Day event or activity. Committee will be aware that over recent years the Council's event programme has incorporated diversity through its commissioned entertainments and food provision and officers will continue to increase this approach. For example, The Big Lunch Food Festival incorporates world foods in its offer.
- 6.2 Similar to the above approach for celebration of the well-established national BHM, officers would suggest working with diverse community representatives to celebrate significant calendar dates that are meaningful. This may well take time and build-up to a regular list of activity. Taking this work forward would again require consideration of current resources, people and budgets.
- 6.3 Committee may be aware that the Democratic and Central Services team is putting together a series of social media posts that would promote the Council's equality statement and principles along with celebrating events and significant dates that occur in the annual diversity calendar.

7. CHILDREN'S TRAIL 10TH ANNIVERSARY

- 7.1 The Children's Trail will reach its 10th anniversary year in 2022. This is partway acknowledged within the Welcome Back Fund application with a sum of £3,000 pounds being requested to erect one or two large scale mice representing the Guardian of the trail towards celebration and to enhance its profile.

- 7.2 Committee has previously asked officers to explore other ways of adding to the Children's Trail. The Trail has a new audience of children each year and its length, both distance and the time it takes to complete it is considered just right for children to cope with. The proposal is to take the theme of children's literature and apply it in a different location and in a different way.
- 7.3 The aim would be to gather tree themed children's stories and create tree themed ceramic characters which are installed in the trees at Linslade Recreation Ground. The Head of Grounds and Environmental Services, responsible for the parks, has agreed to the idea and would advise on fixing techniques.
- 7.4 Similarly to the principles of community involvement in the creation of the Children's trail, the aim would be to work with the art department of a local school and work with students to create the characters that link to the literature. Initial discussion to this end is underway to secure the support of the school for a September onwards period of making, in readiness for installation in 2022. Should it not be possible for a school to support the work, a local ceramicist would be approached to facilitate the delivery of workshops to create the characters and complete the works.
- 7.5 A budget for materials, firing of the clay items would be required and will be sourced from the existing annual budget. If a backstop of commissioning a ceramicist is needed a larger budget may be needed and Committee will be informed of this in September.
- 7.6 During 2021, the Trail will undergo general maintenance using earmarked reserves previously endorsed by committee, (Ref. 88/CE, £2k, 9018/970).

8. WELCOME BACK FUND

- 8.1 In May the Council submitted a plan and application to CBC for the government's Welcome Back Fund. The aim of the fund is to help stimulate the return to economic activity to town centres and high streets. At the time of writing this report, the outcome of the application is unknown.
- 8.2 The opportunity to assist local businesses through this grant is a good opportunity for the Council and work focuses on the themes of business support, ambience, and reinvigoration of the Town Centre. Committee will be aware that the additional work activities included in this application along with the need to provide monitoring evidence of spend, etc. falls upon this service team. Some external capacity has been applied for to buy-in additional project delivery support.

9. SUMMARY

9.1 The above activity continues to stretch the reach of Committees' influence in support of its Town and the communities within.

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