

## OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**Date of Meeting:** 12<sup>th</sup> July 2021

**Present:** Councillor Johnson (Chair)  
Councillors Gill, Kempson, Morris, Procter, Rooke, Steen (sub),  
and Thompson.

**In attendance:** Ken Masser, Chief Executive, Rossendale Leisure Trust  
Neil Shaw, Chief Executive  
Guy Darragh, Head of Regeneration  
Clare Law, Head of People and Policy  
Carolyn Sharples, Committee and Member Services Manager

**Also Present:** Councillors Ashworth and Brennan.  
By remote access – Councillors Haworth, Lythgoe and Serridge

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### 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE & SUBSTITUTIONS

- 1.1 Apologies for absence were submitted from Councillors Lynda Barnes (Councillor Peter Steen subbing), Janet Eaton and Ann Kenyon.

### 2. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

**Resolved:**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 7<sup>th</sup> June 2021 be approved as a correct record.

### 3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- 3.1 Councillor Rooke declared a pecuniary interest as she had undertaken consultancy work for the Whitaker and would not be taking part in item D1. Rossendale Leisure Trust Action Plan (Minute 7), she was a Leisure Trust Board member until next week.
- 3.2 Councillor Morris declared a non-pecuniary interest that he was a Leisure Trust Board member until next Monday.

### 4. URGENT ITEMS OF BUSINESS

- 4.1 The Chair confirmed that there were no urgent items of business.

### 5. QUESTION TIME

- 5.1 The Chair noted that she would allow questions to be asked on each item as it was discussed.

### 6. CHAIR'S UPDATE

- 6.1 The Chair noted that the Digital Strategy had been to the Full Council meeting on 7<sup>th</sup> July, and the recommendation to consult further with Overview and Scrutiny on

specific projects within the strategy had also been agreed. At the same meeting, the Annual Report and Work Programme was also approved.

## **ORDINARY BUSINESS**

### **7. ROSSENDALE LEISURE TRUST ACTION PLAN**

7.1 The Chief Executive of Rossendale Leisure Trust attended the meeting to report on the Leisure Trust Action Plan. In addition to the one-year action plan, the Trust were also working on a three or five year plan, which would be ready late autumn.

7.2 In response to members' questions and comments the following clarification was given:

- The £60k loss reported in the last financial year would be absorbed in the previous reserves.
- In the current financial year recovery would be a challenge, as there was no grant support and a ½ million loss had been forecast. However, the first set of accounts has shown the loss would be in the range of £330-£400k and the Trust were working hard to continue to improve this position.
- If the Ski Slope could continue as it had over the last few months, there would be a profit by the end of the year.
- The Whitaker was a wholly owned subsidiary and the Trust was there to give strategic leadership support.
- Council funding to the Whitaker would phase out over the next two years with the exception of long-term support for the maintenance of the museum collection, which belonged to the Council.
- Rent would start to generate income for the Council next year of the year after.
- Recruitment was compliant with relevant Human Resource practices and the Trust were continuing to work on the attractiveness offer and try to recruit people from different backgrounds.
- The progress of gym members was tracked through a digital system and through regular appointments with the fitness team. The Trust was also working on how to improve communications on General Practitioner (GP) health referral successes.
- Marketing had a digital focus and was targeted to specific audiences.
- Council funding to the Community Leisure Association of Whitworth (CLAW) would phase out over the next two years. There was potential with the Riverside, which had been re-branded the Ashcroft, but there would be challenges with maintaining the leisure centre as it was an older building. It would be important to get the investment right for the Capital funds remaining for the sustainable long term.
- The recruitment to the new governance positions was expected to be completed by October.
- There were new trustees due to start, with a wealth of experience.
- Almost all staff had been retained during Covid, however similar to other leisure facilities, there was a shortage of qualified swimming teachers.
- The annual letter of support was always requested as part of the year-end accounts.
- Marl Pits and Adrenaline Centre leases had been updated to bring them up to date and the first stage of a facility review was underway.
- The Ski Slope and the Whitaker had their own in house teams dealing with payroll.

- Work was taking place to make the museum watertight following the lead theft.
- Whitaker Park was the responsibility of the Council.
- In the longer term there was a need to look at how to prioritise investment in the parks.
- In relation to the kiosk in Whitaker Park, a different level of food offer was being considered.
- Targeted marketing was focussed on the facilities and activities available in a specific area.

The Chief Executive of Rossendale Leisure Trust agreed to provide an update on progress against the action plan at the November Overview and Scrutiny meeting, including providing information on the number of surveys they had undertaken with a breakdown of the different age groups and also an update on recruitment to the new governance positions.

The Chair thanked the Chief Executive of Rossendale Leisure Trust for attending and presenting the action plan.

**Resolved:**

The action plan was noted.

**8. CORPORATE PLAN**

8.1 The Chief Executive outlined the Corporate Plan and action plan and detailed the four themes. The previous plan had expired and the current plan had been developed to cover a four-year period. The plan would be refreshed every year and brought back to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for their comments. Actions would be reported through the Quarterly Performance Report.

8.2 In response to members' questions the following clarification was given:

- The Council relied on partners to deliver certain elements of the plan and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had a role to play in scrutinising and challenging partners and holding them to account.
- Consultation had taken place with a wide range of individuals, partners and voluntary groups, including public consultation, but it was always difficult getting feedback on documents such as this.

**Resolved:**

The Corporate Plan and action plan was noted.

**9. VISITOR ECONOMY STRATEGY**

9.1 The Head of Regeneration outlined the progress on the five priorities of the Visitor Economy Strategy since its approval at the December Council meeting.

9.2 In response to members' questions the following clarification was given:

- A quarterly survey was undertaken using clickers in the town centres which included a daytime count and evening count.
- Rawtenstall Market was installing counters to give hard data.
- There was a plan to set up an information base in all three town centres.
- Regular sessions were held with food and drink businesses and in Haslingden they had identified that they wanted an events programme.

- Marketing Lancashire had made a series of recommendations regarding the East Lancashire Railway and the experiences available both on and off the carriages and there would be a full action plan.
- In relation to accommodation, they were looking to work with private sector investors and the role of the team was to encourage growth and achieve sustainable development.
- Any proposals on camping/caravan sites would need early input from members to explore options and assess whether it would be a great asset that would drive income.

The Head of Regeneration agreed to send the full strategy to new members on the committee for information.

**Resolved:**

The update on the progress of the Visitor Economy Strategy was noted.

**10. EMPLOYABILITY**

10.1 The Head of Regeneration outlined the Employability report and detailed the impact of Covid on the increase in unemployment and the percentage of people on furlough (13%).

- 10.2 In response to members' questions the following clarification was given:
- The number of people unemployed or furloughed had reduced slightly in the last few weeks, but numbers were still high.
  - The Rossendale Works scheme had been set up as a result of businesses approaching the Council to discuss meeting workforce supply demands.
  - The scheme had also been set up to assist people with barriers to work such as low confidence or having complex issues and helping them get into employment.
  - The team were in discussion with education providers and the Lancashire Economic Partnership regarding any unfulfilled demand.

**Resolved:**

The Employability update was noted.

**11. THE FORWARD PLAN**

11.1 Members were updated on the Forward Plan.

**Resolved:**

The update was noted.

**The meeting started at 6.30pm and finished at 8.45pm**

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_