

Culture and Leisure Sub Committee

Tuesday, 14 September 2021

Present: Councillor J Cruddas (Chair)
Councillors K Barrie, L Bones, M Hall, J Montague,
A Newman and J O'Shea

Apologies: Councillors G Bell, L Bell, C Davis and J Shaw

C&L7/21 Substitute Members

Pursuant to the Council's Constitution, the appointment of the following substitute member was reported:

Councillor J O'Shea for Councillor J Shaw.

C&L8/21 To Receive any Declarations of Interest and Notification of any Dispensations Granted

There were no declarations of interest or dispensations reported.

C&L9/21 Minutes

Resolved that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 29 June 2021 be confirmed and signed by the Chair.

C&L10/21 Sport and Leisure Services Recovery

The Sub-Committee received a report on the Sport and Leisure Services Covid journey and recovery planning.

The period since the first lockdown in March 2020 through to the current easing of restrictions on service delivery had been extremely challenging for Sport and Leisure Services. Major sections of the service had not been able to operate for much of the past 18 months and some aspects had remained closed throughout.

Other services had been able to operate for limited periods and with reduced capacity when lockdown restrictions had been eased. For example, reduced numbers with booking systems for the Authority's pools and gyms. This had had significant impact on customer numbers and subsequent income, and it would take a considerable period to build back up pre-pandemic activity.

During the same period the majority of the Sport and Leisure team, at some point, were redeployed to other key services to support our corporate response to the pandemic. In addition, The Parks Leisure centre became a major Covid vaccination and testing centre for the Borough, later followed by the White Swan Centre at Killingworth and the Oxford Centres at Longbenton.

The Government guidance on restrictions during the pandemic had been used in the compilation of the report and could be viewed via the following website:

The Senior Manager, Sport and Leisure Services, presented an overview of the sport and leisure service and what it had been able to deliver over the period of the covid pandemic and current planning for a return to business as usual, including:

- Facts and figures including income generated by Leisure Centres (£5.2m), overall income (£6.96m), expenditure (£8.4m), Net budget (£1.44m), turnover (£15.36m. posts (277 and FTE equivalent (131), visits to leisure centres (c1.5m) and visits elsewhere (c250,000).
- A breakdown of the Covid-19 roadmap and easing of lockdown stages to the re-opening of sport and leisure facilities from June 2020 to present.
- A 3-year comparison of leisure centre visits between April-July 2021 – there had been 254k visits between April-July 2021, which was 50% lower than the same period in 2019.
- An income graph showing that £470k had been generated April-June 2021, which represented a third of income during the same period in 2019.
- A spend and income graph showing a 3-year trend from 2019 and 2021-22 forecast.
- Sports and Leisure in context to the Our North Tyneside Plan – A Thriving North Tyneside; A Family-Friendly North Tyneside; and a Green North Tyneside.

The Authority wanted to provide as many events as possible as part of its summer and autumn 2021 recovery plan. These included family fun days and activities across the borough and with town centres coming alive again, hopefully giving young people a spark of enthusiasm for new hobbies they may continue in the future.

In terms of priorities for recovery, these included building back the business and support to Public Health in delivering the 'Active North Tyneside' programme.

The sub-committee was invited to put forward comments and examined a number of areas of the Sport and Leisure Services recovery planning presentation. These included the following:

- Members felt that the Senior Manager for Sport and Leisure Services, on behalf himself and his teams, were underselling themselves in terms of their contributions to the mental and physical health of customers throughout the Covid pandemic in relation the Our North Tyneside Plan; and officers were praised accordingly.
- With regard to the NHS working at vaccination centres including The Parks as a major Covid vaccination and testing centre, the service delivery was supplemented in part as North Tyneside Council did not want to make these facilities commercial for this priority service however, going forward facilities being used for e.g., eye clinics, blood donor sessions etc, would pay the normal hire charges as facilities were now operating as normal. It was not intended that the bowls hall at The Parks would be used for forthcoming vaccinations programmes.
- In terms of the projection / timeline for recovering income, a 50-70% by April 2022 and 90% in April 2023 was projected, but with no pattern yet.

In addition to the above recovery plans, Members of the sub-committee indicated that they also had a keen interest in looking at ways in which to address health and inequalities in those areas of the borough which were most in need of support.

The Chair, on behalf of the Sub-Committee, thanked the Senior Manager for Sport and Leisure Services for his informative presentation and acknowledged the work done by him and his team(s) in delivering the Authority's services during these difficult times.

It was agreed that the report and presentation on the sport and leisure service delivery over the period of the covid pandemic and current planning for a return to business as usual, be noted.

C&L11/21 Tourism and Events Recovery

The Sub-Committee received a report on the Tourism and Events Sector services recovery planning.

The period since the first lockdown in March 2020, through to the current easing of restrictions on service delivery, had been especially challenging for the tourism industry. The entire hospitality sector had struggled with the uncertainty of lockdowns and visitor hesitancy around returning to indoor venues, along with safety concerns relating to major events.

Services within the sector had been able to operate sporadically, when lockdown restrictions had been eased, allowing for some access to tourism attractions. More recently, with a greater push for people to holiday in the UK, the domestic tourism industry had begun to see a degree of recovery.

While the planned the Events programme for the Summer in North Tyneside had been significantly reduced, including the postponement for two consecutive years of the Mouth of the Tyne Festival, a range of smaller scale events had continued and helped support town centre economic recovery.

The Government guidance on restrictions during the pandemic had been used in the compilation of the report and could be viewed via the following website:

<https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>

The Operational Manager, Tourism and Events, presented an overview covering how tourism and events had survived over the period of the Covid-19 pandemic and current planning for a return to business as usual, including:

- Pre-Covid – 6 million visitors annually and rising; visitor spend and rising (£340m); over 4,000 visitor economy jobs; vast majority were day visitors; and half a million stay overnight.
- Short-term Covid impact 2020 – 2.9m visitors (down 53.4% on 2019), £151m visitor spend (down £197m); 2,197 jobs at risk; and 177k overnight visitors (down 66%). Food and drink sector – 30% of all expenditure and 33% of all employment; business support grants / furlough.
- Actions – Event cancellations; Public Health / Safety Advisory Group (SAG); Covid-secure events; Positive messaging; Cross-council Town Centre; and Recovery: -
- Spanish City Funfair – strict site capacity for social distancing.
- Snowman and Snowdog Trail – world premiere.
- Summer 2021 recovery events – examples included North Tyneside Together, Fiesta, Special appearance from The Gruffalo and Cirque Du Hilarious.
- Autumn / Winter recovery events – examples included Whitley Bay 2021 Carnival,

Big Halloween pumpkin trail, Aardman Animations trail, Bedford Street / Killingworth markets, September Sounds in Wallsend.

- Tourism Activity – Visit North Tyneside; Product development with NTCA (active pursuits, food and drink, winter escapes); NTCA events programme; Cruise Tourism Partnership; and Town Centre support.

The sub-committee was invited to put forward comments and also examined a number of areas of the Events and Tourism Service recovery planning presentation. These included the following:

- Working on water sports promotions in Cullercoats including paddle boarding, Northerly Swell cycle hire, shaping and lighting aspirations for surfing at Tynemouth and around the country – noting the park-and-walk arrangements from Beaconsfield Park at St. George’s Church being considered for this event only.
- An infrastructure which was previously a surfer’s industry, and it was suggested that the money raised from activities could potentially be used instead for changing facilities.
- The operator trialling events for Bedford Street Market which was currently under review by North Tyneside Council on the feasibility of introducing mid-week markets, subject to local consultations. Similarly, Killingworth Market could also be looked at but possibly with a younger demographic.
- The promotion of Waggonways in the northwest area of the borough and how these could be linked with local villages.

The Chair, on behalf of the Sub-Committee, thanked the Operations Manager for Tourism and Events for his informative presentation and acknowledged the work done in delivering the Authority’s services during these difficult times.

It was agreed that the report and presentation on the delivery of Tourism and Events over the period of the covid pandemic and current planning for a return to business as usual, be noted.

C&L12/21 Date and Time of Next Meeting

6pm on Tuesday, 2 November 2021.