

The Highland Council

Adult and Children's Services Committee

Minutes of Meeting of the **Culture and Leisure Contracts Scrutiny Sub-Committee** held in Committee Room 1, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Thursday 21 November 2013 at 3.00 pm.

Present:

Mr A Christie (Chair)

Mr B Fernie (Teleconferencing)

Mr M Rattray

Mr G Ross

Ms J Slater

In attendance:

Mr J Macdonald, Learning and Leisure Client Manager, Education, Culture and Sport Service

Mrs J Graham, External Funding Manager, Education, Culture and Sport Service

Ms L Cruickshank, Independent Museums Officer, Education, Culture and Sport Service

Miss M Murray, Committee Administrator, Chief Executive's Office

Also in attendance:

Mr D Wilby, Head of Performance, High Life Highland

Mr A Christie in the Chair

Business

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr G Gormley, Mr M Green, Mr E Hunter, Mr G MacKenzie and Mrs B McAllister.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no Declarations of Interest.

3. High Life Highland Performance Information

At the last meeting of the Sub-Committee, Members requested more detail on the statistical information which related to the broad indicators contained in the Service Delivery Contract with High Life Highland (HLH).

In that regard, Mr D Wilby, Head of Performance, HLH undertook a presentation on the nine areas of work delivered by HLH since it commenced operations in October 2011. Members had requested pre-HLH data for the purposes of comparison and statistics were therefore presented from 2010/11 onwards. Additional commentary was provided as follows:-

Adult Learning

HLH directly provided adult literacy and numeracy classes as well as English for speakers of other languages. In addition, in 2011/12 it started to commission partners to deliver adult learning and the trends were very positive.

Archives

There were four Archive Centres operated by HLH, namely Caithness, Skye, Fort William and the main Highland Archive and Registration Centre in Inverness. Performance had been quite steady in terms of individual uses in person. Electronic engagement with customers had been introduced in 2012/13 and this had been extremely popular, the statistics showing a significant increase in 2013/14. Many electronic engagements were local but there were also some interactions with customers around the world.

Arts

Additional information on arts provision had been requested on the basis that the Council was considering how it could be expanded. The provision by HLH could be broken down in to three areas, namely gallery attendances, the Creative Learning Programme and Inverness Traditional Music Classes.

Gallery attendances had declined slightly for two main reasons. Firstly, the gallery in Thurso had closed due to structural problems with the roof of the building. Secondly, it had been necessary to save some money at Inverness Museum and reduced winter opening hours had therefore been introduced.

In relation to the Creative Learning Programme, this was provided entirely through schools. It was for both primary and secondary schools and was available in all 29 Associated School Groups in Highland.

Inverness Traditional Music Classes filled a gap in provision in and around Inverness. There was voluntary sector provision in much of the rest of the Highlands.

Leisure Facilities

Leisure facilities were the main source of income for HLH, generating approximately £4M per year, and one of the major objectives was to increase customer numbers and the sale of High Life cards. Tracking user numbers was therefore important and statistics were provided for the past three years. It was highlighted that HLH had recently taken over the operation of the Averon Centre and Aviemore and Culloden Leisure Centres and, for the purposes of comparison, statistics were provided excluding those facilities. It could be seen that there was a positive trend with just over one million customers in 2012/13.

Libraries

HLH was operating libraries more efficiently than comparator local authorities, with slightly lower expenditure per 1000 population and higher book issue and visitor numbers. Events had been introduced, for example, Bookbug Rhyme Time sessions which were important in terms of early years language acquisition and attachment to parents. Both the number of events and attendance had increased significantly from 2011/12 to 2012/13.

There had been a reduction in public access computer sessions over the past three years due, in part, to the increasing number of hand held mobile devices and the aging computer estate. However, there was still significant usage with approximately 140,000 sessions in 2012/13. The computers had recently been refreshed and usage had started to increase in the first two quarters of 2013/14. This was an important service, particularly given the digital inclusion agenda and the introduction of online benefit claims.

Museums

Museum attendance figures were fairly static overall although it was highlighted that there were fluctuations at some facilities, for example, the Highland Folk Museum which catered, to a large extent, to visitors. Attendance at Inverness Museum had increased slightly despite the reduced opening hours and this had been achieved through an increased activity programme including archaeology, art classes, community exhibitions and schools making use of the facility when it was closed.

It was important to examine ways to generate income rather than reduce services. For example, in relation to the shop and catering facilities at Highland Folk Museum, more food was being produced on site rather than bought in. Secondary income had increased by 17% and profit had increased by 113%.

In relation to museum donations, there had been a 6% increase.

Outdoor Education

Outdoor education was one of the services the Council had agreed should transfer to HLH. However, there were issues in terms of getting permission from the landlord of the facility the Council used at Badaguish, Aviemore to sublet the property to HLH and that particular part of the service was therefore still being provided through the Council. The two Council owned centres were at Torrin in Skye and Kinlocheil in Lochaber.

Sport Development

Sport Development was largely funded by **sportscotland** and comparator information was limited due to changes in what was reported as part of the grant funding. However, numbers of distinct participants were increasing.

Youth Work

In response to the Council's prevention agenda, youth work was becoming a more focused service, centred around employability, youth engagement and youth achievement awards. The work being undertaken was more intensive with smaller groups of young people and had consistently been achieving grades of "good" and "very good" in Education Scotland inspections.

During discussion, Members referred to the extensive aims and objectives of the Bookbug programme and suggested that it would be beneficial to receive a presentation at a future meeting.

With regard to leisure facilities, it would be helpful to see which areas were performing well and a breakdown by Council area was sought including information such as the number of facilities and staff and the occupancy percentages.

In response to questions, it was explained that:-

- in relation to youth work, the definition of a “contact” was currently quite broad. For example, it could be an hour of contact with a Youth Worker or three days attendance at a Youth Voice Conference. With regard to youth clubs, each young person in attendance counted as a separate contact. However, the number of contacts with young people was not considered to be good measure of the work being undertaken and a new set of performance indicators for youth work, focused on learning and achievement, was being explored;
- with regard to the Creative Learning Programme, the Creative Learning Leader undertook a programme of activities which schools participated in, for example, drama and art groups. A Creative Learning newsletter was produced for primary and secondary schools and could be provided to Members for information;
- it was possible to project forward and provide anticipated figures for the following financial year in future reports/presentations;
- in relation to traditional music, the loss of grant funding from Creative Scotland and British Waterways Scotland in relation to the Caledonian Canal Ceilidh Trail had led to a reduction in classes and a slight dip in the attendance figures. However, the number of people per class had increased;
- with regard to commissioned adult learning classes, the success was partially attributable to the variety of classes available. Subjects ranged from accountancy and IT to pig husbandry and lambing, which were relevant to crofting communities. HLH had worked with a variety of partners during the first year and awareness had risen, leading to a significant increase in the second year;
- in terms of the statistics, “Leisure Facilities” did not include Inverness Leisure, which was a separate organisation, or community centres, information on which was collected separately; and
- in relation to archives, an “individual electronic engagement” was where a customer had asked a question, for example, by email or on Facebook, and received a response. People were also being encouraged to provide information. Facebook was a good way of interacting and was increasingly being used. All leisure centres and museums and a number of libraries also had Facebook pages and it was being rolled out to all Youth Workers.

Thereafter, having thanked the Head of Performance for the presentation, the Sub-Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the information presented;
- ii. **AGREED** that the possibility of a presentation on the Bookbug programme at a future meeting of the Sub-Committee be explored;
- iii. **AGREED** that the latest Creative Learning newsletter be provided to Members of the Sub-Committee for information;
- iv. **AGREED** that projected figures for the following financial year be incorporated in future reports/presentations; and
- v. **AGREED** that a breakdown of leisure facilities by Council area be provided in future reports/presentations, including the number of facilities and staff and the occupancy percentages.

4. The Highland Culture Fund

There had been circulated Report No CLCS/10/13 dated 11 November 2013 by the Director of Education, Culture and Sport which provided information about the Highland Culture Fund and invited Members to note the outcome of the Assessment Panel's deliberations as detailed in Appendix 1 of the report.

The report summarised the background to the Highland Culture Fund, one of the legacies of Highland 2007 – the Year of Highland Culture, and explained the purpose of the Fund and application process. In May 2013, the Adult and Children's Services Committee had agreed to allocate £0.100M to provide a final grants scheme for small scale projects, the maximum grant being £5000. Of the 33 applications received, 3 had been withdrawn and 10 were unsuccessful. The Assessment Panel had approved 14 applications and a further 6 had been approved in principle, subject to conditions.

In response to a question, it was explained that the number of applications had been slightly disappointing given that the scheme had been promoted through a variety of sources. However, many organisations were finding it increasingly difficult to obtain match funding.

Thereafter, The Sub-Committee **NOTED** the outcome of the Highland Culture Fund Assessment Panel's deliberations as detailed in Appendix 1 of the report.

5. Homecoming 2014 Project: "My Heart's in the Highlands"

There had been circulated Report No CLCS/11/13 dated 11 November 2013 by the Director of Education, Culture and Sport which provided information about the background and aims of the Homecoming 2014 Project "My Heart's in the Highlands".

The report explained that the Highland and Moray Museums and Heritage Partnership (the Partnership) had been successful in securing total funding of £123,800, comprising £40,000 from Museums Galleries Scotland and £73,800 from the Heritage Lottery Fund. The overall aim of the project was to develop a concerted programme of high-quality, additional events for Homecoming 2014 which would deliver a range of benefits. The external funding had enabled the partnership to appoint Rowan Tree Consulting to support the development and marketing of the project and it was hoped to issue a press release before Christmas.

The Partnership comprised approximately 50 members including national and regional heritage organisations and local accredited museums and heritage centres such as Strathnaver, Gairloch, Tain, Cromarty and Rosemarkie Museums. The project would provide support such as training and mentoring to assist partner organisations in developing events. In addition, grant funding of £250 was available to support small, one day events.

During discussion, Members emphasised the potential for links with the Inverness Events and Festivals programme of events and it was confirmed that contact had been made with the Council's Events Officer in that regard.

Thereafter, the Sub-Committee **NOTED** the aims of the project.

The meeting concluded at 3.30 pm.