

SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL EXTERNAL SERVICES/PROVIDERS MONITORING GROUP

MINUTES of Meeting of the EXTERNAL
SERVICES/PROVIDERS MONITORING
GROUP held via Microsoft Teams on
Tuesday, 5 December 2023 at 2.00 pm

- Present:- Councillors M. Rowley (Chair), M. Douglas, J. Greenwell and E. Thornton-Nicol.
- Apologies:- Councillors J. Anderson, S. Hamilton, E. Jardine and J. Pirone
- In Attendance:- Director Resilient Communities, Chief Officer Audit and Risk, E. Jackson (Live Borders) G. McMurdo (Live Borders) and Democratic Services Officer (L. Cuerden).

CHAIR'S REMARKS

With the announcement of his retiral, The Chair thanked Mr Ewan Jackson for his 20 years of stewardship of Borders Sport and Leisure Trust and latterly Live Borders. Members expressed gratitude for his work in preparing for the meetings of this Committee and the Joint Steering Group and wished him well for the future.

1. MINUTE

There had been circulated copies of the Minute of the Meeting held on 5 September 2023.

DECISION

AGREED the Minute for signature by the Chair.

2. LIVE BORDERS CONTRACT PERFORMANCE: QUARTER 2 2023/24

- 2.1 There had been circulated a report by Jenni Craig, Director Resilient Communities, the purpose of which was to provide Members with performance information regarding the Live Borders partnership agreement for Quarter 2 2023/24. The report at Appendix 1 provided Members with performance information on the delivery of the commissioned sport, physical activity and cultural services. Live Borders continued to face challenges including lower than anticipated participation levels due to the cost of living crisis and a protracted recovery from the pandemic; inflation and energy costs; and continuing changes to the ways in which some services were consumed. In March 2023 Scottish Borders Council approved a joint strategic review with the aim of strengthening the partnership and service delivery arrangements to build a long-term sustainable offering for communities and service users. Key outputs from the joint strategic review were considered at the November meeting of Scottish Borders Council and a 12-month joint transformational change programme was approved to implement the consolidated set of recommendations, review existing governance arrangements, and create a new Service Provision Agreement and a new Performance Management Framework.
- 2.2 Ewan Jackson presented the report at Appendix 1 which detailed the service update for quarter 2 2023/24. Regarding Sports Facilities, Teviotdale Leisure Centre had closed on 7 September due to a boiler failure which was then deemed beyond economic repair. A temporary containerised boiler was installed and the Centre fully reopened on 23 September 2023. Kelso Leisure Centre had closed for 10 days due to boiler flue issues and reopened on 2 October 2023 following remedial works. Notwithstanding, participation figures across all sports for quarter 2 were 231,587 which had surpassed the target of 229,083. With reference to paragraph 2.2 of the Minute of 5 September 2023, work

continued at Eyemouth Leisure Centre to install a new energy efficient air handling unit, with a scheduled reopening of early February 2024. Active memberships were at 85% of quarter 2 target where marketing had successfully generated new members, however work was ongoing to retain members beyond the short-term. Membership of Learn2 (swimming) was also down at 74% of quarter 2 target. Immediate measures to address recommendations in the joint review were to be taken forward as follows: an additional eight swim teachers to be trained; junior membership launched which provided 12-17 year-olds with unlimited swim and gym usage for £9 per month (60 youth members to date); and a designated management lead for Sales & Retention. Regarding the Active Communities, quarter 2 had seen strong performance due to the rollout of the Summer Activity Programme with 2,559 participations covering 22 camps across the 9 high school cluster areas. 52% of places were accessed free of charge by targeted low-income families, supported by the SBC Cost of Living Crisis Fund and the CYPPP. Older adult participation increased with 192 health referrals against a target of 150 for the quarter. Library visits, in-person and digital, had increased with 1,162 unique digital users of Borrowbox and 345 unique users of Pressreader in September. A marketing campaign piloted a discounted swim at Peebles Pool (£2.50) for Peebles Library members. Library events continued to attract attendees of all ages online and in-person. Galashiels Library had extended its opening hours to include Saturday mornings and later on Monday evenings, while challenges around staff recruitment had delayed the opening of Hawick Library on Saturday mornings. Regarding Museums and Galleries, though visitor numbers were below target, recorded donations to the end of October 2023 were £8k higher than the calendar year 2022 at £68.5k. With reference to paragraph 2.2 of the Minute of 5 September 2023, it was reported that approximately 40,000 bookings had been made via the Live Borders app (excluding Tri-Fitness). A redesigned Live Borders website had gone live on 1 November 2023 with the aim to be more user friendly and mobile compatible. December and New Year sales campaigns were currently in development. Regarding the Great Tapestry of Scotland, continued media coverage highlighted the 5 star attraction to a wider audience. To maximise footfall and income a short life Focus Group had been established, the work of which was to progress alongside the transformational change programme. With reference to paragraph 2.6 of the Minute of 5 September 2023, it was reported that Tri-Fitness Gym had won the 2023 UK Active 'Best Regional Club/Centre of the Year' for Scotland award. A long-term rental had been secured for its consultation room, with a physiotherapist to run clinics every Saturday and the potential to add a second physiotherapist for weekday and evening appointments.

- 2.3 With reference to the Minute of 5 September 2023, a comparison of swimming pool opening hours for 2019/20 and 2022/23 was provided. 2022/23 had seen a combined total of 302.5 hours per week against 299.1 hours per week in 2019/20. A request for historical swimming pool footfall data split by wet and dry participation was to follow at the next meeting. It was confirmed that all sites operated by Live Borders, apart from Peebles Pool, offered wet and dry activities. Energy use data for both electricity and gas for 2022/23 was provided as requested. The Joint Review had recommended SBC-led actions to commission condition and structural surveys and energy audits of all Council owned buildings, leisure centres and pools managed and operated by Live Borders. A data table was shared with Members which detailed visitor figures by venue/activity for quarters 1 and 2, with a total of 240,729 visits recorded so far.
- 2.4 A summary of the Quarter 2 2023/24 KSI performance was provided with associated RAG status. KSI 2,3, 13,15, 22, 23 and 25 were coded red and KSI 9 was coded as amber. With reference to paragraph 2.6 of the minute of 5 September 2023, the RAG status at quarter 1 was provided alongside that of quarter 2. The KSI performance graphs and tables for Q2 2023/24 were provided for those KSIs that were measured quarterly.
- 2.5 Appendix 2 provided a summary of the 2023 UCI World Cycling Championship which saw events at Glentress Forest mountain biking cross country event and the Tweed Valley marathon event. Local competitors had been supported by initiatives such as Live Borders Sports Academy and Advanced Order Development Squad, ClubSport Borders

and the Athlete Support Programme. Several events and skills development schools had been facilitated by Live Borders and involved national and local partners such as Peebles Cycling Club and Borders Additional Needs Group and Scottish Cycling among others.

- 2.6 Members welcomed the report and there followed a brief discussion during which it was reported that Director Education & Lifelong Learning, as part of the Joint Review, was to consider the role that school leavers might play in staff recruitment. The role of volunteers in museums and galleries was suggested along with recruitment to paid posts. In reference to the UCI event, there had been only one negative comment around the performance skill level of young riders being well above the skill level offered at activities.

DECISION

- (a) **NOTED the Live Borders Performance Report; and**
- (b) **NOTED the ongoing joint transformational change programme; and the inclusion of a revised Service Provision Agreement and revised Performance Management Framework within the scope of the joint transformation a change programme.**

3. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the External Services/Providers Monitoring Group (Live Borders) was scheduled for 27 February 2024 at 2p.m.

The meeting concluded at 2.50pm